



*Shantideva's
Bodhicharyavatara*

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡེ་དཔེ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Chapters 9 and 10

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Ven. Tenzin Dongak

2005 Notes

Tara Institute
3 Mavis Avenue
East Brighton VIC 3187
Tel: (03) 9586 8900

*A branch of FPMT, the Foundation for
the Preservation of the Mahayana
Tradition, a network of Buddhist
Centres in Australia and worldwide.*

Study Group - *Bodhicharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་རྫོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

15 February 2005

I'm very happy to start the year again with the Study Group. You are all familiar with the rules of the Study Group - it is a group where one has to study. For example, if one lives in Australia one has to follow the rules that govern Australia!

It is very fortunate to have the Study Group, and being able to study the text *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* by the great Shantideva is also very fortunate.

Shantideva is a very special being who has generated bodhicitta. Just hearing or remembering his name purifies non-virtuous karmas.

If one asks which of the three baskets of teachings does the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* belong to, the answer is that it belongs to the sutra basket. Even though in general it covers all three baskets of teachings, it falls into the sutra basket, because it primarily concerns itself with the sutra basket of teachings.

We can always recognise the class to which a teaching belongs by looking at the homage. As we have said before, if the homage is to Manjushri then it falls into the abhidharma class of teachings, and if it is homage to the buddhas and bodhisattvas then it is a teaching that falls into the sutra class of teachings.

We should understand well that the teachings of the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* have to be preceded by meditations that are common to the small and medium-capable being. It falls within the framework of the graduated path to enlightenment where the teachings concerning the Mahayana practices have to be preceded by meditation on the practices common to the small and medium-capable being.

The motivation of the Mahayana practices is the motivation of bodhicitta. The practices of the Mahayana being of great capacity are the six perfections.

OUTLINE OF THE TEXT

Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life is comprised of ten chapters.

1. The first chapter shows the benefits of bodhicitta. Why? Because by becoming aware of the benefits of bodhicitta then one is motivated to generate bodhicitta.

2. Just as one would first clean one's house if one were to invite the Wheel-Turning King to one's home, one first purifies the mind of negativities through confession before generating bodhicitta in one's mind. That is why the second chapter is called the chapter of confessing negativities.

3. After having confessed negativities and accumulated merits the third chapter deals with taking the mind of bodhicitta. This chapter also deals with the auxiliary limbs of the meditations common to the small and medium-capable being

The second and third chapter go through each of the seven limbs of practice such as taking refuge, offering prostrations,

making offerings, confessing with the four powers, asking the buddhas to remain and teach the Dharma, rejoicing, dedication and so forth.

One generates bodhicitta after going for refuge, offering prostrations, making offerings, confessing, rejoicing, asking the buddhas to remain and teach the Dharma, and then dedication. Then after doing each of these practices one generates bodhicitta. So one has all the practices there in the opening chapters.

4. After having generated bodhicitta one needs to look after it so that it doesn't degenerate. For that conscientiousness is needed, which is why the fourth chapter is the chapter on conscientiousness.

The next six chapters deal with the way the six perfections are practised.

5. The perfection of morality comes in the fifth chapter which shows how one practises morality with mindfulness and awareness.

6 - 9. The sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth chapters deal respectively with the perfections of patience, enthusiasm, mental stabilisation and wisdom.

10. The tenth chapter explains how to practise the perfection of generosity. It is the chapter that deals with the dedication of virtues, and it shows how one dedicates one's possessions, one's merits and one's body to others.

THE NINTH CHAPTER: WISDOM

The ninth chapter is the chapter that deals with the perfection of wisdom. It has two main divisions: explaining the etymology of the title and the actual meaning of the text.

A. EXPLAINING THE ETYMOLOGY OF THE TITLE

Explaining the title is done in two headings: the condensed explanation of the need to generate wisdom, and the elaborate explanation of the need to generate wisdom.

I. THE CONDENSED EXPLANATION OF THE NEED TO GENERATE WISDOM

The first verse explains the need for the generation of wisdom.

*The Able One explained all these different limbs [1]
For the purpose of wisdom;
Therefore those who wish to pacify suffering
Should generate wisdom.*

There are two different explanations of the meaning of the first line. According to one explanation 'these different limbs' refers to the eighth chapter alone - the explanation of mental stabilisation. The other explanation is that the other five perfections such as generosity, morality, patience, enthusiasm are included. We will concern ourselves only with the second possibility.

When it says all these different limbs were taught by the Able One for the purpose of wisdom, it means that the other five perfections of generosity, morality, patience, enthusiasm and mental stabilisation are the supporting limbs for the generation of wisdom. So the final aim of all these different practices is to generate wisdom.

What it shows is that if one wants to attain a state of complete enlightenment then one needs to practise a path that combines method and wisdom. One needs a path that

unifies method and wisdom on the basis of the Two Truths, through meditating on the Four Noble Truths in a way that combines method and wisdom. Then one can attain the two bodies of a Buddha. That is what is implied here - the first initial five perfections act as supporting limbs for the generation of wisdom.

Therefore, those who wish to attain mere liberation for themselves alone also need to rely on the generation of wisdom. So wisdom is indispensable, regardless of whether one wants to attain complete enlightenment, or mere solitary liberation.

It is important to understand that to attain mere individual liberation one also needs to generate wisdom. One could get the idea that it is only necessary to generate wisdom if one wants to attain complete enlightenment, but that it is not necessary for the attainment of individual liberation. There are certain debates in regard to that, but these are based on a misunderstanding. One needs to generate wisdom for the attainment of both complete enlightenment and individual liberation.

The question could arise, 'In order to realise emptiness does one need to engage in the bodhisattva practices of all the six perfections?'. The answer here is, 'No, one does not need to do this, because, for example, followers of the hearer path realise emptiness'. But one needs wisdom. That is why the last two lines state explicitly, 'therefore those who wish to pacify suffering should generate wisdom'. This states explicitly that those who want to attain individual liberation also need to generate wisdom. This was also mentioned by Nagarjuna when he said,

For as long as there is grasping at the aggregates
There will also be 'I' grasping.
If there is a self-grasping there is karma
And from karma there is birth.
Their three paths are in mutual causation;
Without beginning, end or middle;
The wheel of cyclic existence turns;
Like the wheel of a firebrand;
Because it isn't obtained from self, other
or both and nowhere in the three times;
The grasping at 'I' ceases;
And from that karma and birth.

This directly shows that even the followers of the lesser vehicle need to realise emptiness in order to attain individual liberation.

Why does one need to realise emptiness to liberate oneself from cyclic existence.

Student 1: Because ignorance is the root of cyclic existence.

Why do you need to realise emptiness to overcome the root of cyclic existence?

Student 1: Emptiness is the antidote to grasping at 'I' and 'mine'.

You have to explain how the antidote actually counteracts the root of cyclic existence.

Student 1: As long as there is grasping at the aggregates one continues to take rebirth.

No, no. How does the antidote counteract the root of cyclic existence?

Student 1: The wisdom realising emptiness eliminates grasping at the aggregates, which are the root of cyclic existence.

Why do you need to realise emptiness in order to overcome

the true-grasping at the aggregates? When one says emptiness is needed there is a reason why that emptiness is needed.

Student 1: Because it is the exact opposite to grasping at cyclic existence

If they are the direct opposite then ...?

Student 2: It is able to demolish the false perception of things existing from their own side.

How does it eliminate the false perception?

Student 2: Because grasping is dependent upon the appearance of things appearing from their own side.

Geshe-la is asking how does the wisdom realising emptiness counteract true-grasping.

The wisdom that realises emptiness understands the non-existence of the apprehended object of true-grasping. So the grasped object of true-grasping is understood to be non-existence, and in such a way one stops the true-grasping. As I said to you previously, true-grasping cannot be removed from the mind in the same way as one pulls out a splinter from one's hand. It has to be counteracted by the counter-positive wisdom that realises the absence of the apprehended object.

The wisdom realising emptiness counteracts true-grasping by realising the non-existence of its apprehended object. By realising the non-existence of the apprehended object one counteracts the ignorance.

Antidotes such as love and so forth are mere temporary antidotes to delusions, because they don't realise the absence of the apprehended object of ignorance. For example, love is counter-positive to anger, but it does not realise the absence of the apprehended object of ignorance, and in such a way it cannot ultimately act as an antidote to afflictions. It can only be a temporary antidote to anger. However that doesn't take away any of its value - love is still very important to meditate on.

This first verse completes the first outline, the need to realise emptiness in short. This verse also shows very clearly that Nagarjuna and Shantideva are of one mind in their view as to the importance of realising emptiness. Both assert that it is essential to realise emptiness in order to attain complete enlightenment as well as individual liberation. It is good to keep in mind how these two are actually of one mind in their views.

II. THE ELABORATE EXPLANATION OF THE NEED TO GENERATE WISDOM

This has four sub-outlines:

1. Understanding the view
2. Practising it through meditation
3. Cutting off the mental fabrications of true grasping
4. The function of realising emptiness

1. Understanding the view

This heading has three sub-outlines:

- 1.1. An explanation of the Two Truths
- 1.2. Refuting different debates about the Two Truths
- 1.3. Establishing the Mahayana as supreme

1.1. AN EXPLANATION OF THE TWO TRUTHS

The conventional and the ultimate [2]

Are asserted as the Two Truths;

The ultimate is not an object engaged by awareness,

Awareness is stated to be conventional.

The first two lines show the two-fold division of the Two Truths.

The category 'objects of knowledge' is posited as the basis for the two-fold division of the Two Truths. This adds a very profound meaning to the term 'object of knowledge'. We don't just talk about Two Truths in general, but the Two Truths are actually a division of objects of knowledge.

The Two Truths are the objects that are to be known. Here Shantideva gives the term 'objects of knowledge' a more specific meaning; he is not just referring to objects of knowledge in general. The Two Truths are the objects that are to be known.

This deeper meaning of the term 'objects of knowledge' is directly related to the meaning of omniscient consciousness. Omniscient consciousness is not called 'omniscient' because it knows a great variety of objects, but because it can comprehend the Two Truths directly at the same time. This is not possible if one has not abandoned the grasping that holds the two Truths to be of a different entity.

The first two lines, 'The conventional and the ultimate are asserted as the Two Truths' also eliminates the existence of a third truth. This concurs with the explanation given in the sutras.

1.2. DEFINITION OF TWO TRUTHS

Lines three and four deal with the definition and the definiendum of conventional and ultimate truth. When it says 'the ultimate isn't an object engaged by awareness', 'the ultimate' shows the definiendum, ultimate truth; and 'isn't the object engaged by awareness' shows the definition of ultimate truth implicitly. In the last line 'awareness is stated to be conventional' the word 'awareness' shows the definiendum conventional truth, and 'is expressed to be conventional' explains the definition of conventional truth in an implicit manner.

In the first line the 'conventional' refers to the person and the aggregates, and the 'ultimate' refers to the lack of true existence of the person and the lack of true existence of the aggregates. Those two are asserted as the Two Truths.

So this first line shows that there are the Two Truths, which cuts off the existence of a third truth. The last two lines show the definition of the Two Truths as well as the two definiendums.

You probably have the definition of the Two Truths readily lying on your tongue now.

Definitions of conventional and ultimate truth

According to *Introduction to the Middle Way*

What it gives here very briefly as the definition, i.e. it isn't the engaged object of awareness, seems to be different from the definition that we learnt in *Introduction to the Middle Way*. There it said that *the meaning found by a valid cogniser engaged in nominal analysis, as well as being a nominal cogniser with regard to the found meaning*, is the definition of **conventional truth**.

The meaning found by a valid cogniser engaged in ultimate analysis which becomes an valid cogniser engaged in ultimate analysis with regard to that object is the definition of **ultimate truth**. The definition that is given here is a little bit different but in meaning they are the same.

According to *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's way of Life*

Out of this third line a very popular misunderstanding arises where one says, 'Oh, emptiness is an object that is beyond comprehension, because it says here, similarly to the sutras, that the ultimate is not an engaged object of awareness'. It is very easy to misinterpret that statement and think, 'Oh that means that emptiness is simply beyond any type of understanding'. But that is obviously not correct, because we have the wisdom that realises emptiness, and the wisdom that realises emptiness is a type of awareness. So obviously emptiness is an object that is engaged by a certain type of awareness.

The meaning of this third line is that the ultimate is not an object that can be directly engaged by dualistic awareness. So the ultimate is never an object that could be directly engaged by a dualistic awareness. In other words one can say it is not an object that can be directly engaged by a mistaken awareness, which comes to the same thing.

The explicit statement the ultimate is not an object that is directly engaged by a dualistic awareness implicitly gives us the definition of **ultimate truth**, as *that which is realised in a non-dualistic manner by the direct valid cogniser that realises it directly*. Thus the definition of ultimate truth that is given here is the same definition that is used by the Svatantrika-Madhyamaka - that which is realised in a non-dualistic manner by direct valid cognition that realises it directly. That is the definition of ultimate truth - whatever is realised in a non-dual manner by direct valid cognition realising it directly is ultimate truth. That is implicitly asserted here by stating the ultimate is not an object that can be directly engaged or directly realised by dualistic awareness.

Similarly *that which is realised in a dualistic manner by a direct valid cogniser realising it directly* is the definition of **conventional truth**, which is shown in the fourth line.

This definition is according to the *Sutra of the Meeting of the Father and Son*. In this sutra one difference between the positing of the definition in the *Introduction to the Middle Way* and here in the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, is that in the *Introduction to the Middle Way* the definition of the Two Truths is posited without making any specific distinction between conceptual and non-conceptual awareness. Here it specifically ties the definition to non-conceptual awareness, [which is also why 'intellect' is actually not a good translation].

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak

Edited Version

© **Tara Institute**

Study Group - *Bodhicharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱུང་རྒྱུ་མེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འདུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

22 February 2005

Please generate a good motivation for listening to the teachings, thinking, 'I have to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. In order to do that, I am now going to listen to this profound teaching, and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'. Having some motivation to precede listening to the teachings benefits our practice.

2. THE ELABORATE EXPLANATION OF THE NEED TO GENERATE WISDOM

2.1. Understanding the view

2.1.1 An explanation of the two truths (CONT.)

This heading has three sub-outlines:

2.1.1.1. An explanation of the two truths

2.1.1.2. Definition of the two truths

2.1.1.3 Characteristics of the person who has understood the two truths

2.1.1.2. DEFINITION OF THE TWO TRUTHS

With regard to the definition of the two truths there is a slight difference in the way the definition is posited here, compared with the Introduction to the Middle Way. Even though the meaning is ultimately the same, it looks different, and is done so for different purpose.

2.1.1.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PERSON WHO HAS UNDERSTOOD THE TWO TRUTHS

*Regarding this, two aspects of transitory being
are seen, [3]*

Yogis and ordinary beings.

The ordinary transitory being

Is harmed by the yogic transitory being,

*And yogis are harmed as well through
distinctions [4ab]*

Of awareness by the one above.

There are two types of beings - the yogi and the ordinary being. The ordinary being is harmed by the yogi, and the yogi is also harmed by higher yogis through distinctions of awareness.

The point of reference of 'regarding this' is the person. 'Transitory being' actually conveys the definition of person. So when it says 'regarding this, two aspects of transitory beings are seen', transitory being is actually given as the definition of the point of reference, which is the person. Even 'transitory being' does not really convey the complete meaning of the Tibetan word, which is comprised of two syllables - transitory and dependent. Transitory and dependent is given as a definition of the point of reference - the person. Why? Because first of all the person changes momentarily and that's why 'transitory' is used. It is dependent because the person is the 'I' labelled in dependence on the aggregates.

After having given the definition of person, it says that there are two aspects or types of person, the yogi and the ordinary being.

A yogi is a person who possesses the special union of calm abiding and special insight focussing on emptiness in their mental continuum, which would make that yogi a Madhyamaka. Ordinary being refers to Realists and so forth, who assert true existence.

The ordinary transitory being

Is harmed by the yogic transitory being,

The next two lines basically say that the yogi harms the ordinary transitory being. What this means is that the view of the ordinary transitory being is harmed by the Madhyamaka yogi. The view of the ordinary transitory being asserts true existence and inherent existence, which is the view harmed by the Madhyamaka yogi with different reasonings. For example, the reasoning of one and many, that things are never truly existent one or many. Or they may use the reasoning of dependent arising and so forth, using such syllogisms as: take the subject sprout - it lacks true existence - because it is a dependent arising. This kind of reasoning harms the view that asserts true existence.

Here one shouldn't confuse the lack of inherent existence with a lack of existence. Just because an object does not exist inherently does not mean that it also doesn't exist at all. Lacking inherent existence does not preclude existence. The meaning that we should contemplate is that objects are dependent arisings. Objects arise in dependence on causes and conditions and therefore lack this independent nature, i.e. lack being independent from causes and conditions. Objects exist interdependently. Interdependent existence means that objects lack the independence that exists independently of causes and conditions. That is what is not there. What is there is that objects exist in dependence on the accumulation of causes and conditions.

And yogis are harmed as well through distinctions

Of awareness by the one above.

Here the word 'harm' has a more figurative meaning, while the word 'harm' in the context of the fourth line has a more literal meaning. The reasoning of the Madhyamaka yogi harms the wrong views of the Realists in the same way as a valid eye-consciousness harms the perception of a white conch shell as yellow. If one had a perception of the white conch shell as yellow, but then regained proper sight, seeing that the conch shell was actually white, then that harms the perception of the white conch shell as yellow. In this context the harm is really meant in a literal sense.

But in the sixth line the harm is more figurative. It means more to outshine. First of all, yogis harm ordinary worldly beings, the Realists, but then the lower yogis are harmed by the higher yogis. Secondly it means that the higher yogis outshine the lower yogis. Because they are higher, they outshine the lower yogis, which is the more figurative meaning of the word 'harm' used here.

According to Gyaltsab Rinpoche's commentary, if it is seen from the point view of bodhisattvas of a different continuum, it is meant figuratively. The high yogis outshine the lower yogis because of the greater power of their mind and so forth.

It can also be looked at from the point of view of just one person, who moves from being a lower yogi to being a high yogi. From that point of view it becomes more literal because the higher realisation does do away with the lower realisation, and its associated faults. For example the path of seeing is not able to harm the seeds of the innate true-grasping; for that the path of meditation is needed. If we think about what is actually harming true

grasping, then it can only be the wisdom realising emptiness.

If you really think about how the wisdom realising emptiness harms true grasping, then we can relate it very nicely to our Dharma practice. Contemplating how one can counteract the different delusions, how the wisdom realising emptiness counteracts true-grasping, and thinking about the mechanics behind the whole process is very useful for one's practice. Applying that to one's mind is very useful.

The point of all that was mentioned above is to show that if the wisdom that understands ultimate truth can not even be harmed by the wisdom understanding conventional truth, then there is no need to mention that it would be harmed by the grasping at partless particles. It also shows that the wisdom understanding ultimate truth on the other hand can harm all extreme views.

The higher views always harm the lower views. For example the Sautrantika and the Vaibhashika assert the existence of partless particles, and objects that are an accumulation of partless particles. The Mind Only assert phenomena that exist truly. The Svatantrika-Madhyamaka assert inherent existence. So the reasoning of the Mind Only refutes the point of view of the Sautrantika and the Vaibhashika, i.e. the existence of partless particles. The reasoning of the Svatantrika-Madhyamaka refutes the assertion of true existence by the Mind Only. The reasoning of the Prasangika refutes the assertion of inherent existence by the Svatantrika-Madhyamaka. In such a way, the lower tenets are always refuted by the superseding tenets.

2.1.2. REFUTING OBJECTIONS

2.1.2.1. Refuting objections of the Realists in general

2.1.2.2. Refuting objections by Mind Only

2.1.2.1. REFUTING OBJECTIONS OF THE REALISTS IN GENERAL

Here the worldly beings are the beings whose view is common to the Realists. This point is comprised of six lines.

*Through examples asserted by both, [4cd]
And because of no investigation towards a
result.*

*Transitory beings see objects and [5]
Believe them to exist perfectly,
Not like an illusion; therefore here
The yogi and the transitory being disagree.*

The **Realists** reply to the reasoning of the Madhyamaka yogi, 'My dear Madhyamaka, your reasoning doesn't harm us in the least, because you don't have any valid reasoning that could establish the lack of true existence'.

Here the **Madhyamaka** will say, 'Reason not established, there is a valid reasoning with which one can prove the lack of true existence'. The way the Madhyamaka does this is by way of examples that are accepted by the Realists as well as the Madhyamaka, such as the example of the illusion, the dream and so forth. With these examples the Madhyamaka can establish the lack of true existence to the Realists. The Madhyamaka reply is, 'There exists a valid concordant example for both our systems, and that's why I can prove the lack of true existence'.

As you may recall, *if there is a discrepancy between appearance and existence, then that object is false. If appearance and existence are concordant, then that object is true.*

What the line 'And because of no investigation towards a result' means is, 'You Realists say that objects exist truly. If so then there is no point in practising the six perfections of generosity and so forth in order to attain the result of a complete Buddha, because everything exists truly and inherently'. This line states an argument by the Madhyamaka, 'According to you there is no point in practising generosity and the six perfections because in order to attain the result of a buddha, because everything exists inherently.'

The Madhyamaka says, 'Even though there is a lack of true existence, there is no problem with practising the six perfections in order to obtain the state or the result of enlightenment. Even though the practice of the six perfections and the state of enlightenment are not found at the time of analysis, they exist nominally and are practised nominally'.

*Transitory beings see objects and
Believe them to exist perfectly,
Not like an illusion; therefore here*

The yogi and the transitory being disagree. Both kinds of transitory beings see different objects, such as a fire and so forth, but the difference is that the ordinary transitory being accepts these objects to be a perfect meaning, i.e. existing truly, existing perfectly, existing inherently. They don't accept them to be like an illusion, and that's why yogis and Realists disagree here.

Review

What is the basis of the division of the two truths?

Student: Objects of knowledge.

What is the meaning of objects of knowledge?

Student: Objects perceived by a valid cognisor.

If you give the definition, then give the actual one. An object of knowledge is an object that is suitable to be made an object of awareness.

What is purpose of saying that the object of knowledge has a two-fold division of the two truths, and not just saying that first we have objects of knowledge and then we have the two truths. What is the purpose of saying that objects of knowledge is the basis of division for the two truths?

Student: It's to point out that the Buddha's omniscient mind can see both conventional and ultimate truth at the same time.

That was more the explanation of why the Buddha's consciousness is referred to 'omniscient consciousness', which is directly linked to the two-fold division of ultimate truth and conventional truth. Here we are talking more about the object of knowledge. Objects of knowledge are the basis for the division of the two truths, because the two truths are the objects to be known. When it says objects of knowledge, it gives a meaning to the etymology of objects of knowledge. Objects of knowledge are given as the basis for the division of the two truths, because the two truths are the objects to be known.

What are the two truths?

Student: Conventional and ultimate.

If it exists, is it necessarily either of those two? Is there pervasion that if it exists that it is either of those two?

Student: Yes.

Then what about the subject 'the two truths'?

Student: The subject 'two truths' is conventional truth.

That was a very good answer. [Laughter]

If there are no more than two truths, then what happened to the Four Truths? Geshe-la explained it at the beginning of the class, but I think I forgot to translate that one. The truth of cessation falls into ultimate truth, and the other three truths fall into conventional truth. Geshe-la asks what happens to the Four Truths if two truths are supposed to be enough.

First let's posit the four noble truths.

Students: Suffering, cause, cessation and path.

Is the noble truth of suffering a conventional truth or an ultimate truth?

Students: Conventional.

The origin of suffering?

Students: Conventional.

The truth of the path?

Students: Conventional.

And cessation?

Students: Ultimate.

The Four Noble Truths are contained within the two truths, which is good to know. If somebody were to say that because of the Four Noble Truths there are more than two truths, then the answer would be that there is no pervasion. It is good to train in these types of argument to develop your understanding.

Is the conventional truth true or false?

Students: False.

Is ultimate truth false or true?

Students: True.

What is the meaning of true and false?

Student: If it is false there is a discrepancy between appearance and existence

What is the meaning of true?

Student: There is no discrepancy.

So that appearance and existence are concordant.

[Geshe-la holds up a paper serviette]

Is that paper serviette conventional truth or ultimate truth?

Students: Conventional truth.

Is there a discrepancy between appearance and existence?

Students: Yes.

What is the discrepancy between appearance and existence, because it appears as a serviette, and it is a serviette?

Student: It appears to be inherently existing white paper.

Why does it appear to exist from its own side?

Student: We haven't overcome the cognitive afflictions that make it appear from its own side. We haven't reached omniscience and therefore things appear from their own side.

First of all there is not really a pervasion to your argument, because the bodhisattva on the final uninterrupted path has not abandoned the obscuration to knowledge, and things do not have the appearance of true existence to such a bodhisattva.

The reason that the object appears intrinsically is because it doesn't really appear as if it is posited by the mind, but it appears as if it exists from its own side.

One has to know the mode in which an object appears as truly existing. Of course one can say it appears as existing truly because one hasn't abandoned this or that, but it is also

good to know the mode. For example saying, 'Oh it appears as truly existing because...', and then giving the mode of how it appears, e.g. 'It appears as truly existing because it appears as if it exists from its own side and not posited by the mind'.

The serviette is false, because it appears as if it exists from its own side, even though it actually is posited by the mind. The lack of the existence of the paper from its own side is its ultimate truth. Why is that true? The serviette itself has a discrepancy between appearance and existence and that's why it is false. But the emptiness of the serviette is true, because there is no discrepancy between appearance and existence. Why is it that there is no discrepancy between appearance and the existence of the emptiness of the serviette?

Student: Because it is its true mode of existence, it doesn't exist from its own side.

Geshe-la's question is why is the emptiness of the object true? Why is there no discrepancy between appearance and existence of the emptiness of the object?

Student: Because the emptiness doesn't exist from its own side? The appearance and the existence of the object are the same.

Another student: To the wisdom of emptiness there is no discrepancy between the appearance and the existence.

Does the wisdom realising emptiness not possess true appearance? How does one define whether an object exists the way it appears or whether it doesn't exist the way it appears? That is always decided by its existence relative to its main object possessor. For example, the main object possessors of outer objects such as different forms and so forth are the five sense consciousnesses. If an object doesn't exist the way it appears to its main object possessor, then there is a discrepancy between appearance and existence, and the object doesn't exist in the way it appears to exist. Since one can say the main object possessor of emptiness is the wisdom realising emptiness directly, then one can say that emptiness is true, because emptiness appears to the wisdom realising emptiness in exactly the way it exists. But there are different types of wisdom realising emptiness that have the appearance of true existence, such as the inferential cogniser realising emptiness.

The serviette doesn't exist the way it appears. Why? Because it doesn't exist as it appears to its main object possessor, the eye-consciousness. The serviette, for example, exists in the way it appears to omniscient consciousness. Just because the serviette exists in the way it appears to omniscient consciousness, doesn't mean to say that the serviette exists in the way that it appears to exist.

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Study Group - *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

1 March 2005

Establish a virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. In order to do so I am going to listen to this profound teaching, and then I am going to put it into practice well.

It is important to generate a virtuous motivation, and it is also important to generate the wisdom that can discriminate right actions from wrong actions. With the wisdom that distinguishes right from wrong one is able to purify wrong actions; so one needs to develop this wisdom. It is like having a discussion with oneself about what is the right thing to do and what is the wrong thing to do, and then following that wisdom. By identifying wrong actions then one can also direct the mind to right actions. That is very important.

2.1.2.1. REFUTING THE REALISTS IN GENERAL

Here we have two sub outlines:

2.1.2.1.1. Refuting that one's position is contradicted by direct perception

2.1.2.1.2. Refuting that one's position is contradicted by sutras

2.1.2.1.1. Refuting that one's position is contradicted by direct perception

Forms and so forth, those merely perceived directly [6ab]

Through renown, and not by valid cognition.

First of all it is important to understand the view of the Sautrantika school. Realists in general are called that because they assert objects to exist truly. A more literal way of translating the Tibetan word Realist is 'those who assert objects'. They are called Realists because they assert objects to exist truly.

Secondly, you probably remember from the Tenets that for the Sautrantika conventional truth, objects that lack true existence, and generally characterised phenomena are synonymous, and that truly existent phenomena, ultimate truth and self-characterised phenomena are synonymous. Also, the Sautrantika assert that all phenomena exist inherently. So according to them it is not possible to assert an object that does not exist from its own side. For them, if an object exists it has to exist from its own side. This is important to keep in mind.

The **Sautrantika** argue that the objects of the five senses, which are forms and so forth, could not be objects of direct perception if they were to lack inherent existence.

The idea is that if forms and so forth were to lack existence from their own side, i.e. if they were to lack inherent existence, then they could not become the objects of direct perception. Why? Because according to them direct perceptions have to be direct perceptions with regard to the intrinsic nature of the object that they perceive. Hence, if there is no intrinsic nature then the direct perception could not become a direct perception with regard to that object. That is where they are coming from.

According to the **Prasangika** there is no such fault that if objects such as form and so forth were to lack intrinsic existence then they could not become the object of direct perception. This is because forms and so forth are only objects established nominally, through renown, and are the objects of conventional direct perception. And conventional direct perceptions don't become valid cognitions with regard to the ultimate nature of these forms. Forms and so forth, while objects of direct perception, are only a nominal phenomenon that cannot be found at the time of analysis. So these direct perceptions don't become valid cognitions with regard to the final or ultimate nature of these objects.

Conventional direct perceptions don't become valid cognisers engaged in ultimate analysis realising the ultimate nature of forms and so forth. They are only nominal valid cognisers which realise the object that cannot be found at the time of analysis. That is why there is no fault.

As an answer to the same point there is a quote in the *King of Concentration Sutra* where it says, 'Likewise eyes, ears, and nose are not valid cognitions'. As we have said before this means that the valid cognition that understands them does not understand their ultimate nature, and is only a nominal valid cognition.

In answer to the same point *Introduction to the Middle Way* says:

*If worldly perceptions are valid cognisers, [6.30]
Since transitory beings see suchness, what need
For other arya, through the arya path?*

What this means is if the nominal cognitions of ordinary beings realised the intrinsic nature of the object then they would become ultimate valid cognisers. They would become realisers of suchness. Then there would be no need for arya beings any more because every ordinary being would see suchness directly.

The difference between an arya or superior being, and an ordinary individual is posited as realising emptiness directly. A person who realises emptiness directly is regarded as a superior being, and a person who doesn't see emptiness directly is regarded as an ordinary individual. Hence, if ordinary individuals were to see emptiness directly then there would be no need for superior beings.

The **Realists** make this further point. They say that if everything exists only nominally, and since objects are renowned as existing from their own side amongst ordinary transitory beings, then they should actually exist from their own side.

The answer is given in the next two lines which read:

*False, like impurity and so forth [6cd]
Are renowned as purity and so forth.*

The answer is that even though objects are renowned as existing inherently that doesn't mean that they have to exist inherently. For example, for ordinary beings the contaminated aggregates are objects that are renowned to be pure, happiness, permanent, and possessing a self, even though in reality they are objects that are impure, suffering and misery, impermanent, and lacking self.

Objects that in nature are impure, misery, impermanent and lacking a self, specifically the contaminated aggregates, are renowned by ordinary worldly beings to be pure, to be happiness, to be permanent and to possess a self. That is, the popular perception amongst sentient beings is actually the opposite of the truth. Objects are false in this way, and likewise they are also false in the other way. They are renowned for possessing an intrinsic nature but actually lack

that intrinsic nature. But that is not a problem because even though phenomena are false like an illusion, they still exist nominally.

2.1.2.1. Refuting the Sautrantika

2.1.2.1.2. Refuting that one's position is contradicted by sutras

2.1.2.1.2.1. Establishing those sutras to be interpretive

2.1.2.1.2.2. Refuting that one's position is contradicted by scriptural quotation

2.1.2.1.2.1. Establishing those sutras to be interpretive

For the purpose of introducing transitory beings [7abc]

The protector showed phenomena.

They are not momentary in suchness.

The **Realists** say, 'Isn't your position contradicted by the sutras, which teach that functionalities are intrinsically impermanent'. This is actually a very good point, because there are sutras that teach intrinsically impermanent functionalities. It is very good for one's own understanding if one can relate the debates to the sutras, and then identify where the different sutras are coming from. This, for example, is from the third turning of the wheel.

The answer here is that the Protector Shakyamuni Buddha in his great compassion taught intrinsically existing impermanent functionalities for the purpose of introducing different transitory beings gradually to the idea of suchness and emptiness. This is because there are some sentient beings for whom it is not suitable to be immediately shown the final nature. For them it is better to be initially shown intrinsically existing impermanent functionalities. Then slowly, slowly, by meditating and thinking about the path and the views more and more, their view becomes more and more profound and subtle. For the purpose of introducing transitory beings gradually to the concept of emptiness the Buddha taught intrinsically existent impermanent functionalities at different times. In actuality, even though functionalities are momentary, they don't exist inherently or truly.

It is good to apply this concept of a gradual approach to selflessness to one's own practice; one cannot understand subtle selflessness without first understanding coarse selflessness. It doesn't make sense to say that one can immediately jump to subtle selflessness without understanding coarse selflessness.

So rather than thinking, 'Oh, having the Buddha teaching all these different views at different times is all very confusing', one should see the actual purpose behind those teachings as being a gradual path guiding one from coarser views to more subtle views. That the Buddha taught different views actually shows the greatness of the Buddha and his qualities. Being able to teach according to the disposition and ability of different disciples is really only possible when one possesses clairvoyance.

2.1.2.1.2. Refuting that one's position is contradicted by scriptural quotation

This is covered in five outlines

2.1.2.1.2.1. Refuting that objects wouldn't even exist conventionally

2.1.2.1.2.2. Refuting that the build up of the accumulations would be invalid.

2.1.2.1.2.3. Refuting that it would be invalid to go to take rebirth

2.1.2.1.2.4. Refuting that it would be invalid to have the distinction between virtue and negativity

2.1.2.1.2.5. Refuting that it would be invalid to ascertain the difference between samsara and nirvana

2.1.2.1.2.1. Refuting that objects wouldn't even exist conventionally

This has five lines:

If said to be contradictory even with the conventional;[7d]

There is no fault because of yogi's convention [8]

It is seeing suchness according to transitory beings.

Otherwise the realisation of a woman's impurity

Would be harmed by transitory beings.

Here the **Realists** argue, 'Well let's not even talk about whether it would be impossible to have ultimate truth. According to your point of view it would not even be possible to have conventional truth. That is because it would not be possible for functionalities to exist in a momentary manner since the popular perception is that earlier functionalities exist later. Therefore according to you it would be impossible to have momentary functionalities'.

The answer of the **Madhyamaka** is, 'Even though the popular perception amongst ordinary transitory beings is that earlier functionalities also exist later, that doesn't make them permanent. It does not take away their momentariness, because these very functionalities are actually realised by certain ordinary transitory beings to be momentary. Therefore your fault does not apply. A yogi's conventional valid cogniser does realise the momentary nature of functionalities'.

To that the **Realists** reply, 'Well, then there is really no need to realise suchness if this yogi's realisation of these four aspects of impurity, impermanence and so forth already realises the nature of the object'.

The answer is that relative to the ordinary being's view that phenomena are pure, happiness, permanent and possess a self one can say that the realisation of the impure, miserable, impermanent selfless nature of the object is the realisation of the actual nature of the object. That does not mean that one has literally realised the actual nature of the object in an ultimate sense. One says one has realised the actual nature of the object when one realises the impure, miserable, impermanent and selfless nature of the object, relative to this misconception of grasping at the object as a pure, happy, permanent and possessing a self. But that does not mean that one has not realised the final nature of the object in an ultimate sense.

When the verse says 'otherwise' that means that if a popular perception were to be valid just because of being a popular perception, then the realisation of impurity would be harmed by transitory beings. The female yogi meditates on the impurity of the man's body, and the male yogi meditates on the impurity of the female's body.

The reason for meditating on the impurity of the other person's body is because there is a popular perception of the body as pure. Through meditating on the impurity one ascertains the impurity of the other's body. That realisation would be harmed by the more popular perception of the body as being pure. If a perception were to become valid just by being a popular perception, or consensus, then that is what would happen. But a yogi can actually ascertain the impurity of the body, and as Nagarjuna says, 'If one wants to know the impure nature of the other person's body the

only thing that one needs to do is to look into one's own body'.

If just being popular makes that perception a valid perception, then it would become a valid perception just because of the consensus. In that case the meditation on impurity would be contradicted by the popular perception of the body as pure.

2.1.2.1.2.2. Refuting that the build up of the accumulations would be invalid

Merits from the illusory like conqueror [9ab]
Equal the ones from a truly existent.

Here the **Realists** argue, 'Well if there is no intrinsic existence then it would be impossible to build up the two accumulations.'

The **Madhyamaka** reply, 'If one can accumulate merits by making truly existent offerings to a truly existent Conqueror, then I can also accumulate merits by making offerings to an illusory Conqueror'.

The Conqueror is like an illusion but he taught true existence, because for some it enhances their practice of virtue. By believing in a truly existent Conqueror they make offerings to that Conqueror and accumulate merits in this way. Then Shantideva says here, 'I accumulate merits likewise by making offerings to an illusory Conqueror lacking true existence'.

These two lines refer to the merits that arise from making offerings to an illusory Conqueror. These boundless merits equal the boundless merits that are made towards a Conqueror who is believed to exist truly.

In the second line 'he is truly existent' means that the merits attained from making offerings to an illusory Buddha equal the merits made to a Conqueror who is believed to exist truly.

2.1.2.1.2.3. Refuting that it would be invalid to take rebirth

If sentient beings are like an illusion [9cd]
Then how can they be reborn after death?

These two lines are the objection offered by the **Realists**. If sentient beings are like an illusion, then how could they be reborn? An illusion does not continue after its disintegration.

For as long as the conditions come together [10ab]
For that long even the illusion exists.

The **Madhyamaka** say, 'For as long as conditions come together objects arise that are like an illusion. If an illusion lasts for as long as the collection of its conditions then why shouldn't a sentient being?'

Sentient beings exist because of the accumulation of karma and afflictions, and because of the aggregation of karma and afflictions. For as long as there is this aggregation of karma and afflictions sentient beings will exist. For example, an illusion exists for as long as the conditions for it to arise exist.

At this point it is good to remind oneself of how one takes rebirth in cyclic existence.

1. Initially there is the root cause of ignorance.
2. Because of ignorance one accumulates projecting karma.
3. This projecting karma fades away and its potential is placed on the mind stream. So we have the third link of consciousness.
4. At the time of death the potential of that projecting karma that has been placed on the consciousness is ripened.

5. As one goes through the process one realises more and more that one has to give up the aggregates. As the mind starts to withdraw from the body strong craving is generated in the mind.

6. Because of the concern over losing one's body this craving intensifies into grasping and one then grasps for the particular type of future life.

7. Then comes the establishing karma, the link of becoming or existence.

8. When that happens then one takes rebirth in a rebirth that was projected by the karma.

The first link and the seventh and eighth links¹ are mental afflictions and the second and the ninth links are karma.

Just because of a long continuity [10cd]
Sentient beings are truly existent?

The **Realists** argue that because sentient beings have a much longer continuity than an illusion they are truly existent.

Shantideva then says, 'Well, you cannot really base true existence on the length of time that an object exists, because illusions, dreams and so forth exist for different lengths of time. You would have to say that long dreams exist truly while short dreams do not exist truly. Likewise your assertion basing whether something exists truly or not on the length of time that it exists is not really valid'.

In short one can sum up by saying that regardless of whether something exists for a brief amount of time or whether it exists for a long amount of time it still always will be a false illusory-like phenomenon.

Transcript prepared by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

¹ The twelve links are:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Ignorance | 7. Feeling |
| 2. Compositional factors | 8. Craving |
| 3. Consciousness | 9. Grasping |
| 4. Name and form | 10. Becoming |
| 5. The six senses | 11. Rebirth |
| 6. Contact | 12. Old age and death |

Study Group - *Bodhicharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

8 March 2005

Please generate a good motivation, thinking 'I have to attain enlightenment to achieve the welfare of all sentient beings, and in order to achieve this aim I am now going to listen to this profound teaching. Then I am going to put it into practice'.

2.1.2.1.2. Refuting the *Sautrantika*¹ (cont.)

2.1.2.1.2.2. Refuting that one's position is contradicted by scriptural quotation

Here there are five sub-outlines, and last time we completed the objection that illusory-like sentient beings cannot take rebirth.

2.1.2.1.2.2.4. Refuting that it would be invalid to have a distinction between virtue and negativity

The Realists argue that good and bad would not be possible if sentient beings are only like an illusion.

Here we have ten lines:

The killing and so forth of an illusory being [11]
Does not contain negativity because there is no mind.

Relative to those endowed with an illusory mind,
Merits and negativities arise.

Since mantras and so forth do not possess the power
[12]

The illusory mind does not arise.

The illusion arises from various conditions
And is likewise manifold

That one condition can do it all Is totally non-existent anywhere. [13a]

All these debates turn around the inherent or non-inherent existence of phenomena. All the objections are based on the assumption that if something does not exist inherently, then it has to be completely non-existent. The **Sautrantika** say that if phenomena don't exist inherently and are merely like an illusion, then killing another sentient being would not create any non-virtuous karma. The objection here is that if sentient beings are like an illusion, then one would not accumulate any negativity if one were to kill, or do other non-virtuous activities to another sentient being. They say one does not create any negativity if one kills an illusion, and therefore one does not create any negativity if one kill an illusory sentient being.

Here **Shantideva's** reply is that if a magician creates the illusion of a human being and if one imagines that illusion to be another human being, then killing that imaginary sentient being would not be the complete action of killing. Although there would not be a complete action of killing, one would, for example, create the

negativity of engaging in the action. But there would be not be the full karma of killing, because for that there needs to be the object of an actual sentient being - something that possesses mind. Because an illusion does not possess any mind, confusing an illusion with an actual sentient being and then engaging in the action of killing that imaginary sentient being would create some non-virtuous karma, such as the karma of engaging in the action of killing. But one would not get the complete karma of killing.

Relative to those endowed with an illusory mind,
Merits and negativity arise.

If one engages in a positive action with regard to something that possesses mind, then that will create virtue; if one engages in harmful action with regard to something that possesses mind, then one creates negativity.

How does this difference arise? Even though the illusion as well as the sentient being are the same in lacking true existence, the difference lies in one possessing mind, and the other not possessing mind. Relative to the one possessing mind complete merits and negativities arise.

Since mantras and so forth do not possess the power
the illusory mind does not arise.

What this means is that the mantras and the different substances of the magician do not possess the power to create something that possesses mind. Therefore the illusory mind does not arise within an illusion.

The illusion arises from various conditions
And is likewise manifold.

That one condition that can do it all
Is totally non-existent anywhere.

This shows how the illusion is generated in dependence upon a multitude of causes and conditions and not one single condition. It shows the dependent arising of the illusion. Even though phenomena are like illusions they still fall within the realm of cause and effect, so cause and effect still apply to them. If the causes and conditions arise then the illusory horse and elephant will come into existence. But if the conditions are incomplete, then the illusory horse and elephant won't come into existence.

2.1.2.1.2.2.5. Refuting that it would be invalid to ascertain the difference between *samsara* and *nirvana*

Here the **Sautrantika** say that the division into *samsara* and *nirvana* would be invalid if everything lacks inherent existence.

Should nirvana be the ultimate, [13bcd]
And samsara be the relative,

Then also the Buddha would circle. [14]
What would be the point of the bodhisattvas practice?

If the continuum of the conditions is not cut off,
Then the illusion will also not be reversed.

If the continuity of the conditions is cut-off, [15ab]
Then it won't arise even conventionally.

This debate is aimed at the Madhyamaka view of natural *nirvana*. First of all, there is the assertion that nominally *samsara* is generated from causes and conditions, which are ignorance, karma, consciousness and so forth. The lack of inherent existence of the *samsara* thus generated is asserted to be **natural nirvana**.

¹ Described last week as Refuting that one's position is contradicted by the sutras

Here the opponent confuses natural nirvana with actual nirvana that is attained through overcoming adventitious obscurations. That's important to know. The Sautrantika say, 'On the one hand you accept the conventional samsara that is generated through causes and conditions. Then at the same time you assert that the lack of inherent existence of that samsara is **ultimate nirvana**. In that case everybody would have attained nirvana, since everybody has natural nirvana'.

Here the opponent confuses natural abiding nirvana with actual nirvana. The same thing applies to the natural abiding perfection of wisdom. By confusing natural abiding nirvana with nirvana, the opponent says, 'Should nirvana be the ultimate nirvana?'

Ultimate nirvana is the natural abiding nirvana, the lack of true existence of samsara. At the same time, the samsara that the relatively existing contaminating aggregates experiences - birth, ageing, sickness and death - comes about through ignorance, the other delusions and karma.

In that case everybody would have attained nirvana, since everybody has natural nirvana. It would follow that even a person like the Buddha who is actually accepted by both schools to be beyond samsara would then circle in cyclic existence.

Is there a problem if one were to posit the natural abiding nirvana as nirvana? Is the natural abiding nirvana, nirvana or not?

Student: No.

What's the reason for it not being nirvana?

Student: Because it hasn't overcome the causes for samsara.

But what is the reason for it not having abandoned the causes for samsara? In general we say that nirvana is the non-affirming negation that is the absence of suffering and its causes and so forth. So why is the natural abiding nirvana not nirvana?

Student: Because the causal chain, cyclic existence, has not been cut.

Why is the cause of samsara not abandoned?

Student: Because the natural abiding nirvana is just a mere lack of an inherently existent suffering, not of a dependent arising suffering.

To give a word commentary to the first verse, it says that if the Buddha circled in cyclic existence there will be no point to a bodhisattva's practice because if there is an existence that is already there, there would be no need to attain it, because it is already there. Actual nirvana needs to be attained through meditating on the path and through engaging in different practices. If the natural abiding nirvana were the actual nirvana then the need to practice the path would fall away.

One should know the difference between natural abiding nirvana and actual nirvana, what the cause of cyclic existence is, and how the causes actually generate cyclic existence and so forth. Then, it is asserted there is no fault - the fault that is pointed out by the Sautrantika is not there.

If the natural abiding nirvana is actual nirvana then ordinary sentient beings would already abide within

nirvana. Then one could also say that a buddha actually abides within cyclic existence. This fault does not exist here.

If the continuity of conditions is uninterrupted, then the illusion does not cease to exist. So therefore as long as the causes and conditions of samsara are not interrupted, then samsara will continue to exist and the experience of birth, ageing, sickness and death will continue to exist.

If the continuity of the conditions is cut, then samsara will not exist even conventionally or nominally. There is no need for samsara to exist in a buddha's mind, because a buddha has cut off the conditions for samsara to arise. Because a buddha has cut the conditions for samsara, then samsara does not exist in that buddha's mind. Apart from not arising ultimately, samsara does not arise in a buddha's mind even conventionally. Because ordinary sentient beings have not cut off the conditions for samsara, then their mind is a samsaric mind and they experience samsara.

2.1.2.2. REFUTING THE MIND ONLY POSITION

2.1.2.2.1. Presentation of the position of the Mind Only

2.1.2.2.2. Refutation of the position of the Mind Only

2.1.2.2.1. Presentation of the position of the Mind Only

These two lines present the position of the Mind Only:

*When even the mistaken is non-existent [15cd]
What takes the illusion as its object*

The 'When' in the first line refers to all objects lacking true existence and in that way being like an illusion. The Mind Only assert that mind exists truly and ultimately. They assert that all compounded phenomena are truly existent.

Therefore, when all impermanent phenomena exist non-truly, then even the mistaken mind is non-existent. If everything is like an illusion in that it lacks true existence then everything becomes non-existent. In that case the mistaken awareness that ordinarily perceives the illusion would also have to be non-existent.

This would mean that there would be nothing that could perceive the illusion, and one would arrive at this fault. Therefore impermanent phenomena have to have true existence.

The problem for the Mind Only arises because the Madhyamaka completely refute true existence, but in the Mind Only system compounded phenomena and thoroughly established phenomena have to exist truly. They don't assert that all phenomena exist truly; they don't say that mental fabrications exist truly; but they do say that compounded phenomena and thoroughly established phenomena exist truly. Therefore according to them, when one refutes true existence then it is not possible for consciousness to exist. Then there would be no object possessor that could perceive the object.

2.1.2.2.2. Refutation of the position of the Mind Only

The answer uses the same reasoning, but in reverse. It comes in two parts:

2.1.2.2.2.1. Offering a similar debate

2.1.2.2.2.2. Refuting the answer to that debate

2.1.2.2.1. Offering a similar debate

This is covered in these two lines:

*When for you the illusion is non-existent, [16ab]
Then at that time, what becomes the focus or the
object.*

The **Mind Only** say the object appears as an outer object, but it doesn't exist as an outer object.

So **Shantideva** says to them, 'If the object actually existed in the way it appears to exist, then it would have to be an outer object. In that case, there would be no illusion and there would be no object possessor. If the object does not exist the way it appears, then it has to lack true existence, because that is the actual meaning of not existing in the way it appears to exist. If there is a discrepancy between appearance and existence then the object does not exist truly. 'If you say that the object does not exist in the way it appears to exist, then it has to lack true existence. If it lacks true existence, then again according to you, the object such as the illusion becomes non-existent, and in that case there would be nothing that could make an illusion its object'.

Gyaltsab Rinpoche says something similar in his explanation of these two lines.

When the object exists in the way it appears to exist, as an outer object, then the object would have to be an outer object. In that case, in your system, illusions and its object possessors would be non-existent. If the object does not exist in the way it appears to exist, then it would lack inherent existence, and according to you, it would have to be completely non-existent. In that case, then it would be impossible to have, for example, an illusion that appears as an outer object. Also there would be no other objects such as a form, sounds or so forth that could become the objects of awareness, and also there would be no mind that could focus on that object.

We can stop here. For now, if you can understand the fundamental position of each side then that's a good foundation. After this more debates between the Mind Only and the Madhyamaka will come.

This is the fourth class, so you will have discussion group next week. It's important to have a fruitful discussion where one just doesn't refute the other person with verbal cleverness. When one actually debates on the basis of understanding, one debates on the basis of having thought about the topic.

Student: What is a compounded phenomena? Is it like an illusory object?

The 'compounded' actually refers to the coming together of the causes and conditions that cause the phenomenon in question. The phenomenon is compounded. Why? Because it arose from this composition of causes and conditions.

Geshe-la holds a glass

The glass is impermanent, it is momentary, it is compounded, it is a cause, it is a result. The Mind Only say that it is an other-powered phenomenon, a functionality. The glass is an effect, because it arose from causes and conditions. At the same time, of course, it has its own effect, for example if the glass breaks. Also the

succession of moments of glass cause each other. The first moment of glass causes the second moment of glass, which causes the third moment of glass and so forth.

Student: So it follows from that it's not an illusory object?

The 'illusory' part refers to its lack of inherent or true existence. The 'illusory' refers to the discrepancy between the appearance of inherent existence and the lack of inherent existence. The glass is said to be like an illusion because, while on the one hand it appears as inherently existent or as truly existent, on the other hand it does not actually exist in the way it appears, because it lacks inherent existence or true existence. So that's why the glass is referred to as 'illusory'. It doesn't mean that the glass is completely non-existent.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak

Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་རྫོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

29 March 2005

As usual please generate a virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings, and in order to do so I am now going to listen to this profound teaching. Then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

2.1.2.2.2. Refuting the Mind Only position (cont)

We have finished the outline called The Concordant Debate¹.

2.1.2.2.2.2. Refuting the answer to that debate

This is in two outlines:

2.1.2.2.2.2.1. Expressing the position

2.1.2.2.2.2.2. The refutation

2.1.2.2.2.2.1. Expressing the position

*Even though it exists differently from this very nature [16cd]
Then this aspect is that very mind.*

The **Mind Only** opponent states, '*Even though* the object that appears to the mind does not exist in that *very nature* as it appears to the mind, it *exists differently* in another way, because *the aspect* of form and so forth *is* the substance of *that very mind*'.

The Mind Only position is that both the mind, and the object that it perceives, arise simultaneously from an imprint on the mental consciousness, and that both the mind and the object exist truly. They don't accept the position that the consciousness arises in dependence on the object, and that if the object and mind don't exist truly then they cannot exist at all.

The Mind Only don't posit external forms. Instead they say that the mind is of one nature with the aspect of the object. There is no object that is of a different nature from the mind that perceives it. And both the mind and its impermanent object exist truly.

2.1.2.2.2.2.2. The refutation

There are two outlines:

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.1. It is not perceived by any type of non-dual awareness

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2. The refutation of self-knowers

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.1. It is not perceived by any type of non-dual awareness

*When the mere mind is like an illusion, [17ab]
At that time what is seen by which?*

When the mere mind appears like an illusion but does not exist externally, then *at that time what* consciousness lacking external meaning *is seen by which* valid cognition?

The question is how is mind itself established? If there are no external objects, what type of mind could establish mind itself, since there is no object that is of a different substance from mind itself. If there is no external object then the object possessor itself also will not be perceived.

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2. The refutation of self-knower

This is done in four outlines:

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.1. Refuting the self-knower with a scriptural quotation

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.2. Refuting the self-knower with logic

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.3. Refuting other different types of proof for a self-knower

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.4. Refuting that imputed objects exist truly

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.1. Refuting the self-knower with a scriptural quotation

*The protector of the worlds also said [17cd]
That mind does not see mind.*

*The cutting edge of a knife does not cut itself [18ab]
It is the same for mind.*

As a reply to the previous argument by the Madhyamaka, the **Mind Only** say that mind is not perceived by a mind different from it, but that it is perceived by a truly existent self-knower in a non-dual manner. The self-knower is really a part of the mind itself and that perceives the mind in a non-dual manner.

The Mind Only say that each mind has two parts. It has a part that is directed outwards and knows the object, and a part that is directed solely inwards and knows the mind itself. The part of the mind that knows mind itself is the self-knower. This self-knower perceives the rest of the mind in a non-dual manner. It is this self-knower that is being refuted.

The **Buddha** refuted the self-knower in a sutra. He said that mind can not see itself in the same way as the blade of a knife cannot cut itself. If one were to assert that mind could know itself, then that would be like saying that the blade of a knife could cut itself. There is also a quote from the *Journey to Lanka Sutra*, which states exactly what we have said, 'The blade of a knife cannot cut itself and it is likewise for the mind'.

In the **Mind Only** system, as we have said before, there is no external object in dependence on which the consciousness is generated. They don't assert that there is an object that is experienced by a different experiencer. They assert this self-knower, where one part of the mind knows the rest of the mind. So one has the situation where there is no object that is of different substance from the experiencer.

But for the **Prasangika** there is this dependence of the mind on the object, in that the mind arises in dependence upon the external object. You first have the external object and then, from the causal condition of that external object, the consciousness that perceives it arises. This causality is not accepted by the Mind Only.

¹ Last time this was called 2.1.2.2.2.1. Offering a similar debate

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2. Refuting the self-knower with logic

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.1. Refutation of the example

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.2. Refutation of the meaning

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.1. Refutation of the examples

The first example:

A candle light can perfectly illuminate its object, [18cd]

But can not illuminate itself likewise, [19ab]
Because darkness does not obscure itself.

The **Mind Only** use the example of candle-light, saying that similarly to the candle-light illuminating both itself as well as objects, the mind can know both objects and itself.

This is refuted by **Shantideva** with the reasoning of darkness not being able to obscure itself. If one were to say that light can illuminate itself then darkness should also be able to obscure itself. Because darkness does not obscure itself it follows that light does not illuminate itself. If darkness were to obscure itself then one should not be able to see the darkness. Since that it not the case then light does not illuminate itself.

If light were to illuminate itself then there would not be any doubt with regard to darkness obscuring itself. Therefore the reasoning by the Mind Only that used the example of light illuminating itself is not valid.

Light does of course have luminosity, but it does not illuminate itself. That is the distinction that is being made here. While it has luminosity it does not illuminate itself. If light were to illuminate itself, then the logical consequence would be that darkness would also obscure itself.

Refutation of the second example:

Unlike a crystal, blue does not depend [19cd]
On something else to be blue;

Likewise, some are seen to depend on others, [20]
And yet some are also not.
That which is not blue cannot produce itself
As blue out of its own nature.

The **Mind Only** say, 'When one places a white crystal on a blue surface, then the crystal becomes blue through the power of the blue surface it is standing on. It is not blue through its own nature, but in dependence on something else. On the other hand, the blue of a sapphire is generated out of its own nature, and not dependent on something else. Similarly, the knowing of forms and so forth depends on a consciousness different from them, while consciousness knows itself without depending on a knower different from itself'.

This is refuted by the **Madhyamaka**, who say that the blue of the sapphire is generated in dependence on causes and conditions, because the sapphire itself is generated in dependence on causes and conditions. Since the sapphire itself is generated in dependence on causes and conditions, the blue of the sapphire is likewise generated in dependence on causes and conditions. It doesn't just arise out of itself. If the blue of the sapphire were to arise just out of itself, then the sapphire should also exist independently of causes and conditions.

That which is not generated as blue from a cause does not have the power to generate itself as blue out of its own nature.

Review

The Mind Only say there are no external objects and the Prasangika say that there are external objects. Can you tell me the reasons for these two different positions.

Student: The Mind Only say that we experience things because the karmic imprint ripens into both the object and the mind perceiving the object.

So in the Prasangika system the imprints don't have to ripen for the consciousness to see something?

Student: They say that the object and the mind perceiving it arise simultaneously, and that is why they are both of the same nature.

If form did not exist in such a way then why would it have to be an external object?

Student: Because it wouldn't be in the nature of the mind. It would be external to the mind.

If the mind and object are of different substance then why does the object have to be established as an external object?

Student: Because it is not of the nature of consciousness.

The **Sautrantika**, for example, say that the form is established as an external form, because it is based on an accumulation of partless particles. The **Mind Only** refute the position of the Sautrantika, so the refutation of external form by the Mind Only has to refute the point of the Sautrantika.

If the object exists, and if it is not of one substance with the mind, then it has to become an accumulation of partless particles. Then it has to become an external object. If the object and the mind are of different substance, then the mind is generated in dependence on the object and then the object has to re-establish externally. Then one would arrive at the accumulation of partless particles. That is the Sautrantika point of view. Why do the **Prasangika** say that there is an external object? Form is an external form because it is not contained within the continuum of the person. We went through the eight difficult points of the Prasangika previously².

Then the text starts to talk about consciousness and self-knowers. What is the meaning of consciousness, and what is the meaning of self-knower?

One has to make good use of one's time and not just argue pointlessly back and forth. One has to get to the meaning, and thus progress from one discussion group to the next. But if one just pointlessly argues back and forth just to say something, then it is not very fruitful.

This type of arguing that arises from giving forth very personal opinions without having actually having studied the topic is not very fruitful. One has to study the topic very well, study what the topic is about, what the points are about, and then one has something available to

² This was covered as the Eight Uncommon Features of the Prasangika on 23 August 2003 and 2 September 2003.

say on that basis. If one doesn't have that basis and just voices off one's own opinion then it is not very fruitful. There is a particular name for such a person in the monastery. It is said that such a person has no system to their argument. They will say this and they say that without any substance to their argument.

What is the meaning of consciousness? We have already mentioned this at least one hundred times?

Student: Consciousness is the clear faculty of knowing to which an object can appear to be apprehended.

What is the meaning of clear and knowing? One question that always arises is that if it is clear and knowing does it necessarily cognise the object? If it clear and knowing does it always realise?

If somebody was to assert that then you could posit true-grasping. 'It is a consciousness but it is not a cogniser, as it doesn't realise the object'. Or you could say, 'Then is there not a two-fold division of consciousness into valid cognition and non cognition?'. You have to go back to the text on awareness and knowers.

Student: Is conscious awareness based on the aggregates?

Yes. If you don't have the form aggregate then you don't have coarse consciousness. For example, in our case our consciousnesses are all primarily coarse consciousnesses, and they all depend on the form aggregate for their generation. When the form aggregate ceases then that consciousness also ceases - it goes into a non-manifest state. For example if one doesn't take care of one's body as one gets older (and sometimes even if one does take care of one's body) the consciousnesses lose power because the physical faculties lose power. If one's physical faculties remain strong then the consciousnesses also remain strong, even in old age. That is why it is important to look after one's physical health.

First of all clear and knowing doesn't mean that it is necessarily a cogniser. For example, self-grasping is clear and knowing, but it is not a cogniser. One explanation of the 'clear' is that it refers to the absence of shape, colour and so forth, and the 'knowing' part refers to the ability to reflect objects by arising in the aspect of objects. It doesn't really refer to realising or ascertaining something. Knowing refers to being able to arise in the aspect of the object. If it is consciousness there is no pervasion that it is a cognition. For example self-grasping is a consciousness but it is not a cogniser.

In the Prasangika system every consciousness does cognise itself, because every consciousness cognises the appearance that appears to it. It is a tenet of the Prasangika system that if it is consciousness then it cognises itself, because it cognises the appearance that appears to it.

But that doesn't make it a cogniser. True-grasping cognises itself but that doesn't make it a cogniser, because to be a cogniser it has to be incontrovertible with regard to the main object. There are different types of object, and to be a cogniser it has to be incontrovertible with regard to the main object.

Your debate topic for the next discussion is the difference between true-grasping and the wisdom that realises

selflessness.

- For example the wisdom realising selflessness is consciousness and it is incontrovertible and it is not a wrong consciousness - it is a valid cognition.
- True-grasping is also a consciousness, but it is a distorted, it is not a valid cognition, and it is a wrong consciousness.
- Then you should ascertain how the wisdom that realises selflessness harms true-grasping actually opposing or counteracting true-grasping.

If you can properly establish that then I will fold my hands and make prostrations to you

*Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

Study Group - *Bodhicharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

5 April 2005

As usual generate a good motivation thinking, 'I have to attain enlightenment to achieve the welfare of all sentient beings, and in order to achieve this aim I am now going to listen to this profound teaching. Then I am going to put it into practice'.

2.1.2.2.2. Refutation of the Mind Only position (cont.)

2.1.2.2.2.2.2. The refutation of self-knowers

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2. Refuting the self-knower with logic

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.2. Refuting the actual meaning

*If the statement the candle flame illuminates [21]
Is made after it is known by consciousness,
Then the statement awareness is luminous
Is made after being known by what.*

*To state it is illuminating¹ or not illuminating, [22]
When it is not seen by anything
Is pointless even though expressed,
Like the airs of a barren woman's daughter.*

This obviously relates back to the example of the candle-flame that was posited by the Mind Only. In the first line of verse 22 there is a reference to the analysis of whether mind is illuminated by self, or by another mind. One has to relate this to the essence of the refutation of the self-knower, which is the refutation of inherent existence.

The **Mind Only** base their position of the self-knower on the assertion of inherent existence. The **Prasangikas** refutation of the self-knower is based on the refutation of inherent existence.

The assertion of inherent existence by the lower tenets is always based on the assumption that something is findable at the time of analysis. But for the Prasangika, the imputed meaning is not findable at the time of analysis, even though existing nominally. So for the Prasangika it is not really important whether or not the mind or the candle-flame are illuminating at the time of analysis.

For the **Mind Only** this becomes very relevant. It is good to relate the line, 'To state it is illuminating or not illuminating' to whether or not the imputed meaning is findable at the time of analysis, and not just relate it to the superficial analysis of whether the mind illuminates itself, or whether it is illuminated by another mind.

The point of verse 22 is that after the **Prasangika** have refuted the example of the candle-flame illuminating itself with the reasoning of darkness not obscuring itself, the **Mind Only** concede that point. But they still say that the statement 'the candle-flame illuminates' is only made after consciousness becomes aware that the candle-flame is illuminating. Again, they are trying to make their point

that there has to be some kind of knower that observes the object possessor. However, once they make this statement, they actually contradict themselves, and have moved away from their own position. When they say that another consciousness knows that the candle-flame illuminates (the candle-flame here being the example for a consciousness), then they contradict their own assertion that consciousness is not known by an other-knower different from itself.

Even though the Mind Only try here to rescue their position, what actually happens is they have already completely stepped out of their own position. They have already left behind the self-knower and since they actually don't accept consciousness being known by an other-knower, then there is really no consciousness that knows consciousness. That's how one arrives at these two lines:

*Then the statement awareness is luminous
Is made after being known by what.*

There is nothing left: there is no self-knower and there is no other-knower. Therefore then, to state that the mind is illuminating or not illuminating, when it is not actually observed by any consciousness, is completely pointless. These positions can be expressed, but that becomes meaningless, because the position cannot be verified by a valid cognition that can actually verify whether the consciousness is luminous or not. These positions become like the airs put on by a barren woman's daughter. The daughter is non-existent and her airs are also non-existent.

The Mind Only start out from the position that the consciousness has to be known, and it can only be known by either a self-knower or an other-knower.

The Mind Only say 'we don't accept consciousness being known by an other-knower' because then one would arrive at the absurdity of needing limitless other-knowers. In order to remember one instance of consciousness, that consciousness needs to be observed by a simultaneous instance of consciousness different from itself. But then logically, in order to remember the second consciousness you would need another instance of a consciousness that is again of different. So you would need a limitless number of different instances of consciousness just to have a memory of one instance of consciousness.

The only other possibility for consciousness to be known, in order to generate a memory of it, is that it is known by the self-knower. Here then, when they make this statement 'the candle-flame illuminates' which is known by a different consciousness, they have already gone away from the position of the self-knower and have actually gone to the position of an other-knower, which is actually not possible according to themselves. According to the Mind Only point of view, they have actually arrived at a position where their consciousness is not known by any knower - be it a self-knower or another knower.

That's why verse 22 says that since there is really no knower that knows consciousness, then to make a statement as to whether the consciousness is luminous or not is completely pointless. This is because it cannot be

¹ In this context the Tibetan word *sal*, which means clear, clarifying, illuminating, is synonymous with appear. An object is clarified by the mind by appearing to the mind.

verified by a self-knower or an other-knower. 'Now', say the **Prasangika**, 'you have given up both positions, and for you there are only those two possibilities'.

According to the **Mind Only** position are form and the valid cognition that apprehends form of one substance or not?

Students: They are of one substance.

Why are they of one substance?

Student: Because they both share generation from the same karmic seed.

That's why the Mind Only assert that all consciousnesses and their objects are of one substance. It is because both are generated from one karmic imprint on the mind-stream.

According to the **Madhyamaka** there is form, and the valid cognition perceiving form. Are they of one substance or not?

Students: No.

Why? Are they of a different substance?

Student: Form is external.

Student: The one that perceives the object is triggered by the object. The perception comes from seeing the object, not sharing the same karmic seed.

One can basically say that in the Madhyamaka system form and the valid cognition apprehending form are cause and effect, while for the **Mind Only**, they are not a cause and effect but simultaneous. Cause and effect always have to be of a different substance, while if two things are generated simultaneously from one primary cause, then they have to be of one substance.

In the **Prasangika** system, would one have to say that first form is established, and then the eye-consciousness apprehending form is established?

Students: Yes.

Then there is a blue that is not established by a eye-consciousness apprehending blue. That's an obvious debate that you arrive at. If there is a blue that is not established by the eye-consciousness apprehending blue then it is not an object of eye-consciousness, which is the definition of form.

Since there is a blue that is not the object of the eye-consciousness apprehending blue, then it is not that which is held by the eye-consciousness, which is the definition of visual stimuli. So the definition of form-source goes out of the window! There is lots of debate about that.

The **Mind Only's** need for a self-knower arises from their need to posit consciousness as something that is findable at the time of analysis. For the Mind Only everything, including the imputed meaning, has to be findable at the time of analysis.

For the **Prasangika**, the imputed meaning being findable at the time of analysis is the object of negation. The Prasangika assert that the imputed meaning is never findable at the time of analysis. That's why the Prasangika reject the self-knower and the Mind Only assert the self-knower.

The **Mind Only** feel very strongly that the definition of mind – clear and knowing – should be findable at the time of analysis. According to them, mind needs to be verified. Another mind needs to verify that the mind is clear, and for them, that's the self-knower. Through the self-knower they establish that the imputed meaning of mind is findable at the time of analysis, and they establish the inherent existence of mind.

The **Prasangika** reject this, and therefore the Prasangika also reject the self-knower. For the Prasangika there is no need for the self-knower, because for the Prasangika, the imputed meaning is not findable at the time of analysis. This rejection of the self-knower by the Prasangika should be related to the rejection of the object of negation. The eight profound points of the Prasangika are always related to the unfindability of the imputed meaning at the time of analysis.

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.3. Refuting reasons that show the existence of the self-knower²

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.3.1. The example

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.3.2. Refuting other reasons for the self-knower

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.3.3. Refuting that if there is no self-knower, there couldn't be an other-knower

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.3.1. The example

Actually, we already explained this point in lots of detail last year³, so it should be very easy.

*If there is no self-knower, [23]
How can one remember consciousness.
One remembers in relation
To the experience of something else,
Like the poison of a rat.*

The **Mind Only** position is that if there is no self-knower then it would not be possible to remember the object possessor. When something is perceived there are always two elements – there is the object and there is the object possessor. For example, when one thinks, 'I am seeing blue', there is the object blue and then there is oneself, or the object possessor. The Mind Only's position is that if there is no self-knower that is aware of the object possessor mind, like the eye-consciousness apprehending blue, then one could not remember that one has seen blue. This is because there would be no experience of the experience of blue.

For the Mind Only, that one actually can remember that one saw blue indicates that there is a self-knower. It would not be possible for one to remember that one saw blue if, at the time of seeing blue, there was not some experience of the experience of blue. That's why they say there has to be the self-knower. Logically for them it can only be a self-knower that is aware of the awareness of blue, because they don't accept (for the previously mentioned reasons), that the awareness of blue is experienced by an other-knower. For them there are two types of experience, the self experience, and the experience by the other.

² Listed on 29 March 2005 as Refuting other different types of proof for a self-knower.

³ On 10 February 2004.

The awareness of blue has to be experienced by a self-knower. Blue is experienced by the awareness apprehending blue, and the awareness apprehending blue is experienced by the self-knower. This explains the first two lines.

Then the **Prasangika** reply that one remembers in relation to the experience of something else. They say that even though there is no self-knower at the time of the experience, one can still remember the experience in relation to the experience of something else. The **Prasangika** say that in order to remember the eye-consciousness apprehending blue, it is not necessary to have a self-knower that experiences the eye-consciousness apprehending blue. This is because merely by remembering blue, one automatically also remembers the object possessor that apprehends blue. They are linked, so merely by remembering blue, one also remembers, 'I saw blue'. One remembers the object possessor in dependence on the relationship between the object possessor and the object.

The **Mind Only** position is that one can remember the object possessor. For example, one can remember the eye-consciousness through which one saw blue. One doesn't only remember blue, but one can remember that oneself saw blue. This comes about because of the relationship between the object and the object possessor, which is not a proof for a self-knower. Then they go on to state an example.

One remembers the object possessor in relation to the experience of something else. That something else is the object. There is no need to have a self-knower that experiences the object possessor in order to be able to remember the object. So it is not necessary to have a self-knower in order to remember the apprehension of blue, because, for example, by the virtue of remembering blue, one also remembers that one saw blue. The apprehension of blue is remembered through the force of remembering blue. So you have to think about the fact that one cannot remember the apprehension of blue without remembering blue.

The example is that of a hibernating animal, which is bitten by a rat while it is hibernating in winter. Although the animal does experience the pain of being bitten at that time, there is no experience of actually being poisoned by the bite.

When the animal is wakened out of its hibernation by the sound of thunder in spring or in summer, the poison, which is obviously a long-term poison, is activated. Once awake the animal becomes very sick because of the poison. Even though not really having the experience of being poisoned, it still has the experience of being bitten by the rat, and in such a way, it then remembers having been poisoned at the time when it was bitten, even though not having the actual experience of being poisoned when bitten.

Becoming aware in spring of being poisoned in winter is the example. The meaning of this is that one remembers the object possessor of blue. In the example we have the time the actual poison entered the body of the animal without having the actual experience of being poisoned. The meaning of this is the presence of the object possessor

at the time when the object is perceived, without that object possessor being experienced by a self-knower.

So in spring, the animal remembers being poisoned through the force of remembering being bitten. At the time when it was bitten, there was an experience of the pain. The experience of the pain signifies the experience of the object.

Being poisoned signifies the presence of the object possessor. When, in spring, the animal remembers being poisoned through remembering the pain of being bitten, that signifies the remembrance of the object possessor through the force of the remembrance of the object.

Without there being an actual experience of the object possessor, at the time of the object possessor one can still remember subsequently that one saw blue, merely through the fact of remembering blue. Through the force of remembering blue one remembers that one saw blue. Through the force of remembering blue the memory of having seen blue is induced. At the time of seeing blue, there is an experience of the object blue by the eye-consciousness apprehending blue. But there is no experience of the eye-consciousness apprehending blue itself.

Even though there is no experience of the eye-consciousness apprehending blue at the time when the eye-consciousness apprehends blue, one can subsequently still remember the apprehension of blue by remembering the object. So through the force of remembering the object blue, one then also remembers the apprehension of blue. For example, one can remember, 'I saw blue'.

Similarly, in the example there was an experience of the pain of being bitten, but there was no experience of the poison entering the body. But subsequently when the animal experiences the sickness that is induced through the poison, it thinks back and it remembers the pain of being bitten. It then also remembers that it was poisoned at that time, even though there was nothing that experienced the poisoning. Similarly with the eye-consciousness - there was nothing that experiences the eye-consciousness at that time.

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2.3.2. Refuting other reasons for the self-knower

*If, the Mind Only say, since the mind [24]
Sees the condition of others,
It illuminates itself by applying the formulated eye
balm,
The vase is seen, but does not become the eye balm.*

Here in the first two lines the **Mind Only** make the argument that through the development of calm abiding the mind can illuminate the mind of others, meaning it can perceive the mind of others, i.e. it can develop the clairvoyance that perceives the mind of others. It can perceive the state of other people's minds which are further away. Therefore it also, of course, illuminates or perceives itself. If one can see something that is far away, then there is no question that one can see that which is close by.

Here it is talking about the clairvoyant who knows the mind of others. There are different levels of that type of clairvoyance, but here it talks about the common one that

is shared with non-Buddhist practitioners. So then you might argue, 'Well one's consciousness is able to perceive the minds of others who are further away'. Actually this is also literal. One can actually perceive the minds of others who are many hundreds of kilometres away.

If that is possible, then there is no question that the mind also perceives itself. The **refutation** of this is that just because one can see the treasure vase that is buried in the ground through the condition of applying eye-balm that has been made with mantras and other secret mantra practices, that does not mean that the vase actually becomes the eye-balm. Just because through some conditions one can see something else, it does not mean that something else becomes the eye-balm.

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.3.3. Refuting that if there is self-knower, that there couldn't be an other-knower

Just like the consciousness of seeing and listening,[25]

Should not be refuted here.

That which becomes the cause of suffering,

The formulation of true existence, is to be refuted.

We have the self-knower and the other-knower. The self-knower is called thus because it is directed only inwards. Its focus is solely inwards, directed to the consciousness, and that's why it's called a self-knower.

Other-knowers who are directed outwards, knowing other objects such as forms and so forth.

The self-knower has this characteristic as being solitary, because it is not concomitant with mental factors and so forth. It is solitary, it doesn't have any friends or acquaintances. Other-knowers always exist in relation to mental factors and so forth - they are more social.

The **Prasangika** say, 'There is no need to eliminate the nominal experience of having seen or listened to something. Seeing or listening to something is a conventional experience that does not cause any suffering. Therefore they should not be abandoned here. First of all, they don't generate any suffering. Not refuting nominal conventional existence is not the cause for any suffering. Secondly, even arhats, who have gone completely beyond suffering, have these experiences of seeing and listening. To refute or negate them completely would be a mistake and unnecessary.

'However, what should be negated is the mental creation of true existence, because that is the cause of all suffering. If you negate conventional nominal existence, then you will fall into the extreme of nihilism. What really should be negated is the formulation of true existence, which is the cause of suffering'.

Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright or Jenny Brooks

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak

Edited Version

© **Tara Institute**

Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྒྱལ་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

12 April 2005

Generate a virtuous motivation for listening to the teachings thinking, 'I have to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings, and in order to achieve this aim I am now going to listen to this profound teaching. Then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

Last time we talked about the refutation of the self-knower, and the **Mind Only** view that if there is no self-knower then nominal existence is non-existent. The **Prasangikas** reply is that such is not the case. They say that even though objects lack true existence they can still exist nominally, and that what should be refuted is true-grasping of objects and object possessors, which constitutes the root of cyclic existence.

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.3.3. Refuting that if there is no self knower, there couldn't be an other-knower (cont.)

Refuting that it is inexpressible whether an illusion is one with or different from the mind

*If, 'There is no illusion apart from mind
And that they are not different is also not true.
If a phenomenon then how is it not other?
If asserted not to be different then there is no
phenomenon.* [26]

*Just as illusions, though non-true, are
The perceived object, the perceivers are alike.* [27ab]

The **Mind Only** say there are no illusions, i.e. forms and so forth, that are of different substance from mind. 'And that they are not different is also not true' can have two meanings. It can mean 'the object is also not mind itself', or it can mean 'and they are not truly of one substance'.

To this the **Madhyamaka** reply that if the illusions of form and so forth, i.e. the objects and their object possessors, are truly existent phenomena, then how can these objects not be of different substance from their object possessors?

How one arrives at this conclusion is that if the object exists truly then it has to be of different substance. Why? Because if the object exists truly then it has to be true, and if it is true then it has to exist the way it appears.

Here one needs an understanding of false and true. Being **false** means not existing in the way it appears. That makes objects false. An object is **true** if it exists in the way it appears. So if the object exists truly then it has to be true. It follows that it has to exist in the way it appears. As the object appears as an external object it has to also exist in that manner. That is the consequence that the **Prasangika** see for the **Mind Only**.

Here the **Mind Only** reply that objects and object-

possessors are not of different substance. To this the **Madhyamaka** say, 'Then, in that case, they cannot exist truly, because in that case all appearances of outer objects are false. Objects do not exist the way they appear, and as such cannot exist truly. Just as illusory-like form and so forth are nominally that which is perceived, though not existing truly, the six types of mind can nominally be the perceivers, while not existing truly.'

This connects up with what was said two verses ago, where the **Prasangika** were telling the **Mind Only** not to worry about refuting nominal existence, and saying that objects could exist still nominally even though they lack true existence.

2.1.2.2.2.2.2.4. Refuting that imputed existence is dependent on truly existent phenomena¹

*If, 'Cyclic existence is based on phenomena,
Otherwise it would become like space?' [27cd]*

*If non-phenomena are based on phenomena [28]
How can they perform an action?
Your mind becomes completely isolated,
Without any support.*

*When the mind is devoid of that perceived [29]
Everyone will have gone thus.
In that case, what is the benefit
Of that imputed as mere mind?*

Three characteristics

This outline pertains to the very basic reason for which the **Mind Only** assert true existence. They feel that mental constructs need truly existent phenomenon for their basis. This is why they have the view of the three characteristics: dividing phenomena into other-powered phenomena, conceptual creations and thoroughly-established phenomena.

- The definition of *other-powered phenomenon* is a **phenomenon that arises in dependence on causes and conditions**.
- The definition of *conceptual fabrications* is a **phenomenon which is merely imputed by conceptual thought**.
- The definition of *thoroughly-established phenomena* is **the final object of a pure path**.

They say that of these three categories, other-powered, and thoroughly-established phenomena exist truly, while mental fabrications lack true existence. They do say, however, that all three exist from their own side.

You can see that this is not the uncommon view of the **Prasangika**, which equates intrinsic existence with true existence. Here the meaning of true existence is to be established out of its uncommon mode of abiding, which applies to thoroughly established phenomena as well as other-powered phenomena. Mental fabrications, however, don't exist out of their own uncommon mode of abiding, but exist out of a common mode of abiding. That is why they don't exist truly. The meaning of *existing out of a common mode of abiding* is that the object's mode of abiding is the mode of appearance to, and apprehension

¹ Last week it was expressed as Refuting that imputed objects exist truly.

by, conceptual thought. Mental fabrications share their existence with the mode of apprehension by, and appearance to, the conceptual thought.

That is why they are mental fabrications - they don't really have anything from their own side, but they exist only within the apprehension by, and the appearance to, the conceptual thought.

Other-powered and thoroughly-established phenomena are said to not have this shared existence with conceptual thought. They exist out of their own uncommon mode of abiding.

The basis of imputation

The idea is that truly existent other-powered phenomena act as the basis for mental fabrications. There is a nominal distinction made between the basis of imputation and the final basis of imputation. Other-powered phenomena in general are the basis of imputation for mental fabrications. The final basis of imputation refers to the valid cognition apprehending the object. So, for example, the valid cognition apprehending form would be the final basis of imputation for form, but it would not be the actual basis of imputation. You have to make a distinction between being the figurative basis of imputation and being the actual basis of imputation. The final basis of imputation is only referred to as the basis of imputation, but it is not the actual basis of imputation. For example, even though the valid cognition apprehending space is regarded as the final basis of imputation of space, it is not the actual basis of imputation of space.

For the **Mind Only** conventional existence does not make sense if it does not possess true existence as its basis. They say, for example, that liberation from cyclic existence, or bondage to cyclic existence would be impossible without true existence. They also feel that one couldn't posit the different paths such as the path of preparation and so forth without the basis of true existence. This highlights the uncommon feature of the **Prasangika**, where no true existence is needed at all.

The **Mind Only** say that false imputed phenomena such as cyclic existence and so forth need to have as their basis truly existent phenomena, just as the false phenomenon of the snake is imputed on the truly existent rope.

The **Mind Only** say that if there is not another truly existent phenomenon on which the mistaken appearance of cyclic existence is based, then there would be no phenomenon at all. The line 'otherwise it would become like space' refers to the deceptive appearance of cyclic existence being based on another truly existent phenomenon. If there were no other truly existent phenomena on which the mistaken appearance of cyclic existence is based, then the mistaken appearance of cyclic existence would be like space in that it would be a non-functionality. It would not be able to perform any function, and it would be completely meaningless to say that one could become liberated from, or take rebirth in, cyclic existence. Then comes the **Prasangika** response, which is a consequence that highlights the fault in the **Mind Only** position. If non-truly existent phenomena are based on truly existent phenomena then how can they perform actions? If non-truly existent false phenomena

such as cyclic existence and so forth, are based on truly existent phenomena that act as the basis for the deception, then how could effects such as bondage to cyclic existence and liberation from cyclic existence and so forth occur, since there would be no truly existent basis.

This is actually a reasoning that is mentioned in the *Compendium of Deeds*. Because cyclic existence is a false phenomenon it needs as its basis a truly existent. Only in that way can liberation from cyclic existence, the practice of the six perfections and so forth, happen. However since we have already said that it is a false phenomena, how could there be any true existence within the false phenomena? Since there is no true existence there within the false phenomena, true existence is not established by valid cognition. That is why there is no true existence. Can you see how the **Prasangika** use the fault that is present in the **Mind Only** view as the reason to refute that view?

The **Prasangika** say, 'Your viewpoint is a contradiction, asserting that true phenomena can act as the basis for false phenomena. That notion is an oxymoron. It doesn't work!' That is why they ask how the non-phenomena could perform any function.

In 'Your mind becomes completely isolated without any support' the **Prasangika** are speaking to the **Mind Only**. First of all you don't accept an outer object that is of different substance from consciousness, so there cannot be a consciousness that is not tainted by an object of different substance. If the object exists truly of one substance with the consciousness then a whole series of faults arise. For example, if you have a truly existent object then the object becomes completely unrelated to the consciousness. But since the **Mind Only** say that the object and the consciousness are of one substance it becomes like having an *unrelated one*. Then you have this situation of a completely unrelated one, where the object cannot taint the object possessor. In both cases there is no situation where the object possessor can actually be tainted - the grasping at subject and object being of different substance. That is why it says, 'Your mind becomes completely isolated'.

'According to your own point of view the mind becomes completely isolated. If you say that the object is of a truly existent one substance, then in that case the mind becomes completely isolated, because a truly existent object is actually completely unrelated to the mind. Even though you say it is one, it actually becomes a truly completely unrelated one. In that case the mind becomes completely isolated, without any support. Here 'support' is the negative support of self-grasping, referring to the confusion regarding object and object possessor being of different substance and so forth.

'In either case it is impossible for the mind to be tainted. Since the mind is completely devoid of any kind of appearance or perception that the object and object possessor are of different substance, then naturally all sentient beings would effortlessly being liberated and go to the state of enlightenment.

'If that is the case then what is the benefit of having the mental construct of *mere mind*? What would be the actual

benefit of the view of mere mind or mind-only, if that view actually leads to the conclusion that the mind cannot be tainted by anything? What you actually arrive at is the conclusion that the mind would naturally be pure. The mind would be devoid of the perception that the object possessor is of different substance, so naturally the mind would be pure, and so naturally and effortlessly everyone would go to liberation and enlightenment.

'This effort of forming the Mind Only view in order to attain liberation and enlightenment and practice the path becomes completely pointless if it just leads to the conclusion that actually the mind cannot be tainted by anything i.e. if it just leads to the conclusion that everybody would go naturally to enlightenment.'

2.1.2.3. REFUTING THE CONSEQUENCE THAT THE MIDDLE WAY HAS NO POWER²

2.1.2.3.1. The debate

2.1.2.3.2. Rebutting the debate

2.1.2.3.1. *The debate*

*Although knowing it to be like an illusion [30]
How can the afflictions be opposed
Even the creator himself
Generates attachment for the illusory-like woman.*

The **Mind Only** say that realising that all existence lacks true existence and is illusory-like serves no purpose, and does not have the power to overcome mental afflictions.

The Mind Only ask, 'Does realising that all phenomena are like an illusion lacking true existence have any purpose? If it does not have any purpose then what point is there in mentioning it? If one says the main purpose is to overcome mental afflictions, then that is also incorrect, because the realisation of things being illusory does not have the power to overcome the mental afflictions. One can know that something is an illusion and still have mental afflictions about that illusion. For example, the creator of the illusion can himself generate attachment for the illusion of the woman that he has created thinking, 'Oh, I wish it was a real woman!'. Even though he knows that he himself created the illusion of the woman, it is still possible for him to generate attachment to that illusion. For that reason realising that everything lacks true existence like an illusion does not really overcome mental afflictions. Because your emptiness is only emptiness that arises through listening and contemplation it does not really have any power to overcome the afflictions.

Here the Mind Only are obviously criticising the Prasangika view of emptiness.

Review

Why does one need to realise emptiness in order to overcome true grasping?

Student: inaudible

That is right. You cannot abandon true grasping without realising that the apprehended object of true grasping is not existent.

What kind of awareness is true grasping?

Student: Mistaken.

What makes it a mistaken awareness?

Student: It misapprehends its focal object.

Isn't there a common basis between mistaken consciousness and a valid cognition?

Student: There is in the case of a conventional cogniser.

Ah, and in the case of an ultimate valid cognition?

Student: I'd have to say no.

What about the inferential cogniser realising emptiness? If it is a conceptual thought then it is always a mistaken consciousness. So true-grasping is a wrong awareness, a distorted awareness. The wisdom realising emptiness is a valid cognition. So their mode of apprehension is directly opposed to each other.

The true-grasping holding the vase to be truly existent is a distorted consciousness. In order to understand that it is actually a distorted consciousness, and in order to oppose that, one needs to generate the wisdom that understands that the object is non-existent. Then the mode of apprehension of that wisdom is directly opposed to the mode of apprehension of true-grasping. It becomes the contradictory equivalent.

So we still have the problem of Wayne not understanding what blue is. Don't you have to say that when your eyes see blue then you see blue? If it realises an object such as blue or emptiness it doesn't have to be consciousness. It can be also the person. For example we say that arya beings realise emptiness directly. Why do we say this? Because they possess the wisdom that realises emptiness directly. Do you accept that?

Student: Yes.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak

Edited Version

© **Tara Institute**

² Ed: Geshe-la is using a text by Lama Tsong Khapa, where the heading outline is slightly different from that initially adopted. On February 22, there was a list of three sub-headings under 2.1.2. Refuting objections: 2.1.2.1. Refuting objections of worldly beings; 2.1.2.2. Refuting objections of hearers and 2.1.2.3. Refuting objections by Mind Only.

It would appear that in Lama Tsong Kapa's text Refuting objections of the Mind Only was a subset of 2.1.2.1. Refuting the objections of worldly beings, and that this heading is the second part of Refuting objections. However to keep the numbering consistent, we have utilised the number 2.1.2.3. for this heading.

Study Group - *Bodhicharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

19 April 2005

As usual please generate a virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. In order to achieve this aim I am now going to listen to this profound teaching, and then I am going to put it into practice'.

2.1.2.3. REFUTING THE CONSEQUENCE THAT THE MIDDLE WAY HAS NO POWER (CONT.)

2.1.2.3.1. *The debate*

We were at the outline where the **Mind Only** argue that (1) the realisation of emptiness does not have any purpose; or (2) if the purpose is to abandon the afflictions, then the realisation of emptiness does not have that power. Their reason for the second argument is that even though the magician is aware that the illusory woman he created is only a mere illusion, he still generates attachment for that illusion. Therefore, they say, realising that all phenomena are illusory-like in that they lack true existence does not have the power to overcome mental afflictions.

2.1.2.3.2. *Rebutting the debate*

2.1.2.3.2.1. The reason why the magician still generates attachment

2.1.2.3.2.2. Showing that the wisdom realising emptiness can abandon the afflictions is valid

2.1.2.3.2.3. Showing that perfect abandonment will arise

2.1.2.3.2.1. The reason why the magician still generates attachment

The creator has not abandoned the afflictive imprints [31]

Regarding this object of knowledge.

When seeing it

The imprints of emptiness are weak.

The *creator* refers to the magician, the creator of the illusion. He *has not abandoned the afflictive imprints* of true-grasping *regarding this object of knowledge*, the illusion, and *when* he sees the illusion, *the imprints of emptiness are weak*, so he can not counteract the true appearance of the object, and that is why he still generates attachment for the object.

In a literal sense *afflictive imprint* includes the seeds of the afflictions as well as the mere imprints, and in a figurative sense it can also include the afflictions themselves. The afflictions and their seeds are *afflictive obscurations* and the mere imprints are *obscurations to knowledge*. Here it is referring to the affliction of true-grasping and the seeds of true-grasping.

The *imprints of emptiness* refer to the wisdom realising emptiness, and the last line is saying that the magician's realisation of emptiness is weak. **Shantideva** is saying that just realising emptiness in itself will not overcome the mental afflictions, but that one needs to meditate on it

and reach a certain level on the path to abandon the afflictions.

For example, on the path of accumulation and preparation bodhisattvas do have the realisation of emptiness, and on the path of preparation they have the union of calm abiding and special insight realising emptiness. But they still have not overcome the mental afflictions. Even on the path of seeing, when bodhisattvas realise emptiness directly, they only overcome the intellectually-acquired mental afflictions. The innate mental afflictions are abandoned sequentially on the succeeding levels of the path of meditation, and are abandoned completely on the eighth ground.

There are many distorted perceptions that are very easy to overcome, such as the distorted eye-consciousness to which falling hairs appear. Here all one needs is a valid eye-consciousness that sees that there are no falling hairs.

But to overcome true-grasping, which has been in one's mental continuum since beginningless times, one needs to meditate on the object of emptiness for a long time. It is not enough to just realise the non-existence of the apprehended object, but one needs to actually meditate on the absence of the apprehended object for a very long time. As we have just said, not even the direct realisation of emptiness will overcome the mental afflictions. One needs to have progressed along the path of meditation. Here in the Prasangika system it is only when one has reached the eighth ground that mental afflictions have been overcome. That is the point that is being made here. Overcoming true-grasping is not like overcoming some other everyday misconception; it takes considerable amount of meditation.

2.1.2.3.2.2. Showing that it is valid to say that the wisdom realising emptiness can abandon the afflictions

2.1.2.3.2.2.1. In general

2.1.2.3.2.2.2. In particular

2.1.2.3.2.1.1. In general

Meditating on the imprints of emptiness [32]

Abandons the imprints of phenomena;

The statement that they are totally non-existent

Means that subsequently even that is abandoned through meditation.

By meditating on the wisdom that realises the emptiness of all phenomena one can abandon the imprints of true-grasping.

'Meditating on the imprints of emptiness abandons the imprints of phenomena' means that by meditating on the wisdom that realises the emptiness of all phenomena one abandons the true-grasping that holds all phenomena to be truly existent. These two lines refer to realising the emptiness of conventional phenomena.

Subsequently, even the true-grasping at emptiness itself is abandoned. One realises that even the emptiness of all phenomena lacks true existence, and in such a way one can counteract the true-grasping that holds the suchness of conventional phenomena to exist truly.

If one takes a vase as example, we have the object of vase, and the true-grasping that grasps at vase as truly existent. Then we have the emptiness of the vase and the true-grasping that holds the emptiness of the vase to be truly

existent. By meditating on the absence of the truly existent vase one can counteract the true-grasping that grasps at the vase as truly existent. Meditating on the emptiness of the vase overcomes the grasping at the truly existent vase. Then, by meditating on the lack of true existence of the emptiness of the vase, one overcomes the grasping at the vase's emptiness as truly existent.

2.1.2.3.2.2. In particular

When it is said that nothing exists [33]
The investigated object is not observed
At that time the non-object lacks a basis.
How can it linger before one's awareness?

'When it says that nothing exists' indicates the point in time when there is the realisation that neither the object, i.e. the conventional basis, nor the non-object, i.e. its emptiness, are truly existent. When there is no truly existent object at all the investigated object is not observed. At that time no true existence appears to the mind at all, and one has arrived at a lack of true existence. The non-object is the emptiness of the object. When one realises that the conventional object as well as its suchness, the non-object, lack true existence, then the investigated object is not observed.

Both the conventional basis as well as its suchness lack true existence. Since the suchness is of one nature with its conventional basis then it has to lack true existence, as the basis lacks true existence. If one of them lacks true existence then the other one naturally has to lack true existence. Therefore how could it continue to linger as truly existent before one's awareness?

When objects and non-objects [34]
Do not linger before one's awareness
And since there is no other possibility
The focus is totally pacified in non-existence.

When both conventional *objects* as well as their ultimate nature, the *non-object* of suchness, *do not linger* as truly existent *before one's awareness*, then, *since there is no other possibility* for the appearance of true existence, or for the actual existence of true existence, *the focus* of true existence *is totally pacified* within the *non-existence* of true existence.

The third line, 'since there is no other possibility', is based on the logical conclusion that if there are only two modes in which something could exist truly, and if one has refuted both those modes, then logically true existence has been totally refuted. This is because one has refuted the two existing possibilities, and there is no third possibility. Therefore the conceptual thought holding the object of true-grasping to be real is totally pacified within non-true existence.

One can relate this to the resultant stage of the Dharmakaya, which is the stage where one has totally pacified the dualistic appearances within emptiness. Once one has reached this state, where not only the mental afflictions and their seeds, but all dualistic appearances, have been totally pacified, then one has reached the Dharmakaya. Before that, on the level of sentient beings, the non-dual transcendental wisdom has also totally pacified dualistic appearances.

2.1.2.3.2.3. Showing that perfect abandonment will arise

This leads to the following argument, 'How could someone who has pacified all motivational thought benefit others?'

Placing one's hopes in [35]
The wish-fulfilling golden jewel
Likewise, to the disciples through the power of
prayer
The body of the conqueror appears
After having made offerings to the garuda [36]
Then even if it takes a long time
The poisons and so forth will be pacified
If one makes offerings to the conquerors in
accordance with the practices of enlightenment
Bodhisattvas will go beyond sorrow [37]
And will achieve all purposes.
How can one achieve a result by making offerings to
something that lacks a mind?
It is explained that it is similar with Nirvana.

The answer is that the wish-fulfilling tree, for example, also does not possess any motivational thought, yet sentient beings are still able to achieve their worldly wishes by praying to that wish-fulfilling tree.

Similarly, buddhas benefit sentient beings despite having no motivational thought. This comes about because of the conditions from the sides of the buddhas, and because of the conditions from the side of the disciples. With the motivation of wanting to benefit sentient beings they engaged in accumulating merits for three countless great eons. Throughout their whole bodhisattva practice, which they did solely for the benefit of sentient beings, they prayed for many aeons to benefit sentient beings, and dedicated their merits to that purpose. Their many different prayers included, 'May sentient beings be purified even just by hearing my name and so forth'. Therefore, once they reach the resultant stage they don't need any further prompting to help sentient beings. It comes naturally, without having to think about it.

From the disciples' side, merits are needed to benefit from the buddhas. Through the coming together of these causes and conditions then the disciples benefit from the buddhas, despite there not being any conceptual effort from the buddhas' side.

The buddhas benefit the sentient beings in a great variety of ways, such as through the supreme emanation body, which is perceived by all disciples. Whether or not they perceive the supreme emanation body does not depend on the purity of the karma of the disciples.

Then there is also the enjoyment body, which has completed all the activities of the Mahayana path, that primarily benefits superior bodhisattvas. The enjoyment body enjoys the completion of the Mahayana path benefiting superior bodhisattvas. The benefit comes about through the conditions from the buddhas' side as well as from one's own side. That is why one needs to make prayers that in the future one will meet with spiritual teachers who are manifestations of the Buddha. If one has a teacher who is not a perfect emanation body, if that teacher is in the aspect of an ordinary monk, then one should still think of one's teacher as being an actual emanation body of the Buddha.

Through the kindness of the Buddha one knows about all the different practices, such as how to progress along the path, how to accumulate merits, how to meditate and so forth. Through that the different mahasiddhas, realised masters and so forth, came about.

The example of the garuda we can discuss next time. In brief the objection is made that actually the prayers that a buddha did while practising the bodhisattva path should not be really all that effective, because they were made quite a long time ago. One point to consider here is the importance of bodhisattvas. Where do buddhas come from? Buddhas arise from bodhisattvas: they followed the bodhisattva path and then arose as buddhas.

Next week is discussion group. It is important to understand the process of the questions, and the answers, such as from which point of view the questions are posed, and then how the answers are given.

Review

With regard to the Mind Only if it exists is there the pervasion that it exists truly?

Student: No, conceptual creations don't exist truly.

For what reason?

Student: They are dependent on the mind positing things, on imputation.

Last time we talked about the common and the uncommon mode of abiding. Since they don't exist out of the uncommon mode of abiding, but exist in a mode common to the apprehension by, and appearance to, conceptual thought, then they don't exist truly.

In the Mind Only system is the vase conventional truth or ultimate truth?

Student: Conventional truth.

Why? What is the mode of it being conventional or illusory truth? One can say because it is a phenomenon that is false since it doesn't exist the way it appears.

What is the definition of illusory conventional truth and ultimate truth in the Mind Only system?

The meaning of **ultimate truth is the ultimate object of a pure path that has meditated on it. Conventional truth is that which is not the object of ultimate path having meditated on it.** What are the three characteristics that are posited in the Mind Only system?

Student: Other-powered phenomena and conceptual creations.

There is one object left, about which we talked about for quite a long time.

Student: Thoroughly established phenomena.

What is the definition of consciousness?

Student: Clear and knowing.

Are you sure?

Student: Yes.

Take the subject 'superior buddha' - it follows that he is clear knowing?

Student: Why?

It follows that the superior buddha is not clear knowing?

Student: Yes.

The Buddha knows everything but he is not a knower, and the Buddha is conscious of everything but is not consciousness.

What is the meaning of consciousness?

Student: It arises in the aspect of the object.

How many consciousnesses are there?

Student: Six.

Show.

Student: Eye, ear nose, tongue, body and mind.

The question was what types of consciousnesses are there, not the types of primary consciousness, of which there are six. You could posit divisions like valid cognition and consciousnesses that are not valid cognitions, and minds and mental factors. Then mind has the division into six primary consciousnesses and 51 mental factors.

Student: I want to ask a question about the realisation of the emptiness of the emptiness that we discussed tonight - the specifics of the meditation on that topic. If at that time there exists a direct cognition of emptiness, the moment of realisation would be subsequent. I'm just wondering how one goes back to meditate on the emptiness of emptiness? How does one generate that realisation?

If you have realised emptiness directly then you have already realised the emptiness of emptiness. The subsequent doesn't apply to subsequent direct realisations. There are many different inferential cognisers of emptiness, which we have already talked about. The inferential cogniser realises the emptiness of one, and then of the other and so forth. We have explained before how inferential cognisers first realise the emptiness of one, and then transfer that realisation to others.

Transcript prepared by Jenny Brooks

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak

Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

10 May 2005

As usual generate the virtuous motivation of bodhicitta thinking, 'I have to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings, and in order to accomplish that aim I am now going to listen to this profound teaching. Then I am going to put it into practice'.

2.1.2.3.2.2. Showing that it is valid to say that the wisdom realising emptiness can abandon the afflictions

2.1.2.3.2.2.2. In particular (cont.)

Objection

The Buddha cannot benefit sentient beings because he lacks conceptual motivational thought.

Refutation

*Through the power of prayer, [35cd]
The body of the conqueror appears to the disciples*

Objection: 'But how could the prayers that a buddha made on the bodhisattva path benefit sentient beings since those prayers were made a long time ago before that person became enlightened?

This objection is refuted with an example:

*Even if having died after [36]
Having made offerings to Garuda
And a long time after that,
It will still pacify the poison*

Even if a long time has passed since the death of a Brahmin who had established an offering tree to Garuda for the purpose of pacifying all poisons, the practice of Garuda will still pacify poisons.

The meaning of the example:

*Likewise offerings to the conqueror, [37]
In accordance with the Bodhisattva practices
Will achieve all purposes, though the Bodhisattva
Has gone already beyond misery.*

Similarly, if bodhisattvas establish an 'offering tree' to the conquerors by building up the two accumulations of merit and wisdom in an extensive manner, the final result of that will be the two buddha bodies, i.e. the body for the purpose of self and the body for the purpose of others.

These will continue to benefit sentient beings even though the bodhisattva on becoming enlightened, has gone beyond misery into non-abiding nirvana. When the bodhisattvas pass away (in a figurative sense), and become enlightened, they are no longer bodhisattvas but buddhas. The power of the prayers that the bodhisattva made, such as, 'May I be able to benefit all sentient beings effortlessly' still carry on through the two bodies - the form body and the truth body - of a buddha. In such a way they continue to benefit all sentient beings.

One should also relate this to one's own practice, likewise making prayers to be able to effortlessly benefit sentient beings in the future. However, we don't have to be in any hurry to attain enlightenment. We can take our time - there is no need to become too uptight about it!

2.1.2.3.2.3. Showing that perfect abandonment will arise

Objection

*How can a result be achieved [38]
By offering to one lacking mind?
Because it is taught that it does
For both remaining and gone beyond misery.*

Hearer practitioner: 'How can a result be achieved by offering to one lacking mind?' The thought is that since a buddha doesn't have the conceptual thought, 'now I have received the offerings', how could the making of offerings to the Buddha be of any benefit.

Madhyamaka: Because it is taught by the Buddha himself in the sutras, such as the *Lion's Roar Sutra*, that merits are accumulated with regard to both the one remaining and the one gone beyond sorrow. This means that both accumulate merits, regardless of whether one makes offerings to the Buddha remaining directly in front of oneself, or to representations of the Buddha after his parinirvana.

The *Sutra Explaining the Benefits of Circumambulation of a Stupa* says the same: 'Regardless of whether it is an actual buddha or whether it is a representation of a buddha that has already gone beyond sorrow, there will no difference in the merits accumulated to a mind of equal faith in both.'

If one recognises the representation of a buddha who has already gone beyond sorrow as the actual buddha, and then makes offerings, circumambulations and so forth, the merit will be exactly the same as if the buddha were actually there.

*That it is possible to have a result nominally [39]
And also ultimately, is taught in scripture.
For example, like have a result
Relative to a true buddha.*

This is saying that it is taught in the scriptures that the result of making offerings to a buddha does not depend on whether one recognises that buddha as being illusory, or whether one thinks of that buddha as existing ultimately. For example, it is taught that even if one believes that the Buddha exists truly, such as what the lower tenets do, and makes offerings to the Buddha on the basis of that belief, one will still accumulate vast merits because of the law of cause and effect will still apply.

2.1.3. Establishing the Mahayana as supreme

2.1.3.1. Establishing that all sutras are the advice of the Buddha

2.1.3.2. Establishing emptiness as the antidote

2.1.3.1. ESTABLISHING THAT ALL SUTRAS ARE THE ADVICE OF THE BUDDHA

There are twelve verses that relate to these outlines, which we will go through slowly, one by one.

Objection

*One becomes liberated by seeing truth, [40ab]
Why should one see emptiness?*

Followers of the hearer vehicle (Primary opponent): 'One can become liberated merely by realising directly, and meditating on, the sixteen aspects of the Four Noble Truths, such as impermanence and so forth. Therefore, what need is there to see the emptiness that is the lack of true existence of all phenomena.' Not only do they not accept that one needs to realise emptiness to become enlightened, they completely refute the Mahayana teachings as being teachings of the Buddha, and do not accept the term *selflessness of phenomena* even on a figurative level. The selflessness that they associate with the Four Noble Truths is either the lack of a

permanent, isolated (partless), independent self, or the lack of a person that is a self-sufficient substantial existent¹, which in the Prasangika system are only the coarse selflessness of person.

Mind Only (Secondary opponent): 'Though there is selflessness of phenomena, it is not necessary to realise it in order to go beyond misery (liberation).'

Response

*Because it is taught in scripture that [40cd]
Without it one will not attain enlightenment.*

The task for the Madhyamaka here is to establish to the opponent that there is a purpose for realising the lack of inherent existence of phenomena. First they do so with the reason of scripture.

Madhyamaka: *Because it is taught in the scripture of the Perfection of Wisdom sutras that without the realisation of the selflessness of phenomena one will not attain the enlightenment of a hearer, or a self-liberator or of a buddha.'*

In the *Great Commentary on the Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* it gives quotes from the *Perfection of Wisdom sutras* such as 'those that have recognition of phenomena cannot attain liberation', and 'All the three-time buddhas, and all the other realisations from the attainment of a stream enterer up to the attainment of a self-liberator, are attained in dependence on the perfection of wisdom alone.'

Hinayana: 'This does not prove anything to me because I don't accept the perfection of wisdom scriptures as valid sutras'.

*If the Mahayana is not established [41]
The how are your texts established?
Since they are established for both.
Initially it is not established for you.
The conditions through which you generate faith [42ab]
Are the same for the Mahayana.*

Madhyamaka: 'If you don't accept the Mahayana sutras to be authentic, then how do you establish the Hinayana sutras as valid scriptures?'

Hinayana: 'They are authentic because they are established as valid by both of us.'

Madhyamaka: 'But they were not valid for you initially, because at the time of your birth, or before you had investigated their meaning through listening and contemplation, they were not authentic scriptures for you.'

First you established with logic the *Great Treatise*, which identifies the three baskets of teachings, as valid scriptural reference. And then, in dependence on the *Great Treatise*, you identify the Hinayana sutras as valid scriptures. The *Great Treatise* shows how the teachings on the higher training of morality form the Vinaya basket; how the teachings on the higher training of concentration form the Sutra basket; and how the teachings on the higher training of wisdom form the Abhidharma basket.

This style of establishing faith is the same for us with the Mahayana sutras.'

*If true because two others assert it [42cd]
The Vedas and so forth also become true.*

If you do not use this system to identify whether a scripture is a sutra or not, and base your assertion of the validity of a sutra on whether it is accepted by two parties, then one would also have to say that the *Vedas* would be valid teachings, because they are accepted by two parties as valid'.

*If you say, 'The Mahayana is in question', [43]
Non-buddhists also question the texts,
And other texts are also questioned by
Self and other, therefore they should be abandoned.*

Hinayana: 'Since the Hinayana scriptures we accept as authentic teachings by the Buddha are also accepted by you as such there is not argument between us about them. But there is debate regarding the Mahayana scriptures you accept as authentic teaching, because we do not accept them.'

Mahayana: 'If you deny the Mahayana sutras for the reason that they are being questioned, then you should also deny the Hinayana sutras. Firstly, the Hinayana sutras are questioned by non-Buddhists and Hinayanists alike. Secondly, while the authenticity of the Hinayana sutras is accepted by the eighteen Hinayana schools, there are certain teachings such as the *Sutra Explaining the Intermediate State* that are not accepted by all.'

It is not possible to even attain nirvana without realising emptiness

*If the root of the teachings is the essential bikkhu,[44]
Even the essential bikkhu has a problem.
The mind endowed with an object,
Has difficulty even to abide beyond sorrow.*

The term 'essential bikkhu' refers to arhats. Arhats preserved in their perfect memory the Buddhas teachings, and that is why they are referred to as the root of the teachings. If the *root of the teachings* is the *essential bikkhu*, then *even the essential bikkhu has a problem*, because *the mind that is endowed with an object has difficulty even to abide beyond sorrow*.

This shows that even the attainment of liberation is impossible without the realisation of emptiness, and that those who do not accept the lack of inherent existence of all phenomena can not become arhats. The mind endowed with a truly existent object can not counteract true-grasping because it can not negate the apprehended object of true-grasping. It is true-grasping. Therefore, the realisation of mere coarse selflessness can not counteract true-grasping, because it does not realise the absence of the apprehended object of true-grasping.

Even because not only can one not become enlightened without the wisdom realising emptiness, one can not *even* attain liberation.

*Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

¹ According to the lower tenets these two views of the self are the subtle and coarse views of the selflessness of person: coarse being absence of a permanent partless and independent self, and subtle being the absence of a self-sufficient substantial existent.

Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྒྱལ་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

17 May 2005

As usual, generate the motivation of wanting to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings thinking, 'Towards that end I am then going to listen to this profound teaching and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

2.1.3.2. ESTABLISHING EMPTINESS AS THE ANTIDOTE (CONT.)¹

2.1.3.2.1. It is not even possible to attain nirvana without realising emptiness

If the root of the teachings is the essential bikkhu,
[44]

Even the essential bikkhu has a problem.

The mind endowed with an object,

Has difficulty even to abide beyond sorrow.

There are two reasons why essential bikkhus are referred to 'the root of the teachings'.

First of all, the term *essential bikkhu* refers to arhats. In general, it is said that the *root of the teachings* are the vows of individual liberation. The ultimate practitioners of those vows are arhats, and therefore arhats are referred to as roots of the teachings.

Secondly, arhats such as Mahakashyapa, Ananda and Upali kept the teachings preserved in their perfect memory and were able to recite it to others. Therefore they are regarded as roots of the teachings. At the first Buddhist council of five hundred arhats, Mahakashyapa recited the sutras belonging to the Abhidharma basket, Ananda recited the sutras belonging to the sutra basket, and Upali recited the teachings belonging to the Vinaya basket of teachings.

2.1.3.2.2. The consequence of becoming an arhat merely by abandoning the manifest afflictions

If 'liberated through abandonment of the afflictions'
[45a]

Here, the followers of the **Hearer** vehicle say that one can eliminate mental afflictions and be liberated from cyclic existence by meditating on the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths, such as impermanence and so forth. Therefore, they say, it is not necessary to realise emptiness in order to abandon mental afflictions.

Madhyamaka: It is, of course, possible to realise the lack of a person as a self-sufficient substantial existent, and by meditating on that selflessness abandon a certain level of manifest afflictions. However, according to the Prasangika system, one will not be able to abandon the manifest afflictions as asserted by the lower tenets. This is because according to the Prasangika system, the lack of a person that is a self-sufficient substantial existent is not, strictly speaking, even the selflessness of person.

Immediately afterwards one becomes that [45b]

The Madhyamaka posit this consequence: if one can be liberated by meditating on the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths then it follows that by merely abandoning the manifest afflictions as taught in the two texts on knowledge, *The Compendium of Knowledge*, and *The Treasury of Knowledge*², one would *immediately afterwards become* an arhat. This means that non-Buddhist practitioners who abandon the manifest afflictions would also be arhats.

Though not having afflictions, [45cd]
One can see that their karma is still potent.

Madhyamaka: Though such a person does *not* have any manifest *afflictions* in their mental continuum, one can observe that the *karma* to project a future life *is still potent* in their continuum.

2.1.3.2.3. Refuting the answer to the consequence

If, 'Occasional craving taking forcefully, [46ab]
It is certain I say it does not exist.'

Hearer follower: 'It is not a mere occasional abandonment but certain liberation because, even though the karma in the person who has abandoned the manifest afflictions might still be potent, the conducive condition of craving that induces the next existence does not exist in that person's continuum. At the time of death the potent karma has to be ripened through the conducive conditions of craving and grasping, and though the karma might still be potent, it will not ripen as the conducive conditions of craving and grasping are lacking.'

One can say that at the time of death, craving relates to appearances of this life, while grasping relates to appearances of the next existence.

Though this craving is not afflicted, [46cd]
Why should it not be like ignorance?

Madhyamaka: 'Though the craving arising from the transitory view grasping at the person as a self-sufficient substantial existent might be a non-manifest affliction at that time, but why should it not be the same for craving as it is for ignorance? We have common ignorance as explained in the *Two Knowledges*, and uncommon ignorance according to the Prasangika.'

There is the **common ignorance** that is taught in the *Two Knowledges*, which is the ignorance grasping at the person as a self-sufficient substantial existent. Then there is the **uncommon ignorance** as taught in the Prasangika system, which is the ignorance grasping at an inherently existent self. The line 'Why should it not be like ignorance?' means that since that are two levels of ignorance, why should it not also be the same for craving? There is the coarser craving that is induced by the transitory view grasping at the person as a self-sufficient substantial existent, and the more subtle craving that is induced by the transitory view grasping at an inherently existent self.

In the first system the root is the grasping at the person as a self-sufficient substantial existent, from which arises attachment to pleasure and anger to suffering. This then gives rise to the other root and affiliated afflictions. There

¹ This heading wasn't actually used last week.

² Known as the *Two Knowledges*.

is a whole set of root and affiliated delusions which have the grasping at the person as a self-sufficient substantial existent as their root.

Then there is the more subtle level of root and affiliated afflictions, which have as their root the grasping at inherent existence. Through meditating only on the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths as taught in the *Two Knowledges*, a person may have abandoned the manifest craving that is induced by the grasping at the person as a self-sufficient substantial existent, but that will not even dent the manifest craving that arises from grasping at the self as inherently existent. The craving that arises from the grasping at the self as inherently existent will not be harmed in the slightest by the meditation on the sixteen aspects alone. Although it can abandon the manifest coarse afflictions to a degree, it will not abandon the seed of the afflictions at all.

*Craving arises from feeling,
And those with feeling have it;
It abides for some, whose
Mind is endowed with an object.* [47]

These lines establish that the person who has abandoned the manifest afflictions according to the *Two Knowledges* still has craving, and therefore can still take rebirth.

Madhyamaka: By grasping at the feeling of happiness as truly existent one generates craving to make contact with happiness. By grasping at suffering as truly existent one generates the craving to be separate from the feeling of suffering. Practitioners with feeling who have not abandoned the grasping at true existence will always have craving.

Therefore, to counteract craving it is not enough to just to realise the lack of true existence of something in general. One needs to realise the lack of true existence of happiness and suffering. Otherwise, by grasping at the feelings of happiness and suffering as truly existent, one will generate the craving to meet with the feeling of happiness, and to be separated from the feeling of suffering.

The mind endowed with a truly existent object is true grasping. We previously said that true grasping is the grasping at the basis, path and result as truly existent. As long as one is endowed with that grasping, one is endowed with true grasping. As long as the mind is endowed with true grasping, and has not realised that the absence of the apprehended object of true grasping, then that mind will also have craving.

2.1.3.2.4. Showing the need to meditate on emptiness to even achieve just liberation

*The mind lacking emptiness
Will arise again despite ceasing,
Like the absorption without recognition.
Then, meditate on emptiness.* [48]

Even though the manifest afflictions might have ceased momentarily through meditating on the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths, these afflictions will arise again, for as long as the mind lacks the realisation of emptiness - the realisation of the lack of true existence of person and aggregates. It is similar to *absorption without recognition*, where the manifest afflictions have ceased temporarily, but then rise again. That's why one needs to meditate on

emptiness in order to attain liberation and enlightenment. That's the instruction.

Then come three verses that establish the Mahayana sutras as authentic Buddhist teachings. However there is some doubt amongst some scholars as to whether or not these three verses were part of the original text, because they repeat a point that was made earlier.

*If the words regarded as sutras
Are regarded as teachings of the Buddha
Why do you not regard the sutras
Of the Mahayana likewise?* [49]

This asks the question, 'If the words that teach the superior training of the mind are regarded as Sutra basket, and those dealing with the morality are regarded as Vinaya basket, and those dealing with wisdom are regarded as Abhidharma basket, and since the *Mahayana sutras* also mostly deal with the three higher trainings, then why don't you also regard the *Mahayana sutras* as authentic sutras?'

*If, because of only one
All become faulty,
Then why, through one concordant sutra,
Are not all teachings of the conqueror?* [50]

'If you feel that the Mahayana sutras are not authentic scriptures because there is one Mahayana sutra that doesn't fit your definition of an authentic sutra, then one could likewise say, "Why wouldn't you accept all of the Mahayana sutras" as valid sutras, if there is even just one valid sutra according to your definition.

'If all the Mahayana sutras become faulty because there is one sutra that doesn't fit your description of a valid sutra, then by the same reasoning, one could say that they are all valid as long as there is one sutra that fits your description of a valid sutra.' The sutras that they have a particular problem with are the *Extensive, Medium* and *Condensed Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*.

*The words are not comprehended
By the great Mahakashyapa and so forth.
Who would disregard them,
Just because you do not realise them?* [51]

Here the **Hinayana** say that the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* are not comprehended even by such great beings as the Mahakashyapa and so forth, and therefore they are not authentic sutras.

Madhyamaka: 'Who would disregard the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*, which have actually been pronounced as being very profound by the great Mahakashyapa, just because you do not realise their have profound meaning? Nobody in their right mind would disregard the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* as authentic sutras just because you don't realise them.'

2.1.3.2.4.1. Showing why emptiness is the path to nirvana while avoiding the two extremes

Ordinary individuals are bound by true-grasping and attachment and abide in the extreme of existence, because they have to take rebirth through karma and afflictions. Hearer and self-liberated arhats who have attained individual liberation while not abiding in the extreme of existence, abide in the extreme of peace. Arya Bodhisattvas don't abide in the two extremes of existence

and peace: on the one hand they are not bound by cyclic existence, and on the other hand they have not gone to the extreme of peace. They take rebirth in cyclic existence out of compassion for sentient beings. This is a result of their realisation of emptiness, and that is why the attainment of non-abiding nirvana is the fruit of the realisation of emptiness. The attainment of the non-abiding nirvana is the fruit of the wisdom of realising emptiness, and therefore it is inappropriate to refute the view of emptiness. That is why one must meditate repeatedly on emptiness.

Review

What is the meaning of afflictions?

Student: Any thought that may upset the peace of mind.

Are you sure? How many root afflictions are there?

Students: Six.

Name them.

Student: Attachment, ignorance, hatred, pride, deluded doubt and wrong view.

What is attachment?

Student: The mind that doesn't want to be separated from an object.

That could also be virtue, such as the mind that doesn't want to be separated from bodhicitta, or the Buddha.

What is the meaning of liberation?

Student: Being free from cyclic existence.

Is this vase liberated?

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright

Preliminary edit by Adair Bunnett

Final edit by Venerable Tenzin Dongak

Edited Version

© **Tara Institute**

Study Group - *Bodhicharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

24 May 2005

As usual we should begin with a virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. In order to do so I am going to listen to this profound teaching and put it into practice as much as possible'.

2.1.3.2.4.2. For those wishing for liberation it is suitable to meditate on emptiness

*Emptiness is the antidote against the darkness [54]
Of afflictive and omniscience obscurations.
How can those wishing for quick omniscience
Not meditate on it?*

Afflictive obscurations are the afflictions such as ignorance, attachment and anger, and their seeds.

Obscurations to omniscience have a two-fold division into seed and manifest obscurations. The seed part is the imprints of the affliction that have the power to produce dualistic appearances in the mind, while manifest obscurations to omniscience are the actual dualistic appearance to the mind. Until one has abandoned true grasping, one's mind will be obscured by dualistic appearances.

The wisdom realising *emptiness is the antidote to the darkness of the afflictive and omniscience obscurations*. Therefore *how could those wishing to attain quick liberation and omniscience not meditate on it?*

The **hearer** follower replies, 'Well I don't really feel like meditating on emptiness because it makes me afraid'. They can be forgiven for that argument, because if one does not know how to meditate on emptiness properly then one falls into the extreme of nihilism, where everything becomes non-existent.

The **Madhyamaka** reply,

*If one generates fear [55]
Of the phenomena generating suffering
Then why generate fear of emptiness,
Which pacifies suffering.*

This is a slight rebuke saying, 'Well actually the real danger is generated by truly existent phenomena'. By this they mean that by grasping at phenomena as truly existent one generates all the different sufferings that one is right to fear, but that there is really no reason to be afraid of emptiness, which in fact pacifies suffering.

Emptiness is not really a phenomenon to be afraid of, because it pacifies all fears and dangers, while true-grasping, which is the root of cyclic existence, should be the actual object of one's fear.

*If one becomes afraid of anything [56]
Should some selves exist,
Since there is no nature at all
Who is the one afraid?*

One generates fear if, at the time of analysis, one finds that some selves do exist from their own side. No-one is afraid if at the time of analysis no self nature is found at all. But if there is a strong perception of the person existing

independently from its own side, one experiences fear at the time of analysis.

2.2. Practising it through meditation

2.2.1. Establishing the selflessness of person through reason

2.2.2. Establishing the selflessness of phenomena through reason

Different in basis

The self that is being negated in the term 'selflessness' is the self that exists out of its own nature, independently, from its own side. This is the self that is referred to in *Introduction to the Middle Way* where it says, 'Since all our faults of delusions and so forth arise from the view of the transitory collections, yogis abandon the self'. This is the self to be negated. Grasping at that self constitutes self-grasping. Without realising the absence of such a self it is impossible to counteract self-grasping.

If this type of self existence is negated on the person it is the selflessness of person, and if it is negated on phenomena it is the selflessness of phenomena. That is why there is no difference in the subtlety of the two selflessness. They only differ from the point of view of the basis of negation, and not from the point of view of the object of negation.

In *Introduction to the Middle Way* the selflessness of phenomena was explained before the selflessness of person, which is in accordance with the sequence of generation of the two types of self-grasping. Here the selflessness of person is explained before the selflessness of phenomena in accordance with the sequence in which the two selflessness are realised.

Innate and intellectually acquired

There is also the two fold division of self-grasping into innate self-grasping and intellectually acquired self-grasping. *Innate self-grasping* is the self-grasping that arises naturally in one's mind. *Intellectually acquired self-grasping* is the true grasping that is generated through thinking about reasons. On investigating the nature of phenomena some individuals arrive at the conclusion that phenomena exist truly, which is an intellectually acquired true grasping. Others, of higher intelligence, arrive at the conclusion that phenomena lack true existence.

Intellectually acquired true grasping is a true grasping that is generated in dependence on reason, i.e. having some reason for thinking that phenomena exist truly. It only exists in the continuum of tenet holders, and therefore is not regarded as the root of cyclic existence. Innate true grasping is true grasping that arises naturally in the mind. Only innate true grasping is the root of cyclic existence.

2.2.1. Establishing the selflessness of person through reason

2.2.1.1. The way of refuting the object of innate true grasping

2.2.1.2. The way of refuting the object of the intellectually acquired true grasping

2.2.1.1. THE WAY OF REFUTING THE OBJECT OF INNATE TRUE GRASPING

If the self is found in the basis of imputation then it has to exist either in the body or the mind. The body as a whole or some part of it, or the mind as a whole or some part of it, has to be the self, and that is what is being refuted through this analysis.

The significance is that not only does the object that is imputed not exist inherently, but the basis of imputation also does not exist inherently. This second point is usually more

difficult to understand. How one has to approach this is that the basis of imputation does not exist inherently, because it is not found at the time of analysis. If one approaches it in this way, thinking that the basis of imputation does not exist inherently because it is not found at the time of analysis, then it will become clearer. If one says straight away that the basis of imputation simply does not exist truly, then it is more difficult, because one would still feel that the object is existing from its own side.

The self is merely labelled in dependence on the aggregates. If the object of the thought thinking, 'I', which is present most of the time, is really existent within the basis of imputation then it has to exist either in the body or in the mind. Either the body as a whole, or some part of the body has to be the 'I', or the mind as a whole, or some part of the mind, has to be the 'I'. Sequentially refuting that they are not establishes that the 'I' is not findable at the time of analysis. This means that the 'I' does not exist intrinsically within the body or mind. That leaves only the possibility that the 'I' is merely labelled in dependence on the body and mind, which is the 'I' that actually exists. The focal object of the mere 'I'-grasping is the mere 'I' that exists as merely labelled in dependence on the body and the mind.

*The teeth, hair and nail are not the self; [57]
The self is not the bones or blood,
Not the nasal mucus or phlegm,
And also not lymph or pus.*

*The self is not the fat or sweat, [58]
And neither the lungs nor liver are the self.
The other inner organs are also not the self,
The self was not urinated to the outside.*

The teeth, hair and nails are not the self. That we know. Neither are the *bones* and *blood* an example for the self. *Nasal mucus* and *phlegm* are not the self, and neither is *lymphatic* liquid or *pus*. None of these parts of the body are the self, which is merely labelled in dependence on those parts.

Neither *fat* nor *sweat* are examples of the self, because the self is merely labelled in dependence on those. *Neither the lungs nor the liver are the self*, nor are *other inner organs*, such as the intestines and so forth, the self, because the self is merely imputed in dependence on these body parts. The emphasis here is that the self is merely imputed in dependence on those body parts. Likewise, neither the *urine* nor the faeces are the self. Also *the flesh and the skin are not the self*, because the self is merely imputed on them.

*The flesh and skin are not the self, [59]
The heat and air are not the self,
The holes are not the self, and certainly the
Six primary consciousnesses are not the self.*

The heat and the air and so forth, *are not the self*. Here the four elements of fire, air, space and consciousnesses are refuted as examples of the self. Neither the fire element nor the wind element, nor the *holes* like the nostrils and so forth, which are the space element, are the self. And *certainly the six primary consciousnesses are also not the self*.

None of the six elements are the self because the self is merely imputed in dependence on them. This refutation of approaching the analysis from the point of view of the six elements is accordance with Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*, where the same reasoning is used. None of the six elements individually are the self, and the self is also not contained in the mere collection of the six aggregates, because the self is merely labelled in dependence on the six aggregates.

Review

At the beginning of *Introduction to the Middle Way* it says, 'In order to liberate sentient beings from cyclic existence, he taught selflessness of person and the selflessness of phenomena'. What is the difference between the two selflessnesses?

Student: The base is different.

What is the difference between self-grasping at person and the view of the transitory collections?

Student: The view of the transitory collection is self-grasping at the person of one's own continuum, while self-grasping at person is self-grasping at person in general.

If it is self-grasping at person, is it necessarily the view of the transitory collection?

Student: No. Grasping at the self of person in another person's continuum is not the transitory view.

What is the meaning of cyclic existence?

Student: Being bound to the contaminated aggregates by karma and afflictions.

Then that means the person is cyclic existence, because the person is bound to the contaminated aggregates.

Take the example of a person who is bound to a tree: the tree is cyclic existence, the rope is karma and afflictions, and the person is the self. We are bound to cyclic existence by karma and contaminated aggregates. Sometimes the meaning of cyclic existence is defined as that which takes repeated rebirth through karma and afflictions.

What is the object of the negation of the self of person?

Student: The person not found under direct analysis.

I was looking for the inherent or intrinsically existing person. This leads on to the next question. What is the meaning of inherent existence? If one doesn't refute the inherently existing person, one doesn't arrive at the lack of inherent existence.

Student question: Is a person existing independently, by way of its own nature, including being independent from the designating thought, the object of negation?

That is correct.

The Svatantrika-Madhyamaka say that a person, while not existing independently of the imputed mind, still has something from its own side. The Mind Only say that it exists out of its own uncommon mode of abiding. The Svatantrika-Madhyamaka say that everything is merely labelled, while the Prasangika say that everything is merely labelled 'on', emphasising that there is nothing from the side of object.

Is the person to be found somewhere as part of the elements?

Students: No.

The absence of person among the elements is the subtle emptiness. Sometimes, when one analyses too hard one falls into nihilism.

Student: Can you say a few more words about why consciousness is not the self. We keep coming back to this time and again. What is the most compelling way of dismissing that idea?

We say, 'my mind'. There is a feeling that the mind belongs to one. This is the indication that the consciousness is not the self. Because the thought of 'I' it is not generated with regard to the body, or aggregates. There is another basis with regards to which one thinks 'I'.

Study Group - *Bodhicharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

31 May 2005

As usual, please sit yourself comfortably and relax. Place your mind inwards, not engaging with external objects. Then generate a virtuous motivation, thinking, 'I have to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. In order to do so I am now going to listen to this profound teaching, and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

2.2. Practising selflessness through meditation

2.2.1. Establishing the selflessness of person through reason

Last time we completed talking about the way of meditating on the lack of the object of innate self-grasping of person.

2.2.1.2. MEDITATING ON THE SELFLESSNESS THAT IS THE LACK OF THE OBJECT OF THE INTELLECTUALLY ACQUIRED TRUE-GRASPING AT PERSON¹

What is being refuted here are the different types of self that are posited by non-Buddhists. Even though there are a great variety of positions taken by different non-Buddhist tenets, Shantideva concentrates on the two main positions of the Samkya and Vaisheshika. By refuting these two positions, all the other various non-Buddhists views regarding the self will also be implicitly refuted.

2.2.1.2.1. Refuting the self to be consciousness (as posited by the Enumerators or Samkya)

2.2.1.2.2. Refuting the self to be matter (as posited by the Particularists)

2.2.1.2.3. Refuting objections regarding selflessness

2.2.1.2.1. Refuting the self to be consciousness

The view of the Samkya

The Samkya assert a permanent, isolated, independent self, which is consciousness. They refer to the self as sentient being, knower, consciousness or experience. They attribute to this self five qualities:

1. Engaging - engaging happiness, suffering, and so forth.
2. Permanence - being a permanent functionality
3. Not being the creator, i.e. not being the creator of the different manifestations of the primary principle
4. Lacking qualities - lacking qualities of particles, darkness and courage
5. Lacking action - being pervading

Here the question arises, is the grasping at the person possessing these five previously mentioned characteristics intellectually acquired self-grasping not?

This question arises because if it is intellectually acquired self-grasping, then one realises selflessness by realising the absence of its apprehended object. What do you think?

Here one can draw a fine distinction between intellectually acquired self-grasping and self-grasping generated through tenets. Even though this is self-grasping that is generated through tenets, by realising the absence of its object, one does not realise selflessness. Therefore it might be mistaken to classify it as intellectually acquired self-grasping *per se*. One has to make a fine distinction here.

The Enumerators classify objects of knowledge into twenty-five categories.

- The primary principle. It exists truly and ultimately, and is only a cause and not an effect. The qualities of courage (happiness), particles (equanimity), and darkness (suffering) are perfectly balanced within it.
- The person, also exists truly and ultimately, but is neither cause nor effect.
- The five sense objects of form, sound, smell, taste and tactile sensations, plus awareness and pride, are both cause and effect.
- The eleven faculties, which are effects but not causes
- The five elements (4 + space), which are effects but not causes

The faculties and elements are only effects because they are only expressions of the primary principle. The Enumerators, or Samkya, say that the expressions of the primary principle are all of one partless nature with the primary principle.

They have their own view of how sentient beings circle in cyclic existence, and how they then attain liberation. When the person generates the desire to engage objects such as sounds, the nature of the primary principle is aware of that, and emanates these sounds. From the nature of the primary principle arises awareness, from which arises pride. From pride arise the eleven faculties and five sense objects. From the five sense objects arise the five elements.

They say that awareness is like a double mirror, externally reflecting the expressions of the primary principles such as forms and so forth, and internally reflecting the self. Through that the self is able to engage the different objects. They say that the reason why the self circles in cyclic existence is because it grasps at the action and at the agent as being one.

In order to attain liberation one has to apprehend the solitary self. This is done by initially reflecting on the disadvantages of the sensory objects, and so attaining calm abiding. Then, through the union of calm abiding and special insight, one generates meditative absorption. In dependence on the meditative absorption one generates the clairvoyance of the divine eye, with which one is able to see the primary principle. When one looks at the primary principle it will withdraw just like a modest girl, who has been surprised in the nude. The primary principle will withdraw from the self, and all its expressions will absorb in reverse sequence into it. The

¹ Last week this was described as 2.2.1.2. The way of refuting the object of intellectually acquired true grasping

only thing that is left is the solitary self, at which point one has attained liberation. You can read up more about this in the *Precious Garland of Tenets*.

THE ACTUAL REFUTATION BY THE MADHYAMAKA

*If the consciousness of sound were permanent [60]
One would apprehend sound all the time.
If there are no objects of knowledge how can
One say what is known by what?*

The **Samkya** say that consciousness of sound is a permanent functionality. Sound is that which is being engaged, and consciousness is that which engages sound. In this context, when it refers to consciousness it refers to the self.

Madhyamaka: 'If the knower of sound is permanent, then regardless of whether or not external sound is present, that knower would apprehend sound constantly, because of being a permanent functionality. But that is invalid because if there is not object of knowledge then how can one say this consciousness is the object-possessor of such and such an object.'

The **Samkya** reply, 'That is not established because even though there might be no sound, the consciousness apprehending sound is permanently established'.

*If it is consciousness without that known [61]
Then it follows that also wood is conscious.
Therefore one has to say that without proximity of
The object of knowledge consciousness does not
exist.*

Madhyamaka: 'It follows that even wood is conscious, because it is possible to be consciousness without having an object. Considering all of this one has to say if you do not accept that it is ascertained that without the proximity of sound the consciousness of sound does not exist, then there is no time when sound is not apprehended.'

*If, 'they know form', [62]
Why do they not hear anything at that time?
If, 'because there is no proximity to sound,'
Then there is also no consciousness of it.*

The **Samkya** reply, 'The fault of an objectless consciousness does not exist, because at the time of no sound the consciousness that is the permanent person engages form'.

Madhyamaka: 'Why should the person that is engaging form not hear sound even though there is no sound? After all, that person is a permanent functionality engaging the five objects without distinction.'

The **Samkya** reply, 'When there is no proximity to sound there is no consciousness of sound'.

Madhyamaka: 'If there is no knower of the object when there is no object then there is no permanent person.'

What you have to keep in mind is that the **Samkya** start out with the root proposition that the person is this permanent consciousness of sound. When asked, 'Why would one not hear everything all the time?' they say, 'Because there is no immediate proximity to sound'.

The **Madhyamaka** recognise that this is an opening where the **Samkya** have contradicted themselves. They say, 'Well, that actually contradicts your assertion of a permanent person. Because if you say that if there is no object there is no object-possessor, then there is no consciousness of the object, which contradicts your

assertion that the person is a permanent knower of sound'.

*How could that which is in the nature of the
apprehension [63]
Of sound become the apprehension of form?
One is labelled as father and son
But is not perfect.*

Madhyamaka: That which is in the nature of the apprehension of sound does not become the apprehension of form. because they are two mutually exclusive aspects.

The **Samkya** reply, 'Well, one person can be simultaneously labelled as father and son. Similarly, one consciousness can be labelled simultaneously as the apprehension of sound and the apprehension of form. Even though the *manifestation* of sound might not be present, since sound and form are of one *nature*, when form is present the nature of sound is also present. And therefore at that time the apprehension of form is also the object-possessor of sound.'

They have this notion that the person is this solitary partless entity of consciousness. They don't have the possibility of positing a consciousness that is made up out of parts, where one part is the apprehension of form and one part is the apprehension of sound. Instead, what they say is that it depends on how you look at it. If you look at it from one perspective, it is the apprehension of sound; if you look at it from another perspective, it is the apprehension of form. That is as valid as saying that one person is simultaneously father and son. That is how they posit the person as being the object possessor of form and sound simultaneously.

Madhyamaka: 'But it is not perfect'. What this means is that one person can be both father and son simultaneously, but not as a perfectly established phenomenon. This means that it is only a merely imputed phenomenon, and not ultimately established on the one person. That person is not ultimately both father and son, but only nominally on an imputed level. Being perfectly established is a synonym for being inherently established.

The **Madhyamaka** say, 'Your example does not really fit here because you assert that one consciousness is ultimately both the apprehension of sound and the apprehension of form. In the example it is possible for one person to be both father and son, because that person does not exist ultimately as father and son, but is only merely labelled as father and son'.

*Thus, courage and particles [64]
As well as darkness are neither father nor son.
It is not seen as possessing
The nature of apprehending sound.*

This explains to the **Samkya** why something that ultimately exists cannot be labelled both as father and son at the same time.

Madhyamaka: 'Within the primary principle, where the three qualities of courage, particles and darkness are in a state of balance, the natures of father and son do not exist, since you yourself say, 'the supreme nature of qualities is not something that can be seen; Whatever can be seen is an accumulation, like an illusion.'

Courage refers to happiness; particles refer to equanimity; darkness refers to suffering. The natures of father and son can not exist within the primary principle, or ultimate truth, because the primary principle cannot be observed. It is not possible for the primary principle to be both son and father on different occasions, because it is the primordial substance. The reasoning is that since it is the primordial substance, it cannot be present within the expressions of that substance.

Madhyamaka: 'Further, if the apprehension of form were to possess the apprehension of sound, then that would be something observable, which it is not.'

If, 'like an actor, it is seen [65]
In a different guise,' - it is impermanent.
In case, 'the different guise is one
With it,' that is without precedent.

Samkya: 'The different apprehensions are different expressions of the one consciousness, like an actor who is seen in different guises at different times.'

Madhyamaka: 'It follows that the person is not a permanent functionality because at one time is in the mode of the apprehension of sound, and then later it is in the mode of the apprehension of form. It is not a permanent functionality, because it is later something that it wasn't earlier, and it is earlier something that it won't be later, which makes it an impermanent object.'

The **Samkya** reply, 'There is no fault because the earlier and later apprehension of form and sound are of one nature'.

Madhyamaka: 'If you say that the subsequent apprehension of form is of one nature with the earlier apprehension of sound, then that is without precedent because they exist at completely different instances.'

In case, 'the different guise is not true,' [66]
That is how you assert your nature.
If you say, 'only consciousness', according
To that it follows that all beings are one.
Also the animate and inanimate [67ab]
Become one because of their shared existence.

Samkya: 'There is no fault, because the different appearances are not true. The appearance of a different guise is misleading.'

Madhyamaka: 'If consciousness does not appear the way it exists, then when you refer to consciousness as being truly existent, what consciousness are you talking about? If it is not true it can not be truly existent'.

Samkya: 'The very person that is knowing consciousness is truly existent.'

Madhyamaka: 'Then it follows that all beings that are actually of different continuum would be one, because they are truly existent, permanent, pervasive, partless consciousnesses. Further, not only would all beings be one, but all animate and inanimate objects would be one, because of being permanent, partless, and pervasive.'

When the particulars are distorted [67cd]
Then what could be their shared basis?

Out of the twenty-five categories of objects, the Samkya say that twenty-three are false, while the person and the primary principle are true and are truly existent. How could these various distorted false expressions of the

primary principle have the truly existent primary principle as their shared basis? That is not possible because the expressions are false.

Next time is discussion group and then exam. Have a good discussion. Also, everybody should come to the exam, do their best and write a good exam!

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version
© **Tara Institute**

Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

21 June 2005

Please sit yourself comfortably in the meditation posture and generate a virtuous motivation. Initially turn the mind inwards, and then generate the virtuous motivation of wanting to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings thinking, 'In order to achieve this purpose I am now going to listen to this profound teaching, and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

2.2.1.2.2. Refuting the position of the Particularists (Vaishesika) that the self is matter

*The inanimate is also not the self [68]
For the very reason that it is inanimate, like a vase.
Then if, 'because it is endowed with consciousness
It is conscious,' it follows not knowing becomes
redundant.*

*If there is nothing that becomes the self [69]
How does the mind affect it?
Thus, devoid of consciousness and action,
It is as if space has been made the self.*

Madhyamaka: Not only is consciousness not the self, but neither is matter the self. The assertion that the self is matter, as posited by the Particularists, is invalid. The inanimate is not the self for the very reason that it is inanimate, for example, like the vase. The self has to be something that possesses mind, and form does not possess mind. Therefore it cannot be the self.

If something that is inanimate were to be the self, then it would follow that, since it does not possess mind, it would not know anything.

Particularists: Even though the self is matter, because it is established through dependent arising it can possess mind.

Madhyamaka: That the person later comes to know the five sense objects through outer conditions, refutes the assertion of a truly existent person who initially does not know the five sense objects.

Also, if there is nothing that becomes the self, then how does the mind affect it? Since the self is permanent then how could it know something through conditions? As the Particularists assert that the self is devoid of impermanence, and assert that the self is permanent, it follows that the self is also devoid of action and activity. It also implies that the self cannot actually be affected by causes and conditions, which means that it cannot know through causes and conditions.

'To sum up, if you assert such a self you might as well say that space is the self.'

The **Particularists** assert a self that they say is form, but at the same time they say that it is permanent and truly existent. The **Madhyamika** initially presented the argument that that which does not have mind, the

inanimate, is also not the self for the very reason that, like a vase, it doesn't have mind. To this the **Particularists** replied that the self does have mind, because it is established through different causes and conditions. Then the **Madhyamaka** say, 'Well if you say that the self knows through different causes and conditions, then that negates your assertion that the self exists truly. Further, if the self is permanent and is devoid of any action or activity, then it also cannot be affected by anything. To sum up, if you assert a self that does not know and is devoid of action, you might as well assert that space is the self'.

2.2.1.2.3. Refuting objections regarding the Buddhist position on the self

This deals with the argument by the non-Buddhists saying that the self has to be permanent, because the self has to pervade all past and future lives. They say this would not be possible if the self were impermanent. The Buddhist view is that the self is impermanent; it changes on a basis that it is momentary. The non-Buddhists say that since the self comes from past lives to future lives, it therefore has to exist in all past and future lives, and therefore the self has to be permanent.

Here there are three objections:

1. If the self were impermanent then the karmic cause and effect could not exist.
2. If the self were impermanent then it would be invalid to meditate on compassion.
3. (The non-Buddhists say that the permanent self has not been refuted.¹)

If the self were impermanent then the karmic cause and effect could not exist

*In case it is said, 'Should the self not exist, [70]
Karmic cause and effect relationships
Become invalid because if one disintegrates upon
Creating the karma, whose karma does it become?'*

This is an important point since the self is that which is bound to cyclic existence, and that which is liberated from cyclic existence. The self creates karmic causes and has to experience the effects. The **non-Buddhists** say that if the self is not eternal then the karmic cause and effect relationship would be invalid, because, for example, the person who creates the karma would not exist at that time when the karmic fruits are experienced. For the same person to experience the karma that he or she created earlier, that person has to be permanent. They say that only on the basis of a permanent self does the law of karmic cause and effect make sense, and that it does not make sense on the basis of an impermanent person.

The non-Buddhists assert an eternal self, because they say that if the self were impermanent, the person who experiences the karmic result would be different from the person who created the cause. But at the same time they do say that the self changes. The person who creates the karma is not the person experiencing the karmic result. But the person is permanent.

Answer by parallel reason

The basis of action and result is different, [71]

¹ This outline might be incorrect

*And though the creator self does not exist then,
Since this is the same for both of us,
Isn't this debate here pointless?*

The **Madhyamaka** make use of this view saying, 'Well, both of us accept that the person who experiences the karmic results is not the same person who created the karmic causes. This means that according to your reason both our systems would be erroneous. According to you the person experiencing the karmic results is different to the karmic causes were created. The self who created the karmic causes in one life does not exist in the life when the karmic effects are experienced. Even though you assert that the self is permanent in both instances, are we not both basically saying the same thing? Therefore isn't this debate here pointless?'

The Madhyamaka are saying that if the fault ascribed to them really existed then the non-Buddhists would have the same fault in their own system.

*Or do you say that with a cause is also [72]
Endowed with the result? This is not observed.
In dependence on one continuum
We refer to agent and engaged.*

Madhyamaka: Further, the persons of the earlier life and the later life are two different people. If the person experiencing the effect is permanent then that person should exist at the time of the cause. This means that the person creating the cause would also experience the result at the same time. That is something which is not observed.

How cause and effect is valid despite the person being impermanent

Madhyamaka: It is invalid to say that because the person is impermanent the karmic relationship is invalid, because the person who experiences the result is of the same continuum as the person who created the cause, labelled in dependence on one continuum. Here the person who experiences the result is of one continuum with the person that created the cause, because they have the same root consciousness.

In general one says that sentient beings are of one continuum with the superior Buddha because everyone becomes enlightened, but this is a different reason. Here, one says that the early and later persons are of one continuum, because they share the same fundamental consciousness. Because the earlier and later persons have the same fundamental consciousness they are of one continuum. That is why the person can create actions and causes and later experience the results, and why karmic relationships are valid. Of course, here one is not talking about a truly existent person, but a person who is labelled in dependence on the mental consciousness.

*The past and future minds [73]
Are not the self because they do not exist.
Then, should the generated mind be self,
There is no self because it disintegrates.*

At the time of the present consciousness the past consciousness has disintegrated, and the future consciousness has not yet arisen. Neither the mind that has generated and disintegrated, nor the mind that will arise through causes and conditions is the self. That is why one says that both the past and future consciousnesses are not the self.

One could think that the present mind that has been generated and not yet disintegrated is the self. But the present mind is not the self, because in the next moment it disintegrates. When its nature disintegrates the self does not exist, so the present mind is also not the self. This argument is designed for the non-Buddhist view of self.

*For example, like the banana tree, [74]
When taken apart nothing is there.
Similarly, when looking with analysis
The self also is not perfect.*

On analysis the self is not found to exist inherently. The **non-Buddhists** assert that at the time of analysis there is a self to be found. This is refuted by the **Madhyamaka**, who say that when one analyses the different parts of the basis of imputation, such as the mind and so forth, then the self is not to be found. It is like the banana tree which is made up of an accumulation of leaves. One can pull off one leaf after the other to see what is inside, but after the last leaf there is nothing left. Similarly, when analysing whether or not the self exists truly, at the end of the analysis one will arrive at the lack of a truly existent self.

If the self were not to exist inherently then there would be no object of compassion

*If, 'If there is no sentient being, [75]
Then to whom does one practice compassion?'
That accepted to achieve the result,
Labeled by ignorance.*

Non-Buddhist: If a person does not exist inherently then it is meaningless to generate compassion for that person, because that person does not exist.

Madhyamaka: Just because the sentient being does not exist inherently, that does not mean that there is no sentient being. The sentient being labelled by ignorance, accepted to achieve the result of buddhahood, is the object of compassion. The term *ignorance* here is not used literally for the ignorance that grasps at true existence, but figuratively, because sentient beings are merely labelled without differentiating them as truly existent or non-truly existent. That is, the absence of investigation and analysis becomes ignorance in a figurative sense.

(The permanent self has not been refuted)

*Without sentient being whose effect is it? [76]
True, but even though, it is posited by ignorance.
For the purpose of pacifying suffering
Ignorance of the result should not be opposed.*

Non-Buddhists: If the person does not exist inherently, then there would be no person who could experience the effect of enlightenment.

Madhyamaka: That is true; if there were no sentient beings then there would nobody to experience the effect of enlightenment. But even though sentient beings lack true existence, they still exist nominally. So the sentient being can experience an effect. There is no ultimately existing person who creates causes and experiences effects, but there is a labelled person who creates causes and experiences effects.

Here *ignorance* again is only figurative. When meditating on compassion to pacify the sufferings of sentient beings, one should not oppose the ignorance which merely labels sentient beings without investigation and analysis. This

means that one should not negate the nominal world while meditating on compassion.

This compassion is meditated upon without investigation and analyses into the person pertains to the view of the Madhyamaka that the mere person is the person for whom one experiences compassion. That person is not posited through investigation and analysis. In order to pacify the sufferings of sentient beings one should not refute the mere person, who exists independently of investigation and analysis, and for whom one can practise love and compassion.

*Pride, the cause of suffering, [77]
Increases because of ignorance regarding the self.
If, 'This can not be reversed.'
The meditation on selflessness is supreme.*

Non-Buddhists: Well, what is the ignorance that has to be refuted in order to attain liberation?

Madhyamaka: The ignorance that has to be refuted is the ignorance of self-grasping, which creates and increases the causes for suffering in cyclic existence.

Non-Buddhists: Well, this type of ignorance has been present in minds since beginningless time, and therefore it is not possible to oppose it.

Madhyamaka: Ignorance is an invalid mind that has no foundation in reality. It is a distorted consciousness and therefore it is weaker than the wisdom realising selflessness, which is rooted in reality and is valid. That is why wisdom can overcome ignorance.

This completes the outline of the selflessness of person. Next comes the selflessness of phenomena, which we can do next time. This meditation on the selflessness of phenomena is explained in the context of meditating on the four close placements by mindfulness.

*Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

Study Group - *Bodhicharyavatara*

༄༅། །རྒྱལ་ལུང་རྒྱལ་མེས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

28 June 2005

As usual, please generate the virtuous motivation of bodhicitta.

Last time we reached the point saying that the ignorance that has to be abandoned is the ignorance that grasps at the self of person and phenomena, which is the root of all suffering. The more figurative ignorance is not an obscuration and is not to be abandoned.

Then the **non-Buddhists** reply that it is impossible to abandon this ignorance grasping at the self of person and phenomena, because it has been in the mental continuum since beginningless time. To this the **Madhyamaka** replied that this ignorance can in fact be abandoned through meditating on selflessness, which is the method to abandon ignorance. It is possible for the wisdom realising selflessness to counteract ignorance, because the wisdom realising selflessness is rooted in reality. The ignorance grasping at the self of person and phenomena is a distorted consciousness and not rooted in reality, and therefore it is weaker.

2.2.2. An elaborate explanation of the selflessness of phenomena

Grasping at the aggregates as inherently existent is self grasping at phenomena. The non-existence of the apprehended object of that grasping is the selflessness of phenomena.

2.2.2.1. EXPLAINING THE SELFLESSNESS OF PHENOMENA BY WAY OF THE FOUR CLOSE PLACEMENTS BY MINDFULNESS

The definition of close placement by mindfulness is *an exalted knower on the path that is contained either in mindfulness or in wisdom*.

In the **lower tenets** the close placements by mindfulness meditate on the conventional general and specific characteristics of the body, feelings, mind or phenomena with the goal of liberation from the contaminated aggregates, while in the **higher tenets** the close placements by mindfulness meditate on the ultimate characteristic that is the emptiness of body, feelings, mind or phenomena in order to attain non-abiding nirvana. In both cases the focus is body, feeling, mind and phenomena.

Meditating on the four close placements by mindfulness according to the **lower schools** is for the purpose of being introduced to and realising the four noble truths.

- Meditating on the close placement by mindfulness on the body is done to realise that the body is in the nature of misery and suffering.
- Meditating on the close placement by mindfulness on feelings is to realise that the feelings of happiness and suffering are the cause for craving. Through the experience of happiness and suffering, craving for happiness and craving for the absence of suffering are generated. This makes one realise that the craving needs to be abandoned.

- Meditating on the close placement of mindfulness of the mind is to realise that the mind is impermanent, not the self, and so forth, and to eliminate the fear of becoming non-existent when entering nirvana without remainder.
- Meditating on the close placement by mindfulness on dharmas of phenomena is to realise all afflicted phenomena as the cause of suffering, and therefore something to be abandoned, and to realise all pure phenomena as the cause for happiness, and therefore something to be adopted. In this way one becomes induced into the four noble truths.

The way of meditating on the four close placements by mindfulness is by way of the general characteristic of the object, as well by way of the individual characteristic of the object.

Meditating on the four close placements by way of the **general** characteristic of the object, for example, in relation to the body, would be to meditate the body as impermanent, being in the nature of misery, being empty and being selfless.

To meditate on the body by way of its **specific** characteristics is to meditate on the body as being in the nature of the elements and the derivatives of the elements.

- In the context of this meditation the meditator comes to realise that the **body** is impermanent, suffering, empty and selfless, and in the nature of the elements and the derivatives of the elements. In this context the meditator also comes to realise the impurity of the body, which would be one aspect of this meditation.
- When one meditates on the close placement by mindfulness on **feeling**, one can do it from the point of view of the general characteristics of impermanence, misery, empty and selfless, or one does it from the point of view of the specific characteristic of the nature of experience.
- The specific characteristic of **mind** is the nature focusing.
- The specific nature of **phenomena** is mental factors, which refers to the different virtuous and non-virtuous mental factors.

For example, in the context of the body, the mindfulness keeps the mind focussed on the object of the body, while the wisdom investigates the different general characteristics of the body such as its impermanence, being in the nature of misery, being empty and selfless, or the specific characteristics of being in the nature of the elements and the derivatives of the elements. Meditating on the impure nature of the different parts of the body or the body as a whole and so forth, all fall into this category. This is a very useful meditation that you should try to do.

This heading is discussed under four points.

2.2.2.1.1. Meditating on the close placement by the mindfulness of body

2.2.2.1.2. Meditating on the close placement by the mindfulness of feeling

2.2.2.1.3. Meditating on the close placement by the mindfulness of mind

2.2.2.1.4. Meditating on the close placement by the mindfulness of phenomena

2.2.2.1.1. Meditating on the close placement by the mindfulness of the body

Here in the context of the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, the close placement by mindfulness on the body is meditation on the emptiness of the body.

Meditation of the mindfulness of the body comes in three outlines:

2.2.2.1.1.1. Establishing the lack of inherent existence of that possessing parts, the body

2.2.2.1.1.2. Establishing the lack of inherent existence of the parts

2.2.2.1.1.3. Showing that it is unreasonable to be attached to the illusory-like body

2.2.2.1.1.1. Establishing the lack of inherent existence of that possessing parts, the body

The body is not the feet or calves, [78]
The thighs and buttocks are also not the body,
The stomach and back are also not the body,
The chest and upper arms are also not the body,
The rib cage and hands are also not the body, [79]
The armpits and shoulders are also not the body,
The internal organs are also not it.
If the head and neck are also not the body,
Then what of this is the body?

If the body were to exist inherently, then it would have to exist completely from its own side, completely independently from anything else. It would have to exist independently from its parts, such as the different limbs and so forth. It would have to be findable at the time of analysis and investigation. If a person's body were to exist inherently, then it should be findable when looked for. Here one goes through the different parts of the body: *the feet are not the body; the calves are not the body; the thighs and buttocks are also not the body; the stomach and back are also not the body.* Why? Because the body is merely labelled in dependence on these parts. The inherently existent body is not to be found in any of these parts of the body.

The chest is also not the body, the upper arms are also not the body, the rib cage is not the body and the hands are also not the body because the body is labelled in dependence on these. *The armpits and the shoulders are not the body, also the internal organs are not the body and also the head and the neck are not the body* because the body is labelled in dependence on these. None of the individual parts of the body are the body, because the body is labelled in dependence on them.

In case this body abides [80]
In all parts separately
Then of course the parts abide in parts.
How can it abide in itself?

Here the opponent asserts the coarse body exists separately from its parts. This is then analysed.

If the coarse body is a phenomenon separate from its parts, does this body abide in all parts by dividing itself up, or does this body abide as a whole in each part individually?

In case the coarse body abides in all parts by dividing itself up then also the parts themselves abide in parts. The idea here is that each part of this coarse body abides within the parts of the body. If this coarse body abides in all parts by dividing itself out throughout all the parts, then the parts themselves would have to abide in a similar manner in their own parts. But this would become endless.

For example, if the coarse body abides within its parts, then one of those parts is the hand. The hand would also have to abide within its own parts, for example, within the different fingers. These too would then abide in their own parts and so forth. Thus it would become limitless. Thus, how can it abide in itself?

In case the entire entity of the body [81]
Abides in the hands and so forth,
How ever many, such as hands etc.,
Are found, they become bodies.

In the other case, if the entire entity of the body abides in individual parts, such as the hands and so forth, then the logical conclusion arises that however many parts there are, one would end up with that many bodies.

If there is no body inside or out [82bcd]
Then how is there a body in the hands etc.
If it does not exist apart from the hands etc.,
Then how can it exist?

If there is no body inside or out, then how is there a body in the hands and so forth? This inherently existent body that is of a different entity (as asserted by the non-Buddhists), or the inherently existent body that is of one entity with its parts inside, (as asserted by Buddhists) does not exist, because such a body is not found inside or out. If this intrinsically existent body were to exist, then it would have to exist either as the entirety of the collection of the body parts, or it would have to be findable in the individual body parts, or it would have to be findable separately from the body parts. Since the intrinsically existing body is not findable in any of these ways, then it does not exist.

Then, there is no body, body awareness is generate [83]
Through ignorance regarding the hands etc.,
Similarly to awareness of a person generated for
A heap of stones through the specific shape they are
placed in.
As long as the conditions are there [84]
The body will appear the being.
Likewise, as long as they are there regarding
The hands etc., they will appear as the body.

If such a body does not exist apart from the hands and so forth, *then how can it exist ?* There is no independently existing inherent body, however there is *awareness* of a truly existent *body* that *is generated through* the condition of *ignorance* grasping at the true existence of the body parts, such as the *hands* and so forth.

This is *similar* to the *awareness of a person generated for a heap of stones*, coming about through the *specific shape* of that heap of stones, and the ambiguity of dusk. Because of the presence of these conditions the mind mistaking that heap of stones for a person is generated. Similarly, because of the ignorance grasping at the true existence of the body parts, and the presence of the accumulation of body parts, the mistaken awareness of a truly existent body is generated.

For as long as the conditions are there, the body of stones will appear as the person. Likewise, for as long as the conditions of ignorance and so forth are there, body parts will appear as the truly existent body. This explains how the appearance of true existence is a mistaken appearance, or an illusion, which comes about because of the delusion of true grasping.

2.2.2.1.1.2. Establishing the lack of inherent existence of the parts

In the previous outline, the truly existing body was refuted, and now the basis of imputation of the body, the body parts, are refuted as being inherently existent.

Likewise, because of being the collection of fingers, [85]

The hand also becomes that.

They in turn are a collection of digits.

The digits are also divided by their parts,

And the parts are divided into particles, [86]

Should the particles be divided into directions,

Since the partitioned directions lack parts,

They are like space. Hence, there are also no atoms.

Just as the body is not inherently existent, as it is labelled in dependence on its parts, the hand also is merely imputed on the collection of fingers, and does not exist inherently from its own side. In turn the parts of the hand such as the fingers also don't exist inherently from their own side, because they are imputed on the collection of their parts. When one says that the hand is merely labelled in dependence on the collection of its parts, this also shows the lack of inherent existence of their basis of imputation.

If one checks, none of the individual parts of the arm such as the upper arm, the lower arm, the elbow or the hand and so forth are the arm. The reasoning for the parts of the arm is the same. They are divided by their parts, and are merely labelled in dependence on their parts. Those parts are again divided further into particles, and the particles are divided into their directions. The partitioned directions also lack inherently existent parts, so they are like space. No matter how much further one goes, one will never find truly existent parts. Rather, one will arrive at the lack of truly existent parts. That's why they are like space, and therefore there are non-truly existent atoms.

Similarly to space being the mere absence of obstruction and contact, here one also has the mere absence of truly existent parts. If there were truly existent particles, then there will have to be partless particles, because truly existent particles would have to be particles that exist independently of their own parts. As such there would have to be partless particles, and since there are no truly existent particles, then there are also no partless particles.

2.2.2.1.1.3. Showing that it is unreasonable to be attached to an illusory-like body

Thus, who with discerning faculty, [87ab]
Is attached to an illusory-like form?

What person that has discerned that the body is merely labelled in dependence on its parts, and as such is illusory-like, would generate attachment for the illusory-like form?

Here, the idea is that attachment generated for the body is generated on the basis of the distortion of the body into a truly existent body existing from its own side. We have previously introduced the idea that attachment to the body is generated in dependence on a mistaken conception of the body as attractive and truly existent. The perception of a truly existent body comes about because of true grasping at the body, and on the basis of that one generates attachment for the body, which appears to exist completely independent of any conditions.

By contemplating the four noble truths one's experience of cyclic existence will be lessened. With an understanding of selflessness one correspondingly lessens the experience of

cyclic existence. The reason for this is that when one understands selflessness, one also understands that the apprehended object of attachment is non-existent.

Here in the Prasangika system attachment can be regarded as true grasping. Attachment is generated in dependence on the mistaken conception elaborating the body as attractive, but also elaborating the body as truly existent. One then generates attachment for that truly existent attractive body.

It would be really good for you to sit down and do this meditation, analysing how attachment is generated in one's mind. By realising the lack of a truly existent body one has realised the absence of the object of attachment; one has removed the basis on which attachment is generated. Attachment disappears when one realises that there is actually no object there.

Did you understand that if there were an intrinsically existing body then it would have to be the one entity with its parts, or a different entity. If it is of one entity with its parts, then either the collection of the parts would have to be the body, or the individual parts would have to be the body.

Review

What is the focal object of the self-grasping at the body, and what is the apprehended object?

Student: The focal object of self grasping is the parts of the body, and the apprehended object is the appearance of the body as truly existent.

Aren't the parts of the body different from the body? Isn't there a different true-grasping for each of those? Also, the appearance of a truly existent body does exist. There's a danger that you might mistake that.

Student: The focal object would be the body and the apprehended object is the inherently existent body.

What is the focal object of the wisdom that realises the lack of a truly existent body?

Student: The lack of a truly existent body.

If the focal object is the lack of truly existent body, then what is the apprehended object?

Student: The lack of a truly existent body.

Didn't we talk about these two types of mind: they are of a different, mutually exclusive mode of apprehension, while have the same focus? They both focus on the body, but one grasps the body as truly existent, while the other one realises the lack of the truly existent body.

Student: Isn't it the case that to overcome attachment you have to accept that there's an object there? Yet you just said that there's no object and that is what makes attachment go away.

It is the apprehended object of the true grasping that is non-existent.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak

Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྒྱལ་སྤོམ་སྤོམ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

5 July 2005

2.2.2. ESTABLISHING THE SELFLESSNESS OF PHENOMENA THROUGH REASON

2.2.2.1. EXPLAINING THE SELFLESSNESS OF PHENOMENA BY WAY OF THE FOUR CLOSE PLACEMENTS BY MINDFULNESS

2.2.2.1.1. Mindfulness of the body (cont.)

2.2.2.1.1.3. It is unreasonable to be attached to an illusory-like body

Last time we talked about how to meditate on the selflessness of the body with close placement by mindfulness on the body, and we reached the verse which says that once one has understood the body as lacking inherent existence, then one is not attached to the illusory-like body. And because there is no truly existent body then there is no truly existent man or women.

The reason for this is that attachment to the body is based on true grasping at the body, because it is based on the perception of a truly existent attractive body. By realising that the body lacks true existence one takes away the basis for which one would otherwise generate attachment. By meditating on the body as being like space lacking inherent existence, one meditates on the close mindfulness on the body.

2.2.2.1.2. Meditating on the placement by mindfulness of feeling

Here one meditates on the lack of inherent existence of feeling. There is also the more common way of meditating on the close placement by mindfulness of feeling by meditating on the conventional aspects of the different feelings and the cravings that they generate.

There are four outlines:

2.2.2.1.2.1. Analysing the identity of feeling and refuting that it exists inherently

2.2.2.1.2.2. Analysing the cause of the feeling and refuting that it exists inherently

2.2.2.1.2.3. Analysing the effect of feeling and refuting that it exists inherently

2.2.2.1.2.4. Analysing the person who is experiencing the feeling and refuting that it exists inherently

2.2.2.1.2.1. Analysing the identity of feeling and refuting that it exists inherently

The reason why one generates attachment for that which gives happiness, and generates anger at that which gives suffering is because one grasps at the true existence of the feelings of happiness and suffering. On the basis of grasping at happiness as truly existent one generates a craving for happiness, which then makes one generate attachment for that which gives the happiness. On the

basis of the grasping of truly existent suffering one generates a craving for the absence of suffering, and one generates anger towards that which causes suffering.

Enlightened beings experience uncontaminated happiness, but their mind is not disturbed by craving for that happiness, because of their realisation of the lack of inherent existence of that happiness. While arhats don't experience any mental suffering it is possible for them to experience physical suffering. However, the arhats will not generate anger or aversion to that physical suffering, because of having realised its lack of inherent existence.

Superior beings only very occasionally experience mental unhappiness. Generally one can say that from the level of a returner onward the superior being will not experience any mental unhappiness. Their mind does not become disturbed by unhappiness, because they realise the lack of inherent existence of all feelings. They realise the lack of inherent existence of suffering and the lack of inherent existence of happiness, and therefore don't generate anger or aversion.

2.2.2.1.2.1.1. The feeling of suffering is not inherently established

*If suffering exists in such a way [88ab]
Then why does it not impede extreme joy.*

First of all, because the body does not exist inherently then feelings do not exist inherently. If feelings were to exist inherently, then once generated they would have to abide immutably forever. If suffering were to exist intrinsically then suffering would have to remain in one's continuum immutably forever, and it would not be possible to generate extreme joy.

However this is not the case as the existence of suffering in one's continuum does not impede the generation of physical happiness related to the body. Nor does it impede the generation of mental happiness. If suffering were to exist inherently, then there would never be any opportunity for that suffering person to ever experience happiness again.

2.2.2.1.2.1.2. The feeling of happiness is not inherently established

*If happy, then why does fine food and so forth [88cd]
Not provide joy when miserable?*

If the feeling of happiness existed inherently from its own side then the same thing would apply. The person would have to be eternally happy, and the feeling of happiness would completely cancel out any experience of suffering for ever.

Therefore, *why does fine food and so forth not provide joy when miserable?* If the experience of happiness is intrinsic, then why does the experience of eating fine food not provide any joy for the person who feels mentally miserable because of their child having died and so forth?

*Maybe because of being powerful it suppresses, [89ab]
And one does not experience happiness.*

Opponent: 'The feeling of happiness is present at that time, but it is suppressed by a powerful feeling of suffering, and therefore the person does not experience that happiness. That does not mean that the feeling of

happiness is not present in that person's mental continuum - it only means that it is suppressed.'

*How can that not in the nature of
Simultaneous experience be a feeling?* [89cd]

Madhyamaka: 'How can that not in the nature of simultaneous experience be a feeling? The definition of feeling is experience; feeling is by definition experience. How could one posit a feeling that is not experienced? That is contrary to the very nature of feelings. This is also the answer to the assertion that strong happiness suppresses intrinsic suffering.'

*Merely subtle suffering exists,
Isn't the coarse one cleared away?
If you say, 'It is a mere subtle joy,
Different from it', the subtle belongs to it as well.* [90]

Opponent, 'At the time of strong happiness it is not as if suffering could not exist at all, because although coarse suffering has been cleared away, subtle suffering still exists.'

Madhyamaka: 'How could one assert that strong happiness exists at the same time as subtle suffering? Surely happiness is not strong happiness if it cannot counteract subtle suffering?'

Opponent: 'This is possible because in fact this subtle suffering is a subtle joy!'

Madhyamaka: 'If it is subtle joy, then since joy is by definition happiness, subtle or not it falls within the category of happiness.'

*If, 'since the adverse condition is generated
Sufferings are not generated.'* [91ab]

Opponent (thinking they had refuted the fault of not experiencing happiness from food while mourning a dead child): 'When one is generating happiness from eating fine food and so forth, one is generating the adverse condition to experiencing suffering and does not experience suffering at that time.'

*Isn't the saying
'Feelings are conceptual fabrications' established?* [91cd]

Madhyamaka, 'Sometimes you say that the feeling generated by eating food is suffering, and sometimes you say it is happiness. Doesn't that show that the feelings of happiness and suffering are merely imputed by the conceptual mind?'

2.2.2.1.2.1.3. Advice to abide within the yoga of meditating on the lack of inherent feelings

*Because of that very fact this analysis
Should be meditated upon as the antidote of this.
The mental stabilisation derived from the field of
Analysis is the food of a yogi.* [92]

Because of the *very fact* that feeling lacks inherent existence the emptiness of feeling *should be meditated upon as the antidote of* true grasping at feeling. This realisation will nourish the *mental stabilisation* and internal realisation *of the yogi*, and also actually nourish the physical body of the yogi.

Food is something that nourishes one's continuum. The union of calm abiding and special insight of the yogi firstly nourishes the realisation of the yogi - it nourishes

the mind of the yogi. Secondly, it also actually nourishes the physical body of the yogi. That is why one talks about the food of concentration.

2.2.2.1.2.2. Analysing the cause of the feeling and refuting that it exists inherently

This has two sub-outlines:

2.2.2.1.2.2.1. Refuting that the meeting of sense power and the object is inherently established

2.2.2.1.2.2.2. Refuting that the meeting of the primary consciousness and the object is inherently established

2.2.2.1.2.2.1. Refuting that the meeting of sense power and object is inherently established

The cause of the feeling is contact, so feeling is derived from contact. But that contact is of course the contact that becomes the cause of that feeling. In general, feeling and contact are simultaneous, because the five ever present mental factors of feeling, recognition, intention, contact and attention always simultaneously accompany one's primary consciousness.

Without the mental factor of **feeling** one would not experience the object. Feeling comprises happiness, suffering and neutrality, without which there would be no experience of the object. Without **recognition** one would not be able to recognise the specific characteristics of the object. **Intention** is the mental factor that involuntarily draws the mind to the generality of the object. **Attention** is the mental factor that draws the mind to the particulars of the object. The mental factor of **contact** is generated through the meeting of the object, the consciousness and sense power and acts as the basis of feeling.

The five ever present mental factors accompany one's primary consciousness. One refers to them as the entourage of the five ever present mental factors, because they accompany the primary consciousness involuntarily. They are generated simultaneously from the same sense power with regard to the same object, but it is really the primary consciousness that possesses the object and sense power. One might possess a house divided into flats, which are rented by different tenants, but there is only the one owner.

*If, 'There is room between faculty and object',
How can the two meet?
If there is no room they are one,
What is meeting with what?* [93]

Feeling is generated through the contact between the object and the sense power. If the feeling were to exist inherently then the contact between the object and the sense power should also exist inherently. Contact between the object and the sense power does not exist inherently and therefore the feeling they produce also does not exist inherently.

Madhyamaka: 'If the particles of the sense power and object meet, do they meet with space in-between them or not?'

Opponent: 'They meet with space in-between them.'

Madhyamaka: 'This is not possible because if that object and sense power meet with space between them, then that space would be filled with particles of light or

darkness. Between them there would also be space, which would again have to be filled with particles of light or darkness. It becomes limitless.

‘If you say that there is no intermediate space between the subtle particles of the object and sense power, then they would have to completely fuse into one because, since they are partless, there could not be one part where they meet and one part where they do not meet. The two particles would become one, and therefore there would not be one particle that meets the other particle. For a meeting to occur there have to be at least two particles.’

The assertion of the opponent is that subtle particles are partless particles. If these particles meet without any space between them, then that negates the assertion of partless particles, because once they meet they obviously have direction, which negates the idea of a partless particle. If there is room between the subtle particles of the object and the sense power, then in that space between them are particles of light or darkness, and one can not really say that the particles of the object and the sense power meet, because there are these particles of light and darkness between them.

If the contact between the subtle particles of the object and the sense power occur without space between them, then the notion of partless particles goes out the window, because there is the part of the particles where the two parties meet. If contact between the subtle particles of the object and the sense power occurs without space between them then there are two possibilities: either you have the situation where there is a part of each particle where they meet, which negates the idea of the partless particles, or if there is no part of the two particles where they meet. Then as is says in the root text then they become one.

*Subtle particles can not enter subtle particles, [94]
They do not have opportunity and are equal.
Without entering there is no merging,
Without mixing there is no meeting.*

Partless particles cannot absorb into other partless particles, because there is no space between them and they are of equal size. Therefore they can not meet in any way. The reason is that if partless particles were to meet then they should merge, and if they merge they should penetrate or absorb into each other. But since they cannot penetrate each other they cannot merge, and since they cannot merge they cannot meet.

So the notion of there being direct contact between two partless particles is actually an oxymoron.

As it says here,

*How could it possibly be valid to say [95]
That the partless can meet.
In case meeting and the partless
Are seen, show it!*

Madhyamaka: ‘Therefore it is impossible to have two partless particles meeting. If you have observed such particles then please show us, but that you can not do.’

*Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Preliminary Edit by Adair Bunnett
Final Edit by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

good to train one's mind in these different ways of eating and drinking, such as meditating on the emptiness of the food and drink, and avoiding eating out of craving. One should try to eat on a basis of love and compassion, on the basis of bodhicitta - either generated bodhicitta or spontaneously arising bodhicitta.

One needs to start one's practice somewhere, and through continued training of one's mind, repeating the experience again and again. Then was in the beginning a state of mind generated with effort, will become spontaneous. Initially one trains in effortful bodhicitta but, with continued training, there will come a time when bodhicitta will be generated spontaneously in one's mind.

2.2.2.1.2.3. Refuting that the object possessor of feeling is inherently established

*Whether seen or felt, [99ab]
Through the dreamlike illusory nature*

Since objects seen or felt are dreamlike and illusory in the sense that they lack true existence, then also the feelings that they produce do not exist inherently due to their dreamlike illusory nature.

*Because it is generated simultaneously with mind [99cd]
Feeling is not seen by it.*

*Though generating earlier and later [100]
It is remembered but not experienced.
It does not experience its own nature,
And is also not experienced by others.*

*Since there is absolutely no one with feeling, [101]
Then feeling is not that very nature.
In this way, how can this selfless collection
Be harmed by this?*

If it is a truly existent feeling, then if it exists it has to exist all the time, and if it does not exist, it has to be non-existent all the time. The feeling generated from the dream-like illusory object is generated simultaneously with the mind. *Because it is generated simultaneously with the mind, feeling is not seen by* the mind. That experienced and that which experiences are of mutually different unrelated substance.

In addition neither the feeling that was generated earlier, nor the feeling that will be generated later is experienced. For a feeling to be experienced, it has to be in the present. But the inherently existent feeling is not seen by a mind that is simultaneous with it, and the earlier and later instances of truly existent feeling are not experienced at all. Feeling does not experience its own nature, and it is also not experienced by something else.

For those reasons feeling is not established within suchness. In this way how can this selfless collection of aggregates be harmed by non-truly existent feeling?

This way of meditating on the close placement by mindfulness on feeling is the uncommon Mahayana way. According to the lower tenets the common way of meditating on the placement by mindfulness on feeling is by meditating on feeling as being in the nature of impurity, misery and so forth.

The difference between mind and mental factors is that the mind primarily apprehends the general identity of the object, while mental factors primarily apprehend

different characteristics of the object. One can view the primary consciousness that is synonymous with mind, and its accompanying entourage of the five ever present mental factors, as being like a king and his ministers.

2.2.2.1.3. Meditating on the close placement by mindfulness on mind

2.2.2.1.3.1. Showing that mental consciousness does not exist inherently

*Mind does not abide on the faculties, [102]
Not on form etc., and also not in the middle,
There is also no mind in or outside,
And it is also not found apart.*

*It is not the body; it does not exist apart, [103]
It does not merge, there is also nothing elsewhere.
Because it is absolutely not. Therefore
Sentient beings are naturally gone beyond misery.*

Mind and primary consciousness are synonymous. In Tibetan there is a third word, *yid*, for which, unfortunately, we don't have an English equivalent. Sometimes it is translated as *mentality*, but that is mistaken, as *yid* is synonymous with mind. Mind does not abide on, or in, the faculties, which are the sense powers. The faculties are referred to as sense powers because they empower the apprehension of the object. For example, the eye-sense-power empowers the apprehension of form and so forth.

If mind were to exist inherently then it would have to be findable at the time of analysis. Mind is not findable on the faculties, or on external form, and is not to be found in the middle. The words 'not in the middle' mean it is also not found on the combination of faculties or form. There is also no mind inside or outside; it is not found apart; it is not the body; it does not exist apart from the body; it does not merge with the body; it is also not found anywhere else. Therefore at the time of analysis the inherently existent mind is not found.

There is no inherently existent mind found in relation to the faculties. There is no inherently existent mind that exists in dependence on the faculties, or that is endowed with the faculties. The inherently existent mind is also not found in the outer objects. It is not found in relation to the outer objects; it is not found in between the outer objects and the faculties; and it is not found on the collection of the faculties and the outer object. It is also not on the inside the body; for example, it is not found on the intestines and inner organs and so forth. It is also not found on the outside of the body such as the arms and legs. Because the mind does not exist in any other way, there is no inherently existent mind to be found in or outside.

There is no inherently existent mind to be found on the faculties. There is no inherently existent mind to be found on external objects. There is no inherently existent mind to be found in between the faculties and the external objects. There is no inherently existent mind to be found on the combination of the external object and the faculties. There is no inherently existent mind to be found in the internal organs of the body. There is no inherently existent mind to be found in the external limbs and external parts of the body. There is no inherently existent

mind to be found in any of the other aggregates such as feeling, recognition and so forth. There is no inherently existent mind to be found in the combination of all of the aggregates. There is also no inherently existent mind to be found as a succinct entity separate from the five aggregates. There is no merging between the mind and body that could be an inherently existing consciousness. Therefore the body is naturally liberated. Being 'naturally beyond misery' refers to the emptiness called natural nirvana, or natural liberation.

2.2.2.1.3.2. Showing that the five primary consciousnesses do not exist inherently

Should consciousness exist before the object of knowledge [104]

In reference to which object is it generated?

If consciousness and the object of knowledge are simultaneous

In reference to which object is it generated?

*Well then, if it exists subsequent to the object, [105ab]
At that time what is consciousness generated from?*

If the consciousness and its object were to exist inherently, then they would have to exist simultaneously all the time. Should the five consciousnesses exist before the five objects of knowledge, then in reference to which objects are these five primary consciousnesses generated? So the question is, are the five primary consciousnesses, such as the visual primary consciousness, auditory primary consciousness and so forth, generated before the five objects of forms, sounds and so forth?

If the five primary consciousnesses were to be generated before the five sense objects, then in reference to which object are these consciousnesses generated? For example, in the case of the eye-primary-consciousness, does the eye-primary-consciousness exist before the visual form? In reference to which object is it generated? What is its focal object? The normal sequence is that first one has a focal condition, which acts as the cause for the consciousness to arise.

Opponent: 'If it doesn't exist before, then it exists simultaneously with the object of knowledge.'

If the consciousness and the object of knowledge are simultaneous, in reference to which object is the consciousness generated? The eye-consciousness is not really generated in reference to the form, because they are both generated simultaneously. The form cannot act as the cause for that eye-consciousness.

If it exists subsequent to the object, then what is consciousness generated from? There is no inherently existent primary consciousness generated from the object, because there is no such thing as inherent generation.

2.2.2.1.4. Meditating on the close placement by mindfulness on phenomena

2.2.2.1.4.1. The actual

2.2.2.1.4.2. The refutation of objections

2.2.2.1.4.1. The actual

*In such a way the generation of all phenomena [105cd]
Is not realised.*

The words 'in such a way' refer to all the reasons given in the previous outlines. Neither the generation of all

compounded phenomena, nor the inherent existence of all non-compounded phenomena, is realised. In such a way the inherent generation of all phenomena is not realised.

Because compounded phenomena don't exist inherently, then neither do non-compounded phenomena exist inherently. The inherent existence of non-compounded phenomena is not explicitly mentioned, but once the inherent existence of compounded phenomena is refuted, one also understands the non-inherent existence of non-compounded phenomena. It is explained in this way in *Root Wisdom*: once one has refuted the inherently existent characteristics of compounded phenomena, then one will also see that there are no inherently existent characteristics of non-compounded phenomena.

*Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Preliminary edit by Adair Bunnett
Final edit by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

2 August 2005

Please generate the virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to attain complete enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. In order to achieve this aim I am now going to listen to this profound Dharma, and put it into practice as quick as I can'.

2.2.2.1.4. Close placement by mindfulness on phenomena

Last time we dealt very briefly with the close placement by mindfulness on phenomena.

*In such a way the generation of all phenomena [105cd]
Is not realised.*

These two lines explicitly show the selflessness of compounded phenomena. They say that the inherent generation of compounded phenomena is not realised, because compounded phenomena disintegrate moment by moment. The reason non-compounded phenomena are not explicitly included is because by realising the selflessness of compounded phenomena, one can easily understand the selflessness of non-compounded phenomena as well.

Compounded phenomena lack inherent generation. One reason for this is that compounded phenomena follow the three steps of generation, abiding and disintegration. They have no choice: initially they are generated, then they abide, and finally they disintegrate. If one is trying to take some meaning from inherent existence: if compounded phenomena were generated inherently they should be empowered to abide according to choice, and there would be no need for involuntary disintegration.

2.2.2.2. REFUTING OBJECTIONS TO THE TWO TRUTHS

The **Realists** say that the presentation of the two truths becomes invalid if compounded and non-compounded phenomena do not exist inherently. This objection is refuted in three steps.

2.2.2.2.1. Refuting the improbability of the two truths

2.2.2.2.2. Refuting the improbability of valid reason

2.2.2.2.3. Refuting the consequence of infiniteness

2.2.2.2.1. Refuting the improbability of the two truths

*In case, 'in such a way the illusory does not exist; [106ab]
How could both truths exist on it?*

The **Realists** ask, 'How can the two truths possibly exist if the conventional illusory does not exist? How can the conventional illusory exist if compounded and non-compounded phenomena do not exist inherently? It cannot as there is no basis. If there is no basis for conventional illusory existence then there is no basis for ultimate truth, which is the selflessness of conventional illusory existence'.

If phenomena do not exist inherently then the

conventional illusory phenomena, such as vases and so forth, do not exist, and if they do not exist then also their suchness cannot exist. Therefore there would be no two truths. The consequence is that there are no two truths if phenomena do not exist inherently.

*If it is illusory because of another, [106cd]
How can sentient being go beyond misery?*

The **Realists** say to the **Prasangika**, 'You accept that forms, sounds and so forth are illusory because, while appearing as true to the illusion grasping at inherent existence, they lack true existence from their side'.

The **Realists** continue by saying, 'You accept that forms, sounds and so forth exist only conventionally because, while appearing as true to the illusion grasping at inherent existence, they lack true existence from their side. If we look at this then your conventional existence is no different from the existence of the snake for the mind that grasps at the rope as snake - it is a mere elaboration by another awareness. In that case it follows that sentient beings cannot conventionally go beyond misery, because all conventional existence is a mere elaboration by a distorted awareness'.

*This superstitious mind apart [107ab]
Is not our illusion.*

What the **Realists** assume is that the mind through which nominal truth is posited is true grasping, because that is the mind relative to which one talks about truth. This is refuted here by the **Madhyamaka** who say, 'The object that appears to the superstitious conceptual mind of true grasping is not our conventional truth. That is not what we assert as nominal truth'.

Then the **Realists** ask, 'What then is your way of positing a nominal truth?'

*If this is ascertained subsequently it exists, [107cd]
If it is not it is not even an illusion.*

This shows the presentation of subtle nominal truth as asserted by the **Prasangika**. It says that subtle conventional truth is only realised after having realised emptiness. When it says it is 'ascertained subsequently it exists' this means that if, after having realised emptiness, the illusory object is ascertained as being able to perform functions and actions, then that illusory object is subtle conventional truth. If, after having realised emptiness, the illusory object is not ascertained as possessing a function and activity, then it is not even an illusion, it is not even a conventional truth, and does not even exist nominally.

We have been over this before but we can repeat it once more. One should not think of the lack of inherent existence as non-existence. When we think of an object lacking inherent existence we should think of the object as existing interdependently and relative to other objects. In such a way one is able to combine appearance and emptiness. That is how one can understand the **Prasangika** presentation of subtle conventional truth. Initially one has to understand emptiness. Subsequently to realising emptiness one analyses illusory phenomena, and if these illusory phenomena possesses characteristics such as being able to perform functions, and the activities of coming and going and so forth, then they are conventional truths.

If a phenomenon does not possess those characteristics then it is not even a conventional illusory truth. It is completely non-existent. To understand this presentation of the subtle conventional truth one needs to be able to unify appearance and emptiness. As was said before, when one thinks of a phenomenon as lacking inherent existence, one should not think of the phenomenon as being completely non-existent. Rather one should think of it as being a dependently arisen phenomenon, a phenomenon that exists in dependence on, or relative to, other phenomena.

In such a way one has understood that being empty is not contradicted by appearance. When one reflects on the phenomenon as existing interdependently, then one can understand that the phenomenon lacks inherent existence, and in such a way one can understand that its appearance is not contradicted by the emptiness of the object. In such a way one is able to unify appearance and emptiness.

When you say that form lacks inherent existence you have to think about what is implicit in the lack of inherent existence of form. You should reflect upon this. *[pause for reflection]*

When we say that a phenomenon is a dependent arising then what can we understand that is implicit in that. You should reflect on this for a minute. *[pause for reflection]*

By reflecting on dependent arising one understands the lack of total independence, and by understanding the lack of total independence one understands the lack of inherent existence. *[pause for reflection]*

It is very important to be able to unify appearance and emptiness, and to understand that the appearance of the object does not contradict its lack of inherent existence, or its emptiness, and that the emptiness of the object does not contradict its appearance.

Lama Tsong Khapa says that if one does not understand this unification of emptiness and appearance one will not understand the thought of the Buddha.

2.2.2.2.2. Refuting the improbability of valid reason

Conceptual thought and that imputed [108ab]
Are both mutually reliant.

The imputing thought and the object that is being imputed exist relative to each other. They are mutually interdependent and therefore they do not exist from their own side in the slightest degree.

Just as in dependence on renown [108cd]
All investigations are called

The imputing thought and that which is imputed are both mutually reliant, and therefore do not exist from their own side. They do not exist inherently and therefore they exist through renown as merely imputed phenomena to nominal valid cognition. Similarly, the all phenomena exist only nominally, in mere name.

The worldly way is to accept without question the reality with which one is presented. For example, one accepts without questioning that this object on the table is a clock, because it is renowned as a clock, and labelled as a clock. The worldly way is to just accept what one is presented with without investigation and analysis. The Prasangika

say that the way nominal truth exists in mere name is that it is posited without investigation and analysis.

2.2.2.2.3. Refuting the consequence of infiniteness

At the time when the investigating [109]
Intelligence analyses,
If the analytical intelligence is
Subsequent to intelligence then it is infinite.

'At the time' refers to the time of investigating the lack of true existence. This verse is asking whether, when an investigating intelligence analyses and ascertains the lack of true existence of all phenomena, another investigating intelligence is needed to understand the lack of true existence of the first investigative intelligence? Or is no other investigative intelligence needed? If another investigative intelligence is needed subsequent to the investigative intelligence that understands the lack of true existence of all phenomena, then one arrives at the consequence that one would need an infinite number of investigative intelligences, each one realising the lack of true existence of the previous one and so forth.

To express it more simply, if we have the wisdom that realises the emptiness of the aggregates then is another wisdom needed to realise the emptiness of that wisdom or not? If it is the case that one needs a subsequent wisdom that realises the emptiness of the initial wisdom, then logically one needs a limitless amount of wisdoms in order to be able to realise the emptiness of all phenomena.

Having investigated the analysed object [110ab]
There is no basis for investigation.

If a separate wisdom is not needed to realise the emptiness of the initial wisdom, then one can also say that there is no wisdom needed to realise the emptiness of that which is initially investigated, such as the aggregates. If nothing is needed to investigate the investigator, then also there is nothing needed to investigate that which initially investigated. If no second wisdom is needed to investigate the initial wisdom, then the investigation by the initial wisdom of the initial object of investigation is also not needed since all phenomena would be the same in not lacking inherent existence.

Since there is no basis it is not born [110cd]
This is also called going beyond misery.

The answer is that no second wisdom is needed to investigate the true nature of the initial wisdom, because when the initial wisdom realises the lack of inherent existence of its analysed object, such as the aggregates, there is no appearance of true existence to that wisdom. Therefore at that time there is no basis for further investigation into the lack of true existence at that time.

Also, as long as the realisation of the lack of true existence of all phenomena is active there is no object that is characterised by the analysis of whether or not the object exists truly or not, because as soon as one's consciousness starts to think that way, one immediately remembers that all phenomena lack true existence.

Also, the realisation of the lack of true existence of all phenomena overcomes any type of intellectually acquired true-grasping. Further, if the object lacks true existence, then both the object possessor and the object lack true

existence and are not generated inherently. This lack of inherent existence of the object and the object possessor is also called 'going beyond misery', which is their natural nirvana. By meditating on the natural nirvana one will attain the nirvana that is the abandonment of the adventitious obscurations.

It is good to think that by meditating on natural nirvana, one will attain the actual nirvana that is the abandonment of the adventitious obscurations. Let's say the meditator meditates on the emptiness of form. After having refuted the object of negation, truly existent form, and realising its emptiness, then by meditating on the emptiness that is realised, the meditator will attain the nirvana that is the abandonment of the adventitious afflictions.

At that time one does not go on to investigate the emptiness of the mind that realises the emptiness, which would be an unnecessary investigative activity. When one has arrived at the realisation of the emptiness of one object then does not go on and investigate the emptiness of the mind realising emptiness. At that time it is sufficient to stop with the emptiness of the present object. Later, of course, the emptiness of the object possessor will also be investigated. This is how one attains the actual liberation.

*Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

existence of the object of knowledge through the inherent existence of the consciousness, which is generated from that object of knowledge? Like before, the inherently existent object of knowledge generates the inherently existent consciousness, so therefore why should one not be able to realise the inherent existence of the object of knowledge from the inherent existence of the consciousness, which was generated from it?

In actuality, one can infer the existence of the cause through the effect. For example, we can infer the presence of fire because of the presence of smoke and so forth. But one can not infer the existence of the effect from the existence of the cause.

*If the existence of the seed is realised [115]
Through a consciousness apart from the sprout,
From what does one realise the existence
Of the consciousness realising that object of
knowledge?*

The **Madhyamaka** reply that there is a problem with having a truly existent consciousness as that which establishes a truly existent form. What establishes the truly existent consciousness? If the true existence of the seed is realised through a consciousness that is intrinsically other, then from what does one realise the existence of that intrinsic consciousness realising the intrinsic object? One possibility is that the self-knower does the realising, but that, of course, was refuted earlier, and there is nothing else that establishes that consciousness exists truly.

Summary

The **Realists** have tried in different ways to establish true existence: with quotation, valid reason, and through the consciousness itself. The Mind Only say that the both object and consciousness, for example form and the eye-consciousness, exist truly. They say that the true existence of the object of form can be established through the true existence of the eye-consciousness.

To this the **Madhyamaka** said first of all, that the reasoning is not valid. You can't posit a truly existent consciousness to establish the premise of truly existent form. There are many counter arguments refuting this premise.

Initially the **Realists** said that the true existence of the six types of objects is established through the true existence of the six types object possessors - the six types of consciousness. Upon being asked what basis, valid reason, or supporting valid cognition, they have for the true existence of the six types of consciousness, they say the six types of consciousness exist truly, because the six types of objects exist truly. So they have gone full circle.

*Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

Study Group - *Bodhicharyavatara*

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྒྱལ་ས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

16 August 2005

Generate a virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. In order to achieve this aim, I am going to listen to this profound teaching, and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

2.2.3. STATING THE REASONS ESTABLISHING SELFLESSNESS

After refuting the arguments of those asserting that things exist inherently comes the assertion of the arguments of those positing the lack of inherent existence.

2.2.3.1. Analysis of the cause - the vajra sliver reasoning

2.2.3.2. Analysis of the nature - the reasoning of dependent arising

2.2.3.3. Analysis of the result - the reasoning of the generation and ending of existence and non-existence

2.2.3.1. THE DIAMOND, OR VAJRA, SLIVER REASONING

The *vajra* in vajra sliver reasoning refers to a particular kind of vajra called the space vajra, which can destroy anything. Nothing can stand in its way, it even has the power to destroy Mount Meru and so forth.

The vajra sliver reasoning is an analysis of the cause. We went through this reasoning, which eliminates generation from the four extremes, in the *Introduction to the Middle Way*¹. It is referred to as the vajra sliver reasoning because it destroys the four views of extreme generation:

2.2.3.1.1. The object is generated without any cause

2.2.3.1.2. The object is generated from other

2.2.3.1.3. The object is generated from self

2.2.3.1.4. The object is generated from both

2.2.3.1.1. Refuting Generation from No-Cause [Carvaka]

If it is asked, 'by which different causes?' [117]

Of course by the preceding different causes.

Why can a cause generate an effect?

From the preceding cause's mere force.

The **Carvakas** assert that objects such as the sun, the moon, sharp thorns, the colours on a butterfly's wings and so forth are generated from no cause, and exist out of their own nature. They say, 'I have not seen anybody creating these objects, so therefore they must have risen out of themselves'.

Right now, the direct perception of worldly beings [116ab]

Sees all causes.

Shantideva says, 'Right now, to refute this view of yours I am not going to use any type of ultimate analysis. I am only going to refute you with a worldly nominal reasoning. For the time being, I am not going to use any ultimate reasoning, I am just going to use nominal reasoning.'

Worldly beings see most of the different causes that produce the different worldly effects such as a harvest. If they did not see the causes that produce the harvest then they would not engage in the manifold activities that produce a crop. But, because they can see that planting seed produces a crop, they engage in the effort of planting seed to get a harvest. The different categories of effects are generated by different categories of causes.'

The different petals of the lotus

[116cd]

Are generated by different causes.

Carvakas: 'From which diverse causes are the different results generated?'

Shantideva: 'The different categories of results such as the different petals of the lotus, the different colours on the butterfly's wings and so forth, are all generated by different preceding causes.'

Carvakas: 'Why can diverse causes generate diverse effects?'

The **response** is because of the force of the preceding causes. Secondly, one can say that all compounded phenomena are generated from a cause, because they are only generated occasionally. Because compounded phenomena are only generated when all the causes and conditions come together, this shows that they are generated from a cause. If they were actually generated from no cause at all, then there would be no reason for their occasional nature. They would always be there.

2.2.3.1.2. Refuting generation from a permanent cause apart

2.2.3.1.2.1. Refuting a creator god (Ishvara) [Particularists, Logicians and Enumerators, or Vaisheshika, Naiyayika, Samkya]

Here **Ishvara** is asserted as a creator god that precedes all of existence. This is asserted by the Particularists or Vaisheshikas, the Logicians or Naiyayikas, and the Samkya Enumerators. Not all enumerators assert **Ishvara** as the creator god, though. One section asserts **Ishvara** as the creator god, and another section doesn't.

The idea is that initially one has **Ishvara**, the creator god who is naturally generated out of himself. Then he creates all the different categories of awareness and objects of knowledge, the different worlds and the beings therein and so forth, through movement of his consciousness. They assert that **Ishvara** is both permanent, omniscient, and that movement of his consciousness precedes the different categories of objects of knowledge, the different worlds, and the beings in those worlds.

If Ishvara is the cause of migrators

[118ab]

What is posited as the entity of Ishvara?

Initially the basic question, 'What is the meaning of **Ishvara**?' is asked. One can learn a lot from this approach. **Shantideva** does not immediately enter into an argument designed to refute **Ishvara** as the creator of all of

¹ Chapter 6, *Introduction to the Middle Way*, verses 6.8c to 6.113, 15 April 2003 to 20 April 2004.

existence, but asks 'Exactly what do you mean when you refer to Ishvara?' This is a very useful approach. Instead of immediately contradicting the other person's view, one first asks, 'Exactly what is your thesis?'

*If you say, 'the elements,' it might be like that. [118cd]
Why get strung out over a name?*

Because the elements can be seen as a source from which everything arises, the possibility that Ishvara is the elements is examined. The **Madhyamaka** say, 'We agree that the increase and decrease in the elements produces the increase and decrease of the effects. Therefore, from this point of view, if you refer to the elements as Ishvara the creator god, then there is really not much to debate, as it's just a discussion about how to label the same thing.

*However, since earth and so forth are many, [119]
And impermanent, they are not immutable, not god.
Since they are stepped upon and impure
They are not Ishvara.*

Madhyamaka: You assert Ishvara as partless and immutable, having consciousness that establishes the worlds merely by thinking about them, being pure, being god, and also being outstanding. Therefore the elements of earth and so forth cannot be Ishvara, because Ishvara is partless, and they are diverse. The elements are impermanent, therefore they are not immutable, nor are the elements a god. Also, the elements are stepped upon and impure, and therefore they are not Ishvara.

*Space is not Ishvara because it is immutable. [120]
That the self is not Ishvara has been proven earlier.
Even a creator beyond thought,
What good is it to describe that beyond thought*

Space is not Ishvara because space is immutable, while Ishvara has to have a movement of consciousness that precedes all of existence. And it has been proven earlier that the self is not permanent or partless.'

To this the **Carvaka** reply, 'All of that does not really matter to us, because Ishvara is beyond comprehension anyway'.

To this **Shantideva** replies, 'If Ishvara is beyond comprehension, then essentially you are talking about something that you don't comprehend. So what are you doing expressing a creator beyond thought? If Ishvara the creator god is incomprehensible, then it is not known by you, it is not known by us, it is not known by anybody. Stop talking about something you do not comprehend.'

2.2.3.1.2.2. If it is permanent it is unsuitable to have conditions and to be the cause of all

*What does he want to create? [121abc]
Isn't the nature of the self,
Earth and so forth, and Ishvara permanent?*

As was also explained earlier the Vaisheshika, Naiyayika and Samkya assert a permanent self. Here, the 'earth and so forth' does not refer to the coarse elements, but to the particles that form these elements. While the elements are impermanent, the particles of the elements are permanent. They also, of course, assert that Ishvara itself is permanent. Hence, what does Ishvara create? Ishvara is permanent, the self is permanent and also the particles that make up the elements are permanent. All of these are unsuitable to generate a result because of being

permanent.

*Consciousness is generated from the object of
knowledge [121d]
And the beginningless happiness and sufferings from
karma. [122ab]
Tell, what is generated by him?*

These tenet holders are not nihilists, because they do assert karmic cause and effect. Rather they are eternalists. **Shantideva** asks, 'What is generated by Ishvara? Can you come up with anything?' The objects arise from the elements, and the consciousness of the objects arises from the objects. For example, eye-consciousness arises from visual form. The beginningless happiness and sufferings that one experiences in cyclic existence arise from karma. Hence Shantideva asks the Carvaka, 'Please tell me, what is left that is generated by Ishvara? It is not possible to posit an effect that is generated by Ishvara!'

These reasonings are very good to keep in mind, because it seems that there are many followers of Ishvara in the West, who follow the Hindu Tantric sex system. It is quite good to understand this reasoning so as to be able to refute Ishvara.

*If there is no first cause, [122cd]
How could there be a first result.*

This refers to the feelings of happiness and suffering that one experiences at the present time. If one asserts Ishvara as the direct cause for those feelings of happiness and suffering, then logically, since Ishvara has existed since beginningless time, those feelings of happiness and suffering should have existed since beginningless time.

*Why should he not always produce, [123]
He does not rely on other conditions.
If there is nothing not produced by him
How could he rely on these?*

'Why should Ishvara not continuously produce the present causes and conditions? He produces all effects and does not rely on any other conditions. This follows because if there is no effect not created by Ishvara then what conditions would Ishvara need to produce his effects. If there were simultaneously acting conditions then they would also have to be created by Ishvara.'

Ordinarily a cause needs concurrently acting conditions to produce a result. Consider, for example, the generation of the sprout. Ordinarily a whole group of causes and conditions, including a seed, is needed for the generation of the sprout. But what concurrently acting conditions would Ishvara have, since those concurrently acting conditions would also have to be generated by him. Therefore it follows that he would generate all the effects all the time.

*If he relies then the aggregation [124ab]
Is the cause and not him.*

Actually it is the completion of the causes and conditions that is the cause for the generation of the sprout. If the completion of all the conditions is not the cause for the sprout to be generated, and it depends solely on the wish of Ishvara, then the sprout should be generated at any time that Ishvara wants, even when the causes and conditions are not complete. If the generation depends on all the causes or conditions being complete, then the

aggregation of causes and conditions is the cause and not Ishvara.

If there is aggregation he is powerless to prevent generation. [124cd]

If there is no aggregation he has no power to generate.

One can observe that the sprout will definitely be generated whenever all the causes and conditions are complete. If the causes and conditions are not complete, then without any independence on their part, the sprout will not be generated. It does not depend on Ishvara's wishes.

If he creates despite not wishing to do so [125]
The he is under the power of other.
Even though wishing he depends on the wish.
Though acting, how can he be Ishvara?

Carvaka: 'The suffering of the lower realms is generated through the force of karma, without his intention.'

Shantideva: 'In that case he is not omnipotent. If he creates, even though not wishing it, then he is under the power of other and not omnipotent. If Ishvara's creation of existence depends on his wish, then he is under the control of his wish and therefore also not independent. In fact his wish would become Ishvara, but wishes are impermanent. In any case, how can he be the creator of everything? If he creates the sufferings of sentient beings, then how could Ishvara be regarded as superior? How could anybody who creates suffering for sentient beings be regarded as superior?

If one's happiness and suffering was determined by the wish of Ishvara, then one would be without freedom, and be completely under the control of Ishvara. We refuted the assertion of particles as being permanent earlier, when we refuted the assertion of partless particles.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version

© **Tara Institute**

Study Group - *Bodhicharyavatara*

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འདྲུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

23 August 2005

You need to generate a virtuous motivation of wanting to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings, thinking, 'In order to attain that state I am going to listen to the profound teaching, and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

2.2.3.1. ANALYSIS OF CAUSE - THE DIAMOND SLIVER REASONING (CONT)

We have refuted generation from no cause and generation from other.

2.2.3.1.3. Refuting generation from self

2.2.3.1.3.1. Refutation of generation from a permanent primary principle

2.2.3.1.3.2. Actual refutation of generation of self

2.2.3.1.3.1. Refutation of generation from a permanent primary principle

That a permanent principle is the cause [126cd]
Of migrators is asserted by the Samkya.

In English, Samkya is translated as Enumerators. They are called that because they classify phenomena into twenty-five categories of objects of knowledge. One of these is the primary principle, which has the six qualities of permanence and so forth. This permanent primary principle is the cause of twenty-three categories of phenomena, but it is not the cause of the self. These twenty-three categories are expressions, or effects, of the primary principle.

The Tibetan term *dro-wa* in the second line is usually translated as migrators. Here however it refers to that which comes from the primary principle. The primary principle is the cause of its expressions.

Then the question is asked, 'If this permanent principle with six characteristics is the cause of all its different expressions, then what is exactly this primary permanent principle?'

The equilibrium of the qualities of [127]
Courage, particle, and darkness
Is strongly asserted as principle
And their imbalances are its expressions.

The Samkya assert that this primary principle is the equilibrium of the qualities of courage, particles and darkness. The imbalances of these three qualities are the results or expressions of the primary principle. For the Samkya the three terms root nature, primary nature, and primary principle are synonymous.

The primary principle has six qualities:

- The quality of creation because it creates existence.
- It is permanent because it does not change.

- It is a solitary unit that is partless.
- It is all pervading.
- It lacks the quality of clarity. For this tenet the quality of clarity is associated with awareness. The primary principle is an object and not awareness.
- The quality of the equilibrium of courage, particles and darkness. These three qualities of courage, particle and darkness can refer respectively to happiness, suffering and equanimity. They can also be related to the afflictions whereby then darkness is ignorance, particle is anger and courage is attachment.

The twenty-five categories of objects

- Of the twenty-five categories of objects the primary principle is the only object that is a cause but not an effect.
- The next seven categories are the five mere forms of visual form, sound, smell, taste and tactile sensations plus awareness and pride. These are both cause and expression so they are both cause and effect.
- Then we have the eleven faculties and the elements which are solely expressions. They are solely effects and not causes. They are:
 - The five faculties of awareness, which refers to the five sense-consciousnesses. For the Enumerators the five faculties of awareness are not the physical faculties, but are the five sense awarenesses.
 - The five physical faculties: the mouth, or sometimes the speech (1), the hands (2), feet (3) and the two lower body openings (4 & 5).
 - The five elements: earth, water, fire and wind and space.
 - The mental faculty.

That makes eleven faculties and five elements. Of the twenty-five categories of objects of knowledge these sixteen are only expressions or effects, but not causes.

- The person, who is neither a cause nor an effect, neither a cause nor an expression. The Samkya assert that the person, or the self, has the five qualities of engaging, permanence, not being created, lacking qualities, and lacking action. This was explained previously in *Introduction to the Middle Way*¹.

Initially the negation of the primary principle focuses on the refutation of a partless principle.

For one to have three natures [128]
Is invalid. Hence it does not exist.
Likewise, qualities do not exist
Because they each have three aspects.

Shantideva: One quality of the primary principle is that it is the equilibrium of the qualities of courage, particles and darkness. At the same time it is said that the primary principle is partless, and that it pervades all of its

¹ Teaching of 18 May 2004

expressions. But to say one partless object has three natures is invalid. Therefore the principle cannot be a truly existent, single, partless entity.

Further, since everything possess the three natures in this partless way, because of being pervaded by the principle there is nothing that can be 'one'. And if there is no 'one' then there is no 'many', because one and many are mutually interdependent. 'One' exists only relative to 'many', and vice versa.

Further, the individual three qualities themselves cannot exist as truly existent single objects, because each also possesses the three qualities in the same way.

*If there are no qualities then also the existence
Of sound becomes very far fetched.* [129ab]

If the three qualities don't exist then the primary principle cannot exist, and if the primary principle does not exist then the expressions of the primary principle, such as the five mere forms of visual forms, sounds and so forth, also cannot exist.

*It also becomes impossible for non-sentient
Clothes and so forth to have happiness etc.* [129cd]

Clothes and so forth is a reference to the five objects of tactile sensations, and so forth. The Samkya say that the five mere objects of visual form, sound and so forth are both expressions of the primary principle as well as causes themselves. Therefore, if the primary principle does not exist then none of these five mere objects can exist, because they are all expressions of the primary principle.

Another reason why they cannot be expressions of the primary principle is because they are non-sentient, and do not possess mind, which makes it impossible for them to possess the three qualities of happiness and so forth. Non-sentient objects such as clothes and so forth cannot be a single unit that possess three qualities of happiness and so forth for the very reason that they are non-sentient. They don't have awareness, and therefore cannot possess the qualities of happiness and so forth.

*If functionalities have a causal nature -
Haven't we already analysed functionalities?* [130ab]

If functionalities are in the nature of truly existent causes haven't we already refuted truly-existent functionalities?

The five types of objects are asserted to be both cause as well as expression. If happiness and so forth is generated from cloth and so forth, then since subsequently cloth and so forth do not exist, the primary principle (which is the equilibrium of happiness and so forth) would also not exist.

*Your cause is happiness and so forth -
From that cloth and so forth does not arise.* [130cd]

*Happiness and so forth arise from cloth etc. -
Because it does not exist happiness etc. does not exist.* [131ab]

If happiness were to be generated from cloth and so forth, then as the cloth and so forth would be non-existent, there would be no primary principle possessing the equilibrium of happiness and so forth. It is impossible to have an effect without cause. The text goes on to say to the Samkya, 'However, you cannot actually accept this

because you accept the primary principle to be a permanent functionality'.

*Happiness and so forth as permanent
Is absolutely not an object.* [131cd]

It follows that the nature of happiness and so forth is not permanent, because it is not the object of valid cognition perceiving it as permanent.

Samkya: Happiness is a permanent functionality.

*If happiness exists only when clear,
Why is it not apprehended at the time of experience?* [132ab]

Shantideva: The quality of clarity is only associated with awareness. If the clarity of happiness exists as a permanent functionality, then it should follow that the experience of happiness is apprehended at the time when suffering is generated.

Samkya: When suffering is generated the experience of happiness becomes a subtle one. The coarse experience of happiness ceases, and what is left is a subtle experience of happiness.

*If it becomes subtle then
How can it be coarse or subtle?* [132cd]

*Since it becomes subtle upon discarding the coarse
The coarse and subtle are impermanent.* [133ab]

Shantideva: It is not possible for happiness to cease being coarse and go to a subtle state, because you say happiness is permanent. If you say that at the time of suffering the coarse state of happiness is abandoned and becomes a subtle one, that is too difficult to apprehend, then that indicates that happiness is impermanent. Its nature changes from A to B.

*Similarly, why do you not assert
All functionalities to be impermanent?* [133cd]

*If the coarse is not distinct from happiness
Then happiness is clearly impermanent.* [134ab]

Similarly, why do you not assert all functionalities to be impermanent for the very same reason, because their nature changes from A to B?

Further, do you assert that the coarse is a separate, distinct, substantial entity from happiness, or do you assert that it is not a distinct, substantial entity from happiness?

In the first case, even though coarse happiness ceases one still experiences happiness, which therefore negates that the experience of happiness is coarse.

In the second case, if the coarse is not a distinct, substantial entity from happiness, then happiness becomes very clearly impermanent, because when coarse happiness ceases then also the happiness ceases. If you accept this, then the permanent nature of happiness and so forth has been refuted.

2.2.3.1.3.2. Actual refutation of generation from self

*In case you say whatever is non-existent
Can not generate because of not existing,* [134cd]

*You are firm on generation of the unclear,
Though not accepting it.* [135ab]

Samkya: If something does not exist within the cause

from the start, then it cannot subsequently generate, because it is not possible for something to generate newly.

Shantideva: What do you assert as the meaning of the generation of the sprout?

Samkya: The meaning of the generation of the sprout is the manifestation of the non-manifest sprout that is present in the seed. At the time of the seed the sprout is present in the seed in a non-manifest unclarified form. When the sprout clarifies, or manifests, then that is the generation of the sprout. But for that to happen the sprout has to be already present in an unclear or a non-manifest form within the seed.

Shantideva: If you say that then you affirm the generation of the new, because you are saying that something that did not exist earlier does exist later. So your understanding of the meaning of generation is the same as ours, even though you do not label it as such. You assert as generation that that which does not exist earlier, the manifest clear sprout, does exist later. Although you don't accept our terminology for that process, we both accept the same thing from the point of view of meaning.

You can see how the Samkya actually open themselves to the Madhyamaka argument. Initially they say they do not accept the generation of something new. They say that that which does not exist earlier cannot be subsequently newly generated. But then, when they actually give the meaning of generation, they contradict themselves. They say that the meaning of generation is that the unclear, non-manifest sprout that is present in the seed subsequently becomes manifest, or clear. What they are saying is that the manifest sprout, which did not exist earlier at the time of the seed, does exist subsequently. That is when the Prasangikas say, 'Well, if that is the case, then you assert exactly the same as us. Basically, you have contradicted yourself'.

*If the effect abides in the cause then [135cd]
One would eat faeces while eating cooked food.*

*One would have to pay the price of cloth [136a]
For the seeds.*

Samkya: Excrement is the result of cooked food, so it has to be present in the cause. The result is of a partless, single nature with the cause, and therefore excrement becomes of a partless single nature with the causal food.

Shantideva: In a similar vein, one could just go to the market, sell one's clothes, and then for the money buy cotton seeds and wear those cotton seeds. The cotton grows from the cotton seeds, so the cotton seeds are the causes of the cloth. So the cloth has to be present within the cotton seeds. Therefore one could wear the cotton seeds in the same way as one would wear the cloth itself.

Samkya (being a little stung by the argument): Worldly beings because of their ignorance do not see that the cloth is already present in the seeds, and therefore nobody would do such a thing.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak

Edited Version

© *Tara Institute*

Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

13 September 2005

You should generate the virtuous motivation of bodhicitta thinking, 'I have to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. For that purpose I am going to listen to the following teaching, and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

2.2.3.1. ANALYSIS OF CAUSE - THE DIAMOND SLIVER REASONING (CONT.)

2.2.3.1.3.2. Actual refutation of generation from self

Refuting that it is impossible for an effect to not exist earlier and to be newly generated

*If the effect abides in the cause then [135cd]
One would eat faeces while eating cooked food.*

*One would have to pay the price of cloth [136ab]
For the seeds.*

The **Samkya** view of generation from self is that the result exists on the cause in an intrinsic partless manner, and these lines are the refutation of that view.

Shantideva: Since one can say that faeces are the result of the food that one eats, and that the clothes that one wears are the result of the cotton seed, then the faeces should be present in the food and the clothes that one wears should be present in the cotton seed. If the effect is present in the cause you might as well go to the market, sell your clothes, buy cotton seeds with that money and wear the cotton seeds!

Samkya: People normally don't do that, because due to their ignorance they cannot see that effect resides within the cause. Worldly beings don't know that the effect resides within the cause due to their ignorance.

Then **Shantideva** replies, 'You know that the effect resides within the cause due to your teacher, who you regard as omniscient. Since you know that the result abides in the cause you are certainly eating faeces when you eat food. Secondly, since you are able to understand it from your teacher, then other people should also be able to understand it. Why should worldly beings not see that the result abides within the cause?'

Trying to understand the view of the generation from self and the reasoning that is used for its refutation is very helpful for generating new insights.

Samkya: Worldly beings don't see it, because their consciousness is not a valid consciousness.

Shantideva: If it is the case that the consciousness of worldly beings is not valid, then what they see clearly (directly) also has to be untrue. For example the perception by worldly beings of the seed and so forth would also be flawed. One couldn't trust even what they see with their direct perception.

Showing that these faults do not apply to the Madhyamaka

*In case valid cognition is not valid [138ab]
Doesn't what it comprehends become not false?*

The **Madhyamaka** assert that every existing thing exists in a false manner.

Because the **Samkya** assert that everything exists truly they argue, 'Well, if valid cognition is not valid then whatever it comprehends would not be accurately comprehended as existing in a false manner. Doesn't what it comprehends become not false?'

*For that very reason your [138cd]
Meditation on emptiness is invalid.*

According to the **Samkya**, who assert that everything exists truly, a false valid cognition cannot comprehend a false object and for that reason they say that the **Madhyamaka** meditation on emptiness is invalid.

From the **Madhyamaka** point of view a false valid cognition can comprehend a false object.

Even though the words 'false' and 'true' are adjectives, here they refer to the adverbial meaning of 'falsely' or 'truly'. From the point of view of the adjectival meaning emptiness is true, because it exists the way it appears. But from the point of view of the adverbial meaning it exists falsely and not truly, because it lacks inherent existence.

Therefore the **Madhyamaka** say a false valid cognition can have a false object. Here 'false' refers to the way the object exists; i.e. as lacking true existence, inherent existence, intrinsic existence and so forth. In the adjectival meaning the object is true if it exists the way it appears, and the object is false as it does not exist the way it appears; i.e. there is a discrepancy between appearance and existence. That is the adjectival meaning. Here it refers to the adverbial meaning of whether it exists truly or falsely; i.e. lacking inherent existence.

Both the object possessor and the object are false, because they both lack true existence - they are empty of inherent existence. It becomes clearer in the next lines, which actually establishes the way the object and the object possessor are false.

*Without contact with the imputed object [139]
One won't apprehend its non-existence
Therefore the non-existence of any
False object is clearly false.*

This is another very crucial point to consider. Without the initial identification of the object of negation one will not be able to work towards the lack of the object of negation. 'The imputed object' refers to the true existence that is imputed by true grasping, and 'contact' means the identification of the appearance of that imputed true existence in the mind.

It is crucial that one initially identifies the object of negation that is imputed by true grasping. For example, the truly existent vase is imputed by true grasping, and likewise with the truly existent aggregates and so forth. Initially one needs to identify the appearance of the object of negation within one's mind, and only after one has done this can one start to establish the non-existence of that object of negation. It is very important that one

spends time identifying the object of negation, contemplating how objects appear to one's mind, and identifying the appearance of true existence that is imputed by true grasping.

The non-existence of the false object is clearly false because the false object of negation is impossible.

How the false object possessor can apprehend a false object

*Therefore, the thought thinking,
'The dream child has passed away'
Is the opposite of thinking that it
Exists, and is false.* [140]

The dream thought that the dream child has died is the opposite of the dream thought that the dream child is alive. They are counter-positives and they are both false. The thought thinking, 'Oh now the child has died!' cancels out the thought that the child exists, and both thoughts are false. Hence, one false object possessor can counteract another false object possessor. The **Samkya** assert a truly existent object possessor, but in the **Madhyamika** system it is possible for a false object possessor to apprehend the false object. The *King of Concentration sutras* give a variety of examples, saying that existence is like a dream, like an illusion, like a mirage and so forth. Even though it lacks true existence it appears as truly existent in nature, just like the horse or elephant of a dream appearing to be a horse or an elephant, when actually they are not and so forth.

If one realises the illusory nature of phenomena then worldly likes and dislikes will subside. On realising the dream-like nature of life and death of the dream woman or dream man, any like or dislike for them will cease. Similarly when one realises the lack of the illusory nature of the existence, then worldly like and dislike will cease.

2.2.3.1.4 Summary

*Therefore by analysing in such a way
There is nothing without a cause* [141ab]

By analysing in such a way there is no effect that is generated from other, such as Ishvara, there is no effect that is generated without cause, there is no effect that is generated from self and so forth.

2.2.3.1.5. Refutation of Generation from Self and Other

*It also does not abide on the individual
Conditions or the collection;* [141cd]

*It does not come from other,
It does not abide or go.* [142ab]

The result also does not abide on the individual conditions or the collections. The seed is the substantial cause of the sprout and it needs conducive conditions such as the elements of earth, fire, water, wind - the earth providing the basis, water loosening up the earth, fire provides warmth, etc. If any of those are missing then the seed won't ripen into a sprout. The sprout does not abide on any of these individual conducive conditions, nor does it abide in any of the collection of the conducive conditions.

The **Samkya** say that the sprout abides in the cause in a non-manifest form and then becomes manifest or clarified, which is according to them the generation of the

sprout. That the sprout does not abide within the conditions is something that can be very clearly observed. One can see that the sprout does not abide in any of the conducive conditions individually, or in the collection of the conducive conditions.

Also, it does not come from other; it does not abide or go. The sprout is not generated from an inherently existent seed, or from inherently existent conditions. It also does not abide inherently after generation or go inherently. It is merely generated from the aggregation of causes and conditions.

Therefore, for all those reasons there is no generation from self, other, both or no cause.

2.2.3.2. AN ANALYSIS OF NATURE, THE REASONING OF DEPENDENT ARISING

*How is that made true by ignorance
Different from an illusion?* [142cd]

*That magically generated by a magician
And that magically generated by a cause
Whence do they come from where do they go
You should analyse this* [143]

Is there any difference between the aggregates and the self, which are made true by ignorance, and the illusions that are generated by the magician and reflections?

Student: No, because they perform a function.

So are they similar?

Student: They are similar.

How are they similar?

Student: Because they don't exist in the way they appear to exist.

Are you sure?

Student: I think that is true, but I think maybe the answer should be that they are similar in that they are both products of ignorance.

They are the same in that similarly to the illusory horse actually not being a horse while appearing like one, the self and aggregates do not exist truly while appearing as if they do.

It is good to meditate on how phenomena are similar to illusions, and how they appear as truly existent but don't actually appear in such a way. Similarly to illusions appearing different from the way they actually exist, all phenomena appear to be intrinsically existent while actually lacking intrinsic existence.

For example, one can meditate on emptiness while one is watching a movie, because that is a very good example for the illusory nature of phenomena. One has right in front of one's eyes something that appears differently from the way it actually exists. Then one can transfer this meditation to other phenomena and their appearance of true existence. If one can grasp that, then one has understood a very important point. If one really thinks about the discrepancy between what appears and what is actually there, one will not generate attachment or anger for what appears on the screen, or in real life.

That magically created by a magician, and that magically created by a cause: where do they come from, where do

they go? You should analyse this. The illusions that are generated by the magician come about through causes and conditions, and likewise functioning phenomena also come about through an aggregation of causes and conditions. If they were generated in an intrinsic manner then at the time they were generated they would have to come from somewhere else, and then when they go, they would have to go somewhere else. So, analyse where these magical emanations that are generated from causes and conditions come from, and where they go to.

Generally, coming and going lack true existence, so if the sprout were to intrinsically come and go, it would intrinsically come from somewhere else, and go to somewhere else. One needs to analyse this absence of an intrinsic sprout that is coming and going.

Here one can use the syllogism: Take the self and the aggregates - they lack true existence - because they are dependant arising; like the reflection of form in the mirror.

*Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

20 September 2005

As usual generate a good motivation for listening to the teaching

2.2.3.2. ANALYSIS OF THE NATURE, THE REASONING OF DEPENDENT ARISING (CONT.)

Take the subject self and aggregates: it follows they lack true existence - because they are dependent arising; e.g. like the reflection of form in the mirror.

Illusion arises from the cause of ignorance, and the sprout arises from the cause of the seed. The sprout is generated through the aggregation of the substantial cause of the seed, and the conducive conditions of the earth, water, heat and the air. When these causes come together the sprout is generated. Hence the sprout is seen through its closeness to its causal seed. Elsewhere, illusion is seen through its the closeness to its causal ignorance. If the cause does not exist the illusion or the sprout will not be seen.

One can relate the example of the sprout, its substantial cause and all its conducive conditions, to the twelve interdependent links of dependent arising. Initially one has ignorance and from ignorance one generates karma. Without ignorance karma would not be generated and if karma is not generated there is no dependent link of consciousness. The dependent link of consciousness causes the dependent links of birth and name and form. From these the sources arise, and from these contact and then feeling. One can say that the sprout, the resultant illusion and so forth, lack true existence, because they exist in dependence on other phenomena - they are created. The meaning of being created is to exist in dependence on other phenomena, and that is the reason why they lack true existence.

Lama Tsong Khapa and his two sons labelled this reasoning of dependent arising the king of reasoning, because it is the supreme way to understand the lack of true existence. It contains all the salient points of all the other types of reasoning, and therefore it reigns over all the other types of reasonings just as a king reigns over his subjects.

Analysis using dependent arising overcomes all wrong views and conceptions. In the *Commentary to Bodhicitta* it is said that the reasoning of dependent arising is a supreme reasoning, because through it one establishes the karmic law of cause and effect. When some people investigate inherent existence they arrive at a nihilistic point of view, and this reasoning of dependent arising counteracts that misconception.

2.2.3.3. ANALYSIS OF THE RESULT, THE REASONING OF THE GENERATION AND CESSATION OF EXISTENCE AND NON EXISTENCE

We started with an analysis of the cause, followed by an analysis of the nature of the object, and now we have an analysis of the effect. If something exists from its own side, then why is it not feasible for it to generate an effect?

Student: Because it would have to be permanent.

Why should it be permanent if it exists from its own side? Actually, in that case it should not be permanent.

Student: Because it is would have to be unchanging.

It is acceptable to think that if it were intrinsic then it would have to be devoid of change and therefore it could not produce a result.

*What need is there for a cause [145]
For a functionality to come into existence?
Even in case it does not exist,
What need is there for a cause?*

If it is a functionality that comes into existence from its own side, then what need is there for a cause for that functionality? It does not need to be generated since it exists naturally. If this resultant functionality does not exist then what need is there for a cause, since it can not be generated.

*Even through one billion causes [146ab]
A non-functionality cannot be changed.*

Realists: I can understand why we do not need a cause if the functionality already exists, but one does need a cause if it does not yet exist.

Answer: Even with one billion causes an intrinsic non-functionality can never be changed into a functionality.

This is not negating that there is an effect that arises from the cause. Neither does this negation concern itself with negating that the effect exists at the time of the cause. What is being negated is that an intrinsic effect arises from the cause. In other words, an effect does not arise without a cause. So this is negating that an effect does not arise in dependence on causes and conditions.

*How can it be a functionality occasionally? [146cd]
How can a functionality be anything else?*

*If it can not be a functionality when it is not [147ab]
How can it become a functionality?
If it does not become a functionality*

It has just been argued that even with one billion causes a non-functionality can never be changed into a functionality. But if it were able to change, then does it change without abandoning its status of non-functionality, or does it change after abandoning its status of non-functionality.

In the case of the former, how can something that is a non-functionality also be a functionality, because being able to perform a function and not being able to perform a function are mutually exclusive.

In the second case the non-functionality becomes a functionality upon abandoning its status of being a non-functionality. This means one would need a third object, which is not possible. The reasoning is that if the non-

functionality becomes a functionality upon abandoning its status of non-functionality, then between abandoning its status of non-functionality and becoming a functionality it would have to be a third object, which is not possible.

How can it become a functionality? [147ab]
If it does not become a functionality

Further, if you assert that the non-functionality turns into a functionality without abandoning its status of non-functionality, then when does it become a functionality? At the time when it is a non-functionality it cannot be a functionality, because these two are a dichotomy. And when it ceases to exist it doesn't become a functionality, so both in existence and non-existence it does not become a functionality.

How can it become devoid of non-functionality? [147cd]

If it is not devoid of non-functionality [148]
It is impossible to be a functionality.
Also the functionality does not become non-existent
Because it would follow that it has two natures.

Further, if the non-functionality becomes a functionality upon abandoning its status of non-functionality, it cannot be devoid of non-functionality before being generated as functionality. As long as something is not devoid of non-functionality it is impossible to become a functionality, because both are mutually exclusive. This highlights the point that an object can only be one or the other. It can only be functionality or a non-functionality, and it cannot be something that has abandoned its status of non-functionality before turning into a functionality. In order for something to turn into a functionality it has to become devoid of non-functionality. For as long as something is not devoid of non-functionality it cannot become a functionality.

By showing that functionality and non-functionality are mutually exclusive, one can transfer this reasoning to inherent existence and non-inherent existence. Because it exists inherently a functionality cannot turn into a non-functionality. Here one has to relate it all to the object of negation. Non-functionality does not turn into functionality, because it exists intrinsically. Therefore all functionalities lack inherent existence.

2.3 Cutting off the mental fabrications of true grasping

Since it is not negated in such a way [149]
And functionalities do not exist
All migrators
Are never generated and never cease.

Take the subject 'the sprout': it is not generated from its own side - because it is not inherently generated as an existent, and neither is it inherently generated as a non-existent, for example, like a mule's foal.

Just as generation does not exist inherently, the cessation of the object also does not exist inherently. The sprout is not generated inherently and neither does it cease from its own side. The sprout is pacified from beginningless times and is refuted as being generated eternally. Basically this means that the sprout lacks inherent existence.

Migrators are like a dream [150]
When investigated they are like banana trees
Having gone beyond misery and having not gone -
They do not have any distinction.

Therefore all migrators always lack inherent generation and cessation. They are pacified from the beginning, and naturally liberated. Migrators are like a dream in that they seem to exist from their own side, findable at the time of analysis. However, they lack any type of inherent existence. Their actions and activities abide free and unmixed with inherent existence, despite appearing as though they possess inherent existence. When they are investigated with ultimate reasoning, then just like pulling the banana tree apart leaf by leaf, one will not find anything essential inside. Therefore there is no distinction between having gone beyond misery and not gone beyond misery - their nature is the same.

The person is the mere 'I' that is labelled in dependence on the aggregates. If one investigates how this 'I' exists one investigates the nature of the 'I'. An investigation of the nominal nature of the 'I' includes investigating the nominal nature of the person being the 'I' that is merely labelled in dependence on the aggregates, and investigating which of the three categories of functionalities it falls under - whether it is form, consciousness or non-associated compounded phenomenon, and so forth. This is the nominal analysis of the self. If one is then not satisfied with the self not existing in such a way and goes further, trying to find some intrinsic self that exists within the basis of imputation, then one is unsatisfied with the mere nominal existence of the self, and has gone into ultimate analysis.

Migrators of samsara are like a dream. They are not born, they don't die, and so they are like a water bubble and so forth.

2.4. The function of realising emptiness

The functions of emptiness are two-fold: to fulfil one's own potential, and for the purpose of others. Fulfilling one's own potential means meditating on the absorption of cessation in this life, while achieving the purpose of others means to meditate on love and compassion for them. This part of the text is very useful for one's practice.

Review

What is the definition for dependent arising?

Student: Produced by causes.

That which is established in dependence on its causes is the definition according to the Mind Only view, but that leaves out all non-compounded phenomena. If you say the definition is that which is established in dependence upon its parts, then that also includes non-compounded phenomena. In the Madhyamaka system all phenomena are dependent arising.

What reasoning do you have to use to oppose generation from no cause?

Student: If there is generation from no cause then anything can be generated from anything.

Doesn't Chandrakirti give the reasoning that being generated from no cause is actually contradicted by worldly direct perception?

What is posited as generation from other?

Student: An intrinsically existent effect arises from an intrinsically existing cause.

The generation of an inherently existent result from an inherently existent cause is the meaning of generation from other. Generation from self means that the effect is of a partless nature with the cause. Regardless of the text the same definition is always used.

Give me the syllogism that establishes the lack of inherent existence with dependent arising.

Student: Take the subject 'self and the aggregates': they lack inherent existence - because they are dependent arising; e.g. like the reflection of form in the mirror.

This reasoning would be posited to a person who has first realised that the subject self and the aggregates are dependent arising, and understood that if something is dependent arising it lacks intrinsic existence, and who is now investigating whether or not that makes the aggregates and the self also lack intrinsic existence.

To arrive at this **thesis** one has to all realise all three parts of the syllogism. One has to understand:

- the **subjects** of person, self and aggregates
- the **predicate**, lack of inherent existence
- the **reasoning** of dependent arising

To understand the **pervasion** one has to understand the reason of dependent arising on the subject, self and aggregates, and also the pervasion that if something is dependent arising it lacks inherent existence.

The person wants to understand the thesis that the self and aggregates lack inherent existence, which is a hidden phenomenon for that person. This is done by the reasoning of dependent arising. One firstly needs to understand that the self and aggregates are dependent arising, and then one needs to understand that if it is dependent arising then it will always lack inherent existence. That is how one arrives at the thesis that the person and the aggregates lack inherent existence. One can also use this model for other subjects and predicates, for example, 'take "sound": it is impermanent - because it is a product'. The system is the same. One has to contemplate how sound is impermanent because of being a product. If something is a product it is necessarily impermanent, and then one can arrive at the thesis that sound is impermanent.

If a person has understood that sound is a product and has understood that if something is a product then it is necessarily impermanent, then by combining these two understandings one can arrive very nicely at an understanding that sound has to be impermanent.

Hidden phenomena such as emptiness and so forth need to be understood in dependence on valid reason. One doesn't need any reasoning to understand obvious phenomena, such as the colour blue and so forth, because one can see them directly.

Emptiness has to be understood with reasonings such as the reasoning of dependant arising. One has to understand that the subject is dependent arising, and therefore it necessarily lacks inherent existence. By combining these two understandings one can arrive at the thesis or subject, for example 'the vase lacks inherent existence'. Then whenever one remembers the dependent arising of the vase one will also remember its lack of inherent existence. When one realises the emptiness of one subject then one realises the emptiness of all phenomena, because one can just simply just transfer the initial understanding.

First one investigates with reasoning and by following the path of reasoning one arrives at a valid cognition of the subject. Then one meditates on it repeatedly, thus deepening the understanding.

*Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སྡོམ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

27 September 2005

As usual please generate a virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. In order to do so, I am now going to listen to this profound teaching, and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

2.4. The function of realising emptiness

We have started with the outline of what one should do with the realisation of emptiness, which comes in two parts.

2.4.1. To achieve the purpose of self

2.4.2. Meditating on great compassion to achieve the purpose of others.

2.4.1. TO ACHIEVE THE PURPOSE OF SELF

This refers to subduing the eight worldly dharmas.

*How can functionalities thus empty
Be attained or lost?* [151]

*How could one be praised?
How could one be criticised?*

*Where do happiness and suffering come from?
Why does one like and dislike?
Having investigated this very nature
Who craves, and for what?* [152]

*When analysed, this life's worldly being,
How can it pass away here?
What will arise, what arose?
What is a relative or friend?* [153]

The eight worldly dharmas are the eight attitudes of worldly beings:

- ❖ a liking for gain and a dislike for loss;
- ❖ a liking for praise and dislike for criticism;
- ❖ a liking for being spoken to pleasantly and a dislike for being spoken to unpleasantly;
- ❖ a liking for happiness and a dislike for unhappiness.

It is important to know that the actual worldly dharma is that one generates happiness on receiving gain. Just receiving gain by itself is not a worldly dharma, as there are many superior bodhisattvas who possess great riches. The worldly dharma is that one is happy with gain and dislikes loss. Here dislike is anger. In *Letter to a King*, Nagarjuna told the king that he had to abandon the likes and dislikes of a worldly being.

As was the case in earlier investigations the eight worldly dharmas are empty of inherent existence. After meditating on the emptiness of the eight worldly dharmas, how could one have a liking for gain and a dislike for loss? How could one have liking for praise and

a dislike of criticism? How could one have a like or dislike for the gain or loss of functionalities that are empty? Where could happiness and suffering come from when functionalities are empty? If, as was explained before, functionalities are empty then why should one generate any likes or dislikes?

These lines of the text obviously deal with subduing the eight worldly dharmas. Getting a grip on the eight worldly dharmas is similar to meditating on immeasurable equanimity. One generates a state of equanimity that is free from like and dislike for gain and loss, and one also realises the lack of inherent existence of the subject and object. By comprehending the actual nature of their existence one can apprehend all of existence as being like a dream, and therefore not generate any of the eight worldly dharmas.

If one has an understanding of emptiness, then it is very helpful for lessening one's attachment and anger. Ordinarily, what happens is that when one encounters something that one likes such as gain, one generates happiness and attachment for that. If one encounters something that one dislikes such as loss, then one generates anger. At those times, there is a perception of the object as being truly existent, and also of oneself as truly existent.

For example, when one is criticised, there is a strong perception of oneself as existing independently from one's own side. There is also the perception of the words as existing from their own side, and the person criticising as existing from their own side and so forth. If one meditates on emptiness, seeing that the words, oneself and the other person are merely imputed by conception, then that is of enormous help in lessening and avoiding anger.

Similarly when one meditates on the emptiness of the pleasant appearance of the object, remembering that it is merely imputed by mind, then that helps to lessen one's attachment. Attachment is based on the appearance of intrinsic reality of the object and oneself. If one can overcome this perception, then one can greatly lessen one's attachment.

The generation of attachment and anger is based on the true appearance of the object. By perceiving an object as existing from its own side one generates attachment or anger for the object. Training one's mind in the meditation on emptiness - that the object lacks true existence, existence from its own side, inherent existence and so forth, and is therefore dream-like - will greatly help to lessen one's attachment and anger. The more the mind is consumed by the eight worldly dharmas, the less the person will be able to practice the Dharma.

As explained in the Lam Rim, one needs to subdue the eight worldly concerns in order to be able to practice the Dharma purely. Otherwise, one will not be able to free the mind from the likes and the dislikes of this life. The more the mind is consumed by the likes and dislikes for this life, the less the person is able to practice the Dharma, and the more difficulty the person encounters in this life. The more the eight worldly dharmas rule a person's mind, the more difficulty that person has in this life.

Emptiness is the antidote to all the afflictions. By meditating on emptiness one can counteract all afflictions. One should arrive at the awareness that it is essential to realise emptiness in order to be able to overcome the mental afflictions. Overcoming the mental afflictions will only happen relative to realising emptiness. So make a concerted effort to realise emptiness. Meditate on how the generation of the afflictions depends on the perception of true existence: then you can understand how overcoming the mental afflictions depends on an understanding of emptiness.

*Where do happiness and suffering come from? [152]
Why has one likes and dislikes?
Having investigated this very nature
Who craves, and for what?*

When one investigates the very nature of emptiness with ultimate analysis and reasoning, then one comes to an understanding that there is no ultimate person who craves, and neither is there an ultimately existing object of the craving.

*When analysed, this life worldly being, [153abc]
How can it pass away here?
What will arise, what arose?*

How can this worldly sentient being pass away in this life? What will arise in the next life? What arose in the past life? With such an analysis of the nature of the person, one realises that there is no intrinsic person. There is no inherently existent person who took rebirth in the past, who took rebirth in this life, or who will take rebirth in the next life.

*What is a relative or friend? [153d]
Everything is like space - [154ab]
That is how the likes of me should think of
everything!*

When investigated, there is no intrinsic relative or friend and everything is in the space-like nature of emptiness. As Shantideva says of himself, 'The likes of me should think of everything in this way'. Here, he is referring to himself from the point of view of an ordinary being. One should understand that the awareness of emptiness is the primary cause for the attainment of the qualities of liberation and enlightenment.

2.4.2. MEDITATING ON GREAT COMPASSION TO ACHIEVE THE PURPOSE OF OTHERS

*Those, who desire happiness, [154cd]
Through the causes of fighting and likening,
Are agitated or joyful; [155]
Are miserable, striving and arguing,
Cutting, stabbing, and creating negativity
With each other; It is a very difficult life!*

These lines explain the faults of cyclic existence as the focal object of compassion.

'Those, who desire happiness' refers to those who desire and crave happiness in this life. Despite desiring happiness, they are not beyond suffering. Why is that so?

Through attachment to the happiness of this life one regards the person who obstructs one's happiness and joy as an enemy. Then one starts fighting and arguing with them. One engages in all kinds of activities with one's

friends, which are supposed to bring joy, but they have the effect of agitating the mind and making the mind unhappy. In such a way, one is left in a situation where, regardless of what one does, one does not attain happiness, and becomes very miserable. This leads one to strive even further for happiness in those mistaken ways, and to start arguing with others out of frustration, and also to engage in physical fights, which can end up with stabbing.

One creates negativity by being negative verbally, and from one's mental non-virtuous attitudes towards each other. All of this causes lots of suffering and misery, therefore, looking at the situation of sentient beings, the sages don't generate any attachment for the happiness of this life. By reflecting on the situation of sentient beings in such a way, one can generate compassion for them.

Recognising this situation, those who are skilled don't generate any attachment for the four worldly perfections. Ordinarily, one spends a great amount of time accumulating and achieving worldly perfections. That is why one goes to work, earns money and so forth. But if one is proficient, one can recognise the fruitlessness of being attached to the worldly perfections and therefore give up attachment to them.

These points are very pertinent to one's life. How can one avoid generating happiness and suffering? With regards to the eight worldly dharmas, one can avoid generating attachment and aversion towards different objects. Reflecting on the sufferings of this life, and in this way trying to lessen the attachment to the perfections of this life is very relevant.

Everybody desires happiness, but ignorance always prevents the attainment of that happiness.

*Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྟུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

4 October 2005

As usual please generate a virtuous motivation.

2.4.2. MEDITATING ON GREAT COMPASSION TO ACHIEVE THE PURPOSE OF OTHERS (CONT)

2.4.2.2. THE FAULTS RELATING TO FUTURE LIVES

Last week we talked about the outline that dealt with contemplating the faults of samsara relating to this life¹. Now we come to the point of contemplating the faults of samsara relating to subsequent lifetimes.

Taking a higher rebirth from time to time, [156a]

This line relates to the fact that occasionally, through the conducive conditions of having met a virtuous teacher and having accumulated merits, one takes a higher rebirth. Through the ripening of one's merits, one experiences contaminated happiness in this higher rebirth.

*And having experienced plenty of happiness there [156bc]
One falls after death into the lower realms,*

Here, one should contemplate that the times where one experiences happiness in cyclic existence are very rare, as one only takes a higher rebirth occasionally. Also, the happiness that one experiences in that higher rebirth is very brief. Once the merits to experience such a rebirth have been exhausted, one falls into the lower realms. So one should contemplate that the present happiness, which is being experienced by using up one's merits, is very brief. After that, one is going to fall into the lower realms. Therefore one needs to contemplate what happens after this brief human life that one is presently experiencing. These lines are trying to direct one's attention to the future.

Contemplating these points - the briefness of the present human life, and the certainty of falling into the lower realms in the next life - should induce one to practise the path in order to counteract such a rebirth. By practising the path one can counteract the likelihood of rebirth in the lower realms in the next life.

Experiencing long and unceasing sufferings. [156d]

There are a multitude of precipices in samsaric existence, [157a]

There are a multitude of precipices in samsaric existence, because the accumulation of non-virtue abounds in cyclic existence. Therefore rebirths in the abysses of the hell realms are predominant in cyclic existence. That's the reason why we find that in cyclic existence the beings in the lower realms far outnumber beings in the higher realms. The reason for this is that the karma one

accumulates is primarily non-virtuous karma, which is the cause for the lower realms.

*Where it does not exist and is contradictory [157cd]
With the likes like this,*

What Shantideva is talking about is the wisdom realising selflessness, which does not exist in cyclic existence. Indeed it is contrary to a state in cyclic existence. Why has one taken rebirth in cyclic existence? It is because one has not realised selflessness. The realisation of selflessness is contrary to being in cyclic existence. Samsaric beings grasp at the true existence of a basis, path and result. For as long as there is grasping at the true existence of basis, path and result, then one will not realise selflessness. For as long as one has not realised selflessness, one will not be liberated. So, one has to realise the non-true existence of basis, path and result.

*Hence nothing like it exists in the world [157cd]
Additionally, [in Samsara] there is the inexhaustible
limitless*

Ocean of suffering without example. [158a]

Nothing like the wisdom realising selflessness exists in the world because samsaric beings grasp at true existence. In samsara, there is such a great ocean of suffering that it is impossible to find a single example to illustrate that suffering.

2.4.2.3. EVEN THOUGH ONE IS REBORN IN A HAPPY REALM THERE IS NO OPPORTUNITY FOR DHARMA PRACTICE

*Where thus it is weak [158bcd]
And one's life is short.
There are actions to live*

*And stay healthy; thirst and fatigue, [159]
Sleep and harm; likewise life passes by
Meaninglessly due to purposeless childish friends
and acquaintances -
The opportunity to think is extremely rare.*

This refers to the practice of virtue. Even if one is reborn in a higher state within this limitless ocean of suffering, it is very difficult to create any virtue, because as a samsaric being one's practise of virtue is weak. One's life is also short. That's easy to understand. Because one's life is so short, there is no opportunity for the practice of virtue.

In addition to having limited time in which to practise the Dharma, one needs to engage in actions to prolong one's life. But even if one lives a little bit longer, it is just a further opportunity to accumulate non-virtue.

All the activities that one engages in to prolong one's life, and live in good health without obstacles and so forth, take up a great amount of time. For example, the amount of time that is spent on cleaning and grooming one's body is vast. Some people stay in the bathroom for hours on a daily basis! I might for stay a half an hour having a shower and so forth. If one adds it all up, and looks at how much time in one's whole lifetime one spends in the bathroom, one realises what a great amount of time for the practice of Dharma and virtue is lost. For myself, while washing, having a shower and so forth, I recite mantras and meditate on bodhicitta and so forth, so that the time is not lost.

¹ Last week heading, 2.4.2.1. The faults relating to one's present life, was accidentally omitted.

Then there are also many other actions that one does to serve the body, such as clothing it, nourishing it and so forth. If one looks at all the time that is spent in supporting the body, it takes up a major part of one's life. Then there is also the time spent preventing the body from becoming sick; taking medicine and so forth. All of that adds up to virtually no opportunity to practise the Dharma, even though one is in the human realm.

Then the verses list thirst and fatigue, sleep and harm. In between looking after one's body, one becomes thirsty and hungry, which again makes it difficult to practise the Dharma. One finds it nearly impossible to practise the Dharma when one is thirsty or hungry, because the first thing on one's mind is to get something to eat or to drink.

People become tired and fatigued, which also makes it difficult or impossible to practise the Dharma. Rather than practise the Dharma the first thing one wants to do is to rest. Then there is sleep: while one sleeps, one doesn't practise the Dharma, and sleep takes up a major part of one's life.

Inner and outer harms also prevent one from practising the Dharma. Inner harm includes sicknesses and outer harm refers to being harmed by other human and non-human beings, which of course interferes with one's Dharma practice.

Not only does one not have time to practise the Dharma because of hunger, thirst, fatigue, sleep and harm, but what life time is left passes by meaninglessly, due to the influence of purposeless, non-virtuous, childish friends and acquaintances, who induce one to engage in all kinds of non-virtuous and meaningless activities. Thus time is wasted in accumulating non-virtue.

The opportunity to actually contemplate emptiness is extremely rare. Therefore, since emptiness is the method to become liberated from cyclic existence, one should endeavour to engage in listening, thinking and contemplation on the topic of emptiness.

2.4.2.4. CONTEMPLATING THE RARITY OF THE PRECIOUS HUMAN REBIRTH

*How can the method to overcome
Habituation with distraction possibly exist there?* [160ab]

Objection: I can meditate on emptiness while I have rebirth in a happy realm.

Response: One has been habituated to true-grasping and has engaged in limitless, different distractions since beginningless time. How could any method to overcome these different predispositions possibly exist? Essentially it's not possible. Even though it might be a happy rebirth, adverse conditions to meditating on emptiness still predominate. Conducive conditions to meditating on emptiness are exceedingly rare, even in a higher rebirth.

*Demons work there to throw one
Into the vast hells;* [160cd]

*There are many wrong paths,
And it is difficult to contradict doubt.* [161ab]

There are many obstacles even in a high rebirth. One is confronted by many inner and outer demons that work at throwing one down into the vast hells. There are many

misleading teachers who proclaim many different wrong paths. It is extremely difficult to contradict and clarify doubt. It is exceedingly difficult to find the inner and outer conditions in cyclic existence to generate wisdom, accumulate merit and find virtuous friends. One is now in this extremely fortunate situation, where one has found these conditions, and is free from many of these obstacles. If one does not practise the Dharma now, then it is extremely unlikely that one will be able to practise the Dharma later, when these conditions are not present. This is a reference to the precious human rebirth as the basis for the practice of the Dharma.

Next week is discussion night and after that you have the exam. On the first Tuesday after the exam, we will finish this chapter. Then we will continue with the tenth chapter on dedication. It is very useful to know how to dedicate one's merits. That will probably take us through to December. There are many verses, but we can just go through it as a word commentary.

I've heard good things: students who don't usually come to the Tuesday class attended the Seminar and they were very impressed not only with the depth of knowledge, but also the demeanour of the students - the way the questions were posed and the answers given in a very calm and nice manner. I am very happy with that.

*Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྟུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

25 October 2005

As usual please generate a virtuous motivation thinking, 'I have to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. In order to achieve that aim I am now going to listen to this profound teaching, and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

THE ACTUAL MEANING OF THE TEXT

2. THE ELABORATE EXPLANATION OF THE NEED TO GENERATE WISDOM

2.4. The function of realising emptiness

2.4.2. MEDITATING ON GREAT COMPASSION TO ACHIEVE THE PURPOSE OF OTHERS.

2.4.2.4. CONTEMPLATING THE RARITY OF THE PRECIOUS HUMAN REBIRTH

We have reached the part in the text that explains the rarity of one's precious human rebirth. It says that even though one has now taken a human rebirth, there are many obstructing conditions that can lead one astray and prevent progress and so forth. For example, the presence of many misleading teachers and many misleading tenets can easily generate distorted and afflicted wisdom, and even though one has a human rebirth there are many conditions that make Dharma practice extremely difficult and sometimes virtually impossible.

Therefore one should not allow oneself to be lulled into a false sense of comfort thinking, 'Oh, now I have a precious human rebirth and everything is going well, and even if it doesn't go well now I will just do better in the next life'. In fact it will be extremely difficult to find another precious human rebirth with all the good conducive conditions, such as qualified virtuous friend and so forth, in the future.

Searching for and gathering all the conducive conditions such as finding a pure virtuous teacher and finding the Dharma is extremely difficult, but one is actually in the presence of both of those conducive conditions now. They are extremely difficult to find. So making the mental excuse, 'Oh, even if I don't practise the Dharma purely this life, I can always do better in my next life' is an extremely misleading notion. In fact one can say that gathering these conditions again will probably not happen.

Finding freedom again is difficult [161cd]
And the coming of a buddha is extremely rare to find.

It is difficult to abandon the river of afflictions [162ab]
And weighted down by these one continually suffers.

'Finding freedom again is difficult' refers to the precious human rebirth that is endowed with the eight freedoms. It is extremely *difficult* to find this rebirth *again*. It is *extremely rare* to be reborn when a *buddha* has *come*. Even if one manages to do that, being reborn with a body

that has the freedoms necessary to practice the Dharma is even rarer.

The coming of a buddha is extremely rare and therefore to be reborn at a time when a buddha has come is even rarer. On top of that, to be reborn with the freedoms to practice the Dharma is rare, and to have to other conducive conditions to practice the Dharma is even harder to find. So it is an extremely rare occurrence to have a precious human rebirth.

If one does not rely properly on the virtuous friend that one has found now, and, following the instructions of that virtuous teacher, enter the path realising emptiness, then will be extremely difficult to extract oneself from the continuity the river of afflictions.

Without realising emptiness it is not possible to abandon the afflictions, because emptiness is the sole antidote. If one does not abandon the stream of afflictions then just as a river continues to flow one will be continuously weighed down by the different waves of suffering.

2.4.2.5. IT IS APPROPRIATE TO MOURN THE SUFFERING OF ONESELF AND OTHERS IS SAMBARA

Those that do not see their suffering [162cd]
Despite suffering to the extreme,

These, submerged in the river of suffering [163ab]
It is appropriate to mourn.

Compassion focuses on those who mistake suffering for happiness and who, despite extreme suffering do not see that they are suffering.

It is appropriate to mourn sentient beings who are in this situation. While meditating on sentient beings and their situation, one generates a feeling of grief for those suffering sentient beings, and that is an appropriate reaction. The Tibetan word conveys the unhappiness and grief that arises in the mind from this contemplation on the suffering of these sentient beings.

Who could not feel grief after watching sentient beings repeatedly go into a fire again and again, and who, even though they abide in extreme suffering, believe that they are happy, continually acting as if there is no old age and death for them?

*For example, some, after having washed repeatedly, [163cd]
Go into fire again and again.*

These two lines relate to sentient beings being lead astray by misleading teachers and misleading tenets. The words 'some after having washed repeatedly go into a fire again and again' relates to practitioners who believe that they can purify their negativity by washing in certain springs and rivers. Then they do other things such as sitting in rings of fire, believing it will lead to liberation, or they engage in other acts of self-mutilation and so forth, such as lying on a bed of nails, in the belief that these practices will lead to liberation. In actuality all that happens here is that further causes for suffering are generated. Even though there is the perception of happiness, all they have done is to generate further causes for samsara. Therefore these sentient beings become the object of one's compassion.

*Thus, even though abiding in extreme suffering, [164]
They make-believe that they are happy.
Thus those continually acting
As if without old age and death
Are first killed, [165ab]
And then the lower realms come without respite.*

There are those who, even though they abide in *extreme suffering*, mistake that suffering for samsaric happiness – they delude themselves into thinking that they lead a *happy* life, and behave as if they are already arhats who do not need to worry about experiencing the sufferings of *old age, sickness* and death; they believe that *old age, sickness and death* do not apply to them. *Continually acting* like an arhat who does not experience the sufferings of birth, aging, *old age and death, first* they experience death and then *the lower realms*.

An arhat is liberated from the sufferings of birth, aging, sickness and death and does not need to worry about them anymore, but sentient beings behave recklessly as if, like arhats, they have already abandoned these sufferings, and need not fear these sufferings anymore. They act as if they will live forever, believing that death will never come. But, through different adventitious conditions, death always comes. Then they experience the lower realms without respite.

That completes the explanation of the **focal object** of one's compassion.

The aspect of compassion

The aspect or the mode of apprehension of compassion is the wish for sentient beings to be free from those sufferings. The aspect of compassion is that one has an inability to be able to bear that sentient beings should experience these sufferings, and the wish that sentient beings be free from these sufferings. The aspect of love is a wish for sentient beings to experience happiness.

*Thus may I become someone from whose [165cd]
Clouds of merits a rain well borne*

*Accumulation of happiness pacifies those [166ab]
Tortured by the sufferings of fire.*

'*Thus may I* refers to a person who has reflected on sentient beings in the previously prescribed way, seeing them as being tortured by the sufferings of the fires of the lower realms and so forth. From one's *clouds of merits* may a *rain* of happiness flow down and *pacify* the *sufferings* of sentient beings.

This explains the aspect of compassion after having first focused on sentient beings who are tortured by the fire of the different sufferings. Then one generates the wish that from one's clouds of merits may a rain of well-borne accumulation of happiness (which refers to the different things that make sentient beings happy) fall and pacify their sufferings. May a rain of these accumulations of happiness (the different things that are necessary for a livelihood and so forth) be born from one's clouds of merits, and pacify the fires of the sufferings of sentient beings and establish them in happiness.

*May I, by respectfully building up the accumulation [166cd]
of merits
In the way without focus,*

May I, by respectfully building up the accumulation of merits, and by viewing the accumulation of merits as lacking *focus*, because of one's accumulation of wisdom... This is a reference to the accumulation of wisdom which does not apprehend the object of true grasping in any way.

By *building respectfully* and joyfully *the accumulation of merits* through the practices of generosity, morality and so forth in a vast and extensive manner, and by building up the accumulation of wisdom that lacks the object of true focus, may I be able to show emptiness to those who are destitute because of having the focus of true grasping.

*Be able to show emptiness to those [167]
Who are destitute because of having focus.*

May I be able to show emptiness to all sentient beings liberating them in such a way from cyclic existence.

In such a way *may I be able to show emptiness to all those* sentient beings who are destitute of the wisdom realising emptiness, *because of having* the *focus* of true grasping, and liberate sentient beings.

In such a way may I attain the state of omniscience to bring emptiness to all sentient beings.

A bodhisattva's practice of bodhicitta is the unification of the wisdom realising emptiness and great compassion. This is a reference to bodhicitta that unifies method and wisdom. Therefore one should likewise train in the bodhicitta that unifies compassion and emptiness and train in the path of the middle way.

Lama Tsong Khapa says that regardless of how much one meditates on renunciation and bodhicitta, for as long as one has not realised emptiness, one will not even attain liberation. Therefore one should train in the method of dependent arising. This is just another way of saying that one should train in the method of emptiness.

Gyaltsab Rinpoche says likewise that, without realising the view of the middle way, one will not even attain the state of liberation, and the state of an arhat. Therefore one should train in the path of dependent arising.

Therefore, seeing that samsaric perfections are empty of any essence just like the banana tree, one should give up samsaric perfections and rely on a Mahayana virtuous friend correctly in both in thought as well as in action. By training in the different methods for generating bodhicitta, which is the entrance to the Mahayana path, and by practising the supreme perfection of wisdom, one should accomplish one's own potential and the purpose of others.

The name of the ninth chapter is the chapter of the Perfection of Wisdom of the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*.

Next week we will continue with the tenth chapter, just by going through the verses. There will be no exam unless you have a specific wish to have one. The tenth chapter doesn't deal with very complicated philosophical themes so it is very accessible to everybody. It should be advertised that it is also suitable for people who usually come only on the Wednesday and Monday night classes.

© Tara Institute

Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

༄༅། རྒྱུ་རྒྱུ་སྐྱེས་པ་དཔེ་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

1 November 2005

As usual please sit yourself comfortably in a good posture, and generate the motivation of wanting to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. Then think, 'For that purpose, I am now going to listen to this profound teaching and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

We have previously completed the ninth chapter of the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* and now we go onto the tenth chapter. Of the six perfections, the tenth chapter explains the perfection of generosity, in the form of dedication. This chapter comes in two outlines:

1. An explanation of the dedication in brief
2. A more elaborate explanation

1. An explanation of the dedication in brief

*By the virtues of me writing the
Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life
May all migrators
Enter the Bodhisattva's Way of Life.*

[1]

This is quite clear. 'By the virtues of me' refers, of course, to Shantideva the author, explaining in *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* all the bodhisattva practices and their path to enlightenment.

By the virtue of me Shantideva writing *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* and also students listening to *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life may all migrators enter the bodhisattva's way of life.*

Shantideva dedicates all the virtues created from the composition and explanation of *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, so that all migrators may be able to enter the bodhisattva's way of life. The purpose of dedication is to save one's merits for complete enlightenment, and also to increase one's merits. By dedicating merits to a great aim, such as complete enlightenment, even small merits can be greatly increased and produce a big result. In such a way, once the merits are dedicated to complete enlightenment, they are also protected from being destroyed by anger.

In order to make a dedication, one needs to have some merits that can be dedicated, which is what differentiates a prayer from a dedication. A mere prayer is merely wishing and aspirational, and one does not necessarily have to have anything to dedicate towards that aim. But a dedication is a prayer where one actually has something to dedicate. One can say that if it is a dedication then it is necessarily a prayer, but if is a prayer it is not necessarily a dedication.

When one dedicates merits to the welfare of others and combines that with the wisdom realising the lack of inherent existence of the substance given and so forth, one can see how dedication is the perfection of generosity. By practicing dedication in such a way one places imprints on one's mind to attain both the form-body as well as the wisdom-truth body of a buddha.

The dedication of merits to the attainment of complete

enlightenment is the practice relative to conventional truth. Meditating on the emptiness of the three circles is the practice relative to ultimate truth. On the one side are the motivation, the actual action and the dedication of the merits, which is all relative to conventional truth. On the other side, there is the meditation on the emptiness of the practice of giving, the substance that is given etc., which is relative to ultimate truth. So one has both method and wisdom complete there.

2. The extensive explanation

This comes in three parts:

- 2.1. Dedication for the welfare of others
- 2.2. Dedication for the achievement of one's own potential
- 2.3. Dedication both for the purpose of others and self

2.1. Dedication for the welfare of others

This comes in two parts:

- 2.1.1. Dedicating that the unfortunate ones are relieved of their suffering
- 2.1.2. Dedicating for the completion of realisations of those who have already advanced

2.1.1. Dedicating that the unfortunate ones are relieved of their suffering

This comes in two outlines:

- 2.1.1.1. Dedicating that the beings of the three realms are free from suffering in general
- 2.1.1.2. Dedicating by relating it to the individual sufferings of the three lower realms

2.1.1.1. Dedicating that the beings of the three realms are free from suffering in general

*Those in all directions
Suffering in body and mind
May they through my merits
Attain an ocean of bliss and happiness.* [2]

In a way the verse is quite self-explanatory. *Those in all directions* refers all the beings residing in all directions, who are experiencing different mental and physical sufferings. *May they, through my merits, attain an ocean of bliss and happiness.* Compassion should also be generated in one's mind when meditating on this dedication.

*For as long as they are in cyclic existence
May they never fall from happiness;
May migrators attain the highest
Happiness for ever.* [3]

For as long they are in cyclic existence, may all sentient beings, when *migrators, never fall from happiness,* and *may they attain the highest happiness forever.*

2.1.1.2. Dedicating by relating it to the individual sufferings of the three lower realms

This outline concerns dedication to the alleviation of specific sufferings relating to the lower realms - the animal realms and so forth. We will go through the verses without mentioning the individual outlines, because there are quite a lot of them.

Even the wish for another sentient being to be relieved of a mere headache is an incredibly powerful virtuous thought. Therefore, there is no question that the thought of wishing all sentient beings to be free from all sufferings has limitless power and potential. One might ask, 'How is one's own purpose achieved by dedication?'. Well, the answer is right here. By generating this strong compassion and wishing sentient beings to be free from all their sufferings and so

forth, one accumulates a vast amount of merits because of the incredibly powerful virtue of these thoughts. By dedicating to complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings, one creates the cause for enlightenment, and as the practice of method, places an imprint to achieve the form body of a buddha. By meditating on the emptiness of the three circles, one practises wisdom and places an imprint to attain the wisdom-truth body of a buddha. In such a way all the aspects of the path are present. Compassion has great purifying power. We know this from the life story of Asanga. Therefore one purifies vast amounts of non-virtuous karma by generating all this love and compassion while dedicating.

There are forty-four verses in this outline. We are not going to read them all at once - they will come in instalments [laughter].

*May all beings existing
In the all the hell realms found
In the transitory worlds
Become happy and attain bliss through happiness.* [4]

May all beings that exist in all the hell realms that are found in all the transitory worlds be alleviated from their sufferings of heat and cold, and attain happiness and bliss through happiness.

*May those burdened by cold become warm. [5]
May water from
The great clouds of bodhisattvas,
Refresh the limitless beings burdened by heat.*

May those suffering the cold in the eight cold hells become warm and happy sentient beings. May the water from the great clouds of the two accumulations of the bodhisattvas alleviate the suffering of heat of the limitless beings burdened by heat.

*May also the forest of blade leaves, [6ab]
Become a beautiful pleasure tent.*

This relates to the sufferings of the neighbouring hells. After having prayed for relief from the hot and cold hells, one then prays for the alleviation of the sufferings of the neighbouring hells. *May the forests where all the leaves are sword and knife-like blades become a beautiful pleasure tent.*

This refers to a neighbouring hell where beings experience being cut and stabbed, because of having to go through a forest where all the trees have double-edged blades. Sometimes when you go into the bush, there are some types of big leaves that are quite sharp on both sides. If one goes through them without protection one could be quite badly cut. This neighbouring hell is similar. One dedicates that may these become a pleasure tent for those in this hell.

*May the trees of knife fruits [6cd]
Become wish-fulfilling trees.*

*May they be beautified by the melodious sounds of [7ab]
Wild ducks, red ducks and geese.*

This refers to a similar type of hell where one is walking through a forest and hears the screams and voices of those who were near and dear to oneself coming from the top of the trees. So one climbs up the tree but as one climbs up, the leaves and the fruits of the tree are knives that are turned downward. As one climbs up through them one is cut by them. Then, when one has reached the top, one's near and dear ones cannot be found. But there are many wild birds that will pick at one's head. [laughter] This contemplation is

very good because it instils the fear of non-virtue.

In ancient times there were wish-fulfilling trees, and if one prayed to these then one's worldly wishes would be fulfilled. So here one prays that these trees of knife fruits become wish-fulfilling trees. As to the knives and birds that are picking at one's head in this terrifying place, one prays, *May they be beautified by melodious sounds of*, and then the verse lists all kinds of birds that could be melodious such as *wild ducks*, a specific kind of *red wild duck and geese* and so forth.

After having gone through all the suffering of climbing up the tree and being cut in the process, and having one's head being pecked and one's brains being picked at by the birds, one hears the voices from the root foot of the tree and one starts to climb down and this time, the knives all point upwards [laughter]. So one goes through the same process again.

*May through lakes with greatly scented lotus flowers [7cd]
The realms of hell become happy places.*

*May the heaps of burning coals become heaps of [8]
jewels;*

May the burning ground become like a crystal ground.

May the grinding mountains become the crystal palace

Of offerings; May it become the abode of the Ones Gone to Bliss.

In another hell one experiences being ground up between these *mountains*. *May they become like a crystal palace of offerings and may it all become the abode of the Ones Gone to Bliss.*

*May the rain of burning coals, embers and weapons [9ab]
Become forthwith a rain of flowers.*

In China, it happens from time to time that it rains stones. Similarly, in these kinds of hells all kinds of hurtful things rain down. *May all of that become a rain of flowers*. For example even the human realm there are hail storms where the hail is the size of tennis balls. In the animal realm there are many experiences like that.

*May those cutting each other with knives, [9cd]
Forthwith throw flowers for fun.*

This relates to a particular type of hell rebirth where one is constantly engaged in knife fights to the death with an opponent. Then after both have died and fallen to the ground, a voice comes from the sky saying, 'rise up again' and one has to go through the whole cycle again and again. This verse asks that instead of fighting *each other with knives*, may these beings *throw flowers* at each other *for fun*.

*May all these beings [10]
Through the power of my virtue,*

Obtain the divine body of a god

And then enjoy themselves with goddesses.

This relates to the suffering where beings are boiled in hot water and so forth, until the flesh falls from the bones, which then turn white.

May the beings that are being boiled in hot water until all flesh falls from their bones obtain, through the force of my virtue, a divine body of a god and then enjoy themselves with goddesses.

Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

8 November 2005

Generate a virtuous motivation thinking, 'I need to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. For that purpose I am going to listen to this profound teaching and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

2.1. Dedication for the welfare of others

2.1.1.2. Dedicating by relating it to the individual sufferings of the three lower realms

The following three verses dedicate that the beings in the hell realms be liberated by the trinity of Vajrapani, Chenrezig and Manjushri, through the power of prayer and mental stabilisation.

The first of these three verses dedicates in relation to Vajrapani, who is the emanation of all the Buddha's power. The second verse dedicates in relation to Chenrezig, who is the embodiment of all the Buddha's compassion, and the third verse dedicates in relation to Manjushri, who is the embodiment of all the Buddha's wisdom.

*Why am I afraid here of the men, crows and vultures
of the lord of death?* [11]

*Whose power created this pure bliss and happiness
that dispels darkness completely?*

*Having thought this, may they look up, and see
Vajrapani blazing in the sky.*

*May they be separated from their negativities
through their joy of seeing him and become his
companion.*

Previously one dedicated that the sufferings of the hell realms cease. Here it says that after the terrifying noises made by the *vultures*, the *crows* and the different minions of *the lord of death* in the hell realms (who instil very great fear in the beings that live there) cease, may the hell realms be transformed into places of *pure bliss and happiness*. Then the beings there wonder how this has come about and look up into the sky.

After all the different fears, the terrifying noises and beings, and the darkness of the hell realms have been pacified, and the hell realms have become beautiful blissful and happy places (as one has prayed for in the previous verses) may all the beings *look up* and behold the powerful form of *Vajrapani blazing in the sky*. May great joy be generated in their minds *through seeing him* and through that *joy* may they become free from all *their negativities* and join Vajrapani as *his companion*.

*Having seen the fires of hell extinguished
By a rain of flowers and scented water* [12]
*May the hell beings think about where this
adventitious satisfaction of happiness
Came from, and see the lotus in Vajrapani's hand.*

This verse prays for the sufferings of hell realms to be relieved through the compassion of Chenrezig. It is somewhat similar to the previous one in that initially the sufferings of the hell realms are extinguished, and the sentient beings wonder about the cause of this. Then they

see the deity, which in this case is Chenrezig. *Having seen the fires of hell extinguished by a rain of flowers and scented water, may all the hell beings*, for whom one has previously prayed, *think about where this adventitious satisfaction of happiness has come from*, and may they *see the lotus*, which is Chenrezig, *in Vajrapani's hand*.

*Friend, come hither, far away from the dangerous one
within. You* [13]

*Will become free from all sufferings and be gone in
the power of joy.*

*The one who generates bodhicitta and love to rescue
all migrators,*

*Who will come to Manjushri with the radiant top
knot eliminating all fears?*

*A hundred gods make offerings to his lotus feet, he
has eyes moistened with compassion* [14]

And a rain of various flowers falls on his crown.

*He has a pleasant house, hundreds of thousands of
goddesses Melodiously singing his praises; behold
him!*

*Having seen Manjushri may the hellish minds
emerge.*

Here the scenario is that one of the hell beings is Manjushri, who invites all the other hell beings to join with him to get away from *the dangerous one* - the lord of death. He tells them that if they go with him then they *will be free from suffering, and be gone in the power of joy*, and *will join Manjushri* who has *the radiant top knot illuminating all fears, the one who generates bodhicitta and love to rescue all migratory beings. A hundred gods make offerings to his lotus feet, and his eyes are moistened with compassion. A rain of various flowers fall on his crown and he has a pleasant house where hundreds of thousands of goddesses melodiously sing his praises. Behold him!*

May all beings in the hell realms, after having seen Manjushri in such a way, break out in praises from joy and happiness.

There are two ways of viewing Vajrapani, Manjushri and Chenrezig. One, as the trinity explained above, and two, as three of the eight close disciples. The remaining five close disciples are Samanta-bhadra (Always Pure), Namka'i Nyingpo (Essence of Space), Sa'i Nying-po (Essence of the Earth), Jampa (Love) and Dripa Namsel (Pure from Obscurations)

The next verse relates to the remaining five close disciples.

Thus, by the roots of my merits, [15]
May the hell sentient beings be delighted
*By seeing fresh and nice smelling blissful rain falling
from clouds*
*Unobscured; like the bodhisattvas completely pure
and so forth.*

Shantideva prays that *by the roots of my merit, by the power and ability of the remaining five close disciples may a rain of fresh and nice smelling rain*, which is *blissful* to the touch and *unobscured* by obscurations, *fall from the clouds*. When the *hell beings* see this rain may *they be delighted* and happy.

That completes the dedication relating to the merits. In this context the eight close disciples are viewed as bodhisattvas who always accompany the Buddha.

May animals be free from the [16ab]
Fear of one being eaten by the other.

Animals have the particular suffering of living in a realm of

constantly being eaten by other bigger animals. *May the animals be free from the suffering of being eaten by others.*

May all hungry ghosts be happy [16cd]
Like the people in Draminyen.

May the hungry ghosts be purified and satisfied [17]
By a stream of milk flowing down
From the hand of the powerful transcendent
Chenrezig
And be satisfied forever

The continent of Draminyen is endowed with many fortunes - steady wealth, food, life span and so forth. *May all hungry ghosts* have this happiness, like the *people* who took rebirth in *Draminyen*. *May the hungry ghosts be purified and satisfied by a stream of milk flowing down from the hand of the powerful transcendent Chenrezig and be satisfied forever.*

This relates to a visualization of the milk flowing down from the hand of Chenrezig into the mouth of the hungry ghost, purifying them from their negativities. By doing this meditation you are satisfying their hunger and thirst, and placing them in a state of everlasting happiness.

The previous prayers were for beings reborn in the lower realms; one has dedicated for beings that were reborn in the hell realms, the beings that were reborn in the preta realm, and one dedicated for those that were reborn in the animal realm.

2.1.2. Dedicating for the completion of realisations of those who have already advanced

Now one dedicates for beings that have been reborn in the higher realms so that they become free from suffering. Initially one dedicates so that those with incomplete faculties have complete faculties.

May all that are blind behold form [18]
And all that are deaf always hear sounds.
Like the magical goddesses
May pregnant women be protected and without harm.

One dedicates for those who have incomplete faculties to have complete faculties: for *the blind* to be able to see and for *the deaf* to be able to *hear* and so forth. One also dedicates for *pregnant women to be protected* from difficulty and harm *like the Magical Goddess* (which is the name of the Buddha's mother), who had a very problem-free pregnancy.

The subsequent prayers are dedicating to all the different individual physical and mental sufferings of the beings in the happy realms.

May the naked ones get clothes [19]
Those hungry get food
Those thirsty get water
And sweet drinks.

May those destitute attain wealth [20]
May those miserable and downtrodden attain happiness.
Those depressed by uplifted
And attain perfect stability.

May those who lack *clothes get* nice, beautiful *clothes*, may *those* who are *hungry get* very good and delicious *food*, may *those* who are *thirsty get water* and other kinds of nice drinks such as good tea and so forth. *May those* who are *destitute attain* perfect, stable *wealth*.

May *those* who are *miserable and downtrodden* be uplifted and attain *happiness*. May *those* who are *depressed* and discouraged, because of not achieving their aims, be uplifted and cheered up though achieving their aims. May they attain inner strength and a life of perfect stability and harmony, where suffering and mental unhappiness can harm them.

May those who are low and miserable attain happiness. May those who are burdened by many sufferings, and who are low and miserable attain happiness, and may they attain the objects that make them happy and so forth. May the minds of those who are depressed and miserable be uplifted and may they also attain happiness. Sometimes there are things that can uplift the mind of somebody who is miserable and depressed. May they all experience or receive those things and may their minds be uplifted and happy.

May all sick sentient beings quickly [21]
Be liberated from their sickness
May all the sicknesses of all migratory beings
Be eternally banished forever.

May those with anxieties, paranoias and fears become fearless, may those in bondage be liberated, may the powerless ones become powerful and empowered. *May all sentient beings* who are *sick be* cured of *their sickness*. *May all* the mental and physical ailments and *sicknesses of migratory beings be banished forever*. May they never arise ever again.

Praying that may those who are fearful, with anxieties, paranoia and so forth become fearless, is a very good prayer for these times where many people are very afraid.

May those who are in bondage and in serfdom and [22]
Under the power of others become liberated.
May those who are powerless
Become empowered.

May sentient beings who are powerless become empowered and may their minds become mutually friendly, One can often observe that people don't interact in a very friendly manner with each other. May all this harmful intent and spite and so forth be pacified in their minds, and may they live together harmoniously.

A note on variations in translations

Different translations come about because some translators do a word commentary, and others concentrate on the actual words that are there in the root text. It could be that some don't stick to the words of the root text, but give more of an explanation of the words.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version
© Tara Institute

Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

15 November 2005

As usual generate the virtuous motivation of bodhicitta thinking, 'I have to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. In order to achieve that aim I am going to listen to this profound teaching, and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

Dedications for the success of those who set out on journeys

May all the travellers in all directions [23]
Have happiness;
May the purpose for which they set out on the
journey
Be accomplished effortlessly.

May all travellers who *journey in all* kinds of different *directions* in order to attain wealth, success and other aims, achieve those aims and have happiness. May whatever aims they have be achieved *effortlessly*.

May those who sail on small and big ships, [24]
Achieve their aims according to their wishes.
May they safely and happily reach the shore of their
destination
And be happily reunited with their family.

May those who set out on *small boats and big ships* *achieve* the wealth and so forth, for which they set out.

In the past people set out on boat journeys primarily to seek wealth, precious jewels etc. So here one prays that they find all the wealth that they are looking for. *May they safely* return to their home *and be happily reunited with their family*. Also, may they not experience any sickness or accidents and so forth.

This is a very nice and useful prayer to do. For example, sometimes it happens that, when one returns home from a long journey, for some reason one cannot be happily reunited with one's family.

May those who wander about, lost on dry plains,
mistaken paths and so forth, [25]
Meet with travellers
May they be free from dangers such as bandits,
thieves, tigers and so forth
May they be able to walk their paths untiringly and
happily.

May those who wander about lost on remote *plains* and *mistaken paths* *meet up with* other *travellers*. *May they* be protected from all *dangers such as bandits, thieves, tigers and so forth*. *May they* be able to proceed along the journey *happily, untiringly* in body and mind.

Repeatedly people who go hiking in remote places get lost, and have to live off what they can find in the forest, until they meet up with others or find their way and so forth.

May those who are lost in isolated places, [26]
Who have experienced suffering, who are elderly,
without protector
Whose minds are deluded, crazy or sleepy and so
forth
May all of these be looked after by the gods.

May those who are lost in isolated places, regardless of whether they are young or old, or who are of unstable and disturbed mind and *without* protection, *be looked after by the gods*.

Prayers for the good fortune of fortunate beings to continue

To this point the prayers have been for the alleviation of the different sufferings of human beings. Now one prays for different happinesses - for the increase of fortune and wealth, freedoms and endowments and so forth - to increase.

May they be liberated from inopportune states; and
may they in all their lifetimes, [27]
Be endowed with faith, wisdom and love and
compassion;
May they always have food; and
May they always be aware of good actions and
behaviours;

Here inopportune states relates to the inopportune states to practice the Dharma. *May* beings be free from the eight *inopportune states* for the practice of the Dharma. *May* their lives *be endowed with faith, wisdom, love and compassion*. *May they have* good and tasty *food*. *May they,* through their *actions,* always have the mindfulness that remembers all past lives. This refers to the clairvoyance that remembers past lives.

May they receive unceasing wealth [28ab]
Equalling the space-like treasure.

There is a specific type of concentration that is referred to as the space concentration. When *one* has achieved this specific type of concentration, then one will effortlessly achieve great *wealth*.

May they live together without quarrels and
arguments; [28cd]
May they without harmfulness, attain independence;

Usually when sentient beings achieve wealth, they very quickly they start to quarrel amongst themselves and start to harm each other in various ways. *May they* be able to *live without quarrels and disputes,* live *independently,* enjoying their wealth *without harming* each other.

May sentient beings who have little splendour and
charisma [29ab]
Achieve splendour and charisma.

May those sentient beings who have a bad complexion, *little charisma and splendour* and so forth, *achieve* a good complexion and lots of *charisma and splendour* and so forth.

For those who are sick and diseased with physical
defects, [29cd]
May their forms become completely perfect and
whole.

May all the bodies of those who have physical problems, difficulties and any kind of *physical defect* and so forth, *become perfect, whole*, beautiful, healthy and so forth.

May all women become men; [30]
May all who are low
Achieve a high status; and
May all those who are proud become humble.

The first line has to be read carefully. In Shantideva's time women had a very, very hard time. He was praying from that point of view. Observing the suffering of women, and seeing that they were suffering much more than the men, because of being suppressed, having to work harder and so forth, he prayed that they be reborn as men.

Some people use this line to criticise Shantideva, but I think it is important to understand that Shantideva does not have a low view of women, and that this dedication is not from the point of view of seeing women as inferior. Therefore one should not use these two lines to say that Shantideva discriminates against women. One should not listen to people who say such a thing, because that places a very harmful imprint on one's mind to be separated from bodhicitta for many lifetimes.

May those of *low* family lineage *achieve a higher status*, and *may* they not *become* very *proud*, but remain *humble*.

Quite often there is increasing pride when somebody rises from a lower social status to a higher social status. That's why Shantideva prays that they remain humble.

By my merits, [31]
May all sentient beings
Having abandoned all negativity,
Continuously practise virtue.

Shantideva prays, '*By my merits may all sentient beings abandon all negativity and continuously practise virtue*'. Shantideva prays that by the merits he has accumulated through engaging into the bodhisattva practices, all sentient beings will abandon the negativity of the ten non-virtuous actions, and through that, continuously practice virtue.

Dedication for sentient beings to progress along their path to liberation

May sentient beings never be separated from
bodhicitta, [32ab]
And engage in the bodhisattva practices.

May sentient beings never be separated from the wishing *bodhicitta*, the engaging *bodhicitta* and so forth, and practise the different *bodhisattva practices* such as the six perfections and so forth.

First there is the motivation of bodhicitta, in dependence on which one engages into the practice of the six perfections. May sentient beings to be able to engage in these practices.

May they always be looked after by the buddhas [32cd]
May they always abandon the actions induced by
different demons.

This refers to abandoning actions that are harmful towards one's progress along the path. *May* sentient beings *looked after by the buddhas* and virtuous teachers,

the conducive condition for the path. Here 'virtuous teacher' refers to the buddhas themselves. *May they always abandon the actions* that are counter-productive to progress along *the path*.

As we did last week, we can recite the chapter from the beginning. Here one can pray for everything. People repeatedly ask for prayers to be done for those who have exams, or for people who are sick and so forth. Here you can pray for all of that.

Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྒྱུགས་སོ།།
Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

22 November 2005

In dependence on the root of great compassion generate a good motivation, the motivation of bodhicitta.

Dedicating for sentient beings to be reborn in the pure realms and to have a long life

May all sentient beings have [33]
A limitless life span;
May they always enjoy a happy life,
May the sound of death not ring.

May all the sentient beings (the limitless sentient beings of all directions) *have limitless life span*, and in that life span *may* their *life* be *always happy*. May they also be free from untimely *death*, before their natural lifespan runs out.

May all places become [34]
Gardens where wish-fulfilling trees grow,
Where everywhere buddhas and bodhisattvas
Listen to the profound sound of Dharma.

Then Shantideva says, by all my merits may all the impure worldly realms become a pleasure *garden* full of *wish-fulfilling trees*, filled with *buddhas and bodhisattvas* proclaiming and *listening* to the melodious *sound of Dharma*.

May the ground everywhere be free from unevenness [35]
Caused by pebbles, thorns and so forth, and
Become as smooth as the palm of one's hand
And the smooth nature of lapis lazuli.

May the ground everywhere be without *unevenness*, without *thorns, pebbles*, stones that stand out and so forth, and be *smooth*, like *the palm of one's hand* or *lapis lazuli*.

In the pure lands there is no unevenness, and beings who live there just lightly touch the surface of the ground when they walk, rather than leaving behind an impression. So this prayer is the accumulation of merit that causes one to be reborn in the pure lands.

Initially you pray for a long life of sentient beings, but having a long life is not enough. You also need to have a happy life, and you also have to have the Dharma, because having a life without Dharma is pointless.

You pray here for everything to be like a pure land, a pleasure grove of wish-fulfilling trees, where everything is pervaded by the sound of Dharma taught by buddhas and bodhisattvas, and for sentient beings to have all of these qualities. This prayer is the accumulation that causes one to be reborn in the pure lands, which is where one wants to be reborn.

May there where the circles of retinues are [36]
Many bodhisattvas abide
By adorning the ground

With their qualities.

May bodhisattvas abide in *the places* where the buddhas turned the wheel of Dharma and *adorn them with* their wonderful *qualities*.

May all sentient beings [37]
Hear the sound of Dharma continuously
From birds in the trees and from the sunlight.
May they always meet buddhas and bodhisattvas.

May all sentient beings continuously hear the sound of Dharma from space, *from the sunlight*, from the *trees, birds* and so forth. At present one hears more non-Dharma sounds than Dharma sounds. So here one prays that all sentient beings continuously hear the sound of Dharma, which is a good thing, because the Dharma is essential.

May all sentient beings always meet perfectly
enlightened buddhas [38]
And their children the Bodhisattvas.
May they make limitless offerings with infinite
offering clouds
To the guru of migrators.

The guru of migrators sometimes refers to a teacher, but in this case it refers to Shakyamuni Buddha.

Praying for conducive conditions not to degenerate

May the rain always be timely, [39]
May a perfect crop ripen
May the king act in accordance with the Dharma
May the Dharma spread in the worldly realms.

May the gods (of the white side) *always* let *the rain* fall on time, and may *the crops* also *ripen* well and plentifully, which is a very important worldly purpose.

May the king act in accordance with the Dharma. This is also important, as it is not enough to have a good crop and plenty of food if that is misused by the people who rule the country. It is important that the people who rule the country also act in accordance with the Dharma.

May medicine be powerful, [40]
May the recitations of secret mantra be successful,
May sky dwellers, yakshas and so forth
Be endowed with the mind of compassion

May the life force and merits of worldly beings increase, and *may medicines be powerful* and effective.

May all the recitations of secret mantras be that are done with a good motivation, and which belong to the white side, be accomplished and fulfil the needs of all sentient beings.

May the space dwellers and (literally) the blood drinkers be free from harmful intent, anger, viciousness and so forth, and *be endowed with a mind of compassion*. There are different kinds of demon-like beings who harm human beings by drinking their blood and eating their flesh. There are other kinds of beings who dwell in space who also harm human beings. May all the anger, viciousness and harmful intent of those different types of non-human beings who harm to other sentient beings be pacified, and may they become *endowed with the mind of compassion* with love and compassion.

May sentient beings not experience the slightest suffering [41abc]
And be free from dangers and criticism and
May they not experience the slightest mental unhappiness.

May no sentient being experience any physical suffering. When one offers this prayer then it should be pervaded by love and compassion.

May no sentient being experience any fear, or be bullied, or harmed by others, because if one is mentally anxious and fearful or otherwise mentally unhappy then physical wellness alone is not sufficient for a happy life experience. You can see Shantideva's thoroughness here; he has put a lot of thought into his dedication. The dedication chapter is complete: it prays for sentient beings in the hell realms, in the hungry ghost realm, in the animal realm, then for human beings and so forth.

Dedications for the ordained community in general and for different types of ordained practitioners

May the monasteries abide and expand and prosper [41d]

Through reading and reciting; [42abc]
May the Sangha always be harmonious and
May the Sangha always accomplish their purpose.

May the monasteries prosper, abide and increase through the writing, reading and reciting Dharma by the ordained practitioners who live there.

May ordained practitioners who live in the monasteries always have pure morality, free from any kind of unbroken morality and always interact *harmoniously*

May the studying and propagating of the scriptural and realised Dharma of the ordained community be successful, and may the three types of activities - study, debate, practice of meditative concentration - and the different types of karma yoga in the monastery be successful and be *accomplished*.

May the bhikkhus who aspire towards the trainings [42d]

Attain isolation and, [43abc]
Upon having abandoned all distraction,
Attain a mind of pliant meditation.

May the bhikkhus¹ who aspire to practise the trainings attain a state of isolation free from physical distraction. Then, *having abandoned* mental wandering, may their mind become pliable, and may they meditate on virtue. This refers to the practice of single-pointed concentration where the single-pointed mind becomes pliable and virtuous.

May the bhikkshunis² always be successful and [43d]

May they abandon harm or strife. [44a]

May bhikkshunis always have all the necessary conditions for Dharma practice, and may they abandon criticism and *harm*. This refers to the situation where, on being able to keep pure morality, the practitioner starts to think of themselves as being superior, and begins to criticise others, or even tries to harm them in some way.

May that not come about because the progress of the practitioner is harmed when their mind is distracted by such harmful attitudes.

Praying for the practice of morality to be successful

Initially there was a dedication for the ordained community in general, then one for monks, and one the nuns. Now the dedication is for the practice of morality in general to be successful.

Similarly may all those who are ordained [44bc]
Never degenerate their morality.

The literal meaning of the Tibetan word for being *ordained* describes those who have definitely left the householder's life, meaning that having left, one does not fall back into that lifestyle. It does not refer to a state of not having a home or a place to live.

The literal translation of the actual words is somebody who has *definitely left behind*. But the meaning here is that the ordained practitioner does not fall back into the state of a householder. For example, Geshe-la says that in his case he left home to go to the monastery and never returned, so this literally applies in his case. *May all of those ordained practitioners never degenerate their samayas.*

If they have committed a breach of their morality [44d]

May they always immediately purify their negativity, [45abc]

On having attained a higher rebirth
May their ethics never degenerate.

May they never degenerate their *morality*, and when their mind has become burdened, or when there is *a breach of morality in their mind*, or some unethical thought has arisen, *may they always completely purify their negativity*.

When unethical thoughts have arisen in the mind may the ordained practitioners always exhaust their negativity, and engage in purification (which is like an exhaustion of the negativity), to purify the negative karma.

Upon having attained a happy rebirth through the practice of morality may their practice of morality and discipline in that future happy rebirth *never degenerate*.

May the sages always be praised [45d]

And always receive enough alms, [46abc]

May their continuum always be pure and
May they always be renowned in all directions.

May those of pure morality and pure learning be praised by all. May they also *receive* offerings. *May their continuum* not be affected by that reverence and respect. *May they be humble without pride and without any other afflictions and be renowned in all the directions.*

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

¹ Fully ordained monks

² Fully ordained female practitioners

Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་སྐྱེས་སྐྱེས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

29 November 2005

As usual please generate the motivation of bodhicitta thinking, 'I have to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. In order to achieve that aim, I am going to listen to this profound teaching and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

We have completed praying that all those who are suffering be liberated from their sufferings.

Dedicating for the experience of happiness

May they not experience the sufferings of the lower realms and [47]

*May they without any difficulties
Attain the state of enlightenment
Through the superior (divine) body;*

Dedicating for the purpose of sentient beings

May all sentient beings repeatedly [48]
*Make offerings to the buddhas and
Through the infinite happiness of the buddhas,
May they always be endowed with happiness.*

Praying for the accomplishment of the prayers of the buddhas and bodhisattvas

May bodhisattvas always establish the purpose [49ab]
Of sentient beings in their heart.

The two-fold purpose is the temporary purpose of a higher rebirth, and the ultimate purpose of liberation and enlightenment. *May bodhisattvas always* hold the two purposes of sentient beings *at their heart*, and may they also accomplish those two purposes.

May whatever the protectors think, [49cd]
Also be established for sentient beings.

Here one dedicates that the aims of the buddhas be accomplished. The word 'protector' refers to the Buddha. Of course generally protector has different meanings, but the Protector of the three realms is the Buddha. May the aims and thoughts of the Buddha always be achieved, i.e. the Buddha wishes all sentient beings to have happiness. *May whatever* the Buddha wishes immediately *be* accomplished *for sentient beings*, such as the wish for all of them to have happiness.

Likewise, may self-liberated buddhas [50ab]
And hearers also attain happiness.

Here one dedicates that self-liberators and hearers achieve their aims. Similarly, as said before, *may the self-liberators and the hearers* achieve the *happiness* of liberation that they aim for.

2.2. Dedicating for the fulfilment of one's own potential - the achievement of one's own enlightenment¹

Dedicating for the achievement of the temporary purpose

May I also, through the kindness of Manjushri, [50cd]
Until I attain the ground of supreme joy,

In all my lifetimes I always attain [51ab]
Mindfulness and ordination.

May I in all my lifetimes always be endowed with *mindfulness* and always attain the state of having gone forth. We talked about this state of having gone forth the other day; it refers to the state of having left a household to become an ordained person. These verses show that Shantideva had direct access to Manjushri. That's why it says here, 'May I also through the kindness of Manjushri...' and so forth.

May I be splendours and [51cd]
Live, regardless of my food.

After having prayed to be able to be ordained, one prays that one will always have a healthy and strong body, regardless of whether the food one receives is good or poor. May the body always be strong, healthy and well balanced. Regardless of the kind of food I have, may my body be always look, full with a very healthy glow.

May I in all my lifetimes, [52ab]
Abide in solitude and attain perfection;

'May I in all my lifetimes' refers to all of one's lives, which are like a rosary. There are not just one or two lives, but a vast succession of lives coming one after the other like the beads of a rosary. *May I in all these lifetimes always abide in solitude.*

Then follows the prayer to be endowed with perfection, which does not relate to external perfections such as a perfect body or perfect wealth, but to perfect realisations. Since the first line is the dedication to be able to abide in solitude, the perfection that Shantideva is praying for here is the perfection of inner realisation.

Dedication to be looked after by Manjushri

Whenever I wish to study, [52cd]
Or have even small questions,

May I always be able to behold without obstructions [53ab]

The protector, Manjushri.

This is a prayer to be always looked after by Manjushri.

May I always, when I aspire to the teachings of the Buddha, *or have questions* regarding difficult points of the Buddha's teachings, *be able to* directly *behold* Manjushri.

Dedication to abide in the bodhisattva practices

May my actions, in order to accomplish [53cd]
The purpose of all sentient beings

That pervade all ten directions, [54ab]
Equal the actions of Manjushri.

¹ The headings of the previous weeks have been part of 2.1. Dedicating for the purpose of others.

May my actions always equal the actions of Manjushri, so as to accomplish the purpose of all sentient beings who pervade the space of all ten directions.

Here, it literally refers to all sentient beings who are so vast that they touch the edge of space of the ten directions. That of course is not literally possible, because space is limitless and there is not really an edge of space that can be touched by sentient beings. What he means here is that sentient beings are so vast that they pervade the space of all ten directions. May one's actions equal the enlightened actions of Manjushri, in order to accomplish the purpose of sentient beings.

This is a very nice prayer. Manjushri practiced the bodhisattva actions in order to free all sentient beings, equalling the expanse of space in the ten directions. May I be able to practice the bodhisattva actions likewise.

The prayer for the perfection of the purpose of others

*For as long as space abides, [54cd]
And for as long as sentient beings remain,*

*For that long may I also remain and [55ab]
Eliminate the sufferings of sentient beings.*

For as long as space abides means for as long as samsara abides. *For as long as migrators abide, for that long may I also abide and free migrators from their suffering.*

Here one generates very strong mental courage of wanting to abide until the end of cyclic existence in order to liberate sentient beings.

*May any suffering of migrators [55cd]
Ripen upon myself.*

This doesn't discriminate between migrators or suffering, and Shantideva meditates on taking on all the suffering of all sentient beings.

*Through the power of the transcendent bodhisattva
Sangha, [56ab]
May all sentient beings enjoy happiness.*

Dedication for the increase and spread of the Buddhadharmā, the source of all happiness

May the only medicine for the suffering of migrators, [56cd]

*The source of all happiness - the Dharma,
Abide long [57ab]
With praise and high regard*

The Dharma is truly *the source* for the both the ultimate and temporary *happiness* of sentient beings. Here then, Shantideva prays for the Dharma of sentient beings to *abide* for a *long* while. Not only should it abide for a long while, but *may* it also always be held in *high regard* and may it always be *praised*. There is the scriptural as well as the realised Dharma.

As it says in the prayer: May I be able to perfectly subdue my mind by not engaging in any negativity and by perfecting virtue. This is the teaching of the Buddha.

When one prays, 'May the teachings of the Buddha abide for a long time', it is good to relate it to this verse and to one's own practice. It is not necessary to think about some Dharma over there, but rather to relate it to one's own practice. In this context it is the realised Dharma when one, for example, generates refuge with a prayer.

May that never degenerate, but abide for a long time.

The Dharma is really the source of both temporary and ultimate happiness for all sentient beings. For that reason it is very precious, and so it is very important that it abides. The higher trainings of morality, concentration and wisdom, or whatever practice one has in one's continuum, is the teaching of the Buddha. So one prays, 'May that abide for a long time'.

Prostrating to Manjushri by recalling his kindness

*I prostrate to Manjushri, [57cd]
Through whose kindness the virtuous mind arises*

The words here are quite clear - *I prostrate to Manjushri through whose kindness the virtuous mind arises.*

*And I also prostrate to the virtuous teacher, [58ab]
Through whom oneself develops.*

Here of course, the second half is general: it includes all teachers. But in the first half Shantideva specifically prostrates to Manjushri, which shows that he is a direct student of Manjushri.

I prostrate to the virtuous friends through whose kindness I develop.

Identifying the title of the chapter

*This is at the tenth chapter of dedication [58cd]
Of 'Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life'.*

That completes the tenth chapter.

*Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Study Group – Manjushri Prayer Commentary

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

6 December 2005

As usual you should generate the motivation of wanting to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings thinking, 'In order to achieve that state I am going to listen to this profound teaching, and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

We are going to do a word commentary by Trijang Rinpoche on the Manjushri prayer. Trijang Rinpoche is said to be an actual emanation of Manjushri as well as the incarnation of Chandrakirti, and by receiving the commentary you also receive their blessings.

The prayer came about because at one point many pandits decided that there was a need for a Manjushri prayer, so each of them composed one. Then the salient points of them all were combined into this prayer.

The prayer consists of a threefold praise to the mind, speech and body of Manjushri. Here the qualities of Manjushri's mind are praised first, although it is usually the other way around, with praise being offered to the body first, and then to the speech and mind of the respective buddha.

But here, because Manjushri is the embodiment of the wisdom of the buddhas, his mind is praised first. Also, during the outer offerings in the Yamantaka sadhana the offering of scent to Yamantaka's mind comes before the offerings of flowers and incense. This is because the offering of scent is done to the mind of the deity and as Yamantaka is the wrathful embodiment of Manjushri, he is the embodiment of all the buddhas' wisdom.

Usually when one performs the outer offerings in other sadhanas the offering of perfume comes after the light offering. There are other more elaborate praises to Manjushri that follow the usual sequence of praising body, speech and mind.

1. Praise to Manjushri's enlightened mind

1.1. Praise to his wisdom

1.2. Praise to his love and compassion

1.1. Praise to his wisdom

*He, whose discriminating awareness, by shining
brilliantly like the sun free
From the clouds of the two obscurations, sees all
objects of multiplicity like they
Are, holds therefore a wholesome text.*

Whose refers to Manjushri and *discriminating awareness* refers to his exalted wisdom knowledge. The *two obscurations* are the obscurations to liberation and the obscurations to omniscience. With his exalted wisdom knowledge Manjushri has abandoned the six root delusions and the secondary afflictions together with their seeds and imprints, i.e. the two obscurations.

The *obscurations to liberation* are the six root afflictions and their seeds, and the *twenty secondary or proximate afflictions* plus their seeds. The six root afflictions are anger,

attachment, ignorance, afflicted doubt, pride and wrong view, and they act as the root for the twenty proximate or secondary afflictions. The twenty secondary or proximate afflictions are wrath, resentment (or the wish for vengeance), concealment, spite, jealousy (or envy), greed, pretension, dishonesty, conceit, cruelty, shamelessness, inconsideration, uncleanness (or dullness), excitement, faithlessness, laziness, recklessness, forgetfulness, non-introspection and distraction.

The root afflictions and the secondary afflictions are all contained within the fifty one mental factors. From one point of view the six root afflictions are the root of all unwanted suffering and problems, and from another perspective they are root afflictions because they are the roots of the twenty secondary afflictions. The literal translation of 'secondary' is more like proximate or close afflictions, and they are called that because they are close to their respective root afflictions.

Anger is the root of the proximate afflictions of wrath, spite, jealousy and so forth. Wrath, for example, belongs to the family of anger, because it arises from the root of anger. The difference between anger and wrath is twofold.

Wrath is a very specific accelerated and stronger form of anger that focuses on only sentient beings, whilst anger focuses on anything that is perceived as a cause of suffering, which includes both sentient and non-sentient objects. When one is merely angry one cannot bear the cause of suffering and one wants to harm or destroy the cause of that suffering, regardless of whether it is sentient or not sentient. However one is not really quite at the stage where one would actually inflict harm on another sentient being. Wrath is the accelerated form of anger that more directly precedes the actual harm that one inflicts on another person - it focuses only on sentient beings.

Similarly, attachment is the root affliction for greed. Greed is a proximate or secondary affliction that has attachment as its root, so it belongs to the family of the root affliction of attachment. That is also a good thing to know. All the other secondary afflictions also have one of the root afflictions as their root.

The transcendental wisdom of Manjushri is like the unclouded sun. When the sun is obscured by clouds one does not receive the sun's benefit, and for the sun to be able to shine clearly it needs to be unobscured by clouds. Similarly the transcendental wisdom of Manjushri is not obscured by the clouds of the two obscurations and therefore he can see the truth body clearly.

How does the transcendental wisdom of Manjushri see the truth body clearly? He sees in an omniscient way the unobscured truth body, by simultaneously beholding directly all objects of multiplicity and suchness without any obscuration. The objects of multiplicity are all the different categories of nominal objects from form up to omniscient consciousness. So the transcendental wisdom of Manjushri beholds all objects of multiplicity and suchness without obscurations directly and clearly.

The reason he holds a scriptural text at his heart is because the scriptural text symbolises that his transcendental wisdom perceives all objects of multiplicity and suchness clearly and directly without obscurations. Unlike the particular aspect of Manjushri relating to this prayer, the normal Manjushri does not hold a text at his heart. The aspect of Manjushri relating to this prayer is a red Manjushri that is referred to as the Manjushri Gang-Lo-Ma.

¹ The Tibetan word *nye* literally means close or proximate

1.2. Praise to his compassion

He loves those who exist in the prison of existence dazed by the darkness of ignorance, all the groups of migrators that are afflicted by suffering, like an only son.

Those refers to all sentient beings who are devoid of true happiness. *True happiness* is the happiness of liberation. Samsaric happiness is always transitory, finite and unstable.

All sentient beings that lack true happiness and are *caught in the prison* of the five realms of *existence* are *dazed by the darkness of their ignorance*. Their actions of body, speech and mind have been afflicted by the ignorance of grasping at 'I' and mine since beginningless time. They are overwhelmed by the three sufferings: the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change and pervasive compounded suffering. In the lower realms of cyclic existence they experience the sufferings of extreme heat and cold, and even in the higher realms they experience the sufferings of change and pervasive compounded suffering.

All these migrators, who are pained, burdened and squeezed by these sufferings, are loved by Manjushri like a mother loves her only son. This shows that the compassion that is generated by Manjushri is the non-discriminatory kind of compassion, because it is an equal compassion for all migrators.

The example of the love for an only son refers to the love of a mother for her only son. If a mother has no other children apart from one son then she will have a very special type of love in her heart for that son. This very strong love is used as an example for the great compassion and great love, that buddhas and bodhisattvas feel for each and every sentient being, and is the type of love and compassion that one needs to generate in one's own practice. It comes about gradually, first generating it for one person, then two, three and so forth, if you are interested in that type of practice.

2. Praise to the speech of Manjushri

His melodious speech, endowed with sixty features, reverberates dragon-like, Awakening from the stupor of the afflictions, liberating from the iron chains of karma.

Motivated by this great love and compassion Manjushri teaches migrators the different points of the path - what has to be adopted and practised and what has to be abandoned. Even just one word of the enlightened speech of Manjushri is *endowed with the sixty features* of enlightened speech. That his speech is motivated by great love and compassion does not mean that there is a preceding motivational thought, because that does not happen with an enlightened being.

Then comes the example of the sound of a dragon. This is a poetic description that is used as a synonym for thunder. Even though one is sleeping deeply, thunder can be so strong that it cuts through one's sleep and wakes one up.

Out of great compassion the thunder of Manjushri's speech explains all the points of the path of what has to be practised and adopted and what has to be rejected, which is really the only explanation that will help sentient beings to be free from suffering. This thunder will cause them to arise from *the stupor of the sleep of their afflictions* and free them from *the iron chains of their karma*. Here karma refers to projecting karma, establishing karma, completing karma and so forth. In short, his speech frees migrators from the bonds of cyclic existence, which are karma and afflictions.

He holds the sword that cuts any sprout of suffering and clears the darkness of ignorance.

The *sword* symbolises the power to be able to *cut* any *sprout of suffering* such as the suffering of birth, aging, sickness and death, and to *clear away the darkness of ignorance*.

Manjushri has the power to clear away any sprout of the sufferings of aging, sickness and death and so forth, and to *clear away the darkness of ignorance* of grasping at 'I' and 'mine', by teaching sentient beings the different points of the path with his enlightened speech that is endowed with the sixty features, and which is based on his love and compassion. If one practises what one is taught then one will be rid of the grasping at 'I' and 'mine', and through that one will also be rid of all the different sufferings. The sword symbolises that Manjushri has this power to clear away sufferings in this way.

3. Praise to the enlightened body of Manjushri

The body of a foremost child of the Conqueror, pure from the beginning and Naturally complete with the qualities of having perfected the ten grounds, Beautified with one hundred and twelve ornaments, I prostrate to Manjushri Who clears away the darkness of my mind.

Child of the Conqueror means a bodhisattva. From an interpretive point of view Manjushri manifests as the senior bodhisattva disciple of the Buddha, but from a definite point of view he is perfectly enlightened. *Pure from the beginning* means having being pure for many eons. *Naturally complete with the qualities of having perfected the ten grounds* means having a body that is naturally complete with the qualities of abandonment and realisation of the ten grounds: the qualities of the abandonment and realisation of the first ground, the qualities of abandonment and realisation of the second ground up to the qualities of abandonment and realisation of the tenth ground. *Beautified with one hundred and twelve ornaments* refers to eighty minor marks and thirty-two major signs of the body of a buddha.

I prostrate to Manjushri, who has perfected in such a way all qualities, and *clears away the darkness of my mind*.

Regarding the marks and signs of an enlightened body and the sixty features of enlightened speech there is a commentary on Manjushri by Lama Tsong Khapa that has been translated into English, so you can look them up there.

There are also other translated commentaries explaining the major and the minor marks and signs.

*Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Study Group - *Refuge and Bodhicitta*

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

13 December 2005

The meaning of taking refuge and generating bodhicitta

The first prayer that we recite is the Refuge and Bodhicitta prayer. The refuge and bodhicitta motivations are the motivations that we generate at the beginning of each teaching.

Refuge is the door to the Buddhist path and bodhicitta is the door to the Mahayana path. Refuge protects one from following a wrong path, while bodhicitta protects one from falling into a lesser path.

To the Buddha, the Dharma and the Supreme Assembly

The first line identifies the three objects of Refuge. When we recite the word *Buddha* we should meditate that in addition to Shakyamuni Buddha the word Buddha contains one's teacher; the deities; the eight medicine buddhas; the thirty-five buddhas and so forth. That is something that one should definitely contemplate when one is going for refuge.

One should contemplate that the word *Dharma* contains both the scriptural Dharma and the actual Dharma. The **scriptural Dharma** was taught by the Buddha through his kindness and is comprised of the different categories of the scriptural Dharma. The **actual Dharma** is the truth of cessation and the truth of the path.

The *Supreme Assembly* includes the different beings who are actual Sangha, such as the Mahayana Sangha, as well as the hearer and self-liberator practitioners.

The **Buddha refuge** is that which shows one the Dharma. One goes for refuge to the Buddha as the person who shows one the Dharma. The **Dharma refuge** is the actual refuge. The **Supreme Assembly** (the Sangha), are those who one takes as one's example. While one is going for refuge, one also visualises that one is surrounded by all sentient beings who, together with oneself, go for refuge to the Triple Gem on the basis of the two-fold motivation.

I go for refuge until the attainment of enlightenment

The second line identifies the time for which one is going to take refuge, and the basis that is going for refuge. The words 'I' or 'I myself' identify the basis that is going for refuge.

'Until the attainment of enlightenment' identifies the time period for which one goes for refuge. This is the uncommon Mahayana refuge.

General refuge is taken for the time period of this life, as in the prayer that is done during the formal refuge ceremony, and also when one is taking lay vows, where one says, 'until the end of my life'.

The specific Mahayana refuge is until the attainment of

enlightenment. Here the meaning of enlightenment is two-fold. It can either mean the place of Bodhgaya, meaning that one will take refuge until attaining the state of the complete supreme emanation body in Bodhgaya. Or it means dharmakaya, meaning one takes refuge until one attains the dharmakaya or truth body.

So in these two lines, we have the two causes for refuge; we have the objects of refuge; we have the time period for which one is going for refuge and the basis that is going for refuge. That completes all elements.

May I, by the merits of practising generosity and so forth

Here again, the word 'I' identifies the person who is generating the motivation. 'The merits of practising generosity and so forth' identifies the merits through which one wants to attain the aim of enlightenment:

- the merits of generosity;
- the merits of morality;
- the merits of patience;
- the merits of enthusiasm;
- the merits of concentration; and
- the merits of wisdom.

Become a buddha for the benefit of migrators

The fourth line identifies the purpose of generating bodhicitta. Migrators refers, of course, to sentient beings, so sentient beings are the objective, while 'benefit' is the purpose of others, and 'Buddha' refers to enlightenment.

This line identifies the nature of bodhicitta as existing in the nature of prayer, as explained in both *Ornament of Mahayana sutras* and *Explanation Illuminating the Meaning*.

By the merits that one accumulates with one's three doors, through the practice of generosity, morality, patience and so forth, may one attain the state of a buddha, so as to be able to place all sentient beings in the state of liberation and complete enlightenment.

Mind, not mental factor!

The mind of enlightenment is exactly that - it is a mind and not a mental factor. If something is awareness then it is either a mind or a mental factor. The mind of enlightenment is a primary mind and not a mental factor, even though it is sometimes labelled as aspiration or wish. As it says in *Ornament of Clear Realisation*,

Mind generation is the wish to attain of complete enlightenment for the purpose of others.

The label of aspiration or wish is merely nominal, because the mind of enlightenment is a mind and not a mental factor. The reason the mind of enlightenment is labelled as an aspiration even though it is not is because it has to be endowed with the two-fold aspiration:

- the aspirations of wanting to achieve the welfare of others
- the aspiration of wanting to attain complete enlightenment

The aspiration of wanting to achieve the welfare of others is the causal aspiration. The mind of enlightenment is

labelled as wish or aspiration is because of applying the name of the cause to the effect.

The mind of enlightenment has within its entourage of mental factors the aspiration of wanting to achieve complete enlightenment. The mind of enlightenment is labelled as wish or aspiration to show that it has the aspiration of wanting to attain complete enlightenment within its entourage of mental factors.

So the mind of enlightenment is labelled as an aspiration or wish both from the point of view of one of its accompanying mental factors, as well as from the point of view of applying the name of the cause to the effect.

Seven-point meditation

The aspiration of wanting to achieve the welfare of sentient beings is the causal aspiration that precedes the aspiration wanting to achieve complete enlightenment. If you look at the sequence of meditation in which one generates bodhicitta, then this becomes clearer.

1. On the basis of having meditated on equanimity one meditates on recognising that all sentient beings were one's mother.
2. One meditates on the kindness of the mother.
3. One meditates on the necessity of repaying the kindness of one's mother.

These three meditations establish the basis for the welfare of sentient beings.

4. Then one meditates on near and dear love and great compassion, which trains the mind in the motivation that is concerned with the welfare of sentient beings.

5. Here the wish to achieve the welfare of sentient beings increases and becomes more refined.

6. This is then further refined with superior intention, where one takes upon oneself the responsibility for the welfare of all sentient beings.

7. Only after all these meditations does one generate the actual aspiration of wanting to attain complete enlightenment.

The actual aspiration of wanting to attain complete enlightenment is a result of the preceding meditations where one meditates on the welfare of sentient beings, and generates a concern for the welfare of sentient beings in different stages.

Both bodhicitta and its accompanying aspiration of wanting to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings have superior intention as their basis. Superior intention has as its basis great compassion, which has as its basis near and dear love, which has as its basis making the determination to repay one's mother's kindness, which has as its basis recognising the kindness of the mother. This in turn has as its basis recognising that all sentient beings were one's mother. Here one can clearly see that first one meditates on generating a concern for the welfare of sentient beings. So the aspiration of wanting to achieve the welfare of sentient beings is generated first and acts as the basis for

the aspiration of wanting to attain complete enlightenment.

One has to relate these words to the enlightenment that one is going to personally attain in the future and not to some kind of general enlightenment, because that would not be actual bodhicitta. To be actual bodhicitta, one has to relate it to the enlightenment that oneself is going to attain in the future.

Relating this to the lam rim

You can see that to generate bodhicitta one needs to engage in these step-by-step meditations. One cannot generate bodhicitta merely through reciting a prayer. Rather, one has to engage in these sequential meditations to initially generate an effortful experience of bodhicitta, and then increase that so that it becomes an effortless experience of bodhicitta.

The meditation on bodhicitta needs to be preceded by the generation of pure renunciation, which is attained through the meditations common to the being of medium capacity. This in turn has to be preceded by meditation on the law of cause and effect, which then in turn has to be preceded by meditation on refuge, which in turn is preceded by meditation on the lower realms, which in turn is preceded by meditation on death and impermanence, which in turn is preceded by meditation on the precious human rebirth, which is preceded by meditation on proper reliance on the spiritual friend. By meditating in this way, one places an incredibly valuable imprint of the whole path on one's mind.

If you meditate on those points, that would be really good.

The divisions of bodhicitta

1. There is of course a **division by nature** which is the division into wishing bodhicitta and engaging bodhicitta. **Wishing bodhicitta** is the bodhicitta that is not directly held by the practices of the perfections of generosity and so forth. **Engaging bodhicitta** is the bodhicitta that is directly held by the practice of the perfections of generosity and so forth. For example the bodhicitta in the continuum of a person in meditative equipoise is wishing bodhicitta and not engaging bodhicitta.

2. There is the **division from the point of view of example**. Here we have the twenty-two bodhicittas that are related to twenty-two examples, like ground-like bodhicitta, gold-like bodhicitta and so forth.

3. Then we have the **division from the point of view of their mode of generation**. Here we have king-like bodhicitta, ferryman-like bodhicitta, and shepherd-like bodhicitta. This is very meaningful.

King-like bodhicitta is the bodhicitta that has the motivation of wanting to first attain enlightenment oneself and then to subsequently lead all other sentient beings to enlightenment. It is called king-like bodhicitta because the king is always the foremost person in the realm and everybody follows him.

Shepherd-like bodhicitta is the bodhicitta where the person has the motivation of first wanting to place all

other sentient beings in the state of enlightenment, with oneself attaining enlightenment last. Here the analogy of a shepherd is used because a shepherd always has all the sheep and goats in front of him with the shepherd bringing up the rear. That is why this bodhicitta is called the shepherd-like bodhicitta. The practitioner wants to first bring all other sentient beings to enlightenment, and then, and only then, attain enlightenment for themselves.

With **ferryman-like bodhicitta** the practitioner has the motivation of wanting to attain enlightenment together with all other sentient beings. When the ferryman ferries his passengers over the river, they all go together on the same boat.

4. The **divisions from the point of view of boundary** are:

The **bodhicitta of wish and practice**, which is the bodhicitta on the level of the path of accumulation and preparation;

The **bodhicitta of superior thought**, which is the bodhicitta from the first ground to the seventh ground (you are familiar with the grounds by now);

The **ripening bodhicitta**, which is the bodhicitta on the eighth, ninth and tenth ground;

And the **bodhicitta abandoning obscurations**, which is the bodhicitta in the continuum of a buddha.

You have participated very well this year, and now you need to put it into practice. You have a good opportunity for that. I also want to thank the organisers of the study group very much. It was very well organised - please do it like that again next year.

Next year we will do the *Four Hundred Verses* of the Middle Way and it would be good if everybody could have the text.

You all know when the Lama Tsong Khapa puja will be held. I strongly encourage you to come. Wherever Lama Zopa goes, he prays for the spread of Lama Tsong Khapa's and Atisha's teachings. So there is a purpose for that. Also, I feel that we have a very good relationship - I benefit you and you benefit me. We can say that we are actual Dharma friends. It is good to pray that we will meet from lifetime to lifetime.

We should always practice pure refuge and bodhicitta and base our activities on refuge and bodhicitta.

*Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*



*Shantideva's
Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

བྱུང་ལྷུང་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Ven. Michael Lobsang Yeshe

2013 Notes

Tara Institute
3 Mavis Avenue
East Brighton VIC 3187
Tel: (03) 9586 8900

A branch of FPMT, the Foundation
for the Preservation of the
Mahayana Tradition, a network of
Buddhist Centres in Australia and
worldwide.

Shantideva's *Bodhicharyavatara*

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དབའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

12 February 2013

As is the usual practice for the study group, we will do the *tong len* (giving and taking) meditation. The motivation for that is encompassed by the refuge and bodhicitta prayer that we have just recited. [meditation]

First of all, I would like to express my appreciation for this opportunity to be able to gather together again, as we are old friends like brothers and sisters. Having such a gathering of like-minded people, is an incredibly fortunate opportunity.

You would, no doubt, have had a good break and a good time over Christmas and New Year. However when we think about it, there is nothing remaining from the festivities but the memory of them. Regardless of whether you had a good time or an uncomfortable time, by now it has gone, there is nothing left, and it makes no difference to the here and now.

Thus, it is far more appropriate for us to look forward to what is yet to come. Then we find that our objectives will fall into two main categories. Just as in the practice of giving and taking that we did earlier, where we take unwanted suffering from others and we imagine giving them our happiness; similarly for our own well-being, there are certain things that we need to acquire and certain things that we need to discard.

The *tong len* meditation has two essential elements, love and compassion. Taking upon the suffering of others encompasses compassion, whereas giving our happiness to others encompasses love. Thus the meditation is a training to increase love and compassion in our hearts. When we see others who are deprived of happiness, and we generate a genuine wish for them to be happy, we are expressing our love for them; and when we see others experiencing suffering, and we generate the wish to eliminate their suffering, we are expressing our compassion for them.

Aside from our attempts to engage in and meditate on the practice of giving and taking, even just feeling some sort of inclination to develop more love and compassion towards other beings is already a great start. The *tong len* practice of giving and taking is a higher form of practice, and not an easy one to perform.

Someone who is genuinely determined to practise this technique would be happy when they experience personal suffering, and very wary when they experience happiness or a pleasant situation. In order to willingly take upon the suffering of others, one should not be daunted or overwhelmed by suffering, and thus be willing to endure hardships and difficulties, and then use that as a practice. Conversely, the reason why such a practitioner would wary and uneasy with happiness is because when one experiences something pleasant, there

is a great danger that attachment to those good conditions and pleasant sensations will arise. Therefore a true practitioner would be wary about good conditions and pleasant sensations.

We really need to try to understand what this practice entails, and why it is such a necessary practice. From a conventional or worldly perspective, it sounds very strange that someone would be willing and happy to experience hardships and suffering while being wary and unhappy when pleasant things occur. However when we understand why a practitioner adopts such an outlook, then we begin to see that this is not all weird or strange, but in fact a great point of practice.

If we carefully consider our normal situation, we will come to see that it is our obsession with wanting to experience pleasantness and to avoid suffering that actually causes us the most trouble in our life. If we think about it we will see that this is really true.

Maintaining a normal, worldly view means being constantly obsessed with wanting to experience pleasant sensations and conditions, and constantly trying to avoid any unpleasant conditions and situations, and it is this worldly view that causes us so much turmoil and difficulty when our expectation are not met. When we understood this, we see how it is this worldly attitude that gives rise to delusions such as strong attachment and anger. To go into further detail, when we experience a pleasant sensation and become obsessed with it, then strong attachment to that sensation or pleasant condition arises.

We come so fixated on not wanting to experience any unpleasantness, that the moment the slightest unpleasantness arises, we immediately become upset and angry about that. So we can see how maintaining such a worldly view or outlook causes attachment and anger to repeatedly arise in one's mind. Conversely, one can adopt an attitude where, by willingly accepting and enduring all hardships, one does not become daunted when unpleasantness and difficulties arise. One of the categories of patience is to willingly endure any suffering and hardship. So applying this patience means we will not be daunted by hardships and difficulties, and so our mind will not be disturbed.

The very definition of patience entails not allowing the mind to become disturbed or upset in the face of difficulties or any unwanted experiences. Thus, patience protects the mind from anger. Conversely, if we allow our mind to be completely obsessed with external situations, believing that external good conditions and so forth bring us happiness, then, for as long as we have those external conditions, while we may experience temporary fleeting pleasures, but the moment those conditions cease, we will be left with a feeling of being empty of any sense of happiness. So working on our internal conditions, will help us not to be overly attached to external conditions and situations and solely dependent on them for our happiness.

When we engage in the *tong len* practice, we recite the verses as a reminder of how to practise giving and taking. Even if we are not able to develop the strong determination to apply their real meaning in our heart,

just familiarising our mind with those words and trying to adopt that sort of attitude is still worthwhile for us beginners.

The technique of giving and taking works toward developing a genuine sense of love and compassion within oneself, thereby becoming a means to oppose such strong delusions as attachment and anger. When we understand that, we can gain an overall appreciation of the meditation technique as being the means to acquire a true sense of well-being and happiness.

Our ultimate goal is to experience a true sense of well-being and happiness and to discard any unwanted suffering. In order to reach that goal, we need to apply the proper method and techniques. When we apply this meditation technique in the appropriate way, it will help us to genuinely begin to develop that sense of well-being. In particular, it will help us to increase a genuine, sound wisdom that will help us to clearly identify the conducive factors, and discard the opposing factors to our well-being. When we develop such sound wisdom, then we will begin to really establish a true sense of a relaxed, calm and clear mind, which becomes the basis for our endeavours to progress in our spiritual lives.

It is really worthwhile to contemplate what we are setting out to achieve. When we look around, we can see that everyone is busy trying to achieve something. So when we actually stop and genuinely think about what it is we are trying to achieve, it really comes down to a sense of well-being and happiness, and the lack any factors and conditions that bring about unpleasantness and suffering. Regardless of whether people consciously think about it or not, that is really what it comes down to — whatever we do arises from wanting to achieve some sort of pleasantness, and to discard any unpleasant situations.

The point then is to really consider whether the attempts we are making in our very busy lives are working for us or not? Are they bringing about those good results? That is something that we need to contemplate.

Now of course we have definitely achieved quite a lot. When we were born, we came naked without any possessions. We weren't born with a sum of money in our hands! We can readily appreciate the comparison with what we have now. When we were first born we couldn't walk or even crawl. At that time we were completely at the mercy of our caretakers, particularly our parents. We were completely dependent on their love and kindness our parents and caretakers to feed and cloth us. Then, at a certain point we became educated and were able to think for ourselves. It was our parents or caretakers who nourished and cared for us up to the point where we considered ourselves to be independent, when we could work and earn for ourselves. But up until then, we were loved, cared for and nourished by others.

At this point we are able expend a lot of energy in acquiring the means to eliminate a lot of external adverse conditions. But even though we have achieved sufficient external conditions for our well-being, when we look within ourselves, we can all acknowledge that there is a constant nagging wish for something more, which is really uncomfortable. Somehow we are not fully satisfied; there is something that is not quite right, something that

is missing. So internally, within our own minds, we still haven't really achieved that satisfactory sense of contentment and happiness.

We have spent quite a lot of time and energy in achieving a significant number of favourable worldly circumstances, and we have also endured a lot of difficulties and hardships along the way. If we expend the same amount of energy and time and willingly undergoing difficulties and hardships to acquire favourable internal conditions, we will also be able to achieve adequate internal conditions for our well-being and happiness. That is something that we can definitely achieve. Then we will definitely be able to overcome and eradicate the troublesome attitudes that compromise our well-being and happiness.

Another question that can be posed is, 'How do I actually overcome these problems that trouble my mind? What are the methods that can I use?' These are significant questions. Of course, many may feel that their internal problems are related to external causes and conditions. We are all too familiar with that way of thinking! This attitude stems from a deeper notion that we are not at fault, 'I'm OK, I'm completely innocent'; 'There is nothing wrong with me'; 'The problem was caused by someone else'.

Whilst we may be well acquainted with the notion that our problems are caused by external sources, if we look within ourselves and honestly scrutinise and analyse our internal conditions, we will slowly come to realise that our mind is influenced by delusions such as strong desire and anger. And as long as one is under the control of the mind, which in turn is dominated by the delusions, then to that extent one's mind will always be prone to problems. If we genuinely look within, we will find that the real causes for our unhappiness are our own delusions.

Once we begin to detect where the problem really lies, we will be willing to adopt a technique that does not allow our minds to be influenced by the delusions. For example, we can focus on a particular type of object that does not cause any delusions to arise. If we are able to focus on that object for some time, whether it is one, two, or three minutes, then for that period of time we will not experience a troubled mind. That is because during that time our mind is protected from the delusions, and so we experience a genuine sense of calmness and well-being.

Having been presented with a technique that allows our mind to become focussed and not influenced by the delusions, the next question we might ask ourselves is, 'Will it be possible for me to train in such a technique? Would it be suitable for me?' The answer to these questions is a definite yes! Even though, at present we may be influenced by the delusions and have certain negative tendencies within ourselves, we all possess a positive state of mind. So what we need to do is develop more familiarity with that positive state of mind. If we sincerely adopt this technique there is no question that it will work.

It is natural that when the mind is familiarising itself with an object, then that is the predominant thought. In this way our familiarity and acquaintance with that object,

whether it be an attitude or a particular way of thinking, that becomes the predominant thought. So when we familiarise ourselves with a positive object that does not cause any delusions to arise within the mind, then the more we acquaint ourselves with that object, the more natural it becomes for us to experience a state of mind that is not influenced by the delusions, not being completely dominated by them. As we become more and familiar with this technique and the object of meditation, then gradually the mind becomes clearer and brighter and our intelligence or wisdom will naturally increase. As a consequence of all of that, our mind will naturally become calmer, less troubled and less chaotic. That is definitely the positive result we can experience, but that, of course, requires constant familiarity and acquaintance with the practice.

As explained earlier, we call this technique meditation. The Tibetan term for 'meditation' is *gom*, which literally translates 'to familiarise'. The connotation is that we are familiarising our mind with something that is positive, rather than on negativity.

In order to see the great value and advantage of the practice of meditation, we need to see the faults of negativities such as anger. For as long as we don't see the faults of anger, we won't take the initiative to overcome anger. Thus we need to begin by contemplating again and again the faults of anger.

We need to see how when anger arises, it is followed by an intention of wanting to harm the object of our anger by whatever means. Driven by anger we think, 'I will wait until just the right moment, and then I will say or do something to hurt them'. That is how anger begins to lead us to engage in unwholesome deeds.

The very feeling of anger is accompanied by an intention of wishing to harm the object, and the moment anger arises it makes us feel uncomfortable. So even though anger comes with an intention to hurt others, it is we who experience a more immediate hurt. Thus, anger has no redeeming value — it hurts oneself as well as others. When we contemplate and think about the great disadvantage and faults of anger in this way we begin to develop a strong intention to overcome anger.

This is where the technique of focussing on an object that does not cause any delusions (such as anger and attachment) to arise is important. For the duration of our focus on an object, which by its very nature does not cause delusions to arise, we will not experience anger. If we begin to engage in this practice when we feel anger arising then, then for whatever time (one, two or three minutes) we adequately focus on this object, the anger will subside and we will experience a real sense of relief within our mind. The effect will be soothing and calming.

Another disadvantage of anger, is that when we become upset and angry, the person we are angry with and who we intend to hurt, is usually someone close to us. We won't go out of our way to find a stranger to become angry with! The very person that we either live with or associate with, the one we consider as a loved or dear one is normally the object with whom we become angry! So we can see here the futility of anger in that it influences us to hurt or do hurtful things to the very person we

consider to be closest to us. This is how we need to reflect upon the disadvantages of anger.

We can use these reflections on the disadvantages of anger to inspire us to engage in the practice of meditation; to apply it in our daily life; and to contemplate these disadvantages again and again. There are two reasons to meditate: there are the qualities that one needs to further develop and there are the faults one needs to discard. Meditation is precisely what will help us to accomplish that. When we adequately apply the meditation technique, it becomes the optimum protection for our own mind — our sense of peace and well-being will be enhanced and protected. A calm and a peaceful state of mind (which we all naturally have at some level) is something that we really need to try and protect at every cost. If we make the time to apply the meditation technique, it will help us to develop a clear, happy and a genuinely relaxed mind. Anyone who actually establishes such qualities will be a happy person, wherever they go and in whatever situation they may find themselves. No external conditions will be too daunting for them. They feel relaxed and calm wherever they may be and in whatever company they find themselves. The result is that others also experience that calmness, so it is something of mutual benefit.

Maintaining a happy mind should be a priority for our own well-being. That means actively engaging in analysing one's own state of mind, checking up on what's occurring in one's thoughts and attitudes. Asking oneself, 'what kind of state of mind am I in right now? Is it a happy and calm state of mind or on the verge of declining? Am I imbued with thoughts that promote and increase a sense of happiness and well-being within myself, or am I obsessed with thoughts that obstruct my happiness and calmness?' Undertaking such an analysis on a regular basis will contribute to our overall well-being.

Rather than spending all our time and energy focussing on external conditions, we need to develop a much more internal focus. Although being completely immersed in external conditions brings some sort of temporary benefit to a certain degree, it leaves no time to acquire sufficient conditions for our inner well-being. So if we can adopt an attitude where, at every cost, we attempt to protect our own well-being and inner happiness then, regardless of the external conditions we will be able to maintain a sense of dignity, which encompasses that sense of calmness. When things are going well externally, everything may seem just fine. But when eventually things don't go so well, for example, when there's a difficult situation, or one's living conditions are temporarily reduced, if one has maintained an inner well-being, then one will not be daunted and will be able to adapt to whatever external conditions prevail. That is the most suitable way for us to conduct our lives.

We need to start paying attention to, and analysing our mind and our thoughts, looking for the thoughts that have greatest influence. If we find a negative state of mind, we ask ourselves, 'How do I overcome this?' 'What are the best ways to try and overcome this negative state of mind?' If, on the other hand we find that we have a positive state of mind, then be joyful and happy about

that and think of ways to further increase and nourish that positive state of mind. Such analyses and ways of thinking are really worthwhile and helpful for our own well-being.

The essential point is that the most precious possession one can ever have is a genuine sense of love and compassion. Any person endowed with a true sense of love and compassion is liked by everyone, and they will be welcomed wherever they go. When you can see that in others, then it must also be true for yourself. If you wish to be liked by others, then genuinely love them and be compassionate and help them when you can.

If you are unable to render help, you can at least make a commitment not to harm others, which is also appreciated. The person who does not intentionally harm others is generally appreciated and trusted. So we can see the great value of adopting these attitudes and, at best, exhibiting a true sense of love and compassion. We are the greatest beneficiaries of such an attitude.

One of the things people often talk about is trust. Some people complain that they are not trusted by others, or that their partner doesn't trust them, or that their friends don't trust them. If one wishes to be viewed as being trustworthy, then one needs to really look into what makes one trustworthy. Trust has to be earned! The optimum way to gain the trust of others is by exhibiting true love and compassion for them, and a true sense of concern. That is the best way. If one is not trusted, then one needs to look at the reason why that is the case. Has one's love and compassion, or true sense of concern for others perhaps declined? If that is so, then it follows that others will not render any trust.

Someone once asked me, 'Are there perhaps some mantras to recite to make others like me?' My response was, 'Well, there could be mantras, but that's not really necessary. If you really want others to like and appreciate you, and to draw others towards you, the best way is by developing a true sense of love and compassion. That is the best way'. But that didn't seem to go down too well!! [laughter] There is a story that Lama Zopa once related to me. One of the first FPMT centres in America was Vajrapani Institute, and its first geshe, Geshe Lobsang Gyatso, was one of the first geshes to go to the west from Sera. Apparently the translator had a bit of a hard time with him and was not able to translate everything, and Geshe Lobsang Gyatso seemed to be a little annoyed with him. The translator tried to please him, but to no avail. Then the translator apparently asked Lama Yeshe, 'Is there some mantra I can recite for the Geshe to like me?' [laughter] It seems that many people suspect that Buddhists to have some sort of mantra that can be recited as part of their tantric rituals to overcome or to acquire certain things.

Love and compassion is essential in all relationships, such the relationship between parents and children. It seems that in Western countries the relationship between parents and children causes a lot of suffering. The children might have faults and do things that are inappropriate, but I suspect that even from the parents' side, there are times when they lose the genuine sense of caring, love and concern for their children. It is when there is a mutual waning of that sense of genuine concern

for each other, when love and compassion have declined, that relationships are strained. Consequently, suffering is experienced by both the children and the parents, which is uncomfortable for both sides.

This is something we need to really think about: Since we are living in a world in which we have to rely upon others, it is worthwhile that we have a good relationship with them. So, we need to consider what are the main elements needed to have a good relationship between parents and children and so forth? In order to maintain our sense of love and compassion, we also need to develop patience. While we may extend our love and compassion, which in very simple terms is having a genuine concern for others, there may be times when the other lacks appreciation and so forth. When that happens, one may lose the sense of concern for the other which is a result of the love and compassion for the other beginning to decline. That is the time when it is very important to apply patience. Regardless of their attitude or any inappropriate remarks that they may make, we need to think, 'I should not be daunted by that; I must maintain a genuine sense of concern for them'. With that element of patience, we will be able to endure any temporary difficulties that we may experience in caring for others.

Having extensively explained the importance and the great advantages of love and compassion, we now turn to the techniques of how to develop the genuine wish to benefit others based on love and compassion. This is precisely explained in the text we have chosen to study, which is *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life* or *Engaging in the Bodhisattva's Actions*, composed by Shantideva. This text is renowned among the great Indian and Tibetan masters. All of them agree that this text is the optimum source for advice on how to develop the mind of enlightenment or in simple terms the optimum way to benefit others based on love and compassion. Shantideva explains in great depth and detail the methods of how to develop this unique altruistic mind of enlightenment.

The benefit of developing love and compassion is unequalled. Developing love and compassion is the optimum way to achieve a true sense of well-being, so it is definitely a valuable practice that we need to engage in. Now, in saying that this is really a valuable practice, I am not implying in any way that I have mastered love and compassion myself. I am not saying that at all. But what I can say is that I do acquaint my mind with love and compassion regularly, contemplating the benefits and methods of developing love and compassion again and again. In fact I am mostly pre-occupied with thinking about the best ways to develop love and compassion within myself. My attempts to practise developing love and compassion give me a true sense of well-being and great solace. So, based on my limited experience of acquainting my own mind with love and compassion, I encourage you take up this practice as well. It definitely is a great tool for benefiting others while at the same time being a great source of solace and well-being for oneself. Thus it is something to which we can assign great value.

THE BODHISATTVA'S WAY OF LIFE

The great master Gyaltsab Je wrote a commentary on this text called *The Entrance for the Children of the Conquerors*. He presents his commentary in four main sections.

1. Meaning of the Title
2. Translator's Prostration
3. Meaning of the Text
4. Meaning of the conclusion

1. MEANING OF THE TITLE

The actual Sanskrit title of the text is *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*.

Bodhi in Tibetan is *jang chub*, which relates to the enlightened mind, or enlightenment;

The meaning of *sattva*, or *sempa* in Tibetan, is courageous or brave one;

Charya relates to the Tibetan word *jopa* which relates to actions or deeds;

Avatara or *jugpa* in Tibetan means to enter, or as in the translation 'an introduction'.

Thus the meaning of the title is, 'Introduction to the actions of bodhisattvas'.

There are different styles and systems of presenting the title of a text. It can relate to the person for whom the text was intended, for example there are sutras such as *Advice to a King*. A title can also relate to a place where the teaching was given, so the name of that place will be used in the title, such as *Gawa-gore Sutra* which is the sutra that was given on a particular mountain. Then there are titles based the time of the teaching. For example, there is a sutra the Buddha gave just before he passed into samadhi or nirvana, which is called *The Nirvana Sutra*. Finally there are titles such as this one, which present the content of the text in the title itself.

The meaning of the title is presented in a very meticulous way. The very name of the text can instil a great understanding in those who can relate to it. By merely seeing the title, a disciple who is of superior intelligence will be able to immediately understand the contents of the text. Those of medium intellect can derive a certain amount of understanding from the title alone, and even those with lower intellect would have some idea of what the contents would be. It is similar to labelling a medicine container. For those who are familiar with the name will know what type of medicine is in the container, just by reading the label.

In English the only translation we have of *bodhi* is *enlightenment*. With the Tibetan term *jang chub*, each word has a connotation of what that state actually indicates. The Tibetan word *jang* has the connotation of completely eradicating. This relates to having completely eradicated or abandoned the two obscurations — the deluded obscurations and the obscurations to omniscience. The Tibetan word *chub* has the connotation of acquiring all positive qualities and the ultimate quality to be accomplished is omniscience. So the state to be achieved, *jang chub* is a state in which all negativities are completely eradicated, and all positive qualities have been completely accomplished.

The Tibetan word *sempa*, which is a translation of the word *sattva* meaning a brave or courageous person refers to an individual who, with a courageous mind, is inspired and determined to achieve the state of enlightenment. They are not daunted by the task involved in achieving that state, which includes the practice of the six perfections. Thus, the person who willingly commits to engage in these actions to achieve that final state of enlightenment, is considered to be a courageous one.

So within the word bodhisattva, *bodhi* refers to the ultimate state that is to be achieved, and *sattva* to the courageous one who has dedicated themselves to achieve that ultimate state of enlightenment.

The definition of *charya* is the action or deeds, which most texts relate to the six perfections. However as His Holiness the Dalai Lama explained in his recent teachings on this text, the action itself can be divided into three stages:

1. The initial action, which is the development of bodhicitta — the altruistic mind wishing to achieve enlightenment.
2. The actual actions, which are engaging in practices of the six perfections.
3. The accomplished action, which is to obtain the ultimate state of enlightenment.

The last word of the title, *avatara*, which is translated in the commentary as the 'introduction', relates to introducing the complete methodology to engage in the actions of a bodhisattva, in other words the contents of this text.

In summary, *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* is a clear and unmistakable presentation of the unmistakable methods for engaging in the deeds or actions of a bodhisattva encompassing the six perfections, which lead one to the ultimate state of enlightenment.

This explanation of the title of the text can, in itself, provide us with something really significant to contemplate. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama recently said, 'Traditionally we don't hear about meditations on the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, but when we recite this text, we can contemplate the meaning of every single word in it. That would be a significant meditation based on the meaning of this text'. So it is good to really reflect on the meaning of each word in the title.

What does *bodhi* relate to? When we refer to Buddha, we may think that it just relates to a statue, but that is not correct. It actually refers to the state of enlightenment, which has been obtained by individual beings. When you use the Tibetan words and contemplate the connotations of each word, it gives an in-depth meaning. What does *sattva* mean? What does *charya* relate to? What are the actions that bodhisattvas engage in? What does *avatara* mean?' Contemplating each of these points becomes an adequate form of meditation.

The text itself is divided into ten chapters. As His Holiness recently explained, it is good to use the dedication prayer that we recite regularly, 'May the supreme jewel bodhicitta that has not arisen, arise and grow, and may that which has arisen never diminish but

increase more and more', as the basis for our contemplation of this text.

As His Holiness explained, this aspirational prayer presents the structure of this text.

- The first three chapters introduce bodhicitta, and then clearly define the distinction between aspirational bodhicitta and engaging bodhicitta, and what is entailed in developing that. In other words they relate to the bodhicitta that has not yet arisen to arise and grow.
- The next three chapters, chapter four which is on conscientiousness, five on introspection and six on patience, explain how not to ensure that the bodhicitta which has already arisen does not degenerate or diminish.
- Chapters seven which is on joyous effort, eight on meditation and nine about wisdom, show us how to increase bodhicitta even more. While chapter eight explains the method for increasing conventional bodhicitta, chapter nine specifically explains in detail how to increase ultimate bodhicitta.
- The tenth chapter is a chapter on dedication which seals all the positive virtues that one has accumulated from having developed bodhicitta, by dedicating those virtues and aspirations.

The text explains all this in meticulous detail.

I had great fortune to receive a teaching on this text recently from His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Sarnath. It was a wonderful opportunity to receive it just before I was about to present it here in our study group. So, now I can be bold in presenting it to you!!

Geshe-la then mentioned a few others who had been present with him at the teaching.

The way His Holiness presented this very precious teaching was really incredible. He was so skilful in the way he presented it, that you didn't necessarily have to be a Buddhist to relate to it; he presented it so that it could be used by anyone who listened to the teachings regardless of what tradition they may come from or even if they didn't follow a particular religion.

That will be sufficient for this evening. Those of you who have the material can start to familiarise themselves with it as preparation for class. That will be a good way to conduct the teachings.

I mentioned that it would be good to compile the teachings I give on this so that it can later be published in book form, and Ross has very kindly and courageously accepted that task. But it would be good for everyone to render support and help with that.

Although I have conducted numerous teachings over the years, we have not been able to produce that many books. I am not about to boast, but such detailed teachings and explanations on a certain text are not found all that readily. That is why compiling a book will be useful.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's *Bodhicharyavatara*

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དབའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སློལ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

19 February 2013

As usual we can spend some time in meditation. The *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer* that we have just recited will suffice for our motivation. We need to bear in mind that the purpose of taking refuge is to protect us from following a wrong path, while generating bodhicitta protects us from following the lesser path. That will ensure that our practice is a Great Vehicle, or Mahayana practice. [meditation]

As we have just attempted to do in our short session, it would be really beneficial to adopt a regular meditation practice in everyday life. The positive result of that would be that our love and compassion for others will be established and further increased.

In order to further increase a genuine sense of happiness within ourselves we need to work on establishing and further developing our love and compassion, which naturally brings about a genuine sense of peace. The *tong len* meditation practice will ensure that we establish a peaceful state of mind not, along with ensuring that what has already been established becomes firmer and steadier so that it does not decline, and that which has been firmly established to further increase. This is how the meditation practice will help us to obtain a peaceful state of mind, that we all naturally wish for.

So in this way we can see that the conditions for our happiness and wellbeing do not lie entirely with external circumstances, but in developing our inner qualities. The more attention we pay to further developing our inner qualities, the greater our genuine sense of wellbeing and happiness will be. When our mind is in a happy state, it will definitely have a positive effect on our physical health as well; a happy mind naturally brings about a healthy body. That is something that we need to consider.

As mentioned previously, it is essential for us to secure a positive motivation for engaging in the teachings. The optimum positive motivation can be generated by thinking along these lines: In order to benefit all sentient beings, by liberating them from all suffering and establishing them in supreme happiness, I need to achieve the ultimate state of enlightenment first. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings based on the explanation of this text composed by the great master Shantideva, and put it into practice well.

The four main sections of the text are the meaning of the title; the translator's prostration; the meaning of the text and the meaning of the conclusion.

1. MEANING OF THE TITLE

In our last session we explained the meaning of the Sanskrit title of the text *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, by breaking it up into its parts. *Bodhi* means enlightenment;

sattva means brave or courageous one; *charya* means action; and *avatara* means introduction.

As explained in our last session, it is really worthwhile to contemplate each of these components of the title. For example, *bodhi* or buddha relates the state of enlightenment. So what does that state of enlightenment, or buddhahood actually refer to? By contemplating the meaning of each part of the Tibetan word for it, *jang chub*, we understand that the state of enlightenment encompasses having overcome all adversities and negativities and accomplished all qualities.

Whenever we hear the name Buddha, or relate to the Buddha when engaging in practices of making offerings, paying homage and so forth; it is good to remember that the Buddha refers to a being who had first generated bodhicitta to become a courageous one (*sattva*), and thereby achieved enlightenment, a state in which all defilements have been abandoned and all supreme qualities fully established. He did that for the sole purpose of benefitting all sentient beings.

The practical benefit of contemplating the meaning of even just one word such as 'buddha' is that when we aspire to achieve enlightenment, (as we did with the motivation that we generated earlier) we gain a true sense of what it is that we are aspiring to achieve. When aiming to achieve enlightenment, we are aspiring to achieve a state where we have removed all faults and defilements, and acquired all possible qualities.

Defilements fall into two main categories — deluded obscurations and obscurations to omniscience. Deluded obscurations i.e. the delusions themselves, are obscurations to achieving self-liberation, whereas the imprints of the delusions are the obscurations to omniscience.

For as long as we have the imprints of the delusions in our mind, in particular the mode of mistaken dualistic appearances, to that extent the obscurations that prevent us from reaching the fully omniscient state of enlightenment, will always be present.

Understanding that the Buddha was an enlightened being, endowed with the characteristics of having overcome all defilements and accomplished all supreme qualities, means that when we do prostrations or make offerings or request blessings from the buddhas, we do so with that understanding. This will help us to purify the negativities of our own three doors of body, speech and mind, whilst receiving the blessings of the Buddha's holy body, speech and mind. That is a very meaningful way of relating to the Buddha. Of course, we could go into more detail here—however let us proceed with the text.

It is essential that we have a proper understanding, right from the beginning, as to what enlightenment really means. Then, when we relate that to our own practice, we will have the understanding that we are aspiring to achieve a state where all adversities or defilements have been completely abandoned and all positive qualities have been completely accomplished.

It is also really important to understand that the state of enlightenment is not obtained instantaneously. Rather, our commitment to avoid each and every tiny non-virtue, while acquiring each every good quality, becomes the

basis for creating the causes for achieving enlightenment. This gradual process will eventually add up to the point where we reach the state of overcoming all faults and acquiring all good qualities. It is essential that we have this understanding.

This is a very pungent instruction for our own personal practice. Whenever we find ourselves intentionally avoiding some negativity or non-virtue, and voluntarily adopting good virtue, we can rejoice and feel encouraged by the fact that we are creating the basic causes for enlightenment. This is no trivial achievement but a very significant one that can be a source of tremendous encouragement for our daily practice.

Every time we make sincere attempts to overcome faults, and acquire positive qualities, we are getting closer and closer to enlightenment; meanwhile creating the causes for a genuinely calmer and more peaceful state of mind. When we sincerely adopt this practice in our everyday life we will find that our mind gradually becomes a little bit more settled and peaceful. In this way we can see how engaging in these practices on a daily basis is really worthwhile as we experience the benefits right now. It is not as if we have to wait until enlightenment to experience positive results from our practice. In fact the positive results we experience now will lead onto obtaining more significant qualities in the future.

Other texts explain that one benefit of presenting the title in Sanskrit is that it is the language used by the buddhas of the three times when they turned the wheel of Dharma. Presenting the title of the text in its original form blesses our mind with the blessed language of the buddhas. Using the original Sanskrit title also leaves a good imprint on our minds to be able to master this language so that we can listen and teach in Sanskrit ourselves. In addition the Sanskrit title indicates the authenticity of the text, showing that it originates from the source of great Indian treatises.

If the title is presented in Sanskrit for these reasons, we might well wonder why it is also presented in Tibetan. The purpose for doing that is said to be to remember the kindness of the Tibetan translators. Without the great lengths that the Tibetan translators went through to translate the text, it would be very difficult for us to access these great treatises now. Only a few scholars in Tibet were able to translate the original Sanskrit into Tibetan, but through their efforts many, many more Tibetans have been able to study those texts, and put their instructions into practice.

The great Tibetan masters have studied, meditated on and practised the instructions on *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* in unbroken succession. They were able to do so because of the translation of this and other Sanskrit texts into Tibetan. Without the translations they would not have been able to study these texts. In my own case, I attempted to study some Sanskrit, but I wasn't able to master it to a point of being able to confidently read and study the Sanskrit versions. I have only been able to make attempts to understand these classic texts because of the availability of the texts in Tibetan.

In fact many of the classic Indian texts don't seem to exist in their original Sanskrit form, but they are all available in

Tibetan and therefore are available for translation into other languages. So the English translations of these texts are based on the Tibetan translations. Therefore it is quite appropriate for us to remember and celebrate the work of the great Tibetan translators; without their work we would not have the English translations that we use today. Apparently some of the classic texts have been translated into Japanese, and perhaps some into Chinese. I have heard that it is not very easy to translate them into Japanese, as one also needs to be a master of classic Chinese. So in this way we can see the significance of remembering the kindness of the Tibetan translators.

On the right of the altar there are over one hundred volumes of Tibetan translations of all of the Buddha's words, which are called the *Kangyur* in Tibetan. On the left we can see the *Tengyur*, the two hundred or so volumes of commentaries by the great Indian masters called, also translated into Tibetan, and hence available to this day.

THE FIRST BUNDLE

Although not presented in the English translation, in the Tibetan text, right after the title there is mention of the *First Bampo*. This relates to the system of applying separate sections in the original text. The word *bampo* comes from the Tibetan word used, for example to describe the bundling of hay into a haystack, or a bunch of flowers when you bundle together individual flower stems. Similarly when parts of the text are bundled together as one section, the collection is called a *bampo*. There is also the term *bamdrol* which refers to a sub-section of a *bampo*, which contain specific number of verses—three hundred verses in some cases and five hundred in another text. The *Heart Sutra*, a short text containing only twenty-five verses, has only one *bampo*.

2. TRANSLATOR'S PROSTRATION

I prostrate to all buddhas and bodhisattvas.

There is no literal explanation of this line in Gyaltsab Je's commentary, as its meaning is quite clear. However Gyaltsab Je does, however, explain the purpose of the prostration as follows:

The purpose of the translator's prostration is to pacify the obstacles to the translation and to identify this text as a commentary belonging mainly to the sutra basket of teachings, although in general it is a commentary on all the baskets of teachings.

Here the word *basket* refers to the collections of the Buddha's teachings.

Pacifying the obstacles to the translation includes the obstacles to the completion of the composition. Thus, the prostration to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas is done as a way to receive their blessing during the translation, in order for the translator to complete the composition successfully.

Because *all buddhas and bodhisattvas* encompasses all supreme beings, paying respect to them is the optimum means to accumulate extensive amounts of merit. It is due to the merit that one possesses that one will have success in whatever one does. Here in the west people talk about luck or fortune. I am not really sure what that means, but

from the Buddhist point of view we need to have a sufficient amount of merit to accomplish anything that we wish to accomplish.

The second part of the commentary explains that prostrating to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas also implies that this text belongs to the *sutra basket* of the Buddha's *teachings*. This is in accordance with a decree by an early king of Tibet that all translations had to begin with a salutation to indicate to the readers the collection of the Buddha's teaching that the text belongs to. For texts that relate to the *sutra basket*, as is the case here, the salutation is to all buddhas and bodhisattvas. The texts that belong to the *abhidharma* collection have a salutation to Manjushri, the deity of wisdom; while those belonging to the *vinaya basket* have a salutation to the Omniscient One meaning the Buddha.

So just from the prostration in the beginning of the text, we can immediately detect that this text belongs to the *sutra basket* of the Buddha's teachings. In addition to the three baskets of the Buddha's teachings, these salutations can also relate to the three trainings; the training of morality, the training of concentration and the training in wisdom. The *sutra basket* relates to the training of concentration, the *abhidharma* to the training of wisdom and the *vinaya basket* relates to the training of morality.

When these three trainings are related to the three baskets of the Buddha's teachings, as in this case, they are called higher trainings to indicate that the trainings surpass the practices of other traditions. Consequently a higher training surpasses other forms of training.

Even though they are presented as higher forms of training, we all have, to a certain degree, some level of morality, concentration and wisdom within ourselves right now. We all practise some form of morality in our present state, and to a certain degree we are all able to engage in meditation, and we all have a certain amount of intelligence or wisdom. So, these trainings are not unfamiliar or irrelevant to us. When we notice that we do have these trainings within ourselves to a certain degree, it encourages us to further develop them.

In fact all of the Buddha's teachings are said to be presented in a practical way, suitable for the capacities of the various dispositions of his disciples. It is said that even if we don't have the actual practice, we may have the seed of the practice, or the potential to practise, or even a similitude of that practice.

For example when we recited the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, that form of taking refuge complemented with bodhicitta is the means for us to adopt all three levels of practice. The very act of taking refuge encompasses some form of morality; when we take refuge very sincerely, with a contemplative mind and strong faith, it encompasses concentration; and our understanding of the benefits of taking refuge, encompasses wisdom. When it is complemented with bodhicitta then that act of taking refuge becomes the ultimate form of refuge which is the Mahayana refuge. Thus the practice of taking refuge and generating bodhicitta encompasses all three levels of practice, and that is why it can be considered a very significant and high form practice. This is how we can relate to the practice in a practical way.

3. MEANING OF THE TEXT

The commentary refers to the *First Bambo*. As that makes it clear that this is the first section of the text, there is no need for further explanation.

The text has two main sub-divisions:

3.1. The preparatory actions for explaining the stages of the Mahayana path

3.2. The actual explanation of the stages

As I have explained previously, the headings themselves can tell us what the actual contents of the text will be. They are presented in a very meticulous and logical manner. Initially the preparatory actions or preliminary actions of the Mahayana path are explained, which is then followed by the actual explanation of the stages of the path.

3.1. THE PREPARATORY ACTIONS FOR EXPLAINING THE STAGES OF THE MAHAYANA PATH

This section of the text has three subdivisions:

3.1.1. Homage

3.1.2. Pledge of composition

3.1.3. Humility and the reason for joyful composition

3.1.1. Homage

The homage has three subdivisions:

3.1.1.1. The purpose of paying homage

3.1.1.2. Summary

3.1.1.3. Meaning of the words

3.1.1.1. The purpose of paying homage

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the purpose of paying homage thus:

By expressing the qualities of special objects and going for refuge, one comes to be understood as a holy being, and the obstacles to the composition of the treatise are pacified. In the end, one attains definite goodness and other disciples will also follow this example. As a result, they too will achieve all accumulations of goodness.

It is good to understand the significance and relevance of this presentation. The statement *by expressing the qualities of special objects and going for refuge, one comes to be understood as a holy being*, contains a great truth. We all regard Shantideva as a great master and holy being, so it is clear that as a result of his respectfully paying homage to holy beings, he in turn came to be regarded as a holy being himself. Thus, when one takes sincere refuge in a holy object and practises the commitments of refuge, we can understand the positive outcome will be that one will attain the state of becoming a holy being oneself.

When *the obstacles to the composition of the treatise are pacified* then all obstacles during the composition will be removed, and *the end* result is that *one obtains definite goodness and other disciples will also follow this example*. And *as a result they too will achieve accumulation of goodness*. In short, paying homage encompasses a twofold benefit, i.e. benefit for oneself and benefit for others.

This is in accordance with the practice of all the great holy and noble beings. In whatever activity they undertake, they first take refuge in the Three Jewels and a particular deity they have strong faith in, such as Tara, or

Avalokiteshvara and so forth. It is customary for all holy beings to pay homage before they engage in any activity.

Recently I heard the national anthem of Sri Lanka and, if I am not mistaken I thought I heard the word *namo* at the beginning of the anthem. As I understand *namo* means salutation, and because Sri Lanka is a Buddhist country I assume that it is a salutation or prostration to the Buddha, which is quite significant to have in a national anthem.

3.1.1.2. Summary

1ab. To the tathagatas possessing the dharmakaya, their children

And to all who are suitable for homage I prostrate respectfully.

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

Shantideva prostrates to the Triple Gem and all others worthy of homage.

3.1.1.3. Actual meaning of the words.

In Tibetan, the Sanskrit word *Sugata* is translated as *de sheg*. *Sugata* is comprised of two words, *su* meaning 'great bliss' and *gata* means 'gone or completely gone beyond'. So the meaning of *sugata* is that by relying on the blissful bodhisattva path, one obtains the result of the ultimate enlightened state, which is a state where one has gone completely beyond cyclic existence.

Gyaltsab Je begins his commentary on this section by stating:

The term *sugata* relates to abandonment and realisation.

Here, *realisation* particularly relates to *dharmakaya*, the truth body of a buddha.

Gyaltsab Je then presents the *three qualities of excellent abandonment* in the form of analogies.

- Similar to a person possessing a good body, if one has exhaustively abandoned the afflictive obscurations, then one has gone to the good or beautiful.

When one has exhaustively abandoned afflictive obscurations then one has gone to the good or beautiful stage of enlightenment.

- Similar to having completely purified a contagious disease, one has gone beyond falling into cyclic existence through the power of the afflictions.
- Similar to a well-filled vase, having gone to all and thus having gone to bliss, through having exhaustively abandoned the non-afflictive ignorance.

Next, Gyaltsab Rinpoche explains the meaning of the word *sugata* in relation to the Tibetan word *shegpa*.

[*Dewa* or] bliss is referred to as good, and [*shegpa* or] 'gone' means to have become the living example of that.

Then Gyaltsab Je states:

The three [qualities of excellent abandonments] respectively distinguish a non-Buddhist who is free from attachment, from a stream enterer [or once returner], and a Hinayana arhat.

That covers what are called the excellent abandonments.

In general there are three particular types of abandonments: newly abandoned; abandoned to the point where it never reoccurs again; and exhaustively abandoned.

Gyaltsab Je's explanation of the three types of *excellent realisation* reads:

Having gone to bliss because of 1) directly understanding the suchness of the two selflessnesses; 2) having stable understanding; and 3) understanding all. Respectively these distinguish the three kinds of persons as well.

Then the first two lines of the root text are discussed.

Earlier, the word *sugata* was explained in terms of the Tibetan word *de sheg*, meaning *bliss* and *gone* respectively. So when the verse reads *to the tathagatas*, it is referring to the qualities of a buddha or enlightened ones, who are endowed with excellent abandonments and excellent realisations.

Next the commentary refers to the words *possessing dharmakaya*. The first line of the verse refers to the Buddha Jewel.

Then Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

These lines show the praise to the Buddha Jewel.

Next, Gyaltsab Je's states that:

The dharmakaya is the naturally pure sphere free from all stains, which is the Dharma Jewel, and those possessing it are the ones gone to bliss.

The dharmakaya is the naturally pure state free from all stains which is Dharma Jewel. This refers to the truth of cessation within the Buddha's continuum. Having first presented the definition of the dharmakaya, i.e. that it is naturally pure from all stains which is the Dharma Jewel, Gyaltsab Je then goes on to explain that *those possessing it are the ones gone to bliss*. Thus the first line encompasses all three jewels, *tathagatas*—the Buddha jewel; *possessing the dharmakaya*—the Dharma jewel; and *their children*—the Sangha jewel.

As the commentary reads:

The first¹ and second² terms also contain the two form bodies of a buddha, and the second term also represents the truth of cessation and the truth of the path of a bodhisattva. Hence, all Buddha Jewels and Mahayana Dharma Jewels are the object of prostration.

Children refers to superior bodhisattvas; with their inclusion the Triple Gem is complete.

Here we need to explain why *bodhisattvas* are referred to as *children* or, more literally, the sons of the buddhas. This is in accordance to ancient royal system in India where the king's son, the crown prince, is recognised in the social hierarchy as the one who will be entrusted with the sovereignty of the kingdom as well as the key to the treasury. In other words, the king's son, who is of the lineage of the king himself, is the one who will be entrusted with the most valuable assets of the kingdom.

Using that analogy, the son or the children of the buddhas are the bodhisattvas who hold the complete

¹ Tathagatas

² Dharmakaya

lineage of the Buddha's doctrine. Just like being entrusted with the key to the treasure vault, through their realisations they hold the key to the knowledge of the Buddha's teaching, which leads to enlightenment. As the Buddha in his physical form has passed into nirvana, it is the bodhisattvas who are preserving and maintaining the Buddha's teaching, and causing it to further flourish.

Just like the crown prince holds the lineage of the king, the bodhisattvas hold the complete unmistakable doctrine of the Buddha. Just as the crown prince assumes continues the work of his father when the king reaches old age or passes on, bodhisattvas establish the doctrine of the Buddha and cause it to flourish in the minds of other sentient beings.

Gyalsab Je concludes his commentary on *The Meaning Of The Words* with:

Shantideva prostrates respectfully with body, speech and mind to them, and to all others worthy of prostration, such as abbots, preceptors and so forth.

The commentary further explains, [this part is missing in the translation] that at the end of the second line in the first verse of the root text, there is the Tibetan letter *te*, a continuative particle which indicates that there something else to follow. If we were to use a continuative particle such as 'having' in the English translation, then the verse could read, 'Having prostrated respectively to the tathagatas possessing the dharmakaya, their children, and all suitable for homage', that then would indicate that something else has to follow the prostration. It is similar to saying, 'Having washed, I will take my meal'. If you just say 'I have washed' then that in itself doesn't indicate another action to be followed. But if you say 'Having taken a shower...', then that indicates an action to be followed after the shower.

This Tibetan continuative particle *te* is also used in the offering prayer *Lama sang-gyā lama ch'ö, D'e-zhin la-ma ge-dün-te, Kun-gyi j'e-po la-ma-te*, which implies that something else is to follow that. However there is nothing that follows after the mention of lama. So that's why there are some teachers who say that rather than saying, *Kun-gyi j'e-po la-ma-te* it is better to say *Kun-gyi j'e-po la-ma-ny*. That is because the *nyi* has the connotation of referring to only the lama himself. Nevertheless the word *te* is used in the actual prayer.

The parts up to now in the text have been quite technical and perhaps a bit tedious. However, because the explanations are presented in the commentary, we need to cover it. It has its place and purpose, so it is good to have an understanding of it. Henceforth the explanations in the text will be more straightforward and easy to follow.

After this evening, you might, at the very least, have a better understanding of what the word Buddha refers to and what a bodhisattva actually means.

Another thing that may be relevant and practical is the significance of doing prostrations. The act of prostration to holy objects accumulates the merit to be able to successfully engage in whatever activity we choose.

As the great master Potawa mentioned in one of his works: Don't rely too much on humans, rather make

strong prayers to the enlightened beings and deities. I think he is making a great point there. The deity can be whatever enlightened deity one has a strong connection with.

Just recently someone mentioned to me how making strong prayers to Tara has been really helpful in their life in times of difficulty or problems. He is an older person who helps other elderly people. He told me how one of the people he was helping scolded him a lot, which was really very uncomfortable. It was hard to confront this elderly person to try to stop that abuse, so, he said, 'In desperation I started to pray to Tara, and recited some mantras, which actually started to help my own mind'. Apparently the old man who had been making comments such as, 'Don't come near me again', so he was just sitting in a corner. But a little while after the volunteer started reciting the Tara prayers the elderly man called out saying, 'So you are not coming towards me are you?' And he replied, 'well, if you want I could come near you again' If you are happy I will come', and the old man said, 'Please do come over'. So it seems that conflict was immediately appeased by praying to Tara and reciting those prayers.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Fedor Stracke

Transcribed by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's *Bodhicharyavatara*

བྱང་ལྷོ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

26 February 2013

We can now engage in our meditation practice. The motivation that we generated in the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer* that we have just recited will suffice as our motivation for this practice.

The first two lines of this prayer identify the objects of refuge. In the Tibetan version the first line reads *To the Buddha, the Dharma and the highest assembly*; the **Buddha** relates to the supreme guide; and as this is a Mahayana refuge, the **Dharma** encompasses the truth of the Mahayana path and the Mahayana truth of cessation; while the **highest assembly** specifically indicates the Mahayana Sangha. It is because the Sangha is regarded as a highest or supreme assembly, that making offerings to them is considered to be a highly meritorious deed.

In the lam rim teachings, refuge is presented in four categories: identifying the objects of refuge; explaining the causes of going for refuge; the manner of going for refuge; and having taken refuge, the stages of training. These are really significant points to bring to mind whenever one takes refuge.

The second line of the verse in Tibetan, *I go for refuge until I am enlightened*, indicates the duration of going for refuge. As it is the Mahayana refuge, one goes for refuge until reaching the complete state of enlightenment. In the common refuge, such as when one takes the lay person's vows, it is going for refuge until the end of one's life. The *I* indicates the individual person who is going for refuge, and *go for refuge* indicates the objects of refuge and the manner of taking refuge, intact with the two causes for taking refuge.

Thus, going for refuge implies that the **two causes for taking refuge** are intact. The first cause is to have unbearable **fear** of taking rebirth in the lower realms in particular, and experiencing the sufferings of cyclic existence in general. Out of this fear arises the second cause, which is **wholehearted reliance** upon the objects of refuge, the Three Jewels.

The **manner of taking refuge** has four points outlined in the lam rim teachings are: recognising the qualities of the objects of refuge; recognising the differences between the objects of refuge; going for refuge with acceptance; and abandoning going for ultimate refuge in other objects. These points are implicitly indicated in the prayer as well.

The main point is that this one verse of taking refuge and generating bodhicitta encompasses a complete and really profound practice. Reciting this verse and contemplating its meaning is, in itself, a meditation practice. Treating it as a mere preliminary formality and assuming one is going onto some higher form of practice afterwards is completely missing the point. Without the basis of taking refuge wholeheartedly, with the complete understanding of what refuge and generating an altruistic mind involves, there is no real practice.

We need to consider the reason why this is such a profound practice. At an individual level we want to be free from the miseries of unfortunate rebirths and the shortcomings of

samsara in general. Without obtaining that freedom ourselves we cannot possibly benefit all other beings. So our primary concern must be adopting the best methods to free ourselves from the miseries and sufferings of the lower realms in particular, as well as the suffering of samsara in general. How we do that is solely dependent on taking refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Only these objects of refuge give us the methods to free ourselves from cyclic existence.

The second half of the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer* indicates the generation of bodhicitta. In *from the virtuous merit that I collect*, the *I* indicates the individual person who is collecting the merit. The *merit* is the merit one accumulates specifically from generosity, morality and meditation. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has indicated on several occasions that using the Tibetan word *tsok-nam kyi* which includes both accumulations, rather than *sonam kyi*, which identifies only merit, would be much more meaningful as it encompasses both the collection of wisdom, as well as the collection of merit. That, as His Holiness explains, will encompass far more virtues, and also reminds us of the importance of engaging in both accumulations. The virtue that comes from both accumulations thus serves as a substance for generating the altruistic mind of bodhicitta. As you may recall, during initiations and so forth, it is customary to bring a small offering when taking the bodhisattva vows, to represent the bodhicitta substance. Here the virtue from the two accumulations serves as a supreme substance for generating bodhicitta.

In the last line, [here the English translation corresponds exactly to the Tibetan]— *to be able to benefit all sentient beings*, indicates the purpose for taking refuge which is to benefit other sentient beings. Those who are familiar with the definition bodhicitta will recall the two aspirations that are needed to qualify as bodhicitta — the aspiration to achieve enlightenment and the aspiration to benefit all sentient beings.

In the words *may I attain the state of Buddha to be able to benefit all sentient beings*, the *state of Buddha* identifies the aspiration to achieve enlightenment, while *to benefit all sentient beings* identifies the aspiration to benefit others. So the combination of these two aspirations qualifies bodhicitta as the supreme altruistic mind. The words *may I attain* indicates generating that specific aspiration in the form of a very strong wish. In one of the commentaries on Maitreya's *Ornament of Clear Realisation*, called *Clear Meaning*, it explains by quoting a sutra that bodhicitta is developed in the nature of generating a strong wish. Amongst the twenty-one commentaries on Maitreya's *Ornament of Clear Realisation*, the most supreme one is said to be *Clear Meaning*, composed by Indian master *Haribhadra*.

Thus the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer* suffices for our motivation when it is based on having the full knowledge and understanding of what it encompasses. I'm exhorting you not to forget these points and keep them firmly in mind. The reason why I remind you of these points again and again is because taking refuge and generating bodhicitta is essential and crucial for any practice to become meaningful.

Now we can engage in the meditation practice. [*Meditation*]

In our last session we covered the homage, so what are the objects of the homage? They are the Three Jewels, and all others worthy of prostration, such as abbots, preceptors and so forth.

1.2. Pledge of composition

The pledge of composition has four sub-divisions:

- 1.2.1. Identifying the subject
- 1.2.2. Rejecting the fault of self-creation
- 1.2.3. Rejecting repetition
- 1.2.4. Identifying the purpose, essential purpose and relation

1.2.1. Identifying the subject

The relevant words of the root text are:

1c. ...to the discipline of the tathagatas' children

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

This is a compendium that contains all the stages of the path that cause one to achieve enlightenment, such as the practice of the perfection of generosity and so forth, that were engaged by the buddhas and bodhisattvas upon initially generating the mind of enlightenment.

The order of the lines in Tibetan is different from the English translation we are using. As the commentary explains, *tathagatas* indicates the buddhas, and *children* indicates the bodhisattvas. So *generating the mind of enlightenment* specifically indicates the bodhicitta that has to be developed. So developing bodhicitta and then engaging in the *practices of the perfections of generosity and so forth*, leads one to that ultimate state of buddhahood.

The word *discipline* refers to engaging in the practices such as the perfection of generosity and so forth after having generated the mind of enlightenment.

Here we need to understand that the *perfection of generosity and so forth* implies the practices of the six perfections such as morality, patience, joyous effort, enthusiasm, meditation and wisdom, which will be presented individually in later chapters. By engaging in these practices bodhisattvas reach the ultimate state of enlightenment. Even though the literal translation of *dom* is *discipline* or *vow*, as used in this translation of the root text, the word *dom* has the connotation of a *compendium* as used in the commentary.

Thus, Shantideva's text is a compendium that contains all the stages of the path that cause one to achieve enlightenment

1.2.2. Rejecting the fault of self-creation

This is covered in the words:

1cd. This introduction ... according to the teaching.

In explaining these words, Gyaltsab Je poses a hypothetical question to Shantideva:

Have you not made it up yourself? Who is supposed to believe in this?

As a response to that Gyaltsab Je goes on to say:

There is no fault of self-creation, this introduction to all the stages of the Mahayana path is according to the explanation of the scriptural teachings of the Buddha.

This is a rejection of the fault of self-creation.

1.2.3. Rejecting repetition

Again Gyaltsab Je raises a hypothetical question in his commentary:

Yes, one generates realisations in dependence on the scriptures, but to what end compose this text?

In other words: what reason is there to compose this text? The response is in these words in the root text:

1d. I shall formulate in brief...

Then, in accordance with the root text, Gyaltsab Je indicates Shantideva's response:

There is no fault of repetition because I explained the teachings in a condensed way so that the meaning of the scriptures can be easily realised.

These few lines contain a very significant point that indicates the great kindness of Shantideva. As indicated here there is no repetition of other texts as this composition is *formulated* in a *condensed* or *brief* form. We need to derive from this how incredibly kind Shantideva has been to compose a text that condenses all of the essential points of the Buddha's teachings.

As the opening hypothetical question indicates, *one generates realisations in dependence on the scriptures*. This, of course, is true. One can generate realisations in dependence on the scriptures, which, as the Buddha's own words, are stainless and faultless. However, the reality is that there are so many volumes of text of the Buddha's words that it would be virtually impossible to even find the time to read all of them. That is because we are living in degenerate times. Our life span is short, we lack a significant amount of wisdom and we lack enthusiasm or joyous effort, and on top of that, with our dull intellect we are quite lazy!

To re-emphasise that point, the reality is that we are living in degenerative times where our life span is short in general and not fixed, which means that death can occur at any time. We also lack wisdom, enthusiasm and on top of that we are lazy. This indicates that even if we were to find the time to read the Buddha's words, it would be hard for us to derive their entire meaning. Nor do we have the capacity to condense these words into a manual of practices that extracts the essential points. Thus Shantideva's kindness is limitless, as illustrated by his presentation of this text which contains the essential points of all of the Buddha's teachings in a condensed form.

As mentioned in the past, the teachings on the *Prajnaparamita* (which means the wisdom gone beyond) are contained in four thick volumes. It is virtually impossible for us to try to read and understand all of that, and then to condense it into a set of practices. Hence, the relevance of this compendium compiled by Shantideva. As indicated here, by relying on Shantideva's text we can easily realise the meaning of the scriptures.

1.2.4 Identifying the four, purpose and so forth

First Gyaltsab Je identifies the subject which is:

The Mahayana path and its result are the subject

Secondly, Gyaltsab Je mentions the purpose:

Then to ultimately attain enlightenment in dependence on this is the essential purpose.

The purpose can be divided into the initial purpose and the ultimate or essential purpose. The initial purpose is to understand the meaning of the text and the *essential purpose is to achieve enlightenment*.

The third point is the relationship between these two purposes, which is, as Gyaltsab Je explains:

...that the later does not come about with the earlier...

Here *the later* means that the later part of the text or subject is *dependent* on the *earlier* explanations.

The final point is the purpose of making the pledge, which is so that the composition will be carried all the way through to its conclusion.

It is customary for the great scholars to make a pledge to complete their composition. From this we can understand that once we make a promise it is important to keep that promise and fulfil it.

1.3 Humility and joy in composition

This section has three sub-divisions:

1.3.1. Humility and not written primarily for the purpose of others

1.3.2. The reason for joyful composition

1.3.3. Expressing that it becomes meaningful for others of the same fortune

1.3.1. Humility and not written primarily for the purpose of others

The Tibetan word for *humility* has the connotation of letting go of one's pride. This heading is indicating that the composition was not intended to instil pride but rather the opposite - letting go of one's pride.

The first two lines of verse two relate to this heading:

2. *I do not express anything that did not exist earlier
And I also do not possess poetic proficiency.*

As a way to explain these two lines Gyaltsab Je raises another hypothetical question:

If it was written according to the teachings of the Buddha, and one needs to attain realisations in dependence on the teachings of the Buddha, why then did you compose this text?

The answer to the hypothetical question is presented as if Shantideva himself was responding:

There are two reasons why I have not written this treatise for those who can easily realise the meaning of the subject matter by depending on the teachings of the Buddha:

This is indicating that the treatise was not intended for people who could easily realise the meaning of the subject matter by depending on the teachings.

The two reasons are:

This text does not express anything that is not already taught in the scriptures.

Here Shantideva is posited as saying 'I've not presented anything that has not been explained by the great masters such as Asanga and so forth, who composed great treatises on the Buddha's words'. Again, this is indicating his great humility.

The second reason is:

Although there is no difference in meaning, I also do not have the poetic proficiency to be able to make changes to the words according to their heaviness, lightness, increase and so forth.

Other treatises are written in very poetic ways, using elegant words with subtle meanings, as do some of the scriptures of the Buddha which have a lot of poetic analogies. Here Shantideva is implicitly indicating that he has overcome pride in two respects: pride in understanding the meaning of other sutras, which is saying, 'I have not presented any extra meaning here which has not been presented before'; and pride in relation to quality of his words, saying, *I do not have poetic proficiency*. These are the two reasons why the text was not written for the purpose of others.

There can also be another implication in the words *it was not written primarily for the purpose of others*, which is that this treatise is not intended for those who assume that they can

gain realisations without relying on authentic sources of the Buddha's words and the great masters of the past. There are those who feel attracted to treatises that are written in a very poetic way, regardless of their contents. Shantideva implicitly indicates that this is not the purpose of the treatise. That is my recollection of how His Holiness explained it. If you have a copy of the treatise of those teachings, you can refer to that, but that's how I remember it.

Then having mentioned the explicit and implicit reasons why the text was not written for the purpose of others, the next question is, 'If there is any purpose, then what is it?' This is covered in the next section.

1.3.2. The reason for joyful composition

In essence this is saying, 'It is not that I don't have any purpose for composing this text, as I do have great reasons for a being joyful about this composition'.

The root text states:

- 2cd. *Therefore my intent was not for the purpose of others.
I composed this to acquaint my own mind,*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary essentially indicates that Shantideva is saying:

There is a reason why I composed this treatise. It is for acquainting my mind, so that what I understood earlier does not decrease but increases.

This is a very significant point for us to consider, and it is a personal instruction for us as well. As Shantideva indicates, he composes this treatise *to acquaint* his *mind* with whatever he has *understood* from the Buddha's teachings in the past, so that it *does not decrease, but further increases*.

I try to remind students that it is essential to preserve the understanding we have already gained in the past, and reflect upon it again and again as a way to increase our knowledge. Sometimes people learn something and then put it aside, and go off to find something new, without utilising what they have gained from the earlier teachings. So we need to be mindful about avoiding this.

Another point of personal instruction is that the way to ensure one's understanding and knowledge do not to decrease, and to enable it to increase further is to acquaint one's mind with those teachings again and again. That is the only way to ensure our understanding does not decrease and further increases.

Then Gyaltsab Je's commentary goes on to explain that:

The reason for using the determiner *this* is to indicate either that the text is already complete in the master's mind, or that he is composing it, and that it is not yet complete.

Saying that *the text is already complete in the master's mind* describes the way in which Shantideva composed the text. We would write a few paragraphs, and then search for other material, and incorporate that and then go onto the next chapter and so on. We have to find the resources as we go along. In this case, however, Shantideva already had the full understanding and knowledge in his mind before commencing his composition.

More specifically, having that knowledge already in his mind definitely indicates that through his earlier studies and practices Shantideva had gained a full understanding of the Buddha's teachings. He was endowed with that understanding in his mind before engaging in the composition.

In relation to this, the qualities of a scholar are said to be three-fold: they are great masters of debate; they have great knowledge and they are masters of composition.

Being a **master of debate**, means that having removed all mistaken views, there are no faults in their understanding of the Buddha's words or teachings. Being a **master of knowledge** refers to having clear and unmistakable understanding of the Buddhadharmā. Being a **master of composition** means having the quality of ensuring that the doctrine, i.e. the Buddhist teachings, do not decline but remain for a long period of time. The teachings explain that of these three qualities the quality of composition is the most supreme, because it ensures that the knowledge does not decline but remains for a long time to benefit many.

I have often encouraged people to write down their experiences. If they want to write a book, I encourage them to do so. From a practical point of view others will appreciate what has been written and can learn from it. If someone with knowledge keeps it to themselves, then their knowledge will die with them, as there will be no record of their knowledge or experiences. So we can see that, even from a conventional point of view composing and writing books is a good deed; it survives the person and remains for others to appreciate in the future. Also there can be financial benefits from writing books, as many authors do.

With respect to Shantideva's composition, we can see that Shantideva definitely had that greater purpose and intention in mind. He composed this text as a way to benefit beings for many generations, just as we are now doing.

To explain a further point Gyaltsab Je poses another hypothetical question:

Shantideva composed the treatise for the purpose of self. If he did not understand it, then he was unsuitable to compose the treatise; if he understood it, then that in itself is enough to meditate on. So what need is there then to compose the text?

This is a reasonable question to ask even though it is a hypothetical one. It also indicates that without having understanding, there is nothing to meditate on! This hypothetical question is raised as an introduction to the next two lines of verse:

*3ab. To familiarise with virtue and the strength of my faith,
Initially this will increase them.*

Gyaltsab Je answers this question from Shantideva's perspective:

I composed the treatise to familiarise my mind in an uninterrupted manner with the extensive virtue that I entered into earlier. By putting it in the form of the treatise, it also increases this mind more and more.

Hence, by composing the treatise through the force of my faith, wisdom and compassion, all three of these will initially increase in my continuum.

So the reason for being joyful about having composed this treatise is that *my faith, wisdom and compassion, will initially increase in my continuum*. The word *initially* also has the connotation that:

... in dependence on that, others of equal fortune as me to see this treatise, will also understand it.

That is also implying that while it helps to increase the virtue in Shantideva's own mind through acquaintance with it, others who also have the fortune to see it will also understand this treatise.

1.3.3. Expressing that it becomes meaningful for others of the same fortune

This particular point is indicated in the next two lines:

*3cd. Should others of equal fortune to myself
See any of this, it will be meaningful for them.*

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

The purpose of others is also definitely accomplished, because when other Mahayana practitioners of fortune equal to mine see this text, it will become as meaningful to them as it is for me.

Here we can see the great extent of Shantideva's kindness and compassion and the consideration that he has for other beings. As we relate to the text we will begin to see the extent to which he has benefitted others. Of course, as all great masters of the past have agreed Shantideva was not only a great scholar and master, but a great, noble and compassionate being. The main point here is the humility and great joy with which Shantideva begins this composition.

There is a two-fold meaning in these lines: on one hand Shantideva adopts humility, which counteracts pride, and on the other hand, he finds great joy in composing the text. We need to reflect on these two points with respect to both our study and practice, and our everyday life. We need to be very mindful of protecting ourselves from the two extremes of pride on the one hand and despondency or low self-esteem on the other. These two are said to be the main obstacles that prevent one from gaining knowledge in the first place and then being able to maintain that knowledge and practice.

If one has great pride, then that will definitely prevent one from obtaining knowledge from authentic sources. The assumption that one knows everything and there's no-one better than me and so forth will prevent one from gaining more knowledge from others. Whereas the other extreme of being despondent, also prevents one from developing further. Feeling despondent is actually another form of laziness, in that that comes in the aspect of feeling 'I am not capable of doing that', which means that one does not engage in gaining knowledge. Adopting a sense of humility and having a great joyful mind overcomes these two extremes, because they encourage us to adopt the practices and study and so forth.

Overcoming pride and adopting humility and having a joyful mind aren't just related to the composition of the text. It is also a way to benefit others of equal fortune. This is specifically indicated in the text. Thus there is a two-fold benefit – for oneself and others.

We can often see these two extremes being displayed. There are times when one walks tall with an air of superiority: 'I know everything; I am the master of all'. Then there are other times when one curls up in a corner thinking, 'I don't know anything, I am worthless'. These are important points to reflect on during the course of our whole life. If we wish to lead a meaningful life, then we need to ensure that we protect ourselves from these two extreme attitudes.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke.

*Transcribed by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

26 February 2013 week 3

Shantideva's *Bodhicharyavatara*

བྱང་ལྷོ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

5 March 2013

As was extensively explained last week, the taking refuge and generating bodhicitta prayer can suffice as our motivation. Bringing to mind the meaning of that prayer is the best way to generate a positive motivation for the meditation practice. [meditation]

When a practice is preceded by the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer* then it becomes a very profound practice indeed. In meditation one makes an attempt to keep a focused mind, not just with a single-pointed focus but with the residue of that understanding of having taken refuge and developing the altruistic mind of bodhicitta. Then our focus on the object of the meditation will be encompassed by the great virtues of that earlier practice.

The lam rim tells us that refuge is the entrance to the Buddha's doctrine while generating the altruistic mind of bodhicitta is the entrance to the Mahayana or the Great Vehicle practice and path. So we can see the importance of this practice.

2. THE ACTUAL EXPLANATION OF THE STAGES OF THE PATH

This is sub-divided into two categories:

- 2.1. Exhortation to take the essence of the basis with its freedoms and endowments
- 2.2. The method for taking the essence

2.1. Exhortation to take the essence of the basis with its freedoms and endowments

The relevant line from root text is:

4a To find such freedoms and endowments is extremely rare.

Here we need to recall the presentation of the precious human birth in the lam rim teachings. I would like to explain the topic of the precious human rebirth as presented in the lam rim, however that would take too much time. Nevertheless it would be good for those who have received the lam rim teachings in the past to apply your understanding here. Specifically the lam rim presentation has three main points: identifying the precious human rebirth; the rarity of the precious human rebirth, and the ease with which it can be lost. This line from the text relates to identifying the precious human rebirth and how it is extremely rare.

In the Tibetan word *dal-jor*, the first syllable *dal* has the connotation of being free from certain conditions, while the second syllable, *jor*, relates to conducive conditions, more specifically to the conducive conditions for practising the Dharma. Amongst the ten endowments, five are in relation to oneself and five are in relation to other factors. These will be presented later on.

So a precious human rebirth is identified as being a human rebirth that is free from certain adverse conditions and endowed with certain good conditions, and it is this combination of conditions that enables us to practise the

Dharma. When we relate to the precious human rebirth in this way, we can see that it has a more profound meaning than any ordinary human rebirth.

If we can immediately relate whatever teaching or practice that is being presented to the lam rim then, because of the extensive explanations presented in the lam rim, it becomes much more meaningful and profound. If something is mentioned in a few words in other texts, and we incorporate into it our understanding from the lam rim, we will be able to savour the real meaning of the words.

I'm in no way about to boast, but when I was studying in the monastery I made attempts to memorise the entire outline of the lam rim. Then I was able to read and familiarise myself with the subject matter while keeping in mind its place in the whole outline. If you were ask me to recite the outline now, my memory might fail me in my old age, however when I was capable of memorising it I took the opportunity to do so.

Having such a holistic approach to study, and then trying to implement it in my practice, means that even though I have not been able to acquire any profound realisations, I can safely say that as a result I have a happy mind wherever I go. Whatever the occasion, I seem to naturally be able to have a positive outlook and maintain a happy state of mind. I attribute that to the genuine attempts in studying and practising the Dharma in the earlier part of my life.

The main point that I am emphasising here is that as you now have all the conducive conditions and opportunities to practice, it is really worthwhile and meaningful to apply yourself, as much as possible, to incorporating whatever understanding you have gained from your study into some level of practice. If you wish to have a genuinely relaxed and happy positive state of mind in your old age then it is worthwhile to invest in that now, when you have the time and when you are capable of putting some energy into it.

Rather than treating the explanations in the teachings as a mere process of intellectual understanding, try to relate them to your own personal life and practice. At this point, we are identifying the precious rebirth which has conditions of the eight freedoms and ten endowments. Reflect on how we have all of these freedoms and good conditions right now, and how we have the perfect opportunity to make our life meaningful. In this way we can exhort ourselves to utilise the opportunities we have now, seeing them as an opportunity for personal practice, rather than as mere external conditions.

When Venerable Michael's mother met me recently, she told me about how when she first met the Dharma, she was one of the first Westerners who went to the Tibetan Library in Dharamsala when Geshe Dhargye was teaching there. She said that there were only five or six students attending the teachings at that time and 'except for me all of them have become scholars'. She recalled that Geshe Dhargye constantly exhorted the students, 'While study is important, make it more than just an intellectual understanding. The most important thing is to practise well'. As the great masters of past used to say, 'We are not deprived of knowledge or understanding but lack the practice'. So if you find that having understood the Dharma hasn't helped to subdue your mind then that is not a result of lacking knowledge, but a consequence of lacking the practice.

To return to the line from the root text, *To find such freedoms and endowments is extremely rare*, the lam rim teachings

present the rarity of finding a precious human rebirth in three points:

1. The causes required to find it are difficult to obtain.
2. An analogy illustrating the difficulty of finding a precious human rebirth
3. Contemplating the difficulty in terms of number; i.e. the number of human beings in general is much less compared to numberless other sentient beings

Gyaltsab Je begins his commentary on the line from the root text thus:

One needs to make certain that one practises the Dharma on this basis...

This is an exhortation to take the essence of the precious human rebirth. Then Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

... that possesses freedoms and endowments, because it is very difficult to find such a basis that possesses the eighteen dharmas ...

In relation to the lam rim outline on the difficulty of finding such a precious human rebirth, if one were to ask the question: *why is it be difficult to find such a basis that possesses the eighteen dharmas?*, then the answer is:

... due to it being very rare to establish the causes for it.

We can see how this very logical presentation is profound in itself, as it is also a presentation of the interdependent nature of cause and effect. Without a cause, there cannot be an effect, which means that if one wishes for a positive result or effect, one has to acquire the causes. The interdependent relationship between a cause and its effect is such that if one is lacking, the other cannot come about. Without acquiring the causes, one cannot experience the effect that one wishes for. That is the logic that is being presented here.

If the causes for such a rebirth are so rare, one may further ask, 'Why is it so rare? Why is it difficult to establish those causes?'

Here, Gyaltsab Je explains:

To attain a human body one needs to practise a single act of pure morality ...

Students who studied Chandrakirti's Middle Way text, the *Madhyamakavatara*, may recall that one of the verses says that there is no more supreme cause for obtaining high status and definite goodness other than morality. In other words, the supreme cause for obtaining high status is morality. What Gyaltsab Je is also saying here is that one cannot possibly obtain a human life, let alone a precious human life, without having observed a single aspect of morality in the past.

At this point we can ask, 'What else do we need to practise in order to obtain a precious human life endowed with the eight freedoms and the ten optimum conditions?'

To this Gyaltsab Je's commentary replies:

One needs to support it with the practice of generosity and so forth ...

Thus one needs to support morality with the practice of generosity, and so forth, which includes the rest of the practices of patience, joyful effort, meditation and wisdom.

Then the commentary further explains:

... and complete it with stainless prayer. This is exceedingly difficult to find.

Stainless prayer means that the prayer needs to be without the faulty stain of merely focusing on the benefits of this life. Thus, if one were to practise morality, for example, with the

intention of merely being appreciated by others or to become famous in this life and so forth, then that morality is tainted or stained with the intention of seeking benefit merely for this life. The meaning of prayer is aspiration, so if one's aspirations are mainly to obtain benefits in this life, then that is all one will achieve and one's practice of morality will not become a cause for obtaining a precious human rebirth in the next life, or any of the other forms of high status. To ensure that one's practice of morality becomes a cause for obtaining a good rebirth in the next lifetime (such as having high status), the practice of morality must be completed with an aspirational prayer that is focused on future lives beyond this one. Any aspiration that is focused beyond this lifetime will be a pure or stainless prayer.

A precious human life that possesses the eighteen dharmas is rare because the causes are so difficult to obtain. We need relate this to our own personal practice. Do we possess all the causes? Are the causes intact or not? How do we go about ensuring that we have the causes? Simply put, the basic cause is, as explained here, observing morality. Here we can think about each of the ten virtues and consider whether they are intact within us. Do we abide by the morality and ethics of not killing? If so, then one act of morality is observed and is thus intact, and we can rejoice about that. Do we refrain from stealing? If so, then that is another act of morality that one is observing. One can go through each of the remaining non-virtues: sexual misconduct; the four of speech, lying, divisive speech, harsh speech and gossip; and the three of mind, covetousness, harmful intent and wrong views. Check within yourselves? Ask, 'Am I abiding by these ethics or not?' If so, then we can rejoice about the fact that there is no question we have created the causes for a good rebirth in the next lifetime. If we focus on that and make aspirational prayers for that to occur then we will definitely have the basis for a fortunate rebirth, and so we can rejoice!

If, on the other hand, any of these virtues are lacking, we can still make a genuine attempt to try to incorporate that practice and to abide by the morality of refraining from the ten non-virtues. When it comes to understanding the teachings, looking outwards to see whether or not others have these causes doesn't help oneself. It is only by checking one's own mental continuum that the teachings become meaningful. Then all of these explanations become personally relevant.

There is the story from Tibet, where a lama was once giving a teaching on this very point of the difficulty and rarity of finding a precious human rebirth. Upon hearing this, someone attending the teaching said, 'Oh the lama must never have been to China, because China is full of people!' Clearly this individual did not have a real understanding of what a precious human rebirth meant, let alone relating it to himself.

Having explained how that precious human rebirth is very rare and difficult to obtain, the lam rim teachings go on to explain that such a rebirth is very meaningful. Thus having contemplated the rarity and difficulty of obtaining the precious human rebirth, and then determined that the causes are all present within oneself, one should then contemplate how meaningful that is and how it can be utilised for great purpose.

Contemplating the great meaning of the eight freedoms and ten endowments

The remaining lines from Verse 4 read:

*abcd If I do not do anything beneficial now
To achieve the purpose of sentient beings
How shall I subsequently attain it perfectly?*

The first two lines present the great benefit that can be derived from having a precious human rebirth, and the last line shows the rarity and the difficulty of finding it. In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains how to contemplate the meaning of the freedoms and endowments in accordance with the meaning of the verse:

On the basis of this possession of the freedoms and endowments one needs to accomplish the purpose of others, because one has attained the basis, in dependence on which one can realise the higher status and definite goodness of others, which is their purpose. Hence one should practice with great effort.

Because one has obtained the freedoms and endowments, one has responsibility for helping others to achieve their purposes as well. Everyone is determined to fulfil their own purposes. This can be seen even in a worldly context, where people run around trying to achieve so many things – study, work and so on. Without an intention to achieve some purpose no one would bother to do anything. The most beneficial purpose, even as a temporary goal, is to inspire others to obtain high status and definite goodness. The ultimate purpose of course is to help them to actually achieve enlightenment.

There's no need to mention that, if a mere worldly purpose relates to some temporary benefit in this life, then most people are more than capable of achieving such personal goals and benefits in this life. Here, however, the purpose extends beyond this life. It is a goal that is oriented towards achieving a purpose in a future life, which is a very noble purpose.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary further explains:

Should one not accomplish the happiness of the next life and beyond, due to the idea of one's permanence and the like, ...

This is an exhortation to practise with great effort now, when we have all of the eight freedoms and ten optimum conditions intact. All too often we fall victim to grasping at permanence. Every morning when we wake up, we assume that we will live for a long time, and our day ahead is premised on existing well into future. We have this view that our life is permanent and durable and will last for a long time. That is where we fall short, because we don't contemplate the reality of how fragile our precious human rebirth is, and how it could end at any time. That is what is being explained here.

... then how shall one subsequently attain such a perfect base again?'

The stronger the notion 'I am not going to die', the stronger our attachment to this life's concerns becomes. If we have strong attachment to the pleasures of this life, then we have not contemplated the reality of how our life is impermanent and that we can perish at any time. Conversely, the best way to make life meaningful is to contemplate the impermanence of our life, knowing that it can end at any time. With such an understanding of the impermanence of one's life, strong attachment to this life's concerns and pleasures will definitely be reduced. In this way we can see the significance of the practice of contemplating impermanence and understanding that death can occur at any time.

If, on the other hand, we hold onto the notion that, 'I'm only 25 now, I am young and I have to work hard and save a lot because I am likely live to be 100!', then all one's time and energy will go into in acquiring as much wealth as possible to fund that long life! But the reality is that no matter how much wealth we accumulate out of our strong sense of attachment to this life's concerns, there will be no real sense of satisfaction. As the great Indian master Asvaghosa said, 'The lack of satisfaction is one of the strongest forms of suffering that one can experience'. Without that sense of inner satisfaction, then all the wealth in the world will not be adequate, and there will never be enough. That is the disease of dissatisfaction. We really need to contemplate how a sense of satisfaction comes from understanding how our life is very fragile and that there is no point in grasping too strongly at the affairs of this world.

As I often comment, if one is satisfied with having enough to survive on for one day, then each day can be a meaningful and happy one. If we can train our mind to be satisfied with what we have each day, and do the same the next day, and the next, then that will be sufficient to carry us through our life!

If, on the other hand, one holds on to the notion of definitely living to be 100 one then starts to calculate how much one would have to earn to last that long. Once one starts making those calculations, it can bring about lots of anxiety and fear, 'How am I going to be able accumulate enough money to last me for that long?' With all these unnecessary calculations and fears, one can actually become very anxious! But those fears are caused by nothing more than one's own fears and doubts, what we call the superstitious mind. It seems that many retired people start worrying about whether their savings will last them until the end of their life. They go over and over the calculations, thinking 'Will it be enough?' 'I am just spending and there's no money coming in'. Those sorts of fears and doubts end up making them quite miserable. It seems that some cannot even enjoy the food they are eating because they so preoccupied with such worries and anxieties.

The teachings on the meditations on death and impermanence tell us that death will definitely come. That is certain. Contemplating the certainty of death is really meaningful because the more one incorporates that understanding and actually puts it into practice the more the fears and anxieties about having to plan for the future naturally subside, and one becomes more relaxed and more flexible.

When we begin to understand the significance of this practice, we will begin to reap the benefits of that practice. As presented in the teachings, the first point is that death is certain. Yet while death is certain, the time of death is uncertain. So there is a certainty about death but there is no certainty about the time of death. The reality of that uncertainty about when death will occur is contemplated in two main points.

1. There is no certainty about the time death will occur. It can happen to the young as well as the old. Also death does not spare the rich; it happens regardless of whether one is rich or poor.
2. There are many more conditions for death than there are conducive conditions for survival. Even those very conditions that are usually conducive for survival can in fact become a cause for death. As we all know, there are many ways to perish after having a nice meal: it could be food poisoning; some die from over-eating; people choke on their

food. There are many things that are normally conducive for our survival but which can be a very cause for death.

The point is that reflecting upon all of these realities will reduce our strong notion that our life is permanent. When that idea of a permanent life is overcome, then strong grasping at the necessities for survival or at the pleasures and attachments of this life will naturally be reduced. Then the mind will be much calmer and more relaxed.

Another important point is that reducing attachment does not necessarily mean getting rid of one's possessions. Divesting ourselves of possessions will not eradicate attachment to things. It's the grasping that one has to remove, not the possessions. One can still utilise one's possessions—the main thing is to reduce strong attachment to them. Then, at the time of death, one will be able to die very peacefully and because there is no attachment and clinging to possessions there will be nothing holding one back, and it will be a genuinely peaceful death.

The significance of these points is that while we may not be able to do anything to prevent our death, which is a reality, we can definitely do something to prevent fear and anxiety at the time of death.

Preparation for death has three main elements: 1) practice of morality, 2) supported by practices of generosity and so forth, and 3) completed with stainless or pure prayers.

We can choose to observe the morality of abiding by the ten virtues by refraining from killing and stealing and so forth. When we have voluntarily adopted an ethical way of living such as abiding by the ten virtues and refraining from the ten non-virtues, then that is the ultimate preparation and protection for us at the time of death.

As a result of one's preparation for death, one can actually feel great joy and happiness about experiencing death. That is definitely possible when one has adopted the practice of engaging in the ten virtues and avoiding the ten non-virtues, which serves to protect us from anxiety and fear at the time of death. We can be protected from those fears by the practices that we have engaged in during our life.

Of the three objects of refuge the Dharma Jewel is the actual refuge, and it is the Dharma, the practices we have done, which are the ultimate refuge and the ultimate protection at the time of death and beyond. So we can incorporate that understanding as well.

The word Dharma has the connotation of 'holding onto', which can also mean to protect. So when we incorporate the literal meaning of Dharma, we can derive the understanding that it is the practices one has established which will hold or protect one from the fear of unfortunate rebirths. We really need to understand how the practices that one has incorporated into one's life, is the actual Dharma refuge, the ultimate protection.

Of the Three Jewels, the Sangha will be unable to protect us from fear and anxiety at the time of death and the unfortunate rebirths beyond that, although there may be some blessings from their prayers. If the actual Buddha were present, he would be able to render some assistance. But the real protection comes from one's own practice, from one's own mind. What we can call uncommon or particular cause that protects one from the fears and anxiety at the time of death and beyond is the actual practice, the Dharma that one has incorporated within oneself. There is great solace in knowing that one has established the basis of Dharma within oneself, and has engaged in the practices to the best of one's ability. Then one will have confidence about facing death

without any fear and be able to joyfully and happily go beyond onto the next life. Real solace comes from one's own practice.

The actual definition of the word 'dharma' is 'that which holds its identity'. So the literal meaning of dharma incorporates all existence. Therefore all existence uses the term 'dharma', because everything that exists has that nature of holding its own identity.

We can apply that definition of dharma of holding its own nature or identity to this glass. The fact that this object is an object which holds its own identity or nature means that whoever relates to it will be able to relate to it as a glass. As long as its identity as a glass remains intact, it will always naturally retain that identity, and thus be able to function in that way. Thus we can always relate to it as a glass.

If it didn't have the ability to hold its own identity, then people would no longer relate to it as a glass, because it could change from one thing to another. It is good for us to have an understanding of that general definition of dharma, as well as the Dharma that is one of the Three Jewels.

The next session is the discussion evening. It is part of the study group discipline to participate in both the discussion and the following exam. The discussion is a meaningful commitment, and it is good to come to it with a joyful and happy mind as a way to further extend one's understanding.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

26 March 2013

Based on the motivation that we generated when we recited the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, we can now engage in our meditation practice, which encompasses the basis of love and compassion. [meditation]

That will be sufficient for now; if the meditation session is too long, there is the danger that the meditation turns into sleep.

The meditation practice that we have just engaged in is one that establishes, and further develops the basis of love and compassion within oneself. Indeed, this practice is an essential one, in that without a basis of love and compassion there is no way that we can truly benefit other beings. Love and compassion is our best companion and brings us great solace, because it protects our minds from negativities. We can safely conclude that the practice of love and compassion is essential throughout life and not restricted to meditation sessions. So we need to try to incorporate love and compassion into all aspects of our daily life.

It is not as if we lack the basis of love and compassion, or that we need to develop it afresh because the basis of love and compassion exists in all human beings. That is true regardless of whether we are religious or not. You can see how even animals express love and compassion, so it is should be more pronounced among humans. What we need to do is to further develop and cherish the love and compassion that we already have within ourselves.

Love and compassion are the fundamental basis of Dharma practice. To neglect developing love and compassion and engage in some other form of practice, while assuming that one is practising the Dharma is completely missing the point! In fact, such a person would be an object of the great compassion of the noble and enlightened beings. Neglecting to develop love and compassion shows they have not understood the essence of the Dharma. It is really important to understand that if we wish to engage in Dharma practice, we need to know the essential basis of Dharma practice, which is to cultivate love and compassion. We can sit rigidly through long hours of meditation and say many prayers, but we won't be actually practising the Dharma unless our practice is based on the cultivation of love and compassion. That is what we really need to keep in mind.

Out of love and compassion one will take the initiative to avoid intentionally causing harm to others. Non-violence is practised on the basis of love and compassion, and when further developed it will provide the impetus to extend that love and compassion to benefit all sentient beings. The practice of not harming, but benefiting others in every situation, is the very foundation of Dharma practice.

If, after many years of engagement in some form of Dharma practice, one finds that one is not becoming kinder and more gentle, then that is an indication that one is neglecting a very important element of the Dharma. If we have practised developing love and compassion as part of our Dharma practice, we will definitely see some improvement in our

conduct and behaviour. But if we find we still lack a gentle nature and a genuinely kind heart, then that shows that we have neglected to focus on developing love and compassion. This is a really important point to understand.

As Lama Tsong Khapa has so very kindly exhorted us to do, we need to put whatever teachings we have heard and validated by thinking and investigating it, into the practice of meditation. That is the approach we need to take if we are to engage in the practice of the Dharma. To merely acknowledge, 'Oh that makes sense' or 'that is a good point' but not actually applying it to our own life, would mean that the Dharma we have heard has not been of much benefit, and a deeper transformation will not take place.

An analogy to illustrate how the Dharma practice can help to transform one's mind is that just as a mirror reflects what's on our face, the Dharma can reflect what lies within our own mind. The mirror is serving its purpose when reflecting dirt on our face so that we can clean it up. Likewise, the Dharma reflects the faults in our own mind, which we would otherwise be unable to detect. Thus through the medium of the Dharma, we are able to clearly see the dirt-like defects in our own mind.

Having recognised these defects as faults, we then need to take the initiative to start clearing them away and thus work on transforming our mind. When we take the initiative and begin to apply the Dharma in our practice, we will begin to see a true transformation taking place as our minds naturally become kinder and calmer. If, however, one tries to practise the Dharma without first gaining a proper understanding, then at a certain point when one realises that a true sense of change and transformation has not taken place, then there is the great danger of criticising and forsaking the Dharma. One may end up thinking 'There is no real value in the Dharma as it doesn't work and it doesn't serve any purpose'. At that point there is the grave danger of entirely giving up the Dharma.

We need to take the initiative to analyse our own mind and investigate what is going on within, and try to differentiate between the positive and the negative states of mind. When we notice a negative mind, we need to actively engage in trying to overcome that negativity, while further increasing the positive states of mind. If one applies that measure on a regular basis, then a true transformation will gradually but definitely take place.

My meagre attempts to engage in Dharma practice have definitely benefited my own mind. I am not in any way claiming that I have done any great practice, but I have made genuine attempts to practise developing love and compassion, really thinking about how to strengthen and further develop love and compassion within myself. So at this stage in my life, I can safely say that I have experienced real benefits as a result of my meagre efforts—I have witnessed some transformation taking place in my mind.

If this has been true for my meagre attempts, then there is no question that there will be a great transformation and tremendous positive results for those who are able to engage in a serious practice of developing love and compassion, meditating on it extensively, and dedicating their whole life to developing love and compassion. My meagre practice has not only confirmed the benefits of this practice, but it has also given me great respect and reverence for those who have actually perfected love and compassion, such as the buddhas and the bodhisattvas. They are the objects of our faith and veneration and we can see why that is the case—they have completely perfected love and compassion to the

point that they are actually an embodiment of love and compassion. They have become enlightened beings and bodhisattvas because they have developed and increased their love and compassion. So they have become a great inspiration for us to follow their example, and that is the real reason why we pay respect and venerate the enlightened beings. Of course you must not misinterpret this to mean that I am claiming to have developed any great qualities. That is not the case at all!

The great master Atisha said that we need to hide any qualities that we may possess while proclaiming our own faults, and proclaim the qualities of others and hide their faults. This is very practical advice. If we fall into the normal pattern of focusing on others' faults, then the only their faults will appear to us. So others will always appear to us in a negative light as we are focussing only on their faults.

Regardless of whether or not others have faults, we need to make an attempt to acknowledge their qualities, and then they will appear to us in a positive light. That will, in turn benefit our own mind, helping it to maintain a positive outlook. This also relates to the recent findings of scientists who have claimed that when you see a fault in any object, for example when you are angry, only 5% of that fault lies in the object whereas the other 95% is a projection from one's own mind. That is definitely in accord with what the teachings present—when we see faults in others it is mostly our own projection. Understanding this point is extremely beneficial for our own mind. If we constantly focus on the faults of others then how will we be able to get along with them? We need to get along with so many other people, and focussing on their qualities is the most practical way to deal with the situation in a most effective manner.

Now we need to get on with the study of the material that we have in front of us.

2.1. Exhortation to take the essence of the basis with its freedoms and endowments

In our last session there was a presentation of how a precious human life is very rare and difficult to obtain. This is explained here with an analogy which shows how the causes for obtaining the precious human life are so rare. A more detailed explanation of this will be presented in the fourth chapter.

The Difficulty of Achieving Freedoms and Endowments

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je introduces this heading and then quotes from Nagarjuna's *Letter to a Friend*:

Like a golden yoke on a great ocean in motion
And a turtle meeting it; it is more difficult to be an
animal
And to become human even more difficult. Work
with the human power
To achieve this aim by practising the holy Dharma.

The analogy presented in this verse indicates the extreme unlikelihood of taking a fortunate rebirth. The yoke of an ox's harness has a hole in the middle where the ox's head goes in. In this analogy the yoke is drifting on the surface of an ocean. It is just about impossible for a blind turtle, which rises to the surface once in a hundred years, to meet the yoke and putting its head into the hole.

In the analogy the term *golden* is used to indicate something that is very precious. Thus, the *golden yoke* represents the Buddha's teachings, which are very precious.

The yoke not remaining in one place but *drifting* in different directions indicates that it is not certain that the Buddha's teachings will remain in the one place for too long.

The *turtle putting its head into the hole of the yoke* is an indication of taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, which is considered a doorway to adopting the Buddha's teachings, and putting them into practice.

The turtle *surfacing every hundred years* indicates the rarity of obtaining a precious human rebirth. If it were to come to the surface regularly, it would have a greater chance of placing its head into the yoke. But surfacing every hundred years indicates the rarity of obtaining a precious human life with all the conditions—the eight freedoms and ten endowments—intact.

This analogy reminds us that it is a very rare coincidence to have met with the Buddha's teachings with all of the conditions intact. As we have actually achieved this rare state we must now seize this opportunity and utilise it to make it most meaningful, by putting the teachings we have received into practice, as it is very unlikely that these conditions will recur in the future. The main point is that we must seize the opportunity that we have now to derive the essence of this life.

We should not regard what is being presented here merely as a fancy narration. Rather we must take the meaning to heart and apply it to our own situation. We need to understand that we must seize the opportunity provided by these precious conditions and utilise them for our own practice. If one has no inclination to practise the Dharma, then of course all of this is irrelevant. But if we are inclined to practise the Dharma, then we need to see the relevance of what is being presented here and take it as a personal instruction. There will be no better opportunity to practise Dharma other than now, when we have all of these conditions intact.

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je follows his quotation from *Letter to a Friend* with this statement:

By abandoning the eight states of non-freedom one achieves freedom.

As explained previously, *freedom* or *leisure* refers to being free from certain adverse conditions.

Gyaltsab Je then continues:

[Nagarjuna's] *Letter to a Friend* states that the eight states of non-freedom are:

Holding wrong views and birth as animal,
Hungry ghost or hell being,
Without the conqueror's teachings and birth as
barbarian
In a border country and being deaf and dumb,
And birth as long life god, being born as any of
these,
Is called being born without freedom.
Having found freedom free from those,
Strive to become free from birth.

The specifics of the eight freedoms are clearly presented in other sources such as Lam Rim teachings. We can refer to those more extensive explanations to gain a clearer understanding of them. The essential point Nagarjuna is presenting here is that *having found freedom, free from those eight adverse conditions* (in which one would not have the opportunity to engage in the practice of Dharma), we must *strive to become free from birth*, which means to be free from being reborn with these adverse conditions. In accordance

with explanations given in the past we first need to contemplate the great sufferings that are experienced under those eight adverse conditions, such as the suffering of being born as an animal. Then we need to personalise that and consider how unbearable it would be if we were born in that situation. Out of the fear of being born in those suffering conditions, we take refuge in the Three Jewels. Then, based on our sincere reliance on the Three Jewels, we adopt the practice of avoiding non-virtue and accumulating virtues. This is how we strive to be free from being reborn in such uncomfortable and unfavourable situations in the future.

These eight adverse conditions can be subdivided into two main categories: four of which are non-human rebirths, such as being born an animal and so forth; and four adverse conditions while being born as a human, such as being born where the teachings have not occurred, as a barbarian, or as a deaf and mute. If we were reborn with any of these adverse conditions there would be no possibility for us to properly understand the Dharma. We can safely assume that our current freedom from these adversities is our great fortune. Not utilising these conditions would be a complete waste of a wonderful opportunity.

Having quoting Nagarjuna's text, Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

Because there is no freedom to practice the Dharma in these eight states they are called states of non-freedom.

As explained in the commentary, these eight states are called freedoms because they are the opposites of the adverse conditions of not having the freedom to practise the Dharma. At this point, one can ask, 'What are the good conditions needed to practise the Dharma'? The good conditions are referred to here as the ten endowments, which can be divided into two categories: five that are related to personal favourable conditions and five that relate to external favourable conditions.

Next, Gyaltsab Je states:

The Hearer's Grounds states that the ten endowments are:

The five endowments of self:
Human, central born, complete faculties,
Not having transgressed the limits of karma, faith in the source

Not having transgressed the limits of karma means not having committed or not having induced others to commit the immediate actions. Having faith in the source means to have faith in the three baskets of the teachings

The first endowment is to be born *human*. Unlike some other rebirths, the very fact of being human means that one has the capacity and intelligence to be able to understand what is being presented. Actually, the definition of a human is 'a being who is able to speak and understand'. This means being able to communicate whatever one feels and wishes to express, as well as being able to understand what others are expressing. Thus, being born as a human means that we have the capacity to understand the Dharma.

Being central born means being born in the central land, which is a land where the Buddha's teachings are prevalent.

Having *complete faculties* clearly means having all the sense faculties intact.

Not having transgressed the limits of karma (which will be explained in the text itself) basically means that one has not

committed any of the five heinous crimes, meaning the five actions of immediate retribution.

Faith in the source means having *faith in the three baskets of the Buddha's teachings*.

With respect to the last five endowments that relate to external conditions, Gyaltsab Je again quotes from *The Hearer's Grounds*:

A buddha has come and taught the holy Dharma; the teachings abide, and those following; there is affectionate compassion for others.

A buddha has come refers to the Buddha actually having come to this world.

And taught the holy Dharma refers to having given the teachings or turned the wheel of Dharma

Although we have not been born in the actual presence of the Buddha, we have been born at the time of the Buddha in a sense, because we live at a time when the Buddha's teachings are prevalent. That is due to the unbroken lineage which has been passed them down.

Teachings abide means that the teachings are being actively taught and practised.

Those following refers to the hearers, solitary realisers and the bodhisattvas who created the unbroken lineage of the teachings.

Affectionate compassion for others, indicates that there are affectionate and compassionate individuals who are willing to support us as we follow and practise the Dharma.

If the Buddha had not come to this world then, even though we have been born as a human, we would not have met all the necessary conditions that are conducive to ensuring a fortunate rebirth. So we meet the requirement of having been born at a time when *the Buddha has come*. Not only that, but he has *given the teachings*. If he had not given the teachings, we would not benefit from them. And the teachings have not only been presented, but they still *abide at this time*. *Those who follow the teachings* refers to the great practitioners such as the bodhisattvas, the great meditators and so forth. As they have gained significant realisations from having practised and followed the Dharma, they serve as a great inspiration for us. Even if all of the other conditions were intact, we still need others whose love and *compassion* will support us and encourage us to engage in the practice of the Dharma. And we are living at a time where there are those who actually support us in our practice and so forth. If one wholeheartedly dedicates one's life to practising the Dharma, there will be no need to worry about finding the means to support oneself, because there will definitely be others who will render that support. We can feel incredibly fortunate because we have met all the conditions mentioned here.

There is a saying in Tibet that initially when one sincerely begins to practice the Dharma, one's resources can be so meagre that it is as if the mouth can't find food! But later on, having practised and endured many hardships, one reaches a point where there is so much food around that it doesn't find enough mouths to feed! When we apply that example to our time, we can witness so much food going to waste, which is because it has not found adequate mouths to feed!

2.2. The method for taking the essence

This is the next of the meticulously presented headings. Having described the appropriate conditions to achieve a human rebirth with the eight freedoms and ten endowments

intact, and exhorting us to take the essence of that to make our life most meaningful, the question that then arises is, 'Well how does one actually take the essence of one's life to make it meaningful?'. Hence this heading, which has two main parts:

2.2.1. The general presentation

2.2.2. Explaining the individual meanings

2.2.1. The general presentation

Gyaltsab Je begins his commentary on this section thus:

This text [*Bodhisattvacharyavatara*] shows the complete stage of the path to enlightenment. It shows the training in the thoughts of the small and middling beings as preliminaries for the training in the thought of the great capable being. It shows that having generated the mind of supreme enlightenment, one then trains in the six perfections of generosity and so forth.

Then Gyaltsab Je goes on to summarise the contents of each of the chapters.

Initially, to generate the mind of supreme enlightenment, one needs to strongly increase joyful strength through contemplating its benefits well. This is described in the first chapter, which also shows the training in the thoughts of the small and middling being as auxiliary limbs for the generation of the mind of enlightenment.

In order to generate the mind of supreme enlightenment or bodhicitta, one first needs to develop a strong joyful strength by contemplating the benefits of bodhicitta. That is the main topic of the first chapter, which is a presentation of the benefits of the mind of supreme enlightenment or bodhicitta. The term *auxiliary limbs* means, that this chapter also presents the practices of the small and middling scopes.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

Then, to generate the mind of supreme enlightenment, which has the root of love and compassion, one must confess the opposing conditions, i.e. the negativities, and one must build up the conducive condition, i.e. accumulate merit.

This is done on the basis of having cleaned the place of practice, as if one is expecting a wheel-turning king to visit one's house. Then one needs to take the mind of enlightenment. The former is explained in chapter two and the latter in chapter three.

Thus chapter two describes how to purify the negativities, while chapter three presents the conducive conditions for the accumulating merit to develop the mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta. As conducive conditions refers to the accumulation of merit chapter three is based on the means of accumulating merit.

Next, Gyaltsab Je's commentary describes the fourth chapter:

The fourth chapter demonstrates the need for conscientiousness, the factor that prevents the degeneration of virtues gained from training in generating the perfections.

Thus the subject matter of the fourth chapter is how to develop conscientiousness as a way to protect the mind gained from training in the perfections from declining.

Gyaltsab Je then concludes his commentary on this section:

The next chapters provide the way of training in the six perfections. The fifth chapter gives extensive instructions on the way of training in morality by way of protecting one's mind with mindfulness and

introspection. The way of training in patience, enthusiasm, mental stabilisation and wisdom are explained in the next four chapters.

The tenth chapter gives a comprehensive overview of the way of training in generosity, with extensive notes on how to train in the mind of giving by dedicating one's body, possessions and virtues to others. The training in generosity is also explained at the time of taking the mind of enlightenment and so forth. The resulting buddhahood is explained in the ninth chapter.

With this general presentation, the commentary clearly explains how the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* divides its subject matter—how to develop the awakening mind or the mind that aspires to achieve enlightenment—into different chapters.

In order to present a guide for developing bodhicitta, the benefits of the awakening mind or bodhicitta need to be understood, and that is the subject matter of the first chapter. In order to be able to develop bodhicitta, one needs to first purify one's own mind of negativities, which is the subject matter of the second chapter. The third chapter relates to establishing the conducive conditions for accumulating merit. Then, having developed the bodhicitta or the awakening mind we need to ensure that it doesn't decline, for which we need conscientiousness and mindfulness, and those are explained in the next two chapters. The six perfections are then presented in the remaining chapters. This is a concise summary of the subject matter of the whole text.

Thus, the concise presentation of the Mahayana path or the Great Vehicle is that it consists of a mind that is an awakening mind or a mind of bodhicitta, and the practice of the Great Vehicle is the six perfections. This is the subject matter of the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*.

We will now recite the *Eight Verses of Mind Training* and dedicate the merits of the recitation to Susan Coates' father, who has passed away.

I explained the visualisation when we did the *Eight Verses of Mind Training* in our last Easter course. As explained at that time, we visualise the Buddha Amitabha on the top of our crown. Then as we make requests to Buddha Amitabha, light emanating from his body descends into us and purifies the negativities of the deceased person. So we can base the visualisation on that.

I know Susan Coates to be very modest and good person, who is one of the older students of our study group. Personally, she has been very kind to me, and she always makes very nutritious and delicious food when she provides meals for me. Of course every time I receive a meal I also make strong prayers and dedications. Yesterday I happened to have a meal with her and when I asked 'How is your dad?', she said, 'Actually, he has passed away'. Last Thursday Llysse told me that Susan's father was critically ill, and I was already doing prayers. Susan told me that his passing away was very gentle and peaceful.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེད་ཀྱི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

2 April 2013

Based on the motivation that we have just generated with the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, we can now engage in the meditation practice. In particular we generate this intention: In order to benefit all sentient beings by leading them to the ultimate state of happiness and freedom from all suffering, I will engage in the *tong len* meditation practice, which is based on the expression of love and compassion for all sentient beings.

[meditation]

The meditation that we have just done will suffice as our motivation for the teaching as well, as it has enhanced our original motivation. Every time we engage in the *tong len* practice, we are directly increasing the sense of love and compassion within our own heart, and that is something that we really need to work on developing, because it is as a result of our lack of love and compassion that we find ourselves engaging in so many negative actions. So there is not much point in putting the development of these essential qualities of love and compassion to one side, while focussing on some other practice.

As I regularly emphasise, love and compassion is the basis for whatever practice we do. So it is relevant that the subject matter of this very text that we are studying now is also based on love and compassion. It presents methods on how to generate the superior intention and the mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta.

The text begins with a meticulous presentation of the benefits of bodhicitta, followed by the reasons for developing bodhicitta. As I emphasise again and again, we need to relate to this on a personal level, and daily develop the strong intention, 'I am going to do my utmost to benefit living beings and my utmost to not harm any living being' before engaging in any other activity. At the very least we can certainly manage to adopt that intention as a wish which, at our beginner's level, will suffice for a bodhicitta attitude. As we develop and increase that intention it becomes the basis for developing actual bodhicitta. I find this to be really useful and beneficial point to contemplate.

If we develop that mind as a basis for developing bodhicitta, that will in turn become the basis for developing the excellence of all good qualities, the ultimate state of enlightenment. What may otherwise seem like a simple intention is in fact the basis for developing all the qualities of a bodhisattva. The bodhicitta attitude encompasses benefitting other sentient beings in every possible way and avoiding even the slightest harm to any sentient being. As there are numberless sentient beings, there are numberless ways to benefit them, and equally, numberless ways to avoid harming sentient beings. By reflecting upon that, we can get an inkling of the extent of the bodhisattvas' deeds, which will then inspire us to develop bodhicitta ourselves.

When we relate to the benefits of developing bodhicitta in a logical way, we will definitely begin to see that there are so many benefits from developing the mind that aspires to

achieve enlightenment. As mentioned previously, there are numberless ways to benefit sentient beings and numberless ways to avoid harming sentient beings, simply because there is an infinite number of living beings. When we contemplate this fact, then we will begin to see why the mind aspiring to achieve enlightenment is so precious and invaluable.

Another point to keep in mind is that, as the past masters have said, without the wish for others to be happy and free from suffering, there is no way that the actual wish to benefit others will arise. So the wish to benefit others is based on these two essential elements—wishing others to be happy and wishing them to be free from suffering. When we understand this we will see why those who have developed an unceasing, spontaneous wish to benefit others and who are actually engaging in deeds to benefit numberless sentient beings and avoid harm, are indeed worthy objects of veneration. This is precisely why bodhisattvas are considered as holy beings. As we deepen our understanding of the actual benefits of the awakening mind, it becomes a personal inspiration for us to develop the awakening mind ourselves.

I cannot emphasise enough the great benefits that can be derived from every effort that we make to develop love and compassion in our hearts. The more we acquaint ourselves with genuine loving kindness, the more our own mind will become really calm and settled, and not easily disturbed by either excitement or depression. Rather than being judgmental and hostile or overly excited when we meet someone, we will be able to relate to them in a genuine calm manner. So we can see how having a calm mind changes the way how we relate to other sentient beings. Of course this will be explained in detail in the text itself.

2.2.1. Explanation of the Individual Meanings

CHAPTER 1: CONTEMPLATING THE BENEFITS OF THE MIND OF ENLIGHTENMENT¹

There is a significant reason why contemplating the benefits of the mind of enlightenment is presented first. In order to be inspired to develop the mind of enlightenment, one first needs to see the benefits of having that mind, which also includes the purpose for developing the mind of enlightenment.

There are two parts to the chapter:

1. Explaining the text of the chapter
2. The title of the chapter

1. EXPLAINING THE TEXT OF THE CHAPTER

The text of the chapter has two subdivisions:

1. The advice that is suitable to abandon negativity and to accomplish virtue
2. Contemplating extensively the benefits of bodhicitta

1.1. THE ADVICE THAT IS SUITABLE TO ABANDON NEGATIVITY AND TO ACCOMPLISH VIRTUE

The suitable basis for developing the awakening mind is two-fold: a good physical body and a pure mind. The suitable body needed to develop the awakening mind was presented earlier with the explanation of the eight freedoms and ten endowments. Gyaltsab Je's commentary now turns to the suitable mind needed as the basis for developing the awakening mind, which is a pure mind that abandons negativity and accomplishes virtue.

¹ To keep things manageable the numbering system will start again for each chapter.

As Gyaltsab Rinpoche points out with the heading, the advice contained in this section of Shantideva's text is that it is suitable to abandon all negativity and to accomplish virtue.

It is always good to relate the topics presented in this text to the lam rim teachings as well. To use simple terms to understand the point being made here, we all have a natural inclination to strive for happiness and avoid any kind of suffering. Thus the reason we need to abandon negativity is because negativity is the cause leading us to experience the result of suffering. Conversely engaging in virtue is naturally the cause that leads us to experience the consequence of happiness. As such, when the lam rim teachings present karma in detail, they are explaining how the cause and effect process actually works.

The definition of **negativity** is that which brings about unpleasant results. The definition of **virtue** is that which brings about a happy result. So that is the basis of the advice for the need to accomplish virtue and shun negativity, which is explained in great detail in the lam rim. Gaining a sound understanding of karma is said to be the very foundation of Dharma practice. These are really significant points to keep in mind.

The reason why I emphasise this point is that understanding the profundity of the cause and effect sequence of karma is related to the understanding of interdependent origination, or dependent arising. The masters have indicated that it is only when one has gained a full understanding of interdependent origination that one begins to understand the correct view of emptiness. Without that sound basis of understanding interdependent origination, one cannot possibly gain a true understanding of emptiness. Although one may assume one is meditating on emptiness, it could only be some form of vacuity, where there is nothing to be realised.

Understanding that a particular type of cause brings about a particular type of effect means that it is crucial to understand the nature of causes. A negative cause needs to be shunned and eradicated; and a positive cause needs to be adopted and really cherished, just as a farmer cherishes his seeds. Although some seeds may appear to be small and insignificant, the farmer knows the good effects that each seed can produce. In a practical sense, we need to understand the relevance of karma in the same way.

The point that I derive as a personal instruction is that negativity is really much stronger than virtue. We don't have to think much about engaging in negativity, because it comes about spontaneously. Virtue, on the other hand is very weak. In fact it is so weak that we barely have any intention to engage in virtue, and even when we do, it doesn't have much strength and is only of short duration. So there is little opportunity to accumulate virtue. When we acknowledge that negativity is prevalent and strong, and virtue is very weak, it gives us the initiative to try to change them around. This is the point that I get from the following presentation.

Just to re-emphasise the point, negativity is that which brings about unpleasant results, things that we don't wish for and that we don't want to experience. Virtue is that which brings about pleasant experiences, the effect of which is happiness. As what is being presented here is abandoning or overcoming negativity and adopting virtue, it is good to understand from the very outset what negativity and virtue really mean.

The relevant lines from the text read:

5. *Just like a flash of lightning illuminates the Dark clouded night sky for a moment, Likewise sometimes, through the power of the Buddha, Worldly beings receive wisdom and merit occasionally.*

6a. *Hence, virtue is always meek*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Nowadays, when we are of little merit and our negativities are very strong, it is appropriate to meditate on the antidotes to the negativities.

Nowadays refers to our present degenerate times. In these few lines Gyaltsab Je has derived the essence of the verse. As we don't have much *merit* and have *very strong negativities*, that in itself is the reason why it is appropriate for us *to meditate on the antidotes to the negativities*, and to engage in actions to purify those negativities.

The example presented in the verse is then explained in the commentary:

For example, just as one can see form very clearly for an instant when the dark clouded night sky is illuminated by a flash of lightning, ...

There are three significant elements in this analogy.

Night indicates it is night time when there is no illumination from the sun, which is analogous to the lack of the Buddha's omniscient wisdom radiating down to illuminate the minds of sentient beings.

Dark indicates a moonless night, which is analogous to the darkness of not knowing what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded.

Clouded indicates that even the stars are not being visible, which refers to the mind being clouded with the three poisons.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary then explains that just as such a sky is illuminated by a flash of lightning:

... in the same way, for worldly beings the wisdom that establishes virtue thinking, 'I have to act meritoriously' arises only occasionally. Beings do not possess such thinking continually.

These points need to be seen as a personal instruction. Acting *meritoriously* or accumulating virtue *arises only very occasionally*. It is through the blessings of the enlightened beings, and maybe some small virtue or merit we have accumulated in the past, that the thought of engaging in meritorious deeds will arise briefly. So we can understand now why it is so hard to engage in accumulating merit or virtue.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary then continues:

For that reason they always remain with little virtue, and similar to the dark clouded night sky, they have difficulty overcoming the strong negativities that cause rebirth in the lower realms.

The analogy of lightning on a dark night is a very vivid one. The illumination from the flash of lightning remains for only a few seconds, and when the lightning fades we are engulfed in darkness again. Similarly, it is incredibly difficult for the mind of virtue to arise in ignorant beings, and when it does arise, the duration is very short. What we need to really consider is how precious virtuous thoughts are, and how we need to look for every opportunity to develop a virtuous mind. At the same time we need to remind ourselves that we have accumulated some virtues, and rejoice in that. Then we

need to look for find further opportunities to engage in virtue, which is the most suitable way to strengthen whatever virtue we have. If we find that our mind is oppressed by negativities then that should encourage us to engage in some suitable purification practice. That is the personal instruction we need to derive from what is being explained here.

Gyaltsab Je's conclusion is:

Worldly beings take rebirth in very fearful places, which should be understood as very dreadful times, and therefore one should strive to accomplish virtue and abandon negativity. Hence, *virtue is always meek* is explained in relation to time. It can also be explained in relation to the occasion when virtues are of little power and negativities are very strong.

As some other commentaries have indicated, *Virtue is always meek*, can also relate to the occasions when *virtue has little power and negativities are very strong*. However the main point is that we are now in a time when virtue is meek, with little strength, and negativity is much more prevalent. What we need to take as a personal instruction is that one needs to cherish every moment when it is possible to accumulate virtue, and take every opportunity to abandon and purify negativities. We need to maintain whatever virtue we have and use that as a base on which to slowly begin to increase that virtue. That is the most practical approach. Otherwise we may end up in a situation where we feel that we have to do something extra, but in the process, give up what we already have! That would be a sad situation as we have completely missed the point.

Here I recall the very profound advice that the late Geshe Ngawang Dhargye once gave to Jampa Ignen when he was a monk. Apparently he had sought some advice from Geshe Ngawang Dhargye about doing some extra study or practice, and Geshe Ngawang Dhargye's advice was, 'Well, that's quite good, but wouldn't it be more worthwhile to strive to protect the vows that you've already got and really work at that'. That apparently was very timely advice for Jampa Ignen. When others later heard of the advice to work on maintaining what you've already got they found it to be very profound advice.

The advice that we take here is that if negativity is prevalent, we need to apply the antidote. If for no apparent reason there are times when one feels melancholy and sad, or a little depressed, then that is a sign that negativity is prevalent. If we don't want that experience of feeling sad and unhappy, then we need to get rid of the cause of that, which is the negativity in one's own mind. That, as I have previously mentioned, is what we need to be focussing on. What I often find is that some people do the exact opposite, taking every opportunity to create negativity and feel sad and sorry if they miss an opportunity to create negativity! So when you are feeling sad about something, look into why you are feeling sad. It might well be related to not having had an opportunity to create some negativity.

Feeling sad about not being able to engage in negativity specifically implies being sad about not having had an opportunity to engage in activities that are driven by strong attachment or aversion, in particular attachment. There are things that we want to accomplish purely out of attachment, and when we are not able to do that, we feel sad. When we really think about it from a Dharma point of view, how could anyone possibly consider themselves as a Dharma practitioner if they are constantly looking for opportunities to engage in activities associated with attachment and then

feel sad when those opportunities don't arise? We often find people who claim they are doing something to help others, when in fact they are misleading themselves and in fact dragging them further into creating more negativity. That is not the act of a Dharma practitioner at all, is it?

Sometimes people complain about feeling lonely and say 'I feel lonely Geshe-la, I feel lonely!', and in a kind of naïve way I say, 'Well can't you find some people you can talk to. Don't you have some friends you can call up to chat with?' Then they respond by saying, 'Oh Geshe-la, you don't really understand the point; you don't understand what I am saying!' Then there are some who, even though they have a partner, say, 'Oh I feel lonely' and when I point out, 'You have a husband (or wife)', they reply, 'No Geshe-la, you don't understand!'

Apparently there was an occasion when His Holiness was meeting with a minister and Kevin Rudd, During their discussions apparently this the minister asked His Holiness, 'What is a secret happiness?' and His Holiness' responded, 'I don't know anything about that, I sleep all night!' This minister was also present during the recent annual event at the Loden Centre. When he was speaking to the gathering he quoted His Holiness the Dalai Lama and spoke highly about him. On that occasion I didn't get to speak with him, but he had come up and chatted to me on previous occasions.

2. CONTEMPLATING EXTENSIVELY THE BENEFITS OF BODHICITTA

This section is sub-divided into four categories:

- 2.1. Explaining the benefits of bodhicitta
- 2.2. Identifying the nature of bodhicitta
- 2.3. The reason why it has these benefits
- 2.4. Praising the person who meditates on bodhicitta

2.1. Explaining the benefits of bodhicitta

This has three sub-divisions:

- 2.1.1. It has the power to destroy all negativity and accomplish all virtues
- 2.1.2 One will become special in name and meaning
- 2.1.3 Explaining the benefits with example

2.1.1. It has the power to destroy all negativity and accomplish all virtues

This is further sub-divided into three:

- 2.1.1.1. Destroying great negativity
- 2.1.1.2. It can accomplish supreme virtue
- 2.1.1.3. It can accomplish one's wishes

2.1.1.1. DESTROYING GREAT NEGATIVITY

Having previously indicated that it is suitable to abandon negativity and to accomplish virtue, bodhicitta is explained here as being the best way to destroy great negativity. The remainder of verse six reads:

*6bcd. And powerful negativity dreadful
How can this be overcome by other virtue
That is not the mind of enlightenment?*

As well as sufficing for accumulating the greatest merit and bodhicitta also suffices for purifying the heaviest negative karmas.

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

It is appropriate to meditate on the two bodhicittas [aspiring bodhicitta and engaging bodhicitta], because how could this dreadful negativity, which is the cause of the lower realms, be overcome by any other virtue

that is not the mind striving for complete enlightenment? It cannot.

Nothing else can *overcome dreadful negativity* other than *the mind striving for complete enlightenment*. So the awakening mind is explained here as being the most supreme way to purify such heavy negative karmas as the five karmas of immediate retribution (or heinous crimes in some translations), which are an immediate cause to be born in the lower realms. Such unfortunate rebirths can be overcome by developing the bodhicitta.

Then Gyaltsab Je goes on to explain:

This does not relate primarily to the ultimate bodhicitta that can abandon the seed of the obscurations. Rather, it shows the benefit of conventional bodhicitta purifying the earlier accumulated causes for the lower realms, as well as cutting the continuity of later ones.

There may be room for some misunderstanding about how conventional bodhicitta could be a cause for purifying negative karma, when in fact it is ultimate bodhicitta that removes the seed of the obscurations. So Gyaltsab Je is stating that amongst other benefits, the benefit of conventional bodhicitta is that it also *purifies earlier accumulated causes* for rebirth in *the lower realms* as well as cutting the continuity of further ones.

The Tibetan term for purification has an additional connotation of training, which is also applied to the accumulation of virtue. Here engaging in the training of purifying negative karma means to engage in activities so that one does not have to experience the consequences of those negativities. The sign of purification is one that one does not experience the consequences of negativities. Whereas, training in virtue means to accumulate and further increase good deeds as causes for happiness.

At this point, it is good to remind ourselves that these points are not just some fancy presentation. Rather, we need take them to heart and apply them to our own practice, and thus adopt the essential points that are being presented here. They are not all that complex or profound, and their application is quite manageable.

2.1.1.2. IT CAN ACCOMPLISH SUPREME VIRTUE

We have just seen how the mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta is a cause to destroy great negativity, specifically throwing karma, which is the karma that is a specific cause of rebirth in the lower realms, or unfortunate rebirths. Now we will see how familiarising ourselves with, and then developing bodhicitta, is the optimum way to accomplish the highest virtues.

It is good to relate to these points in a practical way. Simply put, we don't wish to experience any suffering and we wish for happiness. In particular we don't wish to experience the great suffering of unfortunate rebirths, and bodhicitta will overpower the accumulated causes for that. If one were to question, 'If generating bodhicitta prevents me from experiencing suffering, will it also help me to experience happiness?'. Generating bodhicitta is a means to accomplish supreme virtue, which as explained previously, is the optimum cause for happiness. We need to relate this logical, systematic presentation to our own experience, aspirations and even questions. If we really pay attention to the manner of this presentation, we will notice the meticulous detail of the explanations.

A practical approach to generating real conviction in this presentation is to relate it to our own experiences. If we truly

look into our own state of mind, we will all recognise that when we are in negative states of mind, we more readily engage in activities that will actually harm both ourselves and others. Even in everyday life, we see the truth of the law of cause and effect in relation to how non-virtuous or negative states of mind lead to undesirable consequences.

When we look into situations that are conducive for engagement with others or virtuous activity, we see that it is when we are in a positive state of mind that our relationships with others are good. Then we see the immediate cause and effect sequence between our state of mind or attitudes and the effects which are experienced. That is a good basis on which to begin to establish the possibility that the activities that we do now will definitely have an effect on our future lives.

If the altruistic attitude of love and compassion were to be developed then that would be the most powerful way to purify negativities that are the cause of our own suffering, as well as adopting the highest virtues that are the cause of our own happiness. When convinced of this, it becomes reasonable and necessary to develop bodhicitta.

Before we end the session let us now recite the long life prayer for Lama Zopa Rinpoche. I had some dreams of Rinpoche a few days ago and just yesterday I received a scarf and a gift from him, which is a bit of a coincidence. So he must have also been thinking about me. I took that as a sign that it would be good for us to do some prayers to remove obstacles to his health.

We recite the long life prayer and dedicate our merits so that every obstacle and hindrances to Rinpoche's long life will be completely removed, and for the flourishing of his virtuous Dharma activities. It would be rather narrow-minded just to think, 'I am doing this prayer because Lama Zopa Rinpoche is my guru' or because 'he is Tara Institute's spiritual guide and guru'. It is much more worthwhile to think, 'If Lama Zopa Rinpoche were to have a good health and a stable long life, his virtuous Dharma activities would proliferate and increase, which brings benefit to many sentient beings'. Making aspirational prays for Lama Zopa Rinpoche's long life so that he may continue to benefit many sentient beings is much more relevant and beneficial.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© *Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

9 April 2013

With the motivation that we generated during the recitation of the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, we can now engage in the practice of meditation.

[meditation]

We have just attempted to train our mind in giving happiness to other sentient beings, which is based on love, and taking up the suffering of other sentient beings, based on compassion. We can use these very positive intentions, to generate the motivation for receiving the teachings as well: May the benefit that I gain from listening to the teachings become a cause for the well-being and benefit of all sentient beings and may the Buddha's teachings flourish and remain for a long time. With that intention in mind we can now engage in listening to the teaching. Just as the listeners generate a positive motivation, as the teacher, I also, from my side, need to generate that same motivation as best as I can. I might be sitting on a throne and higher than you, but in terms of motivation I am down at the same level as you are.

2. CONTEMPLATING EXTENSIVELY THE BENEFITS OF BODHICITTA

2.1. Explaining the benefits of bodhicitta

2.1.1. It has the power to destroy all negativity and accomplish all virtues (cont.)

2.1.1.2. IT CAN ACCOMPLISH SUPREME HAPPINESS

Later in the text there will be a more extensive definition of supreme happiness, but basically the ultimate state of happiness refers to actualising the two bodies of an enlightened being.

The relevant verse reads:

7. *The powerful able ones, who have contemplated this*

For eons, see this alone as beneficial.

Through it an immeasurable number of beings

Easily accomplish supreme happiness.

The *powerful able ones* refers to the enlightened beings of the past who, over a long period of time, *contemplated* how to accomplish the supreme and ultimate happiness that is the enlightened mind of bodhicitta. This is also a personal instruction indicating that meditating on bodhicitta is the best way to accomplish the ultimate benefit for ourselves and others. We need to apply it to our own practice, rather than expecting others to do it.

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je elaborates on the meaning of this verse:

It is appropriate to strive to meditate on bodhicitta because the able ones who, over countless eons, thought deeply about what is beneficial for sentient beings, and the method with which to achieve that benefit, see only this mind of enlightenment as beneficial.

The term Able One is way of referring to Buddha Shakyamuni. Here, it indicates that prior to achieving enlightenment, Buddha Shakyamuni spent *countless eons* over countless lifetimes practising on the path leading to enlightenment. Having contemplated the best way to benefit suffering beings and to alleviate all forms of suffering, Buddha Shakyamuni found the mind of bodhicitta to be the most beneficial. The term *only this mind* is an expression indicating that among the many techniques and methods for benefitting sentient beings, the *mind of enlightenment* is the most *beneficial*. At a personal level, this is an exhortation to us to strive to develop that mind of enlightenment ourselves.

Gyaltsab Je then goes on to say further:

This very bodhicitta is the seed with which an immeasurable number of sentient beings can easily and happily accomplish supreme happiness, without having to rely on austerities such as tearing out one's hair and so forth.

It is as was said: Going from happiness to happiness; knowing the mind, who will be lazy?

It is not necessary to adopt the extreme measure of practising austerities *such as tearing out one's hair and so forth* in order to *accomplish supreme happiness*. Rather, the ultimate method is to meditate on the supreme mind of bodhicitta, and further develop and increase that mind.

As emphasised in the commentary, *this very bodhicitta is the seed with which an immeasurable number of sentient beings can be led to happiness*. Once the mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta is developed, it implants the seed that will lead one swiftly to the state of enlightenment, where one can accomplish the welfare of all living beings and thus benefit them. The essence of bodhicitta is that it is the seed that will develop into the ultimate fruit of enlightenment, which is what we need to strive to achieve.

As the basis of that seed is loving kindness that is where we need to begin our practice. When one has developed genuine loving kindness, then the wish to benefit others will naturally arise, and whatever other activities we engage in will be very meaningful. As the great master Lama Tsong Khapa said, 'If one has a kind mind, then the practices that establish the grounds and paths will also be gentle and good. If, on the other hand, one has an evil or negative mind, then whatever grounds or paths one establishes will also be unsuitable'. So developing a kind heart and an attitude of loving kindness is essential. That is what we really need to contemplate.

2.1.1.3. IT CAN ACCOMPLISH ONE'S WISHES

The verse relating to this is:

8. *Those wishing to eliminate the hundredfold suffering of cyclic existence*

Wishing to clear the unhappiness of sentient beings and

Wanting to enjoy a hundredfold of happiness

Should never give up the mind of enlightenment.

Gyaltsab Je begins his commentary on this verse by reemphasising the essential point that without developing bodhicitta there is no way one can fulfil the needs of others, or to bring about the ultimate benefit for them.

It is appropriate to meditate on bodhicitta since it is the supreme method for accomplishing the purpose of self and others.

As explained previously, love and compassion is the basis for developing bodhicitta. We could not possibly go about helping others without a sense of the love that wishes others will gain genuine ultimate happiness, and the compassion that wishes for all beings to be free from suffering. If we are to achieve our goal then it is essential that we develop the mind of bodhicitta.

In relation to explaining how this actually accomplishes *the purpose of self and others*, Gyalsab Je explains:

Having trained in the practices of a medium capable being, one wishes to destroy the hundredfold suffering of cyclic existence in one's continuum; having trained in the motivation of a great capable being, one wishes to clear away the unhappiness of all sentient beings.

In the teachings common to the medium scope, the suffering of birth, sickness, ageing and death is explained in great detail. Having contemplated how we will have to experience these sufferings again and again for as long as we remain in cyclic existence, we develop the keen wish to be completely free from cyclic existence. Thus, by overcoming the sufferings of cyclic existence, one accomplishes one's own purpose. Then, *having trained in the motivation and practices of the great capable being, one develops the strong wish to clear away the unhappiness and suffering of all sentient beings*. Thinking about their plight, we generate the distinct mind of wishing that all living beings to be free from all forms of suffering. In this way we accomplish the purpose of others.

Then the commentary goes on to say:

Regardless of whether one wishes to enjoy the hundredfold happiness of higher status or definite goodness, there is no better method. One should generate bodhicitta alone, and never give it up, or let it degenerate.

There is no better method to achieve the happiness of higher status or definite goodness than developing bodhicitta, which is based on love and compassion. We might not have developed bodhicitta yet, but we do have the basis of love and compassion within our own hearts. In order to transform basic love and compassion into bodhicitta, first we need to firmly establish the love and compassion that is within our heart, then further increase it and develop it so that it turns into unconditional and unbiased love and compassion for all beings. The more we train in this, the firmer it becomes, it further increases, and will less likely degenerate. This is how we can use this explanation as a personal instruction.

As I have shared with you previously, the most practical approach, appropriate at our level, is to develop the following attitude on a daily basis: 'I will not harm any living being in the slightest manner and I will do my utmost to benefit other living beings in the best possible way'. This attitude can then be complemented with the thought: 'I will take the personal responsibility for freeing all living beings from every suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness'.

The more we generate this thought, and the more we familiarise ourselves with it, the closer we will get to

actually developing bodhicitta. While I can't claim that engaging in some other form of practice while neglecting to familiarise our mind with these basic attitudes will prevent you from developing bodhicitta, I can say that it will be hard for one to get any closer to developing bodhicitta. If one does not familiarise one's mind with these basic attitudes then the very basis of developing bodhicitta will be missing. Thus the most practical way to engage in developing bodhicitta is to familiarise ourselves with this attitude of loving kindness on a regular basis.

Adopting the determination, 'I will not harm any living being in the slightest way and I will do the best I can to benefit other sentient beings' serves as the best basis for developing bodhicitta. If I recall correctly, on an occasion when His Holiness was teaching in Bodhgaya he mentioned that this attitude will suffice for a bodhicitta attitude for ordinary beings. He definitely did emphasise the importance of developing this attitude. His Holiness always presents us with most practical ways to engage in practice.

While love and compassion serves as the basis for developing bodhicitta, on another practical level it definitely serves as an antidote for overcoming delusions such as intense anger, strong attachments, jealousy and so forth. The more we familiarise our mind with these attitudes of benefitting others and not harming any living being, the more we are developing a direct opponent to the self-cherishing mind, which is the basis for all delusions. When the self-cherishing mind itself is opposed, the mind of cherishing other beings is further developed and there is not much room for manifest delusions to arise. This is the most practical benefit of adopting love and compassion as our daily practice.

As I regularly mention, I haven't really developed any great realisations as such, but I do try to familiarise myself with this attitude of love and compassion in my everyday activities. Whether I am sitting or trying to engage in prayers, or I am moving about outside, or even when I am taking a shower, I try to occupy my mind constantly with thoughts of not harming other sentient beings in any way and benefitting others in the best way I can. From the little experience I have in developing these attitudes, I definitely find that they help to overcome delusions. So I can confidently share with you that the practical result of having attempted to practice in this way is that I do have a happy mind now. Wherever I go I seem to be able to maintain a happy attitude and a happy mind, and I attribute that to my attempts to engage in these practices.

I consider these attitudes to be my best friend. In terms of wealth, these attitudes are the best possessions that I own, and they are the best guide and teacher. I don't know if I am missing the mark and have it all wrong, but I definitely seem to find some personal benefit. Some might remark 'Well that is a crazy geshe's attitude!', however it is not uncommon for practitioners to be called crazy. Even great practitioners such as the renowned master Ensapa was called crazy as was Milarepa the most famous hermit.

I was about to relate a story about Milarepa and his sister, but we might get side-tracked and so you can look it up for yourselves.

Through our meagre attempts to develop a genuine mind of loving kindness, our minds will naturally be transformed, and we will become more gentle and kinder. But such a mind does not develop naturally or appear spontaneously, or as a result of practices of mere austerity. We have to actually make the effort to familiarise ourselves with these positive attitudes. That is why I exhort you and remind you again and again of the importance of paying attention to this practice of developing loving kindness.

2.1.2. One will become special in name and meaning

This section explains how the transformation achieved through the mind of bodhicitta influences the way one will be known.

The relevant verse reads:

9. *Should one generate bodhicitta. Then in one instant
Those pitiful ones bound in the prison of cyclic
existence will be
Referred to as the children of the tatagatas,
And become objects of prostration for worldly
gods and humans.*

The first part of Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse says:

Should one generate the wishing and engaging bodhicitta, one will instantaneously attain the distinguished name 'child of the tatagatas' ...

The moment one generates wishing and engaging bodhicitta one will be considered as a child of the tatagatas, or child of the buddhas. As explained previously, just as the son of the king is held in high regard because he holds the royal lineage of the king and the royal family, being a child of the tatagatas means being a suitable vessel to carry on the lineage of the buddhas. Thus the buddhas consider it appropriate to bestow on such beings the essential teachings, meanings and so forth.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

... and as the meaning of the name indicates, one will become an object of prostrations for worldly gods and humans.

Just as their name indicates, children of the tathagatas will become an object of veneration, offerings and so forth by humans and gods alike.

Then, Gyaltsab Je explains:

It is not only the bodhisattvas who have entered the great grounds that have these qualities, but...

This relates to a natural doubt that that these great qualities are only befitting for bodhisattvas who have reached the higher grounds, and as such they do not relate to us personally. In response to this doubt, Gyaltsab Je states:

...also the pitiful ones bound to the prison of cyclic existence by affliction and karma attain these benefits instantly, the moment they generate bodhicitta.

This will be elaborated later in the text. In terms of a suitable basis, any individual being is capable of

developing this, be they male or female, of high status or low status, rich or poor, from any kind of social background or lineage; anyone one who has the appropriate conditions is a suitable basis for developing bodhicitta. The very moment bodhicitta is developed they become the object of veneration, because all the qualities mentioned previously are obtained. So the essential point here is that everyone has the potential to develop bodhicitta and become special in name and meaning. There is no discrimination based on gender, status, race and so forth.

That concludes the benefits of bodhicitta.

2.1.3 Explaining the benefits with analogies

The six benefits of developing bodhicitta are described using analogies.

2.1.3.1. Analogy showing how the lesser becomes supreme

2.1.3.2. Analogy showing its rarity and preciousness

2.1.3.3. Analogy showing the unending and increasing result

2.1.3.4. Analogy showing its ability to rescue from great danger

2.1.3.5. Analogy showing how it destroys negativity effortlessly

2.1.3.6. The benefits that are explained in the sutras

2.1.3.1. ANALOGY SHOWING HOW THE LESSER BECOMES SUPREME

The verse relating to this reads:

10. *Like the supreme elixir that makes gold,
Having taken this impure body, it transforms it
Into the priceless precious body of a conqueror;
Hence, strongly hold that called 'mind of
enlightenment'.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains that:

Having contemplated these benefits and generated that which is called the mind of enlightenment, one should hold onto it firmly.

Again, this is an exhortation to take these explanations of the benefits of bodhicitta as a personal instruction. We need to think like this: 'I must do my utmost to develop bodhicitta because of its great benefits, and whatever bodhicitta I have developed, I need to establish firmly and further increase it'. We need to pay heed to this advice and really take it to heart.

The analogy presented is that:

Just like one *sang*¹ of supreme gold transforming elixir can transform one thousand *sang* of iron into gold, this mind can transform this body that one has taken, impure both from the point of view of cause and nature, into the priceless precious body of a conqueror.

In Tibetan, the first line of the verse refers to having taken this impure body, which refers to being impure from the point of view of both cause and nature. We don't have to go into detail now but the cause of our body was substances from our parents, which are not normally considered as being clean substances. Whichever way we look at it our body is, by its very nature neither a clean

¹ A Tibetan unit of measurement.

object nor pure in nature. The words *having taken* have the subtle implication that one has taken this impure body repeatedly, again and again. So the contaminated body that we have is impure both from the point of view of cause and nature.

We have taken this body over and over again in the past and for as long as cause and the conditions are intact, we will have to further take it again and again in the future. When the mind of enlightenment is further developed it can transform this impure body into the priceless precious body of a conqueror.

In the analogy Gyaltsab Je explains that a small portion of *supreme gold transforming elixir can transform one thousand sang of iron into gold*. Similarly, when one develops the mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta, that mind can transform this impure body that has to take rebirth again and again, into the precious body of a conqueror or a buddha.

Finally, Gyaltsab Je makes reference to the sutras.

The *Array of Stalks* sums up the benefits of bodhicitta with the example:

One *sang* of mercury, which appears as gold, can transform one thousand *sang* of iron into gold.

The main point being presented here is that bodhicitta serves as an elixir that can transform an impure or contaminated body into a pure or uncontaminated one. To go a bit further, on the hearer and solitary realiser paths, when the being on the path of preparation transcends to the next path, which is the path of seeing, their contaminated body remains intact. In other words the being on the hearer and solitary realiser path who reaches the path of seeing becomes an arya or noble being but still retains a contaminated body. Whereas, on the Great Vehicle's path, when the bodhisattva on the path of preparation attains the path of seeing their very contaminated physical body transforms into an uncontaminated body. That physical transformation takes place due to the bodhisattvas having the extra quality of bodhicitta in their mental continuum, which hearers and solitary realisers don't have. While I haven't seen this specific explanation in other teachings, in my view this has to be the reason for the difference and relates to the point being explained here.

2.1.3.2. ANALOGY SHOWING ITS RARITY AND PRECIOUSNESS

The verse which relates to this is:

**11. It is very precious since the sole captain of
migrators
Investigated well with immeasurable
awareness.
Those who wish to be free from the place of
migration
Should hold well onto the precious bodhicitta.**

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

Those who wish to be free from all faults of cyclic existence, the place of migrators, should hold well onto the precious bodhicitta and protect it from degeneration like a powerful king of jewels.

Those who wish to be free from the faults of cyclic existence, in the place of migrators specifically relates to the six types of realms that beings migrate to. Those who wish to be free

from all of the faults of the six realms should hold well onto the precious bodhicitta and protect it from degeneration, just like those who have found a powerful king of jewels.

Gyaltsab Je further explains:

Like the skilful captain, who brought the merchants to the jewel island, the unequalled sole captain of migrators, the Buddha, with his immeasurable wisdom awareness, investigated thoroughly what the best method may be to eliminate the poverty of migrators, and saw that only bodhicitta was that precious, meaning that it is rare and extremely beneficial method.

Just like the analogy of a *captain who guides merchants to the jewel island the unequalled sole captain of migrators* (i.e. living beings in the six realms), *the Buddha with his immeasurable wisdom awareness* (referring to the omniscient mind of the Buddha), *having investigated thoroughly what the best method may be to eliminate the poverty of migrators, saw that bodhicitta was rare and precious and the most beneficial method for alleviating the sufferings of the migrators of the six realms.*

The Buddha's omniscient wisdom does not have the slightest fault in the way it perceives and distinguishes phenomena. So there is not even the slightest fault in the Buddha's mind, because of that omniscient wisdom. When that wisdom looks into what would be the most beneficial way to alleviate the suffering of sentient beings, the Buddha sees that bodhicitta is the ultimate method. If we have faith in the Buddha, then we know that he sees everything just as it is, properly and correctly. Since he said that bodhicitta is the most precious and beneficial way to benefit sentient beings, we need to strive to develop that mind for ourselves.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

16 April 2013

Based on the motivation that we generated when we recited the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, we can now engage in the practice of meditation.

For this meditation, we imagine that we are surrounded by all sentient beings who are deprived of happiness and experiencing various forms of suffering. We generate the wish for them to abide in happiness and, based on love, imagine giving our own happiness to them. Then we focus on their suffering, and generate the wish that they not experience any suffering, and based on compassion, we imagine taking upon ourselves all their suffering. This is how we can engage the meditation practice. [*meditation*]

The motivation for engaging in the teaching also needs to be based on love and compassion. So we can generate this motivation:

In order to benefit all sentient beings, to liberate them from all suffering and to lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put into practice well whatever I understand from it.

As I regularly emphasise, in addition to our meagre attempts to develop love and compassion in our meditation, it is essential that we try to maintain and strengthen that sense of love and compassion in our everyday life. Personally, I attempt to do this practice regularly, and I encourage you to do so as well. As I have mentioned over and over again, the most valuable companion we can have is this quality of love and compassion and loving kindness within our own heart. In fact, if we secure this most valuable companion within our own heart, then we will not be deprived of external companions. Conversely, if we harbour the delusions or negative states of mind such as intense anger, attachment, jealousy and so forth, then it will not be possible to find good external companions and friendship.

If we are obsessed with delusions such as intense anger and attachment, then the companions we find will naturally be ones who harbour anger and attachments as well. Even if they were not initially dominated by strong delusions such as anger and attachment, our own negativity will start to rub off on them, changing them into an angry person. If we are infested with strong attachments, that naturally influences others, and brings out attachments within them. If we harbour intense anger within our own mind, then when we relate to others it will naturally be out of anger, which triggers the anger in their mind and they too will start to become angry as well. It's the same with jealousy. If we have a very jealous mind, and discuss things with others out of jealousy, then that will naturally arouse jealousy in their minds. These situations occur as a result of not having overcome delusions in one's mind. Whenever we encounter objects of delusions they serve as a trigger for our delusions to arise, which that is why the delusions seem to arise very easily.

We need to use our rational and logical mind to see how our own delusions can trigger the manifestation of delusions in the minds of others. If you have strong attachment and anger you will end up having to deal with friends who also have strong attachments and anger. Conversely, if we practise love and compassion with a genuine intention, then that will become a positive trigger for positive states of mind to arise within others. Therefore, as I remind you again and again, we need to begin with those in our immediate surroundings and practise expressing genuine loving kindness in our speech, mannerisms and so forth. That will definitely contribute to the development of a genuinely calm and harmonious relationship with our companions and others. On a practical level these are really good points to think about.

In the event that our companion becomes angry or says inappropriate things in a state of anger, if we take the initiative to remain gentle and calm, it can have the positive effect of calming down our angry companion too. This is a very practical approach. I can relate a personal story about this. I had a very good childhood friend in Tibet called Tinley Dhargye. He was not able to escape with us to India and was imprisoned, and later passed away in prison. He was really very faithful and loyal friend but he was known to be a bit short-tempered. However, despite being easily irritated he was also known to be really good-hearted. Knowing that he trusted me, I would sometimes provoke him by playing pranks on him. When he was falling asleep, I would put odd things in his mouth, and when he woke up he would immediately become very angry, and sometimes he would even strike me. But when I just smiled and laughed, he couldn't really respond to that with anger. Eventually he became less and less irritated and he even began to participate in those pranks himself. This is yet another example of how, with a genuine concern and without anger from our side, we can help others to overcome their short temperedness, sometimes even by provoking and teasing them.

2.1. Explaining the benefits of bodhicitta (cont.)

Reflecting on the great benefits of bodhicitta will encourage us to further develop it in our own minds. While we might not have yet developed uncontrived bodhicitta, we do, to a certain extent, have a contrived aspect of bodhicitta within our hearts. At its most basic level we all have the inclination of not wanting to intentionally hurt others and wanting to benefit others in any way we can. We all feel uncomfortable when we see others who are hurt, and we all have wish to help others. When these intentions become purer and more unconditional, then the mind moves closer and closer to developing actual bodhicitta. We need to look at our current state in a practical way. We may not have developed uncontrived bodhicitta, but we can definitely use what we already have as a substitute for that. We can use our inclination of not wanting to harm others and wishing to benefit them as a basis of our reflection. When we think about this again and again throughout the day, wherever we are, the more familiar we become with this positive attitude, and the stronger and firmer it will be established in our mindstream.

2.1.3.3. ANALOGY SHOWING THE UNENDING AND INCREASING RESULT

12. *All other virtues, similar to the plantain tree
Are exhausted upon bearing fruit.
Since the fruit tree of bodhicitta constantly
Bears fruits, it is not exhausted but increases.*

In his commentary on the text Gyalsab Je opens his explanation of the meaning of the verse with these words:

It is also appropriate for those who wish for unceasing and increasing virtue to meditate on bodhicitta.

This is another very meticulous explanation of the benefits of developing bodhicitta. Virtue is defined as that which brings about pleasant results. We all want pleasant and good results, and as that comes from virtue we have an impetus to engage in accumulating virtue. Here, in a most practical way, we are being advised that *for those who wish for unceasing and increasing virtue, it is also appropriate to meditate on bodhicitta.*

While this will be explained more extensively later on, we can reflect here on how we can engage in accumulating vast amounts of virtue. As mentioned previously, while we may have not developed an uncontrived bodhicitta mind, we can, by intentionally making some effort, develop our love and compassion—wishing all beings to be free from all suffering and wishing them ultimate happiness—into a strong aspiration to achieve enlightenment. We can combine our practice of accumulating virtue with the bodhicitta attitude by thinking, ‘May whatever virtuous activities I engage in become a cause for achieving enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings’. We try our utmost to maintain this bodhicitta attitude, even if it a contrived one, while we are engaging in the virtuous action and at the end dedicate it with a bodhicitta attitude. As mentioned previously, although the contrived state of bodhicitta at our level requires some effort, it is the seed of actual bodhicitta. So we must not underestimate the value of developing even a contrived level of bodhicitta attitude in our practice. We need to really keep that in mind and make every effort to develop it further.

To put it in a very simple way, there is nothing to lose but much to gain from generating the bodhicitta attitude. Indeed, far from any loss, there is only benefit, in this life as well as in all future lifetimes. This practical approach will encourage us to develop the bodhicitta attitude to the best of our ability.

In his commentary Gyalsab Je then explains why this is appropriate:

Virtues that are not held by bodhicitta are like the plantain tree, whose ability to produce a fruit is exhausted after it produces one.

Here the plantain or banana plant is used as an analogy. The plantain produces only one crop of fruit after which it perishes. A new plant has to spring up before it can produce fruit again. The analogy is that if whatever virtues one accumulates are not accompanied with a bodhicitta attitude, then when the result of that virtue is experienced, then that will be it! There will be no further results of that virtue. Applying that at a personal level, our present human rebirth is a result of virtue, and the good conditions we have now are also the result of past virtue. If our virtuous actions with these good conditions are not accompanied by the bodhicitta attitude, we will use up all our good karma now, and our human life will end here. So our good karma will be like the plantain tree which produces fruit only once: we have a human rebirth this one time, and it will be very hard to obtain it again. Whereas if we utilise the bodhicitta attitude in our life, and develop and increase it with the good conditions that we have now, then our virtuous actions in this very life will produce more human rebirths in future lifetimes.

As Gyalsab Je states in his commentary:

On the other hand, the tree of bodhicitta produces fruits unceasingly. Like the wish-fulfilling tree it increases more and more.

A wish-fulfilling tree is a mystical tree that produces fruit unceasingly. The more you take from it the more it produces, and the fruit is never exhausted. That wish-fulfilling tree is an analogy showing how the accumulation of virtue is increased with a bodhicitta attitude. Rather than being exhausted, the virtue increases evermore. So we can see how incredibly valuable the bodhicitta attitude is.

It is because of their bodhicitta that bodhisattvas are able to come back again and again to this world with all the perfect conditions, to continuously benefit sentient beings. For example, the practice of morality for bodhisattvas is the means to accumulate great merit to obtain a good rebirth such as a human rebirth with all of the perfect conditions intact. The bodhisattva’s practice of generosity is the optimum cause to acquire good resources, great wealth and so forth in the future, as a way to continuously benefit other sentient beings. The practice of patience is the optimum cause for the bodhisattva’s charismatic features and qualities and so forth, which again serves as a means to benefit other sentient beings. In this way, all of the bodhisattvas’ practices of serve as the optimum causes to obtain all the perfect conditions, rebirth after rebirth, all the way up to enlightenment, where they will be able to benefit all sentient beings in the optimum way. More extensive explanations will come later, but it is good to reflect on these points now.

Finally, in order to back up the earlier explanation, Gyalsab Je quotes from the *Sutra of Inexhaustible Wisdom*:

The *Sutra of Inexhaustible Wisdom* states:

Just as a drop of water that falls into the ocean abides until the end of an eon, the virtue that is dedicated for enlightenment remains until the essence of enlightenment is fulfilled. It does not cease.

This quote from the sutra presents another very vivid analogy. When a drop of water falls into an incredibly vast ocean it merges with the water of the ocean. The only way that the drop of water could be exhausted would be for the whole ocean to dry up. So, because of the vastness of the ocean, *the drop of water abides until the end of an eon*, which is an incredibly long time. Likewise the essence of whatever virtue one has accumulated and dedicated to enlightenment, will not be exhausted and the seed of it will remain until one actually achieves enlightenment. The main point to derive as a personal instruction is: this: if we generate a bodhicitta motivation to the best of our ability before engaging in any practice, then remind ourselves of the bodhicitta attitude again and again during the practice, and dedicate our practice with the bodhicitta attitude at the end, then that will seal our virtue so that it becomes unceasing and increases more and more.

To take that further, Lama Tsong Khapa says in his teachings that we should not neglect or underestimate the value of virtue and gravity of negativity no matter how small they may be. In the sutras the Buddha himself mentions that we should not underestimate the gravity of even the smallest negativity. The Buddha presented the analogy that they are like the small spark that ignites a fire, which can cause great destruction. Likewise, one should not neglect or underestimate the value of small virtues, for just as small drops of water eventually fill a large container, small virtues can accumulate to achieve great results. The analogies the

Buddha used are very practical and straightforward, and easy to understand because they relate to our own experiences.

We can see how skilfully the Buddha used analogies that are relevant to our own experiences. For example, in the Black Saturday bushfires, I heard that many houses were set alight not by the fire itself but by small sparks that were carried on the wind. We can also relate the analogy of filling a huge container with drops of water to saving money. If we consider one dollar as having little value and don't bother saving any dollar coins, we might never be able to save any significant amount of money! On the other hand if we take an initiative to start saving a dollar at a time, we might eventually be able to save up \$1000. So, in this way we can see that the Buddha presented so many great analogies with logical reasons to help us become more intelligent, and accomplish what we wish for.

The really significant point here is to understand how the Buddha used skilful means to guide us. He didn't exhort us to go to great lengths in order to accumulate virtue, which could potentially overwhelm us. Rather, he exhorts us to avoid creating small negativities and adopting small virtues. Thus the Buddha showed us really practical ways of accumulating virtue as methods for us to begin our practice by taking small steps at a time. Engaging in small manageable virtues at a time becomes a cause for us to accumulate great virtues, and reap great positive results in the future.

2.1.3.4. ANALOGY SHOWING ITS ABILITY TO RESCUE US FROM GREAT DANGER

The verse relating to this reads as follows:

13. *Even having generated extremely terrible negativities,
One becomes liberated from them
instantaneously if one relies on it,
Like from great dangers in dependence on a
brave one.
Why do the conscientious not rely on it?*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Why don't the conscientious, who are patient concerning what has to be practised and what has to be abandoned, rely on bodhicitta? It would be appropriate to do so.

Here Gyaltsab Je reframes the question posed in the verse: *Why don't the conscientious, who are patient concerning what has to be practised and what has to be abandoned, rely on bodhicitta?* Then Gyaltsab Je answers Shantideva's rhetorical question with, *it would be appropriate to do so*, and explains his reasoning.

If one has created very frightful negativity such as harming the Three Jewels or creating the five immediate karmas then, by generating the mind of enlightenment, one can become free from the fears of the lower realms in an instant. It is like relying on a powerful brave person to protect one from the fears of a very dangerous road.

Here, the heavy negative karmas such as those created by showing disrespect to, or criticising the *Three Jewels*, are described as *frightful*. Other heavy negative karmas are translated here as *the five immediate karmas*, which are also known as the five heinous crimes or the five karmas of immediate retribution. These include killing one's mother, killing one's father, drawing blood from a tathagata and so forth. They are so gravely negative that, if not purified, an

unimaginable amount of suffering is to be experienced in the immediate next life as the result. We have definitely created these karmas in past lifetimes when we were completely ignorant. Even in this life, where we are quite intelligent and enjoy very good conditions, we find ourselves engaging in so many negativities and create so much negative karma. When we were completely ignorant, and in desperate situations, there would have been nothing to stop us from creating such grave heavy negative karmas. We still have the residue of those imprints in our mind now, so we need to take great measures to try to overcome those negative propensities. That is why it is appropriate for us to engage in practices of purification, most importantly by developing the bodhicitta attitude, which is one of the most powerful ways to overcome those negative karmas.

The way to *become free from the fears of the lower realms* is to overcome negative karmas by *generating the mind of enlightenment* or the bodhicitta attitude. The analogy presented here is that *it is like relying on a powerful brave person who can protect one from the fears of a very dangerous road*. If we have to travel along on a road known to be very dangerous, and we don't know the area at all, we will have to rely on a powerful person who can guide us across that treacherous and dangerous land. Similarly, bodhicitta can lead us away from fear of the lower realms.

In brief, bodhicitta has a two fold purpose: it serves as a powerful means to purify negative karma, as well as being the most powerful means to accumulate extensive merit. As explained in Nagarjuna's *Commentary on Bodhicitta*: The merits that a single being accumulates from developing bodhicitta even for a moment, is said to be so vast that all the buddhas and bodhisattvas in the ten directions are not able to describe the amount of merit that is obtained.

2.1.3.5. ANALOGY SHOWING HOW IT DESTROYS NEGATIVITY EFFORTLESSLY

There are two lines in relation to this heading:

14ab. *Like the fire at the end of the eon, the great negativities
Are completely burned up in an instant.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning of this verse as follows:

If one has generated this mind, then one is endowed with great power to destroy negativity. Similar to the fire at the end of the eon destroying all the worlds below the first concentration, bodhicitta definitely burns the strong karma that causes rebirth in the lower realms in an instant.

The implication is that:

If it can destroy the power of karma that will definitely be experienced, then what need is there to mention that the karma that will not definitely be experienced will also be destroyed? The great trail blazers said that confession complete with the four opponent powers purifies the karma that will definitely be experienced.

To explain the analogy of *the fire at the end of the eon destroying all the worlds below the first concentration*, there are three main periods in the world system: the formation, the remaining duration, and then the end or the destruction of the world. It is said that the destruction of the world occurs with the fire that burns downwards from the first concentration, which destroys the world below that. Just as that great powerful fire destroys the world systems, likewise

bodhicitta can definitely destroy the karmas that cause rebirth in the most unfortunate lower realms.

Next Gyaltsab Je explains that *if it can destroy the power of karma that will definitely be experienced, then what need is there to mention that the karma which will not definitely be experienced will also be destroyed?* There are various ways of explaining karmas that are definitely to be experienced. One of these refers to the three ways in which the karma is accumulated. The first of these is karma both caused and accumulated, and this is a karma where the results will definitely have to be experienced. The results of the next two, karma which is accumulated but not caused, and karma which is caused but not accumulated, will not definitely have to be experienced.

However it has also been explained in the teachings that when the four opponent powers are intact and applied in a purification practice, then whatever karma one has accumulated (even heavy negative karmas) will definitely not be experienced, as the appropriate measures for opposing those negative karmic imprints have been applied.

As explained here *the great trail blazers* Nagarjuna and Asanga have said that *confession complete with the four opponent powers purifies the karma that will definitely be experienced.*

This indicates that even karmas that are otherwise classified as definitely to be experienced, can be overcome when the four opponent powers when they are applied fully. These four opponent powers will be explained in more detail in the next chapter, which specifically deals with purification; meanwhile you can do some research and prepare yourself for the explanations that will be given in more detail then.

The commentary concludes by explaining that *definitely to be experienced* means that if one does not meditate or apply the antidote, it will definitely be experienced. This is established with both quotation and reasoning. Again, this relates to our own personal practice: we have had so many previous lifetimes where we were completely overwhelmed with negativities, ignorance and so forth and so there is no karma that we haven't adopted or engaged in. At this point in time, however, we are aware of that karma and so we can apply the antidotes and engage in purification practices to overcome those grave negative imprints that remain in our minds.

2.1.3.6. HOW THE BENEFITS ARE EXPLAINED IN THE SUTRAS

This heading is covered in the remaining lines of verse fourteen:

*14cd. Its boundless qualities
Were explained by the aware Maitreya to
Sudhana.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

The mind of enlightenment definitely creates these benefits¹ because [as a way to back it up with a quotation from the sutras] Maitreya, who is endowed with awareness, explained these benefits and infinitely praised this mind in the *Array of Stalks* sutra to the bodhisattva Youthful Sudhana.

Then there is a quote from the *Array of Stalks* sutra:

The *Array of Stalks Sutra* has an extensive explanation:

Son of good family, the mind of enlightenment is like the seed of all enlightened dharmas. It is like a field because it increases the white dharmas of all migrators....it is like the pure vase because it

perfectly accomplishes all thoughts. It is like a spear because it causes the downfall of the enemy of the afflictions.

These are just some of the analogies presented in the sutra, which has a much more extensive list.

The main point is that the benefits that were explained earlier were not made up by ordinary people, but they were actually presented by the Buddha himself in a sutra. So the benefits of bodhicitta come from an authentic source that one can rely upon.

As you are aware the next session will be the discussion evening. As usual I encourage you to do the discussion with good intention, in a spirit of sharing your understanding and knowledge, and further expanding one's own understanding. The week following that will be the test. That is also a very worthwhile activity to engage in with a good motivation.

Before we conclude with the usual dedication prayers, let us do the long life prayer for Lama Zopa Rinpoche. It is important that we make strong and fervent prayers for an authentic and genuine teacher such as Lama Zopa Rinpoche to have a long and stable life. For this is an immediate cause for the Buddha's teachings to remain for a long time to benefit many sentient beings in this world. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has emphasised the great importance of being able to distinguish a genuine teacher from a false one. So it is important to be cautious and apply the correct discernment.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

¹ Referring to the benefits mentioned earlier.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱུང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

7 May 2013

As usual we will spend some time in meditation. The *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer* that we have recited will suffice for our motivation. It's good to really think about the meaning of the lines in that prayer.

For the purposes of our practice it would be good to envision the objects of refuge, Buddha Shakyamuni surrounded by all gurus, buddhas and bodhisattvas, in the space before us. At the front, in the centre, we can envision all those beings towards whom we feel hostile. To the right we envision our father of this life surrounded by all relatives and friends of the male aspect, and to the left side our mother and all other relatives and friends of the female aspect. Surrounding these are an infinite number of sentient beings. As one engages in the *tong len* practice of giving and taking, envision receiving inspiration from the objects of refuge, and then engage in the practise of giving and taking in relation to the surrounding beings, who are the objects of our love and compassion. This ensures that we are doing a very good and appropriate practice.

As we become familiar with this visualisation, we will be able to use it whenever we recite the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*. When we commence the prayer we will be able to recall the objects of refuge in front of us and the objects of bodhicitta surrounding us. Also as we recite the prayer we can imagine ourselves to be like a chant leader, leading all other sentient beings surrounding us into taking refuge as well. As we sincerely take refuge in the objects of refuge we imagine that all beings surrounding us also take refuge in the objects of refuge and that we all receive the blessings. With this in mind we can now engage in the practice.

[meditation]

This is a very meaningful practice. As we engage in it we can generate the strong aspiration, 'May I be able to put this into practice. May I be able to actually implement this visualisation and make it an actual practice'. Then our meditation practice becomes really meaningful. We should not consider this a mere simple practice. It is, in fact, an incredibly meaningful and powerful practice. The teachings mention again and again that the root of all happiness lies in generating true love and compassion within one's heart. So this practice of *tong len* is definitely a very high level practice. Any practice that we engage in that is not based on love and compassion is only a practice that is sullied with personal interest and gains.

The more we familiarise ourselves with the practice of love and compassion, meditating and thinking about it again and again, the more it will help us to reduce anger towards others, which is a practical benefit for ourselves as well as others. That is because the practice of

generating love and compassion in one's heart involves focussing on those sentient beings who are experiencing suffering, and who are deprived of happiness. So the more we familiarise our minds with their plight and wishing them not to experience any suffering, the more endearing and closer they become. Thus we begin to really open up our hearts to them.

As we progress with our practice, we slowly begin to transform that initial wish for sentient beings to be free from suffering and endowed with happiness into the state of taking on a personal responsibility for doing that ourselves. Thus we transform our love and compassion into superior intention, where we make the resolve, 'I will myself lead all sentient beings out of the state of all suffering and place them into the ultimate state of happiness'. Having developed this superior intention, we are now very close to developing the actual awakening mind. This is how we gradually develop our intention to benefit other sentient beings.

As mentioned previously, when we relate to the plight of those who are deprived of happiness and who are experiencing great suffering there is no room for an angry and hostile mind to arise. That is because our thoughts are filled with genuinely wanting them to experience happiness and not to experience any suffering. When we are feeling love and compassion, thoughts of anger cannot arise. Likewise, thinking in this way will definitely help to overcome feelings of jealousy, contempt, competitiveness and so forth towards other beings. Through this practice these kinds of negative attitudes will definitely be overcome. So we can see how, as we develop our mind and improve it further, what seems like a simple practice is really a profound one. This is the way to progress on the path to enlightenment.

Of course the very reason we engage in the practice of meditating on love and compassion is so that we can implement it when we actually interact with others. We need to remind ourselves again and again, that the whole purpose of meditating on love and compassion is so that we can integrate and apply it in our daily lives. When we come out of our formal meditation practice and begin to interact with others, we need to ensure that our interactions are actually based on the sense of love and compassion with which we have been familiarising ourselves with during the meditation sessions. If we do this sincerely with a strong commitment, then the positive effect of our meditation will indeed extend into our everyday lives where we interact with other beings. This is how we need to actually engage in the practice.

I emphasise these points regularly as a way to remind you that these are essential practices—they are the very practices we need to take to heart. The teachings remind us again and again that love and compassion is the very basis for every Dharma practice. So we need to actually implement this advice in our own practices.

During the recent Easter course there was someone who said she used to come here regularly. She confided that she had practised meditation for over ten years, but her practice had lapsed for a while. However she has taken it up again recently. She said that while she is able to maintain her focus during meditation for about half an hour and even up to an hour at times with no problems,

she reverts to being grumpy and irritated as soon as she comes out of her meditation. She was being very truthful about her difficulties in maintaining her practice.

Being truthful like that is far better than being pretentious about not being affected by the world. Others may not detect what is going on, but affecting this pretentious calm and cool attitude when there is actually internal irritation can harm our progress. It is far better to be honest about the failings in our practice. When we are honest about where we are at, then when we listen to the teachings and receive advice, it can really hit the mark and help us to transform our mind.

This situation of not being able to extend our calm state of mind during meditation into the post-meditation state, arises because of not maintaining mindfulness and introspection out of the meditation session. It is because we have not maintained mindfulness and introspection outside the meditation session that the faults of becoming agitated and grumpy occur.

As I have mentioned previously, someone else confided in me that although he had been familiar with the meditation practice for over ten years, he had never heard about the specifics of applying mindfulness and introspection in meditation. He said it was really incredible when he was introduced to it. How had he missed this essential point?

2.1 Explaining the benefits of bodhicitta

Having heard of the benefits in detail, one will then feel inspired to develop bodhicitta. The way the text next introduces the nature of bodhicitta is really very skilful. Here, we can note the meticulous presentation of the great master Shantideva. Firstly he inspires us by explaining the benefits of bodhicitta, and then he explains what the nature of bodhicitta is.

2.2. Identifying the nature of bodhicitta

This heading has three divisions:

2.2.1. Divisions by nature

2.2.2. Explaining the divisions with an example

2.2.3. Explaining the difference between the benefits of the wishing and engaging minds

2.2.1. Divisions by nature

The divisions of bodhicitta by nature are presented in this verse:

15. *The mind of enlightenment, if summed up,
Should be known in two aspects:
The mind wishing for enlightenment and
The one engaging in enlightenment.*

Of course these two divisions of bodhicitta have been presented many times in previous teachings to older students.

The explanation in Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Take the subject 'the generation of the mind of supreme enlightenment': by way of nature it should be known in brief in two aspects—the mind focusing on wishing for enlightenment, and the mind focusing on engaging in enlightenment.

Thus, there are two divisions of bodhicitta by nature: wishing bodhicitta and engaging bodhicitta.

Next Gyaltsab Je presents this definition of bodhicitta:

The definition of the Mahayana mind generation is the mind that accompanies the aspiration to achieve complete enlightenment for the purpose of others.

This of course is an abbreviated definition; we have gone over the more detailed definition of the Mahayana mind generation in previous teachings.¹ However, the definition of the *Mahayana mind generation* presented here is that it is *the mind that accompanies the aspiration to achieve complete enlightenment for the purpose of others*.

Here we need to take note that within the divisions of mind and mental factors, bodhicitta is a primary mind and thus not a mental factor. It is however accompanied by the mental factor of aspiration which is of two-fold: the aspiration to benefit other sentient beings and the aspiration to achieve enlightenment oneself.

The first aspiration is the aspiration to benefit others, which is generated within one's mind-stream on the basis of having developed love and compassion and superior intention. From that follows the aspiration to achieve enlightenment oneself for the sake of all sentient beings. This is the actual aspiration that accompanies bodhicitta. In other words, in order to fulfil the aspiration to benefit other sentient beings, one needs to first fulfil the aspiration of achieving enlightenment oneself. Thus we need to obtain enlightenment first in order to benefit others to the fullest extent. This is an essential point that we need to recognise and understand.

In summary, the Mahayana mind generation or bodhicitta is a primary mind that is accompanied by two aspirations. The aspiration to benefit others is the causal aspiration, whereas the aspiration to attain complete enlightenment is the resultant aspiration that accompanies bodhicitta. Thus the aspiration to achieve enlightenment is that which accompanies bodhicitta, i.e. the *mind of supreme enlightenment*.

As mentioned previously, in terms of development, the aspiration to benefit others is generated first followed by the aspiration to achieve enlightenment for oneself. In terms of obtaining the results, one first obtains the state of enlightenment and will then be able to lead other sentient beings to the state of enlightenment. So, one needs to obtain enlightenment first in order to be able to actually engage in the ultimate purpose of benefitting others, i.e.

¹ There are two Tibetan terms used in this context, *teck-chen sem-kye* and *jang-chub sem*.

The Sanskrit term bodhicitta is *jang-chub sem* in Tibetan – *jang-chub* means enlightenment and *sem* means mind, hence the literal translation is 'mind of enlightenment'; however the implicit meaning is the 'mind that aspires to obtain enlightenment'. The person who has this mind that aspires to obtain enlightenment is a *jang-chub sem-pa*, or bodhisattva in Sanskrit.

The term *teck-chen sem-kye* is translated in the commentary as 'Mahayana mind generation' – *teck-chen* means Mahayana, *sem* means mind and *kye* means generation. It specifically refers to a mind that is characterised as a Mahayana mind from the moment it is generated and for as long as it is maintained.

So the two terms essentially refer to the same thing with respect to the nature of the mind which aspires to enlightenment. The difference lies in the fact that one term involves a process, i.e. generation, and a setting, i.e. Mahayana, whereas the other is focussed on the result, i.e. the 'mind of enlightenment' or more specifically that which aspires to obtain enlightenment.

lead them to the state of complete enlightenment. As the teachings mention, when we work solely for the benefit of others, it will naturally fulfil our own purpose as well. So, this means that when we are fully committed to benefiting other sentient beings, that will also serve as the optimum means to obtain enlightenment ourselves, because we realise that without obtaining enlightenment oneself first there is no way that we can fully benefit others.

More specifically, you will recall that in the seven-point cause and effect sequence for developing bodhicitta, the state of mind that serves as the immediate cause to achieve the result of bodhicitta is called superior intention. This is where one takes on full responsibility for leading all beings to happiness and removing them from all suffering. The mind of superior intention makes this resolve, 'I will not rely on others to do it, but rather I will take it upon myself to bring happiness and free all beings from suffering'.

Having taken on that personal responsibility, which is based on love and compassion, and making the courageous commitment to bring all beings to the ultimate state of happiness and free them from all suffering, one then reflects on whether one has the ability to do that right now. When one realises that one does not have that full ability now, one investigates who has that ability, and comes to realise that only a buddha has the full capacity to benefit all sentient beings.

When one takes refuge in the Buddha by reflecting on the enlightened qualities in detail, such as the qualities of his holy body that is adorned with the enlightened signs and marks, the numerous qualities of his speech, the unimaginable qualities of his omniscient mind, and his vast virtuous activities, then that in itself becomes a strong impetus to develop exactly those same qualities for ourselves. It is only when one has obtained all the qualities of enlightenment that one will gain the full ability to free all other beings from suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness. When one develops the strong aspiration to obtain enlightenment as a way to benefit all sentient beings fully and completely, then one has developed bodhicitta or the awakening mind. This is how one develops the Mahayana mind generation—a mind that aspires to obtain supreme enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

You also need to understand that bodhicitta is developed only on the basis of having first obtained calm abiding. As explained many times previously, the mind basis for developing bodhicitta is a higher realm mind called the preparatory stage.² As explained in the teachings, calm abiding, the preparatory stage and the mind of higher realm are all obtained simultaneously. The reason why bodhicitta cannot be generated based on a mind of the desire realm is because the mind of the desire realm is a very gross level of mind, and since bodhicitta is only developed in relation to a subtle mind and particularly a

very firm and stable mind, it has to be generated based on calm abiding which is a higher realm mind.

You can refer to the more extensive definition of bodhicitta that is presented in other texts and compare it with the definition presented here. Does the definition presented here include all of the necessary elements of bodhicitta? It's good for you to investigate this. So, is this definition intact?

Students: Yes.

But this definition would apply even to an ordinary being who has not yet entered the path. Ordinary beings just prior to entering the Mahayana path would have generated the mind that aspires to enlightenment, and even though it is a contrived mind it still meets all the criteria of this definition, doesn't it?

Also, the Buddha's eye consciousness is a primary consciousness, which also meets the criteria of the definition, but it would not be referred to as being bodhicitta. Thus the crucial element that needs to be added on to this definition of the generation of a Mahayana mind is that it is a Mahayana primary mental consciousness. So, thus the full definition would read: the Mahayana primary mental consciousness that accompanies the aspiration to achieve complete enlightenment for the purpose of others. This definition carries the criteria for it to be the full definition of the generation of the Mahayana mind of bodhicitta. Adding the extra element 'Mahayana primary mental consciousness' to the definition, rules out the primary consciousnesses of the other senses such as eye primary consciousness, the nose primary consciousness, the tongue primary consciousness and so forth as bodhicitta.

The inclusion of 'Mahayana' in the definition also rules out the mental consciousnesses of an ordinary being who has not yet entered the Mahayana path, as being bodhicitta. In the definition presented here it just mentions a 'mind that accompanies the aspiration' and does not specify that it has to be a Mahayana mental consciousness.

We will not go further into the extensive explanation in the commentary at this point, as you can read that for yourselves. As presented there, in addition to this two-fold division Gyalsab Je mentions twenty-two divisions by example and four by boundary, all of which are explained in the lam rim teachings. The commentary also refers to abandoning the four black dharmas and relying on the four white dharmas and so forth, and again these are also explained in the lam rim teachings. As the author of the commentary, Gyalsab Je, mentions, to understand all of these more extensively, you must study the lam rim teachings.

2.2.2. Explaining the divisions with an example

The next verse goes into more detail.

16. *In the same way one understands the difference between
Wishing to go and going,
Those who are proficient should
Understand the difference of the two
sequentially.*

² A preparatory virtuous state of concentration within the sphere of the form and formless realm that directly generates an actual state of meditative concentration of either the form or formless absorption. There are eight types of preparatory meditative concentrations.

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

The mind that thinks, 'I want to go to that place' while resting and not being held by the action of going, and the mind that thinks, 'I shall go to that place' while held by the action of placing one foot down and raising the other, are the same in being an awareness that thinks 'I should go to that place'.

The difference lies with being held, or not being held by the action of going.

That is the example. Then the commentary continues:

The respective difference between the wishing and engaging mind generation should be understood by those who are proficient in the same way. They are the same in being a mind that thinks, 'I shall attain enlightenment for the welfare of others', but one of them does not depend on being held by the practice of the perfections of generosity and so forth, and the other does depend on that.

So the difference between wishing bodhicitta and engaging bodhicitta does not lie in the intention, which is the same for both, i.e. 'I shall obtain enlightenment for the welfare of others'.

What does differentiate the two is that wishing bodhicitta is not accompanied by engaging in the practices of perfection of generosity and so forth. Whereas engaging bodhicitta, while having the same mind of 'I shall obtain enlightenment for the welfare of others', is held by the practices of the perfection of generosity and so forth. With engaging bodhicitta the practice of the perfections of generosity and so forth is manifest.

One way to understand this is that a bodhisattva who is in meditative equipoise is not actively practising engaging bodhicitta, but they do maintain the wishing bodhicitta within their mental continuum. When the bodhisattvas come out of meditative equipoise and enter into the post-meditative state, they engage in activities of benefiting others such as by practising generosity, giving teachings and so forth; and at that time their mind is held by the engaging bodhicitta. It is good to understand this distinction between wishing or aspiring bodhicitta, and engaging bodhicitta. That should be sufficient for now—you can do more research on that for yourselves.

The commentary ends the section with this comment:

The master Kamalashila and others explained it in the same way, so I will not elaborate it here.

2.2.3. Explaining the difference in the benefits of the wishing and engaging minds

This is sub-divided into two:

2.2.3.1. The benefits of the wishing mind

2.2.3.2. The benefits of the engaging mind

2.2.3.1. THE BENEFITS OF THE WISHING MIND

In his commentary on this section, Gyaltsab Je begins with this quotation from the sutra called *The Liberation of the Superior Jampa*:

Son of the lineage, it is like this: For example, the precious diamond, though broken, outshines the supreme ornaments of gold and so forth, still keeps the name 'precious diamond', and eliminates all poverty. Son of the lineage, likewise the precious diamond of the mind that generates omniscient

knowledge, even without significance, outshines all the gold of the qualities of the hearers and self-liberators. It keeps the name of bodhisattva and eliminates all the poverty of cyclic existence.

This quote was also mentioned when we were studying the *Madhyamaka* (or Middle Way text), so you will be familiar with it.

Then the verse from the root text is presented:

*17. Though from the wishing mind of enlightenment
Great benefit arises while circling,
Continual merit, similar to the mind
Of engaging, does not arise.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

As stated here, though a great result from the mind wishing for enlightenment arises while being in cyclic existence, a similar uninterrupted stream of merits, such as that which arises from the engaging mind does not arise.

As a result of the merit accumulated from a wishing mind of enlightenment while one is in cyclic existence one actually experiences great positive results, such as being born as a universal monarch and so forth.

However an uninterrupted stream of merit is not obtained from a mind that merely wishes for enlightenment. The engaging mind produces an uninterrupted stream of merit, which is far superior and far greater than the merit one gains from just the wishing mind.

The distinction between the mind that generates a wish for bodhicitta and the mind that engages in bodhicitta can be understood in terms of how each is actually implemented. The wishing mind is where one develops that keen aspiration to achieve enlightenment, 'May I achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings', which suffices for the wishing mind. Based upon that aspiration of wishing to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, the engaging mind actually makes a promise to achieve enlightenment. When we talk about the bodhisattva vows, we are talking about vows that are based upon the engaging mind. Based on the earlier aspiration 'for the sake of all sentient beings I aspire to achieve enlightenment', the engaging bodhicitta mind promises to engage in the practices of the six perfections such as generosity and so forth. So we can see that there is definitely a difference between a mere aspiration and making a promise to fulfil that aspiration.

We can relate this to the practices and commitments that we regularly undertake, such as the Vajrayogini sadhana. The practice begins with 'I aspire to achieve the united state of Vajrayogini and for that purpose I will now engage in these practices of generating myself as the deity and so forth'. The first part 'for the sake of achieving enlightenment may I achieve the state of Vajrayogini' suffices as wishing bodhicitta. The second part 'for that purpose I will engage in the self-generation of Vajrayogini' suffices for engaging bodhicitta. It is good to apply this understanding to any practices we may engage in.

One also needs to understand that it is the promise that makes engaging bodhicitta so much more powerful. We can see this with our practice of the virtues, such as

refraining from killing. The mere act of refraining from killing is of course a virtuous act in itself. However if one were to actually promise, 'Today, I will not engage in any act of killing' or 'I will completely refrain from killing' then the act of refraining from killing becomes much more powerful and much more meritorious. This is important to understand.

It is good to study the definition of the Mahayana mind generation or bodhicitta and become familiar with what it actually means. That doesn't mean just being able to repeat the definition, but rather having a personal understanding of what bodhicitta actually means. What is the actual difference between wishing bodhicitta and engaging bodhicitta and so forth? We need to really understand this so we understand what we are striving for.

Bodhicitta is not something to be left as merely an intellectual understanding. We will gain the most benefit from bodhicitta when we actually meditate on it. Initially meditating on bodhicitta can be done with the explanation based on the sequential development of bodhicitta. As I have presented on numerous occasions, there are two main methods for developing bodhicitta. One is based on the seven-point cause and effect sequence, and the other on the technique of equalising and exchanging oneself with others. In the form of a meditation, or as part of familiarising one's own mind with them, it is good to go over these points and try to reflect upon them.

The seven-point cause and effect sequence begins with developing equanimity towards all living beings. We begin the process of developing a contrived bodhicitta by 1) contemplating how all beings have been equally kind to oneself, as they have all been one's mother in an infinite number of past lives. At this point you need to use logical reasons to determine that, as one's mental continuum has gone back beyond the conception of this life through numerous, countless, and infinite past lives, then all beings must at one time or another have been one's mother. Then 2) we remember the incredible kindness shown to us by all beings, just like one's mother in this life. In this way we remember their great kindness. Next, 3) we develop the strong intention of wishing to repay that kindness. Then 4) we develop heart-warming or appealing love for all beings, 5) followed by compassion. The sixth cause 6) is superior intention. Having meditated in this sequence one has, using this contrived means, reached a point where one really wants to do anything possible to benefit sentient beings, to bring them happiness and remove their suffering. When we acknowledge that we do not have the full potential or ability to achieve that goal, then the aspiration to obtain enlightenment is developed.

When we develop that thought, 'How wonderful it would be if I could obtain enlightenment in order to benefit all beings', we have generated a contrived bodhicitta attitude. We need to further familiarise our mind with this contrived attitude until it becomes the effortless and spontaneous wish to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all living beings.

The technique that Shantideva presents in great detail in the eighth chapter of *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life* is the

equalising and exchanging self with other technique. The exchanging self with other technique has four stages, beginning with 1) equalising oneself with others, which is developing equanimity. Then based on that, 2) one contemplates the many faults of cherishing oneself; followed by 3) contemplating the benefits of cherishing others. Then comes 4) the actual practice of exchanging self with others, which incorporates superior intention. You would have done this *tong len* practice of giving and taking over the three weeks when I went to India last year.

Some texts indicate that when one engages in the practice of developing bodhicitta using the exchanging self with others technique, then the seven-point cause and effect sequence is subsumed into that technique. Whereas if you're practicing the seven-point cause and effect sequence for developing bodhicitta, that doesn't necessarily suffice as a practise of exchanging self with others technique.

Some have commented that the exchanging self with others technique doesn't necessarily mean that you have to think about past lives. I think this particular explanation is presented in *Liberation in the Palm of your Hand*, which also mentions that the exchanging self with others technique incorporates the seven-point cause and effect technique as well.

So it's good to refer to different texts and read their various explanations as a way to increase your understanding and wisdom. The opportunity we have now is, of course, very rare, and this is a good opportunity to try to bring this about again in the future. But that's very hard to predict.

Before she passed away Caryn Clarke confided in me, 'I have no real hesitation about death itself, but the prospect of not meeting with such an opportunity to be with you again is a prospect that really frightens me'. She was referring to me, but of course she really meant having the opportunity to practise Dharma and meet with teachers. We need to take this as a personal instruction. The great Kadampa masters had similar ways of presenting instructions; with predicaments and so forth. Caryn said, 'You know I've had the opportunity to be with you for about seven years, and that was a great time of being together, for learning and practice. I worry that I won't have this opportunity again'. These are points that we need to remember.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བལྟགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

14 May 2013

Based on the motivation we generated in the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, we can now engage in our meditation practice. [meditation]

It would be good to generate from the depths of one's heart a positive motivation for receiving the teaching such as: For the purpose of all sentient beings, to free them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of enlightenment and happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself; so for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well'.

2.2.3. Explaining the difference in the benefits of the wishing and engaging minds (cont.)

The distinction between the wishing mind and the engaging mind was presented in the last session, along with the benefits of the wishing mind of bodhicitta. It is good to reflect on those benefits.

Again, I exhort you to contemplate the meaning of the teachings that have been presented and not to just leave it as a mere intellectual understanding thinking, 'OK, I've heard that. It makes sense'. There is not much benefit in just skimming over what is being presented. The only way to derive any personal benefit is by really contemplating and reflecting on the meaning of these points. Only then can one taste the real flavour of what is being presented. Having reflected on and digested the meaning of what the great scholar and master Shantideva presented, we will begin to really admire and venerate him.

The most important application of these teachings to our practice is to see how they counteract our very stubborn mind, which cherishes our own interests and well-being. It counteracts that self-cherishing because everything being presented here relates to thinking about the welfare of all other beings, and how to benefit them. By its very nature the material presented here extends our view beyond ourselves to benefiting others, which definitely counteracts our focus on our own interests and our self-cherishing mind.

The essence of this presentation lies in the ways and means to benefit others, which also helps to simplify what might otherwise seem to be a complex teaching. When we look into it, we find that we already have, to a certain degree, a wish to benefit others. So it is just a matter of further developing and expanding that. That is essentially what is being presented here.

2.2.3.2. THE BENEFITS OF THE ENGAGING MIND

The two verses relating to this heading are:

18. *Whoever, from the time they perfectly generate
With an irreversible attitude,
This mind to liberate the infinite
Realms of sentient beings,*
19. *From then on, although they sleep
Or become reckless, manifold
Merits of uninterrupted power,
Equalling space, strongly arise.*

In his commentary Gyalsab Je begins his explanation of the meaning of these verses as follows:

Whoever, from the moment they perfectly generate an irreversible engaging mind for the purpose of others, to completely liberate all realms of beings and place them in the state of enlightenment, for as long as cyclic existence lasts,...

These verses are introducing the nature of the engaging mind as a way of explaining its benefits. As explained earlier, the wishing mind is a mere aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of other sentient beings, whereas the engaging mind is a mind accompanied by actions or deeds such as the six perfections. *From the moment* someone makes that pledge or vow to engage in the bodhisattva deeds *they perfectly generate the irreversible engaging mind for the purpose of others*. This refers to engaging in the actions solely for *the purpose of benefiting others for as long as cyclic existence lasts* and *to completely liberate sentient beings in all realms*. This is the extent of the pledge that is made when one takes the engaging bodhisattva vows.

So, the engaging mind is this very strong and stable pledge to not abandon working for the purpose of others for as long as cyclic existence lasts. This means continuously working for the purpose of others until the very last sentient being is liberated. Here we need to take note that the negativity from breaching the bodhisattva vows is only incurred when one has made this pledge. With a wishing mind one has not made any pledge, so if one does not apply oneself to the practice, or if one breaches any of the practices, there will be no resulting negativity, simply because one has not made the pledge. The negativity of a downfall occurs only when one breaches the commitments of a pledge.

Having explained the engaging mind and that it involves making a pledge, Gyalsab Je indicates that from the time the bodhisattva makes the pledge and generates the engaging mind:

... from then on, whether they sleep or become reckless through intoxication and so forth, they will still create a manifold uninterrupted power of merit as vast as space.

That is because the wishing mind is generated merely through aspiring to the result, while the engaging mind is held by the practice of completing the causes for enlightenment.

As this is such a clear presentation it is good for us to reflect on its meaning. Because of the power of the pledge and the power of the mind that one has generated (i.e. the resolve to benefit all sentient beings until the end of samsara), bodhisattvas continue to create merit even while asleep, or during moments when they are not being conscientious, such as becoming intoxicated. Some bodhisattvas may engage in worldly activities, such as socialising with others, maybe even drinking to the point of becoming a little intoxicated, and temporarily numbing the mind. However, due to the power of their pledge they are still accumulating merit at that time.

Here we need to understand that there are occasions where, even though their mind is not manifestly active such as when it is intoxicated, or sleeping, the bodhisattva still accumulates merit. But it is important that we don't misinterpret this. It doesn't mean that once the pledge is made, one does not need to further develop that engaging mind—bodhisattvas still need to train to further develop that altruistic state of mind. However, once they have developed the engaging mind they will continuously

accumulate merit, as vast as space, in all their activities, even while sleeping and eating. When eating, for example, they will consciously consume the food with the intention, 'It is for the purpose of nourishing my body to make it stronger, so that I can further develop myself to be in the service of benefiting others, that I eat and drink'. They sleep with the intention, 'I go to sleep in order to rejuvenate and restore the energy of my body, so that I can further work for the welfare of other sentient beings'. So in this way, any activity, even sitting or moving about, is engaged with a conscious mind of doing so for the purpose of benefiting others. That is how bodhisattvas are said to accrue an incredibly vast amount of merit. All their activities become the means to accumulate merit, because they are done for the purpose of other sentient beings.

The main point here is that the way to accumulate a continuous stream of merit is by holding that intention to benefit others. Then whatever activity one engages in actually becomes a means to benefit others. The simple act of opening a door can be done with the intention, 'By opening this door may I open the door to liberation for all sentient beings'. With the bodhicitta attitude a normal and simple activity such turning on the light can generate an altruistic intention such as, 'May turning on this light become the cause to remove the darkness of ignorance within all sentient beings'. So, whatever seemingly simple, mindless activity we normally do, it becomes a supreme means to accumulate extensive merit when it is accompanied by the intention of wishing to benefit others. So combining any practice or activity with that intention of benefiting others is a means to accumulate great merit.

On a practical level, if we can ensure that whenever we engage in any activity we do so with an intention that the activity will benefit others, then that will be a direct antidote to the self-cherishing mind. As explained extensively, because so many faults arise out of a self-cherishing mind, we definitely need to overcome it. A practical way to begin overcoming that negative state of mind is by turning every activity into an intention to benefit others, which will act as a direct antidote that overcomes the self-cherishing mind.

In addition to these ways of training our mind to overcome self-cherishing, there is the practice of equalising and exchanging self with others. This is a practice where we intentionally engage in methods to lessen the self-cherishing mind and replace it with a mind that cherishes others. As mentioned previously, when we ensure that our actions are held with the intention to benefit others, then these actions actually become a practice of cherishing others. Doing anything with the intention of benefiting others will naturally overcome the self-cherishing mind. The practice of exchanging self with others can be thus applied with this intention. We have heard of these practices and techniques many times, so now it is up to us to use every opportunity to try to apply them. That is how we will gain the greatest benefit from the practice.

However, you need not worry that your own welfare will suffer if you cherish others! As mentioned in the teachings, the side-effect of cherishing others will be that your own welfare and wellbeing will naturally be enhanced. More extensive explanations about the benefits of cherishing others and overcoming self-cherishing are found in the eighth chapter of this text.

As mentioned in that chapter, we just need to look at the difference between the Buddha and ourselves in order to understand the disadvantage of cherishing oneself and the

benefit of cherishing others. Having surpassed the practice of cherishing others, the Buddha became a supreme enlightened being, whereas we are still ordinary beings suffering in cyclic existence. That is because we have held onto the self-cherishing mind. This really summarises the benefits of cherishing others. If we have any doubts that we might lose or miss out if we don't cherish ourselves, we can encourage ourselves by remembering that the ultimate benefit of cherishing others is that we will become enlightened, just like the Buddha. There is no greater benefit than that!

We can see the significance of becoming a buddha by recalling how many beings are naturally drawn to the Buddha now—they naturally respect and admire him and want to follow his advice. His Holiness recently mentioned that it had come to his attention that a general survey in China had revealed that there are over 200 million Chinese people who are interested in the Buddhist teachings and who consider themselves to be Buddhists. That is the extent of the interest in the Buddha in these times. Of course, in the past, China was mostly a Buddhist country. When I was in Tibet I used to hear from the elders that things began to decline in China when the emperor was no longer able to reign. If he had been able to rule continuously there would have been peace and wellbeing in China. That is because the emperor was regarded as a manifestation of Manjushri. If the emperor had remained in power, then as a follower of the Dharma, and as a manifestation of Manjushri, he would have brought peace and harmony throughout the Chinese nation. That's what the elders in Tibet used to say.

To this day one of the prominent places of pilgrimage in China is the Five Peaks of Manjushri, where there are many monasteries and temples on the main mountain. I wouldn't mind going on a pilgrimage there but at my age I don't know if I would be able to reach the summit! There's a Tibetan saying that whoever makes the pilgrimage to the Manjushri peaks will definitely receive some sign of making a connection with Manjushri.

Getting back to the main point mentioned earlier, lest we feel we are missing out by cherishing others and overcoming our self-cherishing mind, we can reflect on the Buddha's deeds and qualities, and how we will achieve the same state of buddhahood. That will really help to encourage us to practise cherishing others.

2.3. The reason for these benefits arising

Thus far the many benefits of cherishing others have been presented. Lest one wonders how and why these benefits come about, Shantideva very meticulously presents the reasons why these benefits arise. He does so under two headings:

2.3.1. Stating the quotation

2.3.2. Establishing it with reasoning

2.3.1. Stating the quotation

The quotation is presented in this verse:

20. *That this has validity
Was taught by the Tathagata
In the Subahuprccha
For those aspiring to the lesser.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je elaborates:

That it is valid that the engaging mind has these benefits was established by the Tathagata himself in the *Sutra Requested by the Bodhisattva Subahu* with reasoning ...

The sutra that is referred to here is the *Sutra Requested by the Bodhisattva Subahu*, and *with reasoning* indicates that the quotation from the sutra is a citation that withstands the three-fold analysis. As older students would be aware from previous teachings, the three-fold analysis determines whether a quotation is valid or not.¹ The three-fold forms of analysis are:

1. Obvious phenomena are not contradicted by direct valid perception.
2. Slightly obscure phenomena are not contradicted by valid inference based on the force of evidence. Examples of slightly obscure phenomena would be impermanence, selflessness and so forth.
3. Extremely obscure phenomena are not contradicted by valid inference based on scriptural authority. Examples of extremely obscure phenomena would be the subtleties of karma.

The main point is that a quotation is established as a valid quotation when it withstands the three-fold analysis.

Gyalsab Je's commentary continues:

Why did the Buddha do this? It was intended for those sentient beings who are inclined to the lesser; such as a person whose hearer lineage is not definite, but who is afraid of accumulating vast merit, and thus they turn away from the Mahayana path and aspire to the hearer's enlightenment. It was to help them give up their inclination to the lesser, so that they could be placed in the Mahayana.

We need to clearly understand what is being presented here and what we should specifically rely upon. As mentioned here in the commentary, the Tathagata or the Buddha specifically explained the benefits, especially for those who might be inclined to the Hinayana or the Lesser Vehicle. *Like a person whose hearer lineage was not definite* means that if a being's lineage is already definite or fixed, then there would be no point mentioning it to them because they have definitely entered the Lesser Vehicle. Those whose lineage is not yet definite could turn to either the Mahayana or Hinayana path depending on which teachings inspire them. Such beings might be afraid of the effort needed to accumulate the vast merit required in the Mahayana path and possibly *turn away from the Mahayana path and aspire to the hearer's enlightenment*. So in order to help them give up their inclination to the lesser vehicle and become established in the Great Vehicle, the Buddha explained the benefits of cherishing others.

At a personal level, this is very sound advice. We might safely assume that we don't have the hearer's lineage, meaning that there might be no immediate danger that we will enter the hearer's path. Nevertheless we may lack aspiration to practise the Mahayana path because we are afraid of the vast amount of merit that needs to be accumulated. The prospect of having to accumulate extensive merit might be so daunting that there might be times when we start to think, 'Um, maybe I will set the practice for enlightenment aside for now, and go for self liberation!'

There is a reason why the lam rim teachings present the practices of the three scopes sequentially. If the great scope practices are not presented, then there is the danger for the trainee to aspire to self liberation after they have trained

their mind in the small and medium scope practices. When the trainee becomes familiar with the practices of the small scope followed by the practices of the medium scope, they will develop confidence about being able to obtain liberation. So if bodhicitta is not presented to them at that stage then there is the danger that they will strive just for self-liberation. When the practices of the great scope are introduced they will be able relate their own plight in samsara to all other sentient beings. That can then be developed into the great resolve of liberating all sentient beings and thus entering the Great Vehicle. We need to see how the lam rim has been presented in this way so that there is no danger of entering the lower vehicle; i.e. the path aspiring to self-liberation.

To put this into a more specific context, the benefits of bodhicitta are presented to beings who are not yet inclined to enter the lesser vehicle, such as the hearer's vehicle. If all the great deeds of the bodhisattvas are presented initially to a beginner trainee, that could be too daunting for them and hence there is the danger that they might turn to the lower vehicle.

For example, the great deeds of generosity practised by a bodhisattva could extend to giving away their own limbs and even their whole body. There are many accounts of how in his previous lives as a bodhisattva the Buddha gave away his limbs and his own body in order to benefit others; he gave away his possessions; and there are even accounts of him giving away his children and wives and so forth. His generosity was so great that he was able to give away much that would otherwise be cherished as being so very dear. The thought of such practices of generosity can be very daunting, and there could be a danger that one might think, 'I can't manage that!', and enter the Lesser Vehicle. However, when the mind is not yet set and the potential to enter the Great Vehicle is still intact, presenting the benefits of bodhicitta in detail will really inspire them to enter the Great Vehicle path.

So the benefits of bodhicitta are presented by starting with the disadvantages of cherishing oneself, and then describing the great benefit of cherishing others. When these are presented systematically, they will be a source of inspiration to actually engage in those practices, because the great benefit in cherishing others will be apparent.

2.3.2. Establishing it with reasoning

This section is subdivided into two:

2.3.2.1. The validity of the benefits of the wishing mind

2.3.2.2. The validity of the engaging mind

Having presented a valid quotation, i.e. a quotation that withstands the three valid forms of analysis, the benefits of bodhicitta are established more firmly using logical reasoning.

2.3.2.1. THE VALIDITY OF THE BENEFITS OF THE WISHING MIND

This is further subdivided into four:

2.3.2.1.1. Great benefit because of the infinite applications for virtue

2.3.2.1.2. There is no higher concern for others than this

2.3.2.1.3. Sentient beings do not generate such a concern even for their own purpose

2.3.2.1.4. Praising it as a summary

2.3.2.1.1. Great benefit because of the infinite applications for virtue

This is presented in two verses:

¹ This threefold analysis is discussed in the teachings of 19 June 2001, 18 November 2003, 23 October 2007, 15 November 2011.

21. *Even if one thinks: I shall
Alleviate just the headache of sentient beings,
Since it has the intent to benefit
One becomes endowed with boundless merits.*
22. *What need is there to mention the wish to
alleviate
The boundless unhappiness of each sentient
being
And to establish each of them
In boundless qualities?*

The commentary explains:

Captain Friend's Daughter, though generating only the limited thought, 'May I free sentient beings from their headaches', had a true concern for others which generated infinite merit...

The explanation in Gyaltsab Je's commentary is related to an account of events that took place in the past. The *tong len* practice of giving and taking is said to have originated from this historical account.

It is a rather long story but I can give a brief account of the story of Captain Friend's Daughter, who was actually his son. Long ago there was a captain called Friend who really longed for a son, but every time a son was born to his wife it died soon after it was born. Thinking that there must be a spell on his family, he decided to name the next born son Daughter instead of son. In due course his wife bore a son, who he named Daughter, and indeed the son didn't die. Hence he was referred to as Captain Friend's Daughter. He grew up to be a fine young man and followed his father's footsteps, becoming a merchant and sea captain. He would go on sea voyages to buy wares from other places, and sell them on his return. Whenever he made a profit he would give it to his mother and he was also very generous to the poor as well.

On one occasion he set out on a dangerous voyage with some other merchants to find some particular jewels. Thinking of the great dangers, his mother was concerned and didn't want her son to go. So she tried to prevent him from leaving by holding on to his clothes, and lay down in the doorway so as to not let him pass. However, because he had decided that he really wanted to go on this voyage, he stepped over his mother's head and went out to his ship.

The ship was wrecked because of bad weather, but Daughter was spared. Clinging to a plank from the ship he drifted towards an island. It is said that once he landed on the island, he passed through many different kinds of magical valleys of great enjoyment. Eventually he came to a place where he witnessed people undergoing great suffering. In particular, he saw someone whose head was pierced by a turning cartwheel. When the cartwheel turned over his head it drilled through his skull which meant that his brains and so forth oozed out, which he licked up.

Captain Friend's Daughter asked the locals, 'Why is this happening?' What was the karma that this person created in the past to experience this kind of result now?' He was told that this was the result of this individual having kicked his mother's head in the past. When he heard that, Daughter immediately started to feel very anxious and fearful, remembering how he had stepped over his mother's head when he left home. At that very moment the cartwheel changed direction and headed towards his own head. When the cartwheel fell upon his head and started drilling a hole, he began to experience excruciating and unbearable pain. At that moment he thought, 'May this great agony and excruciating pain that I am experiencing now suffice to take

away the headaches of all sentient beings'. It is said that the moment he generated that intention, the cartwheel detached itself from his head and flew away.

There are different versions of what happened next. One says that after he had developed the intention to experience the suffering of headaches of all sentient beings, the cartwheel detached itself from his head and he went up to the pure lands. Another version says that he returned to his homeland. The main point of the story, however is that this individual practised the two main aspects of the giving and taking practice. Earlier, he had engaged in great deeds of generosity, giving his profits to his mother and also to charity; later he engaged in the practice of taking, when he took upon himself the suffering of all beings experiencing excruciating pain.

So, even just the wish to alleviate the headaches of others was the means for that person to accumulate a great amount of merit. That being the case, Gyaltsab Je argues:

If that is so, then what need is there to mention that the wish to eliminate infinite unhappiness of each sentient being, and to establish each of them with the infinite qualities of a buddha, has limitless merit?

If even the thought or wish to alleviate the headaches of sentient beings produces such great merit, then there is no need to mention the limitless merit that would be accumulated by generating the thought of eliminating the infinite unhappiness or suffering of each and every sentient being, and establishing their ultimate happiness with the infinite qualities of the buddhas.

Here we need to establish through logic how this altruistic wish of the bodhicitta attitude is a means to accumulate an extensive amount of merit. There is so much merit to be gained by thinking about alleviating the suffering of just one sentient being, or even one aspect of the suffering of other sentient beings. We can see that with examples from everyday life. When someone is suffering, we have a genuine wish for them to be free from the suffering, which is a really noble thought. Based on that wish to alleviate their suffering, we do everything in our power to help them to be free from that suffering. When someone is gravely ill and bed-ridden, then after generating the initial thought of wanting them to be free from the suffering, we might then do something practical to help them. Likewise, with the bodhicitta attitude, when we generate the wish for all beings to be free from all suffering and to lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, we can see, just through logic, how much more merit that would generate. This is how such an intention would result in limitless merit.

From this explanation we can also understand the teaching when it says, 'It is through the bodhicitta attitude that one can accumulate the most extensive merit as well as purifying extensive negative karmas'. These are important points for us to reflect upon: thinking about removing suffering from even one sentient being is a great deed, and the moment we generate the thought to alleviate the suffering of all sentient beings, we accumulate a great, extensive amount of merit.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱུང་ཚུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

21 May 2013

Sitting in an appropriate posture, focusing our mind inward, and bringing to mind the motivation we have generated earlier, we can now engage in the practice of meditation. [*meditation*]

It is important to also generate an appropriate motivation for receiving the teaching such as: 'In order to benefit all sentient beings, to liberate them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teaching, and put its meaning into practice well'.

2.3.2.1. THE VALIDITY OF THE BENEFITS OF THE WISHING MIND (CONT.)

2.3.2.1.2. There is no other superior intent to benefit than that

Having mentioned the benefits of the wishing mind earlier, the text is re-emphasising that there is no greater superior intent to benefit than this. The root text states:

23. *Regardless of whether it is father or mother,
Who has such intent to benefit?
Regardless of whether god, sage,
Or brahmas, do they possess it?*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je begins with a question:

In the transitory world, what father or mother who wishes to benefit their child has such an intent to benefit?

The intent to benefit referred to here is the wish for all beings to obtain supreme happiness and to be free from all suffering, i.e. wishing bodhicitta. So, what is being explained here is that there is no greater intent to benefit others than bodhicitta. The text explains the reason for this being so by comparing it to the intent to benefit that other beings in the transitory world have, such as fathers and mothers who have the intent to benefit their child. Although in our contemporary world we would regard the parent's intention to benefit a child to be one of the highest and noblest, it is however merely focused on the child's welfare for this life only. Thus a parent's intentions for their child's welfare would be in relation to the child having sound health and being free from illness; receiving a good education so they can earn a lot of money and become rich and famous; having good companions; and to become powerful. One could argue, in our mundane or contemporary world there is no higher intent than that. Gyaltsab Je then asks:

What other person has such a wish to establish supreme happiness?

This is a rhetorical question indicating that indeed there is no-one else in the transitory world who has such an intent to establish others in supreme happiness.

Then Gyaltsab Je answers his question:

Not the gods or the true speaking sages, and not the brahmas who abide in the four immeasurable thoughts have such a mind to benefit.

As a way to understand why others in the transitory world don't have such an intent to benefit, one might wonder if it is because others lack any sense of love for others? As explained earlier, parents have a great amount of love for their children. Yet even fathers and mothers, who love their children dearly, don't have the intention for their child to obtain supreme happiness. Even though in the transitory world the greatest wish to benefit is the one that parents hold, they don't have that intention to benefit their children beyond this life's goals.

If one further wonders, is it because others lack clairvoyance that they don't have such intent? As explained in the commentary, not even the gods, such as Indra who has great clairvoyance, have such an intent to benefit. If one wonders, is it perhaps because others lack knowledge that they don't have this intent? Further, even the true speaking sages, such as the great sage Serkya who had vast knowledge and was skilled in so many arts and treatises, don't have that intent to benefit. Is it because others lack the intention to benefit others altogether that they don't have that intent to benefit? To remove such doubts the text explains that even brahmas, who abide in a joyful land with the four immeasurable thoughts, do not have that intent to benefit. Brahmas live in the joyful lands where there is no immediate suffering and they are endowed with the four immeasurable thoughts, such as immeasurable love and so forth, so they definitely have the intention to benefit others. However, even their intent to benefit can't equal the intent to benefit others to obtain supreme happiness.

Here it is good to reflect on this presentation to really get a sense of how noble and how superior this intent to benefit others, which is based on the bodhicitta attitude, really is. It is the highest intent to benefit others, which surpasses all other forms of intention to benefit others in the transitory world. In our worldly system we might ask what could surpass a parent's love and their intent to benefit their children? What could be greater than that? However, as explained, the intent to benefit others that is based on bodhicitta is far superior to that.

We might feel that even though parents have the best intentions for their children, they are not really able to benefit their children to the greatest extent as they lack the knowledge and don't have clairvoyance. We may feel that having clairvoyance would be the optimum way to benefit others. However, as pointed out in the text, although being clairvoyant is a tremendous mental achievement, without the intent of benefiting others based on bodhicitta, that clairvoyance in itself does not suffice to be able to benefit other beings to the fullest extent. Simply put, just having clairvoyance is not such a big deal in comparison to the bodhicitta attitude. The benefits of bodhicitta far outweigh any benefits one may gain from developing clairvoyance, and it is a far more meritorious attitude to meditate on and to cultivate.

Furthermore, we might feel that if one has immeasurable thoughts of benefiting others, such as that in which a brahma abides, then that mind might be the noblest intent to benefit others. However, as pointed out here, the

intent to benefit others based on bodhicitta outweighs even that. These are important points for us to reflect on. If whatever intent we might have to wish to benefit others is merely focused on the worldly benefits of this life, then it is a very limited intention to benefit compared with the bodhicitta attitude. But even though we haven't developed bodhicitta yet, just generating the thought, 'I will not harm any living being, and do whatever possible to benefit others', is extremely beneficial for our mind, and is a means for us to acquire merit. As mentioned previously, it is really important that we generate such thoughts on a regular basis.

Some of the practical ways to generate the bodhicitta attitude that I explained in previous sessions are exactly in accord with the text that His Holiness the Dalai Lama will be covering in the teachings in Sydney, *Vast as the Heavens, Deep as the Sea, Verses in Praise of Bodhicitta* by Khunu Lama Rinpoche. Just last weekend I made a commitment to myself to read this text again. It's incredibly uplifting and really inspiring. And the ways to cultivate the bodhicitta attitude are exactly as I have explained to you earlier, so it is not really difficult to understand at all. Reading the text would also be good for you who are intending to go to the teachings to prepare yourself. The beautiful presentation really inspires us to generate that mind ourselves.

In my last session, I explained how, when a bodhisattva generates that bodhicitta attitude, then whatever activity they engage in will become a meritorious act. Even such activities as walking or sleeping or even opening a door and so forth will generate merit. That is exactly how it is explained in Khunu Lama Rinpoche's text, which explains the many ways of turning what would normally seem to be mundane activities into great meritorious deeds by generating the bodhicitta attitude. As I mentioned earlier, the text is not very difficult to comprehend, and the passages and verses are easy to understand. They are extraordinarily beneficial for anyone who is inspired to develop the bodhicitta attitude. Reading this text will further inspire anyone who has even just a spark of that inspiration. So I exhort you to read it.

The presentation in the text is very meticulous. It first encourages us to remember bodhicitta in every activity that we engage in. When sitting remember bodhicitta; when you are standing remember bodhicitta; when you walk remember bodhicitta; and before you sleep remember bodhicitta. The author first exhorts one to remember bodhicitta, then gradually exhorts one to actually generate bodhicitta, when sitting, walking, eating and before sleeping. So the text exhorts us to generate the bodhicitta attitude at a beginner's level. The text essentially complements this very text that we are studying, *The Bodhisattvas Way of Life*. It unmistakably puts the onus on us take the initiative to do as it instructs.

Our daily activities can be basically summarised into four activities: we are usually sitting, eating, walking about, or sleeping. So, the main point here is to always be mindful while engaging in those activities to take the opportunity to remember bodhicitta. The great master Atisha advised us, 'When you are alone, watch your mind; when you are with others, watch your speech', which is very beneficial

and practical advice. Of course this instruction was given with respect to Dharma practice, but even in a worldly context it is also very relevant and applicable. These are really important points to keep in mind.

Other Kadampa masters have also pointed out that the best instruction is to look into one's mind, the best companions are mindfulness and introspection, and the best knowledge is the wish to benefit others. That very succinctly summarises the main points. All the great masters have presented such succinct yet very poignant instructions about how to go about our daily lives.

2.3.2.1.3. Sentient beings do not generate such a concern even for their own purpose

The relevant verse is:

24. *These sentient beings have not generated
Previously such a mind for their own purpose,
Not even in their dreams;
How would they generate it for others?*

Here *these sentient beings* refers to those beings mentioned earlier, such as parents who have great love for their child, gods who have clairvoyance, the sages who have great knowledge and brahma, who has the four immeasurable thoughts in their mind. As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

Sentient beings have not previously generated such a mind for themselves, and not even dreamt of it in their dreams. So how could they manifest it now while they are awake?

If sentient beings don't have an intent to benefit others in their dreams then how can they manifest this attitude when they are awake? The main point here is that if they don't have the intention to benefit others even in their own dreams, meaning for their own purpose, then how could they have that intention to benefit others while they are awake?

This relates to points that I have emphasised in many teachings. Without having developed renunciation, there is no possible way to develop love and compassion for others. Hence, there is no possibility of developing bodhicitta without renunciation. If we were to look at it sequentially, one needs to first develop renunciation, i.e. the wish to renounce the suffering of samsara oneself, and based on that, one generates the altruistic wish for others to be free from the suffering of samsara. These are very important points to reflect upon, and there are many such points in the Buddha's teachings.

One needs to first have an experience oneself and only then can one relate it to others. This, in its simplest term, is the point to consider. Here the first experience is one of being completely overwhelmed by the suffering of samsara. That generates a keen longing to be free from that suffering, and one has developed renunciation when that mind unceasingly and spontaneously has this longing to be free from the sufferings of samsara.

Then we relate it to others and see how all other sentient beings are in the same plight. Based on our own experience and understanding of the suffering of samsara and wishing to be free from that, we can wish other sentient beings to be free from that suffering as well. Then, based on that, one develops the altruistic attitude of bodhicitta.

As I have related earlier, a good example that portrays the way one's own experience makes such a great difference in the way one relates to others, is found in the army. A general who has reached his rank by progressing from the lowest ranks will interact and relate to others with kindness and understanding, which will differ greatly from those who become generals because of their connections. The general who has reached their high rank from lowly beginnings has endured the whole range of experiences and hardships. So they can relate to new recruits and understand the difficulties they may face.

Again and again the teachings emphasise that without developing renunciation first, there is no possibility of developing bodhicitta. Furthermore, the development of renunciation has to be based on practising morality. As explained in the teachings, if one practises pure morality without renunciation, then that practice of morality will suffice merely as a cause to obtain high status such as being born as a human or in one of the celestial god realms in the next life. That practice of morality, as pure as it may be, cannot be a cause to obtain liberation unless it is combined with renunciation. It is only when one develops renunciation based on the practice of pure morality that the practice of morality will be a cause to obtain liberation.

2.3.2.1.4. Praising it as a summary

The next verse contains similar points:

25. *Others do not generate this mind for the welfare of others
Even for their own purpose.
This distinguished precious mind,
Something special unprecedented was born.*

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

While it has not been generated even for a moment by other sentient beings for their own sake, for this precious wondrous exalted mind wishing to attain enlightenment in order to place all sentient beings in happiness and abandon their suffering, which has not arisen before, to be generated now by bodhisattvas is praiseworthy. Thus others also need to hold it as being praiseworthy and strive for it.

The main point presented here is that the precious superior mind of a bodhisattva, the wish to attain enlightenment in order to place all sentient beings in the ultimate state of happiness and to free them from all suffering, has not been generated for even a moment by other sentient beings for their own sake. So when the bodhisattvas generate such a mind, others should acknowledge and praise it, and strive to develop it themselves.

What is referred to here as the *distinguished precious mind* is the actual bodhicitta that encompasses the engaging mind. It doesn't refer merely to the aspiration to achieve enlightenment, but to the mind aspiring to achieve enlightenment that is combined or held with engaging in the deeds of the six perfections.

It is really important to reflect on what kind of mind bodhicitta is? What is the superior intention? By contemplating these questions and gaining a profound understanding, we will naturally develop a genuine admiration and respect for bodhisattvas, who are the noble beings that are endowed with this mind of

bodhicitta. As explained in the teachings, the mind of a bodhisattva is bodhicitta, and the actions in which they engage in are the practices of the six perfections. Thus in both thought and deed they are incredibly noble, and surpass all other ordinary beings who may be endowed with good thoughts and engage in basic good deeds.

The only intent of a bodhisattva is the wish to benefit others, and for the sake of all other beings they aspire to achieve the highest goal of enlightenment. In fulfilling that aspiration their deeds and actions are completely selfless and solely for the benefit of others. Thus a bodhisattva does not even have an atom of self interest—their only intention is to benefit others. As a way to appreciate the great extent of that intention and to understand just how noble it is, we can consider the example of someone who has the altruistic intention to benefit all the people in Australia, with no self interest at all. If we think about it, completely dedicating one's whole life to the welfare of each individual in Australia would be an incredibly noble deed, wouldn't it? If doing that is, from a worldly perspective, great and admirable, then just imagine how great it would be for someone to have the intent to benefit not only the people of Australia and this world, but all sentient beings in the entire universe. Imagine not leaving out a single living being, but wishing to benefit all sentient beings equally and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness and freedom from all suffering. We can only try to fathom how incredible that is. This is how we can think about the intentions of bodhisattvas.

In practical terms, even non-Buddhists such as Christians seem to appreciate the teachings on bodhicitta. As I have related previously, when I went to a Christian monastery up in the Yarra Valley I met a young Christian monk there. I don't know how much understanding he had of bodhicitta but he did say to me, 'The teachings and the explanations you have of bodhicitta in your Buddhist tradition are really incredible and astounding'. He seemed to really relate to that. Indeed, who wouldn't appreciate such a state of mind and the intent to benefit others?

2.3.2.2. THE VALIDITY OF THE ENGAGING MIND

That is subdivided into three:

- 2.3.2.2.1. Actual
- 2.3.2.2.2. Its validity
- 2.3.2.2.3. Clearing away doubt

2.3.2.2.1. Actual

The relevant verse reads:

26. *The cause for the joy of all migrators,
The remedy for the suffering of sentient beings,
The merits of the precious mind,
How can it be comprehended?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

If the benefits of the wishing mind are very great, then the benefits of the mind that is held by the practice of the perfections are even greater.

Having gained a sense of the great benefits of the mere wishing mind, one can naturally understand that the benefits of the engaging mind are far greater. At this point we can reflect upon the differences between the wishing mind, the mere aspiration to achieve

enlightenment, and the engaging mind, where the aspiration is combined with actual deeds, and actions such as the six perfections.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

Since it works to achieve the happiness of higher status and definite goodness of all migrators, ...

As explained in the commentary, with wishing bodhicitta one also works to achieve the happiness of higher status and definite goodness. Generally speaking that is the goal of the small and medium scopes, which is a good result and a desirable achievement. Khunu Lama Rinpoche explains this very point in his text when he states that the bodhicitta attitude itself will suffice as a means to obtain one's temporary goals of high status and definite goodness (liberation). Thus the temporary good results and benefits such as obtaining high status and liberation are obtained through the cultivation of bodhicitta.

Here we can take note that when he praises bodhicitta His Holiness the Dalai Lama often uses this verse from the prayer to Maitreya:

I prostrate to bodhicitta,
The mind that reverses the lower realms,
Shows the path to high status,
And guides one to freedom from ageing and death.

This verse indicates how bodhicitta suffices to free one from the lower realms, leading one to high status, and it frees one from the fears of aging and death, which indicates liberation.

You would have heard His Holiness reciting this verse and praise it in his teachings, so it's good to keep this in mind. I am older than you are and my brain should be weaker, but somehow I seem to remember these points that His Holiness presents. You of course have much fresher minds.

Then Gyaltsab Je explains:

... it is the cause for their joy and the precious wish-fulfilling jewel that is the medicinal elixir that destroys the sickness of suffering of all sentient beings.

The point here is that bodhicitta itself will suffice to obtain one's temporary goals such as high status and definite goodness or liberation. Furthermore it brings about happiness for all sentient beings and is thus like the precious wish-fulfilling jewel.¹ Bodhicitta is a wish-fulfilling jewel that serves as a medicinal elixir which destroys the sickness of all suffering. It is not as if bodhicitta is able to cure only some kinds of sufferings while not managing to cure others. Rather it is able to overcome the entire range of sufferings of all sentient beings.

Then Gyaltsab Je asks this rhetorical question:

How can one put a measure to the merits of such a mind, since it is infinite?

The merits for developing bodhicitta are said to be infinite, in support of which the commentary quotes from the *Sutra Requested by Viradatta*:

From the *Sutra Requested by Viradatta*:
The merits of the mind of enlightenment,

If they were put into form
All the sphere of space would be filled
It is even more than that.

As indicated here, if the merits were in tangible form, then even the extent of space will not be sufficient to hold the merits of generating bodhicitta. We can also recall Nagarjuna's explanations in his *Commentary to Bodhicitta*, where he explains that the merit that one accumulates from a single moment of generating bodhicitta cannot be expressed, even by all the buddhas.

Then the commentary ends this section with:

More extensively, one can know from the *Compendium of Deeds* where it quotes the *Array of Stalks Sutra*.

2.3.2.2.2. *Its validity*

Here, we can relate the validity of the engaging mind to the three valid reasons that establish validity.

The verse relating to this heading reads:

27. *If even the mere intent to benefit
Is far superior to offerings to the buddhas,
What need is there to mention the striving
For the happiness of all sentient beings?*

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

It is taught in the *King of Concentration Sutra* that even the mere motivational thought, 'I shall attain enlightenment to rescue all sentient beings' is more meritorious than making offerings to all of the buddhas found in the billions of buddha fields.

If this is so, then what need is there to mention the infinite merit of striving extensively in the practice to achieve the highest happiness for all sentient beings?

When the *King of Concentration Sutra* mentions the mere intention or aspiration to achieve enlightenment to rescue all sentient beings, we understand that to refer to the wishing mind. The merit from the wishing mind is far more superior than making offerings to all the buddhas found in the billions of buddha fields.

As explained in the teachings, there are billions of buddha fields, so to make offerings to billions of buddha fields would mean that each offering would be immensely extensive. As the *King of Concentration Sutra* indicates, the intention to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings is much more meritorious than that. Shantideva is saying that if that holds for the mere wishing mind, then *what need is there to mention the infinite merit of striving extensively in the practice to achieve the highest happiness for all sentient beings*, which is the engaging mind. i.e. the intention combined with the actual practices. The point here is that generating this engaging mind gives rise to far more extensive merit.

We need to rely on scriptural authority that withstands the three-fold analysis, such as the *King of Concentration Sutra*, because the extensive merit gained from developing bodhicitta falls within the category of extremely obscure phenomena, and thus cannot be validated by valid perception and valid inference.

The threefold analysis

As presented last week, there are three categories of phenomena: obvious phenomena, slightly obscure phenomena and extremely obscure or subtle phenomena.

¹ If one possesses this legendary jewel, all of one's wishes are fulfilled.

Obvious phenomena are not contradicted by valid perception. When the Buddha talked about obvious things such as the colour of the snow mountain being white, then that can be validated by a valid perception. Of course, someone with jaundice will not see it as white but as yellow, but that is not a valid perception because their perception is impaired. Thus, an obvious object can be analysed and be validated as being true by mere valid perceptions that confirm it as being true.

Slightly obscure phenomena are not contradicted by valid inference based on the force of evidence. For example, when the Buddha taught that the nature of products is that they are impermanent and transitory, this can be analysed and validated by the valid inference holding it to be true. The opposite, which is that products are permanent, does not hold as it does not withstand analysis using valid reasoning. The Buddha's statement that things do not have a self, for example, is also within the category of slightly obscure phenomena, so it has to be validated through valid inference.

Extremely obscure phenomena are validated by scriptural authority. This means that the analysis is based on validating the phenomena by reference to scriptures that withstand the three-fold analysis. Examples of extremely obscure phenomena are the subtleties of karma, and the extensive merit gained from bodhicitta, which is in this category. So we need to rely on citations from the Buddha's teachings, i.e. the scriptural authority of a valid being, to validate such extremely obscure phenomena.

The syllogism to validate the *King of Concentrations Sutra* is: Take the subject, the *King of Concentrations Sutra*: Its contents are infallible—because it is a citation that it withstands the three-fold analysis. I have explained this syllogism several times in previous teachings, so it would be good for you to look it up as way to expand on your understanding on this. I will not go into further detail now.²

I remember that on one of His Holiness's visits some years ago, His Holiness presented the very same topic in his teaching that I had just taught. After the teaching Lobsang Jinpa commented, 'His Holiness went into great detail on that particular topic. He must have been intending that for the senior geshe who were present', indicating that it would have been too obscure for general listeners. However, I later heard that many students who had been attending my classes actually understood what His Holiness was presenting, based on what I had explained in our classes here.

That might have been a way for you to gain a little bit more confidence in my teachings [laughter]. You may gradually develop confidence in my teachings like that!

2.3.2.2.3. *Clearing away doubt*

First of all, certain doubts that might go through our minds are presented. Doubts such as if sentient beings naturally don't want to experience suffering and they naturally want happiness then wouldn't they be capable of working that out for themselves? Why would we have

to actually do it for them? Those sorts of doubts are raised and then the teachings explain how to clear them away. Shantideva wrote these poignant lines, which are often quoted in the teachings:

28. *Though having the wish to destroy suffering
They run directly to suffering itself or alone;
Though desiring happiness, due to ignorance
They destroy their happiness like an enemy.*

Due to ignorance specifically refers to being ignorant of what righteous things to adopt and what negative things to discard or abandon.

This presentation relates particularly to the practices that are presented in the small scope of the lam rim teachings. This is, of course, my personal interpretation as to how this definitely relates to the practices presented in the small scope. More specifically, ignorance refers here to not knowing how to adopt virtues such as the ten virtues and how to shun or to abandon the ten non-virtuous deeds. Overcoming that ignorance is the way to stop creating the causes for one's own suffering.

This teaching is not really all that difficult to understand. It's just a matter of reading it, trying to contemplate it and then trying to integrate it into your own way of thinking. That's how it will benefit you. Even if you are not able to practice it in extensive ways with large numbers of beings, it is important to begin with your own companion or partner. It's important to begin at home and really try to practice this teaching with those you relate to in your everyday life.

Our mental agony seems to begin with a lack of harmony with our very closest companions. So if we can make peace, beginning with those we live with, then we will have a joyful smile and a happy mind. The reason we live with companions is so that we can derive a mutual benefit, but of course our predicament is that often we seem to receive a lot of harm from the very person from whom we feel we can gain benefit. The reason why we seem to have more intense anger towards someone who is supposed to be close is because of that very expectation we have: 'I expected to gain benefit from this person, but instead of benefit I am receiving harm'. That is why anger erupts like a huge fire in our minds. I have often mentioned that if children don't respond well to their parents and have a good rapport with them, then there is a significant reason for parents to feel distraught and unhappy.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© *Tara Institute*

² This threefold analysis is discussed in the teachings of 19 June 2001, 18 November 2003, 23 October 2007, 15 November 2011.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བལྟགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

28 May 2013

Based on the refuge and bodhicitta motivation that we generated earlier, we can now engage in the practice of meditation with a focused mind.

[meditation]

It is important to generate a proper motivation prior to receiving the teaching, such as: In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment myself.

So we generate the thought, from the depth of our hearts, of wishing to achieve enlightenment in order to benefit all sentient beings, and for that purpose, listening to the teachings and putting them into practice well.

Shantideva presented the unique exchanging self with other technique for developing bodhicitta, and a good preparation for engaging in this practice whole-heartedly is to engage in this practice at a meditation level.

2.3.2.2.3. Clearing away doubt

The first verse of the three verses relating to this heading is:

28. *Though having the wish to destroy suffering
They run directly to suffering alone;
Though desiring happiness, due to their
ignorance
They destroy their happiness like an enemy.*

It is good to really contemplate the very profound meaning of this verse.

Gyaltsab Je begins his commentary on this section with a rhetorical question:

Sentient beings wish for happiness, and do not wish for suffering, and by striving in this way they are able to achieve happiness and abandon suffering. Therefore are they not proficient in the practice of achieving happiness and abandoning suffering? Why should others strive for that purpose?

It is indeed true that we all like to believe that we are skilled in acquiring the means for our own wellbeing and in removing any unwanted problems or suffering. We all have the notion, 'Oh, I am quite skilled at that', and might well have the assumption that, because we are already well-equipped, we do not need any further advice. It is, of course, a fact that sentient beings wish for happiness and do not wish for suffering, and at a personal level we make every attempt to make this wish come true.

The doubt that is raised here is that, if individuals are already proficient in the practice of achieving happiness and abandoning suffering for themselves, then why should others strive to achieve their purpose. The answer, as stated by Gyaltsab Je, is:

One definitely needs to strive.

Then Gyaltsab Je goes on to explain the reason:

Although sentient beings have an intent to abandon suffering, through the power of the afflictions they only create the causes for suffering. Thus they run

infinitely in cyclic existence, especially towards the suffering of the lower realms.

This very meticulous presentation explains that while none of us wish to experience any suffering, it is as if we are intentionally running towards our own suffering. That is because we actually engage in accumulating the very causes of suffering. So it is as if we want to experience suffering. A very vivid analogy that illustrates this is with moths, which, being attracted to light, fly into a flame or a lamp. We can see so many moths perish in the flame of a candle or get trapped in a light fitting and perish because of the heat. Our predicament is exactly like that: we run towards the very sources that cause us so much suffering.

The causes of suffering are, for example, engaging in the ten non-virtues. Rather than abandoning these ten non-virtues, sentient beings intentionally create negativities such as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, divisive speech, harmful speech, gossip, and the three of the mind; covetousness, harmful intent and wrong view. So, sentient beings engage in the very deeds or actions that are the causes of suffering. Rather than abandoning or refraining from engaging in these causes of their suffering, they are attracted to and engage in the very causes of suffering. That is how sentient beings inevitably end up experiencing suffering.

As explained in many other teachings as well, if we don't wish to experience suffering, we need to overcome the causes of suffering; the only way to eliminate suffering is to abandon the causes of suffering. Other commentaries explain the lines *having the wish to destroy suffering, they run directly to suffering alone*, to mean that if we intentionally adopt the causes of suffering, then it is inevitable that we will experience suffering. If we adopt the causes rather than abandoning them, then the outcome is that we will definitely experience the consequence, which is suffering.

As I have mentioned previously in other sessions, we need to consider this predicament carefully. We need to be really mindful of our actions. There are often cases where, when we are not able to engage in some negative action, rather than feel a sense of loss, we feel glad about it. We might even claim, 'Oh, I have missed a great opportunity'. How many times have we been in a state where we intentionally strive to engage in some negative action and if we are unable to do so we feel sad about that? For as long as we hold onto such an attitude, we will not be abandoning the causes of suffering. If we intentionally create the causes of suffering and feel sad and distraught when we are not able to do so, then how are we ever going to overcome suffering?

Having considered and contemplated our own predicament first, we can then relate it to others who are totally ignorant about the causes of suffering. What chance do they have when they are completely ignorant about what the causes of suffering are? They are completely ignorant of the fact that they are repeatedly creating the causes of suffering that lead them to perpetually experience great sufferings. It is said that when we think about the predicament of other sentient beings in this manner, then we will develop a much more profound and deeper level of compassion towards them.

This level of compassion is called uncommon compassion, which is unlike the common form that arises in relation to witnessing the obvious suffering of others. The uncommon compassion arises when one understands and sees how beings intentionally strive in creating the very causes of suffering. From our own experience we know very well how difficult it is to avoid creating some of the causes of

suffering, even though we know that they are causes of suffering. Beings who are completely ignorant and who do not have that understanding are in a much more pitiful situation.

These profound lines from Shantideva are very poignant, and it would be really good to memorise them.

*Though having the wish to destroy suffering,
They run directly towards suffering alone
Though desiring happiness, due to ignorance,
Destroy their own happiness like an enemy.*

It would be good to reflect on the meaning of this verse on a daily basis: 'Am I running towards suffering by creating the causes for suffering? Am I holding onto the very causes of suffering? Could I be destroying the causes of my own happiness?' It is really important to consider these points. By memorising these lines you can remember their meaning on a daily basis, which will be very helpful.

Based on the understanding of what is being presented here we can slowly get a sense of the value of the mind training practices, where we train the mind to be happy when we experience suffering, and unhappy when we have pleasurable experiences. Being happy when we experience suffering arises from understanding that whenever we experience suffering we are experiencing the result of previously created negative karma. So the experience of suffering means that previously created negative karma has ripened, and as we are experiencing suffering we are actually exhausting that negative karma. So we should be glad that the negative karma is ripening now, so that we won't have to experience it in the future. Willingly accepting any difficulties that we might be experiencing now will enhance our practice.

The reason why this practice serves as an antidote to overcome worldly concerns is because training our mind to think in this way helps to overcome the delusions. If we don't embrace this practice of being happy when we experience suffering, then because we are not happy about it, our mind will begin to feel agitated and slowly become angry. So if we don't endure suffering when we experience it, we will inevitably start to feel angry, and create negativity from that anger.

It is the same with being unhappy with pleasurable experiences. When we have fleeting pleasurable experiences, we are using up our good karma. If we are attached to the pleasurable experience then it is just a waste of our good karma, which is not something to be happy about. Furthermore, if you don't embrace this attitude of feeling unhappy when experiencing pleasant situations, then your happiness will slowly turn into attachment to that pleasurable experience, and thus we create negativity.

So embracing these points of practice is essential if we are to overcome the delusions, in particular anger and attachment. As such, they are a supreme means to overcome the eight worldly concerns.

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

Though they wish for happiness they are confused about the methods for happiness, and out of ignorance they destroy their happiness, as if it were their enemy.

When one does not adopt the causes for happiness and actually intentionally abandons those causes, then it is as if one is destroying the very causes of the happiness one longs for.

As explained in the teachings on karma, if one wishes to abandon suffering, one needs to abandon the causes of suffering. The causes of happiness are refraining from the ten non-virtuous actions, so if one intentionally adopts these non-virtuous actions then one is destroying the causes of happiness. Yet so often we seem to intentionally adopt non-virtuous actions, such as taking life, stealing and so forth. There are many who take great pleasure in engaging in non-virtuous actions such as killing!

Whenever we experience suffering, we should think, 'This suffering is the consequence of engaging in negativity in the past. As I do not like this experience of suffering, and do not want to experience it again, I should therefore avoid adopting the causes of suffering'. Every time we remember to think in this way, the suffering becomes worthwhile, because it encourages us to refrain from further adopting the causes of suffering. In fact the teachings mention five qualities of suffering from which we derive benefit.

Likewise when one experiences a happy situation, then rather than being attached to that happy state, we should remember, 'Since this is a happy state that I wish to experience, and as it is a result of engaging in the positive causes for happiness, may I strive to further adopt the causes for true happiness'. That is how we need to exhort and encourage ourselves to adopt these practices.

Gyaltsab Je concludes his commentary on verse 28 with these words:

In this way, they engage mistakenly in the methods for achieving happiness and avoiding suffering.

As so meticulously explained earlier, this is exactly the predicament of sentient beings.

Since we unavoidably experience suffering, the advice for our personal practice whenever we experience any kind of suffering or uncomfortable situation, we should take that as a message from the Buddha reminding us to avoid engaging in negativity. Whenever we experience a pleasant situation, that is also a message from the Buddha reminding us to adopt virtue. Whenever we experience an unpleasant situation, we need to consider it as a personal message from the Buddha, and remember, 'Since it is an uncomfortable situation I should avoid the causes of suffering, which is all negativity'. Likewise whenever we experience happiness, we should regard it as a message from the Buddha to adopt virtue.

When we actually put these points into practice then we will be able to adapt to any kind of situation that we may encounter, and it won't disturb us to any great extent. When we experience suffering, then rather than becoming agitated and wary and feeling despondent about it, we can think, 'OK, this is a reminder for me to further engage in virtue and avoid negativity, and to engage in practices to purify the causes of suffering'. If we adopt this way of thinking then when we experience suffering we can make that suffering part of our practice. Then, rather than being in a situation that causes us distress, making us feel despondent and completely overwhelmed, it will actually become a means to further enhance our practice.

Whenever we experience a pleasant situation, rather than relaxing, taking it for granted and becoming lazy, we should think, 'Well this is the result of good karma that I have created previously. So, now I can use this opportunity to further enhance my practice. I should not become attached to these good conditions, but rather create more virtue and causes for happiness'. Thus, we incorporate both pleasant

and unpleasant situations into our practice. In that way our practice becomes steady, rather than constantly fluctuating.

It is in this way that we can use whatever circumstances we find ourselves in to engage in the practice of adopting what needs to be adopted, and abandoning what needs to be abandoned. We need to constantly be mindful of this practice.

If we don't know how to transform our suffering to encourage ourselves to engage in further practice, then we will really miss out; we can become completely lost and immersed in our own suffering. Thus, transforming suffering into the path is an essential method to enhance our practice.

The next lines from the root text are:

29. *Those who are destitute of happiness
And who have many sufferings,
I shall satisfy them with every happiness and
Remove all their sufferings.*

30ab. *I shall also eliminate their ignorance
What other virtue could equal that?*

With regard to first two lines Gyaltsab Je explains:

For that reason, what virtue is equal to the mind that wants to satisfy sentient beings, who are confused about the methods of happiness and suffering, and who lack happiness and have many sufferings?

What greater virtue could there be than wanting to satisfy sentient beings who are confused about the methods of happiness and suffering, and who lack happiness and have so much suffering? This rhetorical question implies that there is no greater virtue. Again we are being presented with the optimum method for developing profound and deep compassion for sentient beings.

The second two lines *I shall satisfy them with every happiness and remove all their suffering*, relates to the bodhicitta attitude.

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

What virtue, with all the happiness of higher status and definite goodness, wants to cut the continuity of all suffering and clear the ignorance that is confused with regard to what is to be practiced and what is to be abandoned?

This refers to another doubt: Why should one strive for the purpose of others? The answer is that, although wishing to avoid suffering sentient beings create the very causes for their own suffering because of their ignorance, and although wishing for happiness, they destroy the causes of their own happiness, because of their ignorance. Therefore there is no *equal or higher virtue to the mind that wants to satisfy sentient beings who are confused about the methods of happiness and suffering, and who lack happiness and have many sufferings.*

Here, wishing them to have all the *happiness of higher status and definite goodness* refers to enjoying all forms of happiness, and removing all forms of suffering from the temporal happiness of high status all the way up to ultimate happiness of definite goodness, liberation and enlightenment.

The aspect of **love** within the bodhisattva's mind is wishing all beings to experience the happiness of high status all the way up to definite goodness; the aspect of **compassion** in the bodhisattva's mind is wishing all beings to be free from all sufferings; the aspect of **wisdom** within the bodhisattva's mind is that which wishes to clear away the ignorance of sentient beings, i.e. that is confused with regard to what is to be practised and what is to be abandoned. This is the main

point that is being presented. Bodhisattvas strive to help beings who wish for happiness and who do not wish to experience any suffering, but who completely lack the knowledge to attain their wishes. These beings are confused about what is to be practised and what is to be abandoned, so the bodhisattvas intend to lead them to that state of understanding, by removing their ignorance of the causes of suffering and happiness. Thus, the answer as to why it is essential to strive to work towards providing happiness and removing the suffering of other beings, is that because of their ignorance sentient beings lack the optimum means to do it themselves.

In relation to this particular point, Shantideva says: *I shall also eliminate their ignorance. Thus: what other virtue could equal that?*

It is bodhicitta that enables bodhisattvas to work towards eliminating the suffering of sentient beings, and endowing them with a state of happiness. The question Shantideva poses: *What other virtue could equal that?* is a rhetorical question, implying that bodhicitta is indeed the highest virtue. As such there is no power equal to the power of bodhicitta.

Although the commentary explains the meaning of the verses, it is good to remember the verse itself and then use the commentary to elucidate its meaning. Verses are easier to recite and to reflect upon because of their concise nature, and because of the profound meaning, they are optimum means to instil love and compassion within us.

The last two lines of verse in this section are:

30cd *Where else is such a friend?
Where else is such merit?*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

What other friend is there who establishes all happiness and rescues from all suffering? What other merit is there that shows correctly what has to be practised and what has to be abandoned? There is none. That is why one should strive to generate the mind of enlightenment.

What other friend is there who establishes happiness and rescues us from suffering, implies there is no superior friend than that mind of enlightenment, and that there is no intent superior than that wish to benefit others.

This is exactly what I have been saying to you over and over again in my teachings. The wish to benefit others, and the love and compassion within your heart is your best friend. How do we define a best friend? It is someone who only thinks of benefiting us and who does not wish us any harm. The bodhicitta attitude, based as it is on love and compassion, is an attitude that can only benefit us. There is no harm in holding this attitude, there is only benefit; there are only advantages and no disadvantage. Therefore we need to strive to cultivate that state of love and compassion in our heart. I am just trying to re-emphasise what the great master Shantideva presented in this very special teaching.

The way we need to take this to heart is to really think again and again about the unmatched value of love and compassion and ultimately, of course, bodhicitta, which is all condensed into the whole-hearted wish and resolve to benefit others. We develop it from the depth of our heart, by thinking again and again about the great benefits of developing love and compassion. The more we contemplate the value, benefits and great advantages of developing such an attitude, the more we will be inclined to really develop it. When it is well established in our minds, the wish to benefit

others will be cultivated from the depth of our heart. We need to be inspired to develop and establish bodhicitta, just as indicated in the dedication verse we recite regularly.

May the supreme jewel bodhicitta
That has not arisen, arise and grow,
And may that which has arisen never diminish,
But increase more and more.

This one verse encapsulates the presentation of the entire *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*. As mentioned previously, the first three chapters of *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* focus on developing the bodhicitta that has not yet been developed. The subject of the next three chapters is increasing the bodhicitta that has already been developed. Then chapters seven to nine show how to firmly establish bodhicitta so that it never declines, and the last chapter is the dedication.

By relating to the text in this way, we can be encouraged to develop bodhicitta within ourselves.

2.4. Praising the person who has generated such a mind

Thus far we have covered the benefits of bodhicitta, and now we come to the noble being who has generated bodhicitta.

It is inner qualities we see in someone that determine whether they are considered as praiseworthy. Even in a conventional sense we praise people for their character and their good qualities, not just their physical body. Here, when we contemplate the unequalled value of bodhicitta, we will naturally be able to see that anyone who has bodhicitta is praiseworthy.

There are three subdivisions in this category:

- 2.4.1. Suitable for praise because of helping out of compassion, without being asked
- 2.4.2. If even small benefit is praiseworthy then achieving all happiness and benefit is even more praiseworthy
- 2.4.3. Praiseworthy because of becoming the supreme field

2.4.1. Suitable for praise because of helping out of compassion, without being asked

We regard anyone who helps us when we are in difficulties, even if we have not asked for help, as being very kind. This section relates to that particular aspect of a bodhisattva.

The relevant verse is quite easy to understand:

31. *If any repaying of benefit
Is momentarily praiseworthy,
What need is there to mention the bodhisattva
Who does good without being asked to?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse begins with:

One should praise and eulogise bodhisattvas.

The reason that is presented is:

From a conventional point of view, someone who repays a kindness is praised, with the saying, 'That is a grateful person'.

We all agree that whenever someone benefits from the kindness of another, they will praise that kindness, and say they are very grateful for that. That is definitely the case at our conventional level.

I have related to you previously that I go to the St Kilda sea baths regularly. Last year there was a man who regularly brought his aged mother to the pool. He was very attentive to her, helping her into the pool, helping her while she was in the pool, and then helping her to get out. On one occasion I put my thumbs up, indicating that what he was doing was a really good thing. I haven't seen him with his mother again

this year, so maybe his mother's age is such that she finds it too difficult to come now.

There was also another lady who would come with her mother and help her. I once asked her, 'Is she your mother?' and she said, 'Yes'. I praised her saying, 'It is really very good that you are helping your mother, bringing her here, helping her out. Your kindness is quite incredible'. Later I met her at the pool again, when she said, 'Oh, my mother is not able to come now, but she would really like to see you again'. When I see the younger generation taking care of the older generation, particularly their parents, it moves my mind and is praiseworthy.

I used to see some definitely older people in the baths and they seemed to be happy to see me, but I haven't seen them for a while. Maybe they are not able to come any more. There were also young children who used come to the pool as well, but they don't come any more. Maybe they have to go to school now. These toddlers were very happy and glad to see me when I was there.

We need to take these examples of people who are serving the elderly to heart, and to try to implement it as part of one's practice, particularly if one has aged parents. I consider caring for aged parents as one of the highest virtues. And in fact that is not just my personal view. The Buddha himself mentioned in his teachings that caring for the sick and the elderly and one's parents creates great virtue and is very meritorious. As the Buddha indicated, when one's parents are aged and not very well, then all of the conditions to create merit are met in caring for them.

My practical advice, which I have shared with others in the past, is that when caring for your parents, try to not even think about the past. There might be uncomfortable memories, but at present that is all irrelevant. Just think, 'These are my parents and I am their child, and it is fitting for me to be helping them now'. Just focusing on that, and helping and serving one's father or mother is a really great deed. Having shared this practical advice, some have confided in me that they have really benefited from that advice, which encouraged them to take the initiative to actually care for their parents. They thanked me, saying they would never forget that advice. If we can take this to heart it will really be a practical and great way to accumulate virtue.

A more specific account is the exchange that I once had with Toby Gilles. It must have been several years ago, as his mother passed away about two years ago. So it was some time ago when I asked after his mother, and his response was, 'Oh, Mum is quite frail and unable to go out much, but her mind seems to be quite happy'. He went on to explain that his sister was really caring for her, making tea, cooking and nursing her, and my immediate response to that was, 'That is incredibly good. She is really practising the Dharma'.

Then I went on to say, 'I can't say for certain that sitting down, doing your prayers, and meditating is practising Dharma, but I can definitely confirm that your sister's care for her mother is Dharma practice'. He was a bit taken back and said, 'Do you really mean it? I said, 'Yes, I can definitely confirm that your sister is practising Dharma, but whether your sitting down and saying prayers and meditating is Dharma or not, I cannot say for sure'. Then I explained that my reason was based on one definition of Dharma, which is that benefiting others is practising Dharma. In this case, Toby's sister was definitely benefiting their mother by helping and caring for her, and so there was no question about whether or not that virtue was Dharma, whereas, the

virtue of reciting prayers and meditating depends on one's motivation, and as such, one can't say for sure whether that the action itself is a Dharma practice or not.

I was able to speak in that very frank way with Toby because he was quite fond of me. We had a good rapport. Whenever I used to go to Geshe Loden's centre in the past, he would always take it upon himself to make tea or coffee for me and make sure that I was comfortable. He even went to the extent of saying, 'If you were come to live here, I would definitely take care of all your needs', but changes have taken place and he is not living there any longer.

It has been a while since I last saw Toby, but the last time we met I mentioned to him there is a nice venue at Bacchus Marsh where we used to go for Easter courses and it might be good for him to arrange for some Dharma talks there, and that people who are interested might come to the talks. I was encouraging him to share his knowledge of the Dharma in that way. I haven't met him since then. I was invited to his birthday some time after our last meeting, but I was not able to go.

To continue with Gyaltsab Je's commentary, if, in worldly terms, someone who repays a kindness is praised, then:

What need is there to mention that bodhisattvas, who achieve all happiness and benefit out of compassion without being asked, are worthy of praise by gods and humans?

From the conventional point of view we are grateful to someone who helps us and praise them for their kindness. So what need is there to mention being grateful to bodhisattvas who, out of great compassion, extend their help to all beings, without even being asked, benefiting others to achieve the ultimate state of happiness. Without any doubt, such bodhisattvas are worthy of praise, not only by humans but also by gods.

As you are aware, the next session is the discussion session and following that is the exam. As I mention regularly it is good to engage in the discussion as well as the exam with a good attitude, in a spirit of sharing and further developing your understanding.

More importantly it is good to keep these points in mind in our regular daily life. We need to really understand these points and try to put them into practice as much as we can. Our kind attitude should be based on love and compassion and kindness, and the practice that we engage in has to be the practice of adopting virtue and abandoning negativity. To the best of our ability, we need to take every opportunity to accumulate virtue or merit and to abandon and really minimise negativity.

That, in essence, is the practice that we need to adopt. The benefit from the virtue or the merits that we accumulate from that will travel with us to the end of this life and beyond. None of us are extending our life span. In fact we are all getting closer and closer to our next life. Whether young or old, we are all in the same predicament—we will come to the end of this life and go onto the next life. So it is good to be equipped for that journey, and to take something with us into the next existence.

The alternative to preparing ourselves in this way would be trying to hold onto whatever wealth we have accumulated. I have recently heard an account of someone who was always holding onto his pillow. When he died and they took his body away they found the pillow was filled with his money. This goes to show the extent of clinging that someone can have for their money.

There is another story of the Tibetan who passed away in Dharamsala. It was traditional to sell the possessions of the dead. He had a doona which, of course, was sold very cheaply. The person who bought it took it to the river to wash it and noticed that there was something unusual stuffed inside. The Tibetan had been using the doona to store his money.

Then there was the Tibetan in Dalhousie who was known to always carry his cushion with him wherever he went. Later it became known that he did so because it was his safe for storing his gold. In the early days of course he would not have had good accommodation, so he might not have really found a good place to keep his gold. So he was quite clever to put it in a cushion which was the last place people might think to look. He was never separated from this cushion, which was his safe.

This is just one account of how having wealth doesn't necessarily bring calm and peace, but can cause more worries. Of course, I have many other stories like that, but I will leave them for another time.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcribed by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

25 June 2013

Based on the motivation generated during the recitation of the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, we can now engage in the practice of meditation.

[meditation]

Also, as for the motivation for receiving the teachings, it would be good to generate a motivation based on bodhicitta; such as the thought:

For the sake of all sentient beings, in order to liberate them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teaching and put its meaning into practice well.

The main point is to try to generate a motivation that is not tainted by mere self-interest.

2.4. Praising the person who has generated such a mind (cont.)

2.4.2. If even small benefit is praiseworthy then achieving all happiness and benefit is even more praiseworthy

This heading is covered in these two verses:

32. *Even giving scornfully just one instance
Of ordinary food, which lasts only half a
day, To a few migrators
Is praised by beings, saying:
'It is an act of virtue'.*
33. *What need is there to mention the continual
generosity
Of working to complete all mental
intentions,
The highest happiness of the tatagatas,
For countless sentient beings for a long time.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on these verses reads:

In worldly terms, someone who gives inferior ordinary food in an inferior manner, with scorn and no praise, to a small number of beings, (such as one hundred), enough for only half a day, will be regarded by the people as a great sponsor who practises virtue.

What need is there to mention then that someone who continually gives the superior object, the highest uncontaminated happiness of the tatagatas, with the special benefit that it satisfies each and every thought, in a respectful manner to the expansive field of innumerable sentient beings for as long as cyclic existence remains, is praiseworthy?

Therefore one should have single-pointed respect for the bodhisattvas who have this mind.

As explained in detail here, the benefit that bodhisattvas extend is definitely an object worthy of praise and

veneration, because this benefit is focused on all living beings, which is an incredibly expansive scope.

2.4.3. Praiseworthy because of becoming the supreme field

This section is subdivided into three:

2.4.3.1. The reason why it is unsuitable to be even a little disrespectful to a bodhisattva

2.4.3.2. The reason why it is suitable to meditate on faith

2.4.3.3. They are worthy of praise and going for refuge

As Gyaltsab Rinpoche clearly elucidates, the negativity incurred by criticising a bodhisattva is very grave. As we are not able to discern who is a bodhisattva and who is not, there is always the danger that we might be criticising or ridiculing someone who is in fact a bodhisattva. Therefore we need to be incredibly cautious about criticising others in general, because we would incur grave negativity if they are a bodhisattva. Thus Gyaltsab Rinpoche cautions us to be really mindful and careful about this point.

Can you give me a definition of a bodhisattva?

Student: A person of the Mahayana lineage who is intent on benefiting others by achieving enlightenment, accompanied by the deeds.

When an explanation of what a bodhisattva means is sought, it would be good to have a clear, concise and succinct explanation already in mind.

A bodhisattva is a being who has developed bodhicitta, which has two components *bodhi* and *citta*. The Tibetan word for *bodhi* is *jang chub*, which has two syllables and a separate connotation of each. It is good to contemplate what *bodhi* or *jang chub* implies. If you can remember, this was discussed at the very beginning of the text.

The title of the text is *Bodhicharyavatara*. The *charya* relates to the actions, which includes the basis, the path and the result or fruits; so all three aspects of the path are explained in that one word *charya*.

A bodhisattva is a being who has developed the bodhicitta mind. Thus a succinct explanation of a bodhisattva is a being who has developed the mind that aspires to enlightenment, and who engages in the actions of the six perfections.

As I have also explained previously, a buddha has bodhicitta in their mental continuum, however they are not referred to as bodhisattva. These are important points to keep in mind.

2.4.3.1. THE REASON WHY IT IS UNSUITABLE TO BE EVEN A LITTLE DISRESPECTFUL TO A BODHISATTVA

34. *If one generates negative minds towards
One bodhisattva patron like this, one needs
To remain in the hells for eons equalling
The number of negative minds, the Buddha
taught.*

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

Should one criticise or generate a negative attitude towards those ultimate bodhisattva benefactors, who offer all benefit and happiness to any sentient being, then this negative attitude is the supreme among negativities. If one generates a negative

attitude, then it is taught in the *Sutra of Strong Peace Definitely Abiding Magical Emanation*:

Jampel, should a bodhisattva generate anger or a criticising mind towards another bodhisattva then it is said for that many eons he will remain in the hells. Therefore, wear your armour.

As taught here by the Able One, one will remain in the hells for as many eons as the number of moments one generates the negative mind. Therefore, one should be careful concerning this object.

From the *Sutra of the Seal Generating the Power of Faith*:

It generates much more countless negativity to generate a negative attitude and so forth towards a bodhisattva who aspires to the Mahayana, than to destroy or burn stupas equalling the number of sand grains in the Ganges.

As support it states that the buddhas are born from the bodhisattvas, and that to harm the cause of the buddhas is taught in many teachings and commentaries as supremely negative.

Gyaltsab Je's explanation is quite clear so there is no need for further elaboration.

2.4.3.2. THE REASON WHY IT IS SUITABLE TO MEDITATE ON FAITH

This is covered in these two lines:

*35ab. But, if one practices clear faith
Its result will increase even more,*

Gyaltsab Rinpoche's explanation is meticulous. First, it indicates that because bodhisattvas are working towards the ends of all sentient beings, it is a grave negativity to criticise, ridicule or disparage bodhisattvas. Then, because they are an object of faith, if one were to generate a moment of faith with a clear mind, one's virtue will increase incredibly. This is a very logical and meticulous presentation.

As his commentary reads:

However, if a person has clear faith in a bodhisattva, then the result of that virtue will increase more than the earlier explained result of negativity.

While the negativity incurred by disparaging and criticising a bodhisattva is very grave, vast virtue is accumulated from a clear mind of faith in a bodhisattva. Praising and having faith in a bodhisattva will accumulate an incredible amount of merit. So there is far more benefit in generating faith and veneration, and paying respect to a bodhisattva, than the negativity incurred from criticism.

This can also be understood in conjunction with the qualities of a bodhisattva. The benefits of developing the mind of bodhicitta and the qualities of someone who has developed bodhicitta have been explained extensively. These are directly related to the great virtue or merit that one accumulates by praising a bodhisattva.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

For however many moments of clear faith there are, for a much greater number of eons one will experience the special result.

This is explaining the great results from generating faith, for even just one moment. These explanations exhort us to develop that faith in the qualities of a bodhisattva.

Finally, Gyaltsab Je says:

This is taught in the Sutra of the Seal of the Definitive and Indefinite.

There is a quote from this sutra, but we will not go through that.

2.4.3.3. THEY ARE WORTHY OF PRAISE AND GOING FOR REFUGE

The next two lines of verse read:

*35cd. Even great force against the conqueror's
children
Will not raise negativity, it increases virtue
naturally.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Even if the great children of the conquerors are confronted with the intent to harm or cause suffering, they will not generate negative minds such as anger and so forth, and their virtue will naturally increase, even when faced with danger or loss of their lives.

As explained in the mind training teachings, adverse circumstances, or any kind of difficulties (such as lacking sufficient food, clothing, dwelling and so forth) will not daunt the person who is intent on practice. Those very difficulties can be transformed into the path. The Tibetan word *dogal* translated here as *great force* also has the connotation of the significant difficulties that one may face. As mentioned in the teachings, transforming difficulties in the path does not literally mean that negative circumstances will actually become the path. Rather, difficulties and so forth can complement one's practices on the path. That is the main meaning of transforming difficulties into the path. Rather than becoming a hindrance, difficulties and so forth become an aid for one's practice. In this way not only can suffering be more readily endured, but it can be transformed as an aid to complement one's practice.

The crucial point lies in the lines, *they will not generate negative minds such as anger and so forth*, but instead *their virtue will naturally increase, even when faced with danger and loss of their lives*. An ordinary mind responds to suffering and difficulties with anger, or at the very least some annoyance and agitation, and the moment that this happens there is no way for virtue to increase. From the very instant we generate anger and so forth we immediately incur and accumulate negativity.

As explained here, a bodhisattva, even when their life is at stake, will not allow any situation to become a cause for engaging in negativity or allow a negative mind to arise. Rather, they will use that situation as a way to further increase their virtue. We need to take this advice to heart and try to implement it in our own practice. If bodhisattvas do not allow even a moment of negativity to arise, even if their life is at stake, and only accumulate virtue, then that should be an example for us to try our best. When we face minor difficulties in life, we should not allow a negative mind to arise and we should try to maintain a virtuous mind. That is the main point.

When bodhisattvas are referred to in the teachings they are always referred to as being objects worthy of veneration and praise. If we really understand the practices of bodhisattvas then we will come to understand for ourselves why bodhisattvas are regarded as holy or noble beings.

The next verse comes under the same heading:

36. *This precious holy mind
Whoever has generated it, I prostrate to their
body.
Though harmed they remain connected with
happiness
I take refuge in this source of happiness.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of this verse thus:

For those reasons¹, I respectfully prostrate with my three doors to the body of the person who has generated such a precious holy mind.

I take refuge in the bodhisattvas, who are our source of happiness (as explained later on in the chapter on patience), who when harmed, not only refrain from retaliating, but only offer happiness, just as in the life story of the king Maitrabala who, despite the five yakshas drinking his blood, led them to the state of a superior being.

The crucial point being emphasised is that *when harmed, bodhisattvas not only refrain from retaliating, but only offer happiness*, unlike ordinary beings who retaliate by returning harm for harm. Instead of returning harm with harm, bodhisattvas only offer happiness to the one who has harmed them, and lead them to the state of ultimate happiness. This in itself is an unprecedented act of compassion. If we think of ourselves as an example, when someone utters uncompromising words, hurtful speech or inflicts any kind of harm on us, we immediately create a negative mind and wish to get back at them! For a bodhisattva, there is not even a hint of retaliating with harmful intentions, only the wish to lead them to the ultimate state of happiness. The connotation of *though harmed they remain connected with happiness* is that they connect those who harm them with ultimate happiness. Thus, *I take refuge and offer veneration to the source of happiness*.

Another important point to note here is that there may seem to be a discrepancy here between the earlier explanation, that if out of a negative mind one harms or criticises a bodhisattva, then that will incur the negativity of being reborn in the hell realms for many eons. Whereas here it is explained that if you harm a bodhisattva, they will hold you dear, and by not forsaking you, they will lead you to supreme happiness. So it may seem that there is a discrepancy or a contradiction between these two points.

The earlier point refers to the infallibility of the law of karma: if you create positive karma you will reap positive results, and if you create negative karma you will reap negative results. Thus it concerns one's own karma: if out of a negative mind one harms a bodhisattva, then one's own karmic consequences will be a negative result in the

form of unfortunate rebirths in the hell realms and so forth.

Here, however, the point concerns the qualities of a bodhisattva. Even if you harm a bodhisattva, they will hold you dear. Through their compassion they will never forsake you. From the bodhisattva's side, they will never give up on you and will guide you to the ultimate state of happiness. So these points need to be understood in their proper context.

Through their compassion, aspirational prayers and their skilful means, a bodhisattva leads others, even those who harm them, to the ultimate state of happiness.

Furthermore, as the commentary explains:

In short, regardless of whether one enters the tantric or perfection path, the door to the Mahayana is the generation of bodhicitta alone. Therefore, one needs to generate this mind by striving in many methods. As explained earlier, to generate it one must first develop strong, heartfelt enthusiasm for the benefits of meditating on this mind.

Basically, if one is to develop an attitude of bodhicitta a courageous mind is essential.

Then, as Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

That one needs the seven limbs with refuge is explained by this supreme commentary on the stages of the path of a bodhisattva, as well as in the *Compendium of Deeds*.

To generate the mind of bodhicitta one first meditates on its benefits again and again, which generates a strong inclination to develop that mind, and as an aid to develop that mind we need the seven limb practice. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama recently mentioned, if we add refuge to the usual seven limbs then it becomes eight limbs. I don't know if you recall it but I definitely remember hearing that. Sometimes there is reference to ten limbs of practice, which adds the limbs of faith and bodhicitta as well as the limb of refuge to the usual seven limbs. It is good to remember that so that you don't become confused. The importance of the seven (or eight) limb practice is explained in the *Bodhicharyavatara* as well as the *Compendium of Deeds*, which was also composed by Shantideva.

Gyaltsab Je goes on to say:

If the aforementioned explained benefits are condensed, then there are two, which can be subsumed into temporary and ultimate benefits. The first again has two: not falling into the lower realms, and being reborn in a happy migration.

We went through these points in earlier verses, and His Holiness recently emphasised them in his teachings. He quoted the *Praise to Maitreya* which says that generating bodhicitta protects one from the lower realms, as well as leading one to a happy migration.

Then Gyaltsab Je goes on to present his reasons:

If one generates this mind, then many earlier accumulated causes for the lower realms are purified, and the future accumulation of further causes is interrupted. The causes for a happy migration that one has already accumulated

¹ Referring back to how a bodhisattva is praiseworthy and so forth.

increase due to being held by that mind, and those to be accumulated will be inexhaustible because of arising from that mind.

This succinct explanation states that due to the bodhicitta state of mind, both the causes for unfortunate rebirths are purified, and further causes for unfortunate rebirths are interrupted; and the causes for a happy migration that one has already accumulated will increase, and further causes will be inexhaustible. For as long as the bodhicitta attitude is held in one's mind, one will continuously be accumulating virtue. The personal instruction is, as mentioned again and again in the teachings and by the teachers, that generating the bodhicitta attitude prior to engaging in any virtuous activity is extremely important. When one generates a bodhicitta attitude, it will ensure that whatever activity one engages in will become a means to accumulate the highest form of merit, thus becoming a cause for one's temporary and ultimate happiness.

Furthermore, Gyaltsab Je says,

Ultimately, one easily attains liberation and enlightenment in dependence on this mind, but first one needs to have the spontaneous aspiration to attain those temporary and ultimate benefits because, since these benefits arise from the generation of bodhicitta, one may say, "I shall generate the mind", but it will be mere words. If one analyses one's mind, this will be very clear.

As I mention again and again, it is important that we ensure that our deeds and our attitudes are not just mere words, but that we have actually developed that attitude. We need to really try to put some effort into generating and cultivating that bodhicitta attitude, otherwise, when we recite the text there is a danger that it will become mere words or lip service.

Then Gyaltsab Je further explains:

To generate the wish to attain the two benefits of higher status and definite goodness one needs to first train in the motivations of the small and middle capable being, and then meditate on the mind of enlightenment, which is rooted in love and compassion.

Here again the commentary is stating very clearly that in order to create the causes to obtain higher status, such as a good rebirth (i.e. as a human being) in the next lifetime, one needs to have a good understanding of karma as well as practising it. This is explained clearly in the small scope and the middle scope of the teachings. Without that basis of a profound understanding of the law of karma and abiding by that law, there is no way one can establish the causes to create a higher status.

Without developing an understanding of emptiness and realisation of emptiness, there is no way that one can obtain definite goodness or liberation. To gain a profound understanding and realisation of emptiness, one also needs to have a good basis of the practices of the small and medium scopes.

What this really means is that we need to develop renunciation, because without developing renunciation there is no way that one can gain the realisation of emptiness. Recently when I was among the other geshe

we were debating certain points, and I made the comment that there is no way for us who still seek pleasure in samsara to obtain the realisation of emptiness! How could we possibly realise emptiness if we don't give up the pleasures of samsara? Indeed the teachings say: without developing renunciation there is no way to gain the realisation of emptiness.

Even non-Buddhist practitioners such as the Tirthikas, who are classified as extremists, have actually renounced certain levels of suffering. They definitely have developed disgust for the sufferings of the desire realms. With disgust for the pleasures of the desire realm they develop a longing for the pleasures of the higher realms, such as the form and formless realms. Then, when they gain the absorption of the form realms while in a meditative state, they realise that even the pleasures there are mediocre relative to the higher realms. Thus they develop disgust for the pleasures of the form realms and long for the pleasures of the formless realms. Then they go further into meditative absorption to obtain the pleasurable state of the formless realms. So while they have developed a certain amount of renunciation in relation to the two sufferings (the suffering of suffering and the suffering of change) of the lower realms, they have still not overcome the third suffering, the all-pervasive compounded suffering, which is the primary form of suffering. For as long as one does not renounce that third level of suffering, one cannot develop renunciation of the pleasures of samsara. This is the crucial point that we need to understand.

Based on the training of the practices of the small and middle capable being, one meditates on the mind of enlightenment, based on love and compassion. We need to really understand and realise these practices and go through them in systematic stages, leading up to engaging in the higher practices of developing bodhicitta.

Then Gyaltsab Rinpoche, author of the commentary, sums up the meaning of the chapter in this verse:

Those who know they have attained a human body
with freedoms and endowments
Meditate with effort on the two bodhicittas.
This is the supreme taking the essence of the
freedoms and endowments.
Initially meditate on the benefits of that mind.

THE TITLE OF THE CHAPTER

This is the commentary on the first chapter called The Benefits of the Mind of Enlightenment from the commentary on the *Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas*, called *The Entrance for the Children of the Conquerors*.

Having completed the first chapter we will begin the second chapter in our next session. The main subject matter of the second chapter is a detailed presentation of the practices of the seven limbs. You can prepare for this by reading relevant texts such as the lam rim teachings. I taught this chapter at one Easter course in conjunction with the seven limb practice from the lam rim, so you may refer to your notes from that.

At the recent teaching on the *Heart Sutra*, His Holiness discussed the very beginning of the sutra where it states

that the Buddha is absorbed in the meditative state called Profound Illumination. His Holiness explained that the words *profound* and *illumination* indicate that the Buddha is simultaneously in meditative as well as in post meditative equipoise. In other commentaries, the *profound* and *illumination* are said to refer to subject and object. His Holiness' explanation showed that the quality of the Buddha was such that he could be in these two states simultaneously, and this explanation brought tears to my eyes!

As he has done in the past, His Holiness mentioned in his teaching this time that the word *also* (from the line: *also looking perfectly and correctly at the emptiness of the inherent existence of the five aggregates*) has a profound implication. His Holiness offers a very profound explanation of this. Most commentaries explain that *also* means that not only the aggregates, but also the constituents are empty of inherent existence. However, as His Holiness explained, *also* implies that not only are the aggregates empty of inherent existence, but the person who is designated upon the five aggregates is also empty of inherent existence. This is a much more profound explanation of the word *also*, because it has the implication of presenting the lack of inherent existence of both persons as well as other phenomena. This explanation is not really found in other commentaries. Beginning with this explanation His Holiness then went on to explain the essence of the *Heart Sutra*.

On this recent visit I had many opportunities to be close to His Holiness, which was really good. His Holiness really showed clear signs of being really pleased. So if I don't now attempt to do some practice it would be really embarrassing!

When we were in New Zealand His Holiness approached me and asked how old I was and I offered that I was actually 78 years old, and then at the Quang Minh temple, after the teaching he came down and held my hand and said 'We are of the same age, so we are old buddies!' After the second session at Quang Minh, His Holiness came down and held my hand and said, 'Thank you for what you do'.

The event at Geshe Ngawang Dhargye's centre in Dunedin was really very good. His Holiness was scheduled to visit for only half an hour, but ended up spending about two hours there. When he saw the picture of the late Geshe Ngawang Dhargye, His Holiness spent quite a long time looking at it and commented, "This picture must have been when Geshe-la was quite ill, because normally he was quite plump wasn't he?"

When His Holiness was interviewed soon after he arrived at the New Zealand airport, he explained that one of the main reasons for his visit was to come to the centre which was established by the late Geshe Ngawang Dhargye, who was a great scholar and a practitioner and a great friend. Having been a great friend of His Holiness, he said, "It befalls upon me to take on the responsibility for looking after his centre now". Later I mentioned to the centre staff that if they were to listen to what His Holiness said, they would find great points there for them to consider. There wasn't time to receive His Holiness at Dunedin airport, so I waited at the centre for his arrival. As soon as His Holiness stepped out of the car he came

up towards me and held me in his arms for a while. This was definitely an auspicious occasion.

It is important to utilise the teachings to subdue one's mind and not to increase one's pride. As His Holiness himself mentions, if we use the teachings and the words of buddhas to subdue one's mind then it contributes to a happy mind. But if one remains pompous, with a sense of pride, it does not help to contribute to a joyful and happy mind. This is very practical advice presented by His Holiness.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

2 July 2013

Having generated our motivation with the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, we can now engage in meditation, focussing single-pointedly on the practice.

[meditation]

It would also be good to now generate the positive motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings, as a way to liberate them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teaching and put it into practice well.

Familiarising ourselves with these positive intentions is extremely beneficial. At the very least we can familiarise our mind with the thought of how wonderful it would be if all beings could be free from suffering and abide in ultimate happiness, and then think, 'May I be able to do that'. If we can remind ourselves again and again of this intention, and periodically bring it to mind in any activity we engage in, we will be familiarising ourselves with the basis of love and compassion, which then becomes the foundation for developing bodhicitta within our own mind. Familiarising ourselves with this attitude is incredibly meaningful and beneficial. Although as beginners we have not yet developed actual bodhicitta, this sort of attitude can be a substitute for that bodhicitta attitude at our level.

In our last session we completed the first of the ten chapters of the *Bodhicharyavatara*, which explained the benefits and the many great qualities of bodhicitta. The main topic of the second chapter is how to engage in the purification of negativities.

It is good for us to identify what negativity is, as well as its opposite, virtue. **Negativity** is defined in the teachings as that which brings about unwanted or unpleasant consequences. So any activity that brings about unpleasant consequences is engaging in negativity. The opposite of negativity, **virtue**, is that which brings about positive and pleasant consequences for oneself.

We can succinctly identify negativity by referring to the ten non-virtues, which are easy to list. The lam rim teachings explain karma in great detail—the different types of karma, the four pathways of creating karma and so forth. Through this we can understand in greater detail how one creates and engages in negativity. The opposite of the ten non-virtues are the ten virtues, which we can also relate to the lam rim teachings. Thus we will be able to see that intentionally engaging in the ten virtues is a way of accumulating virtue.

We need to have a reason to engage in the practice of abandoning non-virtue and negativities and adopting

virtue. Why do we need to abandon negativity and adopt virtue? The reasons can be understood when we think about the unpleasant consequences of negativity and the positive results of virtue. If we don't wish to experience unpleasant results, then we need to abandon negativity; if we want to experience positive results then we need to adopt virtue. It's as simple as that! When we relate this basic understanding to the extensive explanations in the lam rim teachings, we will gain a broader picture of how karma works, which would be really meaningful.

Relating to the lam rim teachings will broaden our understanding of the range of material about karma. So if we are asked, for example, to teach about karma, we will not be short of material to relay—if, that is, we have studied the lam rim. On a practical level it is good for us to expand our own understanding by referring to other teachings, both for our own development as well as to present the topic to others. Then, when a situation arises where we need to present the Dharma to others, we will readily be able to access the knowledge that we have gained from our study of the texts. It is good to take this practical approach to studying the texts.

I've heard comments that the *Bodhicharyavatara* is an easy text to teach. I personally feel that it is not that easy at all to teach the *Bodhicharyavatara* thoroughly; one needs to have a broad understanding of the lam rim teachings, the Madhyamaka teachings, the mind training teachings, as well as a good understanding of tenets.

In the past, in our recitations of the *Bodhicharyavatara*, as you were doing the recitation in English it seemed to take much longer. In particular, when we came to the ninth chapter I would hear you recite terms such as Chittamatra, and I wondered where that came from in the actual text. Later I learnt that the ninth chapter was translated as a commentary, and was not in verse form.

I can safely say that I have made every attempt to study the earlier mentioned subjects, so it's not as if I am trying to present this text without having done any prior study myself. Even though I cannot claim to be able to give you a profound explanation, I have at least attempted to complete the study. I have to assume that when His Holiness the Dalai Lama thanked me, it was because what I'm presenting here might have some value and benefit. There would be no reason at all for His Holiness to thank me about anything else.

1. THE PREPARATORY ACTIONS FOR EXPLAINING THE STAGES OF THE MAHAYANA PATH¹

2. THE ACTUAL EXPLANATION OF THE STAGES OF THE PATH

2.2. The method for taking the essence

2.2.2 Explaining the individual meanings²

2.2.2.1. CONTEMPLATING THE BENEFITS OF ENLIGHTENMENT (CHAPTER 1)

2.2.2.2 THE WAY OF TRAINING IN THE PRACTICES UPON GENERATING THE TWO BODHICITTAS

This is subdivided into two.

2.2.2.2.1. Taking the mind of enlightenment

2.2.2.2.2. The way of training in the perfections

¹ These headings relate to the structural overview of the entire text. The numbering of each chapter is self-contained.

²This heading was introduced on 26 March 2013.

The two bodhicittas were explained in detail in chapter 1, so here we need to be able to immediately reflect on our understanding of what these two bodhicittas refer to.

From just the outlines alone we can see how profoundly the material of the text is presented. Just one heading can carry the whole entire path within it, as is the case with this outline. It implies that having cultivated and developed the two types of bodhicitta (the awakening mind that aspires to enlightenment and the mind that engages in the practices), the next step is to actually engage in the practices, such as the six perfections and the four means of gathering disciples. So this outline is concisely referring to the bodhicitta attitude as well as the practices of the six perfections.

Even just this one line can be a basis for contemplating the entire presentation of how a bodhisattva practises along the path. As mentioned here, the two bodhicittas refers to aspiring bodhicitta and engaging bodhicitta, which can be developed using two specific techniques. With regard to the seven point cause-and-effect technique, it would be good to reflect on what those six causes and their effects are, and contemplate each point. Then we can contemplate the various points within the exchanging self with other techniques. As training in the practices refers to the six perfections, we can reflect on the nature of generosity and how it is practised, and likewise morality, patience, joyful effort, concentration and wisdom and how each of these are practised. The bodhisattva's practices also include the four means of gathering disciples, which are the means by which a bodhisattva gathers disciples.

2.2.2.2.1. Taking the mind of enlightenment

This has two main sections.

2.2.2.2.1.1. Confessing the disruptive conditions, the negativities, by way of the complete four powers, after having done the preliminaries of prostrating, offering and going for refuge

2.2.2.2.1.2. The actual taking of the mind of enlightenment after having applied the conducive conditions of accumulating merit such as rejoicing in virtue and so forth.

The precious mind of enlightenment, or bodhicitta, is not generated spontaneously. Rather, it depends on specific causes and conditions of which there are two types, abandoning the disruptive conditions that have to be purified, and adopting the conducive conditions for developing bodhicitta that need to be acquired.

The **conducive conditions** are acquired through the accumulation of merit. Without the accumulation of merit there is no possible way to generate bodhicitta within one's mental continuum. Therefore, various methods of accumulating merit are presented in the teachings as a way to acquire the conducive conditions for generating bodhicitta.

The disruptive conditions are the negativities. Thus the negativities need to be purified, for without purifying the negativities there is no possible way to develop bodhicitta. So an extensive explanation of how to purify the negativities is also presented here.

Nagarjuna explains how one definitely needs to accumulate extensive merit as a way to develop bodhicitta, while Asanga explains how one definitely needs to have faith, in order to develop bodhicitta.

The optimum way to incorporate both of these aspects of accumulating merit and generating faith is to engage in making offerings. In addition to accumulating merit the very act of making offerings in an appropriate way will induce faith in the holy objects.

2.2.2.2.1.1. Confessing the disruptive conditions, the negativities, by way of the complete four powers, after having done the preliminaries of prostrating, offering and going for refuge

Having applied the conducive conditions of accumulating merit such as rejoicing in virtue and so forth, taking on the mind of enlightenment begins with engaging in the conducive preliminaries of prostrations, making offerings and going for refuge. Then one engages in the practice of purifying negativities by way of the four opponent powers.

We need to take this presentation as a personal instruction. If we aspire to develop bodhicitta, then we need to engage in the preliminaries. It is not as though we can skip the preliminaries, and suddenly develop bodhicitta. Without engaging in the preliminaries, there is no way we can develop bodhicitta. Therefore we need to identify what the preliminaries are and what the practices involve, and then attempt to really engage in those preliminary practices. That is the optimum method to establish the basis for developing bodhicitta within ourselves.

There are texts that will help us to identify the preliminaries. One of these is *Bodhicharyavatara*, the text we are studying. The lam rim teachings present the preliminaries as well, particularly in the practices of the small and medium scopes, which are the preliminary practices for developing bodhicitta. So we can refer to these texts to gain a good understanding of the correct sequence of engaging in the preliminaries. Then we can confidently present the preliminary practices to others if they ask us. So understanding the preliminaries is for our own benefit, as well as the benefit of presenting it to others.

CHAPTER 2: PURIFYING NEGATIVITIES

The chapter has two subdivisions:

- I. Explaining the text of the chapter
- II. The title of the chapter

I. EXPLAINING THE TEXT OF THE CHAPTER³

The chapter is divided into four sections:

1. Offerings
2. Prostrations
3. Refuge
4. Confessing of negativity with the four complete powers

In the lam rim the first of the preliminaries is prostration, whereas here the first practice is offering; except for the order there is not much difference.

³ To keep things manageable the numbering system starts again for each chapter.

1. OFFERINGS

This has two main headings:

- 1.1. The need to make offerings
- 1.2. The actual practice of offering

The Tibetan word for offerings is *chopa* which comes from the Sanskrit word *puja*, and it has the connotation of pleasing the minds of the gurus, buddhas and deities such as Tara and so forth. So, when we imagine that the object of one's offering is pleased, we are making the actual offering. For our own sake, making offerings is to be understood as an antidote for overcoming miserliness.

The manner of presenting the offerings is clearly presented in the lam rim.

First of all the offerings themselves have to be pure. That is they have to be free from deceit, which is sub-divided into two categories:

1. Free from deceit on a causal level.
2. Free from deceit on a motivational level.

To be free from deceit on the **causal level**, one needs to ensure that the object of offering is not obtained through wrong livelihood, or acquired through heavy negativities. Wrong livelihood involves pretentious behaviours and so forth. The teachings explain four different types of wrong livelihood. We can, however, offer what we have obtained from others if others have given it to us willingly. Even if we have to ask for donations or beg for an offering, as long as it is given willingly it can be offered, as it would not be an offering obtained by a wrong livelihood. Otherwise, if something is obtained from pretentious behaviour and so forth, then the offering has been obtained through causal deceit, and thus will not be a pure offering.

On a **motivational level**, the offering has to be free from the eight worldly concerns, i.e. not made with the eight worldly concerns in one's mind. This is extensively presented in the lam rim. Offerings made out of worldly concerns are tainted and cannot become a cause for liberation and enlightenment.

The lam rim teachings present this under the heading of the Six Preliminary Practices. The first of these is to clean the area well first and then arrange the altar with the representations of the three objects of refuge. The offerings have to be on a clean surface, presented in clean containers and so forth, and also arranged very beautifully. When we make water bowl offerings for example, the water bowls have to be arranged neatly and so forth. It is good to understand these details of how to engage in the practices of offering so you can incorporate them into your daily practices. I have previously explained this in detail and it is also good for those of you who were present to refer to those notes.

In addition to the text we are studying, I exhort you to refer to the lam rim teachings which have a very detailed presentation. We cannot forget about the lam rim teachings when we are studying *Bodhicharyavatara*, and it is good to complement our study of this text with the lam rim as a way to enhance your understanding.

It is good to note Gyaltsab Je's meticulous presentation where he uses the outlines as a way of explaining and summarising the body of the text.

1.1. The need to make offerings

The first verse of this chapter reads:

1. *To take this precious mind,
I make wholesome offerings to an ocean of
qualities:
The tathagatas and the holy Dharma,
The stainless Jewel, and the buddhas' children.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je commences his explanation of this verse as follows:

One respectfully makes offerings in thought and action in a wholesome way, with exalted objects.

Here, *exalted objects* refers to the actual objects of offering. What is to be offered has to be an exalted object. This implies these are objects that are free from deceit, i.e. that they are pure objects. The manner of offering is *respectfully*. *In thought and action* can refer to offering with the intention to benefit all sentient beings, to lead them to the ultimate state of happiness and to free them from all suffering.

This is another very meticulous presentation by Gyaltsab Je. It is a concise explanation of the complete form of making an offering in relation to both our physical actions and our thoughts; our gestures in relation to the object itself; and the substance we offer and so forth. All of that has been presented in these few words.

The presentation in the commentary follows the order of the Tibetan version of the verse. Following his explanation of making offerings Gyaltsab Je asks:

To what end?

In other words, for what purpose do we make the offerings. The answer to that is:

For the purpose of taking the precious mind, from which all the masses of goodness of all sentient beings arise.

That is an explanation of the first line of the English translation of the verse. As a way of explaining the following lines of the verse, the commentary presents this rhetorical question:

To which object?

That is to say, to what objects are we presenting the offering? Again it is good for us to understand the meticulously logical quality of the presentation, which reflects how our mind works. It poses questions as a way to quell doubts or queries as they are likely to arise. After the explanation that one should make offerings respectfully in a wholesome way, and that the objects have to be exalted objects, one might ask, 'For what purpose? Why would one need to do that?'

So Gyaltsab Je next presents the objects to whom one presents the offering:

As one makes offerings to the tathagatas and the holy superior beings, and also to the holy Dharma Jewel, the Mahayana truth of cessation that is free from adventitious stains on top of being naturally pure, and the truth of the path, is an object of offering.

The ocean of qualities that are the children of the buddhas, such as the superior lord Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri and others, are included as well.

The meaning of *tathagata* was extensively explained at the beginning of chapter one, so we can refer to that. A

tathagata is an enlightened being. The *holy superior beings* are the bodhisattvas (of which we have also given an explanation). The *holy Dharma* refers here to the Dharma Jewel which is the Mahayana truth of cessation and truth of the path. *The Mahayana truth of cessation* consists of that which is *free from adventitious stains*, which is *naturally pure*. *Free from adventitious stains* refers to the *cessation* of the deluded obscurations, and *naturally pure* refers to the obscurations to omniscience. Thus cessation includes being free from both the deluded obscurations as well as the obscurations to omniscience. That is what the cessation means in the Mahayana Dharma Jewel. Then the *truth of the path* is also included in the Dharma Jewel. Thus the two aspects of the Dharma Jewel are *cessation* and *the truth of the path*. *The ocean of qualities of the children of the buddhas* refers to the *holy superior beings*, as mentioned here.

1.2. The actual practice of offering

This is subdivided into three:

- 1.2.1. Offering substances that are not owned
- 1.2.2. Offering one's own body
- 1.2.3. Offerings that are emanated by the mind

1.2.1. Offering substances that are not owned

This section has three subdivisions:

- 1.2.1.1. Offering substances
- 1.2.1.2. The way of offering
- 1.2.1.3. The reason for offering substances that are not owned

1.2.1.1. OFFERING SUBSTANCES

The substances that we offer are:

2. *Whatever flowers and fruits there are,
Whatever medicines there are,
Whatever precious objects there are in the world,
Whatever clean and beautiful waters there are,*
3. *High mountains and likewise,
Forested areas, isolated and beautiful,
Flowering trees adorned and weighted with flowers,
All trees whose branches are weighted down with fruit,*
4. *Divine and worldly smells and
Incense, wish-fulfilling trees and precious trees,
Uncultivated crops and
Further, ornaments suitable as offerings,*
- 5a. *Lakes and ponds adorned with lotus flowers,
And beautiful swans making pleasant sounds.*

Offerings classified as unowned offerings are those things that are not personally owned by oneself. In fact, these are the best offerings for those of us who feel that we don't have much to offer. When we think about these lines of verse, we will find we have no shortage of offerings.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary elaborates on each of the substances listed in the verses.

The unowned flowers of the world, such as lotuses and so forth;

Lotuses and so forth are an example of very beautiful flowers. When we are out and about in a beautiful park or garden, rather than just enjoying it for our own personal pleasure, we can immediately remember to

mentally offer these beautiful flowers to the objects of veneration—the objects of refuge. It might be inappropriate to pick a flower as soon as we see it; if it is completely unowned then maybe that's fine, but not if we are in someone's garden or a park where we are not allowed to do that. The advice is to mentally offer the beautiful flower as soon as you see it. The *Mandala Offering* refers to visualising, which means a mental offering. There can be no dispute if you do that, as you will not be actually taking anything from the environment.

One needs to understand that these are incredible ways for us to take every opportunity to engage in practice and accumulate virtue. As soon as we see a flower we can immediately seize that as an opportunity to make an offering, which is a way for us to accumulate virtue. So it is in these small and moderate ways that we need to start accumulating merit and virtue.

Then as the commentary continues:

- Whatever fruits there are such as aryara and so forth;
- Whatever medicines there are such as camphor and so forth;
- Whatever precious substances there are in the worlds such as gold, silver and so forth;
- Whatever clean and pleasant waters there are such as lakes, ponds and so forth;

This means that whenever we come across small lakes or ponds we can immediately offer them.

The eight mountains of gold and so forth;

These are mythological offerings. Here one visualises offering great mountains of gold and so forth to the objects.

Likewise forests, isolated and beautiful areas;

Along with the objects of offering such as beautiful forests and so forth, *isolated and beautiful areas* are areas that are conducive for meditation, in particular, for developing calm abiding. So these sorts of places can also be objects of offering.

Flowering trees that are weighted down and adorned with their flowers;

Trees fully in bloom with beautiful flowers are also objects that can be offered.

Trees whose branches are bent by the weight of their ripe pure fruits;

Here, we visualise trees laden with fruit, like mangoes or apples, where the branches are weighed down with their load of fruit.

Pure scents of gods, nagas and so forth, natural ones, applied ones and created ones;

Pleasant incense;

Natural ones refers to pleasant scents that are naturally fragrant. *Applied ones and created ones* refers to those which are created or applied by the mixing of substances, such as incense. So *incense* is included in the category of scents which are created, meaning that you have to put many substances together in order to create the nice smell.

The wish-fulfilling tree that gives what one needs and wishes, and trees made out of precious substances;

The wish-fulfilling tree is a mythological tree that is said to bear whatever one wishes for. Now, of course, we refer to a mythological tree, but it is very possible that such trees did exist when the merit of the beings in the world was much greater.

Lakes as one thinks they should be and ponds for bathing, that are adorned with lotuses, where beautiful swans make pleasant sounds;

It is very good for us to visualise these beautiful places and areas to make as offerings. Visualising such an offering can be really soothing and pleasant, and it is really a form of meditation. Visualising pleasant objects can really lift you up and make you feel quite joyful.

The crops that grow by themselves without the need to plough the fields and

This again relates to the time called the fortunate era, when it is said that beings on this planet didn't need to sow seeds to reap a crop. In fact, it is said that if a crop was harvested in the morning, it would already be growing again by evening. This was a fortunate time when merit was very high. It is also said that it declined when humans started to amass things for themselves, when they didn't have to. I think this is one of the heaps on the long mandala offering, the *Mandala of the Thirty-five Heaps*.

All unowned offerings are summarised in this last offering:

Beautiful ornaments that are suitable to be offered to the tatagatas.

In summary, whatever offering that is suitable to be offered to the tatagatas can be offered. This also implies that there may be certain offerings which are not suitable to be offered, either mentally or actually.

It is also explained in the teachings that we should use the best substances we can afford as an offering. There is a Tibetan sweet cake made out of butter and tsampa which turns mouldy and green if you keep it for too long. Cutting off the mouldy part and offering it would not be suitable. Nor is it suitable to offer a plant with yellowing leaves. In other words one should not be making offerings of substances that one would not use oneself. 'Oh, this is spoiled, I cannot use it, so I might as well offer it!' would be the wrong way of making an offering. Rather one should offer things that are in their prime.

On a personal level, these explanations encourage us to make offerings on a regular basis in whatever way that we can—water bowl offerings, or flowers or even visualised offerings of beautiful parks and so forth. That is a way to accumulate merit in our daily lives.

Offering substances such as one's wealth will not deprive us of food and drink. Rather it will be the reverse; it will be a cause for us to have even more food and drink. So you need not worry that you will be losing out by making offerings of your food and drink to the holy objects.

Whenever we can make actual offerings of substances we obtain them through our own means. Whenever that is not possible we can use unowned objects as a way of making offerings. So what we have learned here is that we are never deprived of means or substances for offerings. As the teachings mention, it is not the lack of

substances that will deprive us of making offerings to the holy objects, but rather the lack of faith.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱུང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྐྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

9 July 2013

Based on the refuge and bodhicitta motivation that we generated earlier, we can now engage in the meditation practice. [meditation]

We can now generate the following motivation for receiving the teachings:

In order to benefit all sentient beings by liberating them from all suffering and leading them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teaching and put its meaning into practice well.

Generating such a motivation can definitely ensure that our time listening to the teaching will contribute to the flourishing of Dharma and the welfare of all sentient beings.

1.2.1. Offering substances that are not owned (cont.)

1.2.1.1. Offering substances

Last week we covered the list of unowned substances that can be offered. Now we turn to the way in which we offer these substances.

1.2.1.2. THE WAY OF OFFERING

The relevant lines from the root text are:

- 5cd. *Extending to the end of space
All of these, which are unowned,*
6. *Having mentally created and offered them
To the Able One, the supreme of beings, and
his children,
May those with holy qualities and great
compassion
Consider me with affection and enjoy these
offerings of mine.*

The opening line, *extending to the end of space*, indicates the measure or extent of whatever offerings we are presenting. When offering flowers, for example, one can imagine that the whole sky is filled with flowers. With this visualisation the merit one gains will not be limited to offering just a few flowers. Rather it will expand to the extent of space. It is the same with all the other offerings. Not limiting an offering to one or two items but making such expansive offerings is a way to amass much greater benefit from the offerings.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins with:

All the objects not possessed by anyone, having mentally created and offered them...

The implication of *all the objects* is that we can make offerings in the most expansive way. *All the objects* particularly relates to all the unowned objects, a list of which was presented last week. Another way to understand how to make extensive offerings would be, for example, when offering a flower then we can also bring to mind the particular beautiful features of the

flower such as its beautiful shape, colour, and scent. When one presents the offering, thinking in detail about all of its beautiful features, it becomes a much more expansive offering.

A significant point about mentally creating the offerings is that even though these objects are unowned external objects, when we personally take the initiative to mentally create and offer them expansively to the extent of space and so forth, they become offerings made from our own side. Also, the *Mandala Offering* is created in one's mind. As the six-session prayer reads, 'Holding in my mind an exquisite jewel-filled mandala'. So one needs to understand what this all actually means.

The next part of the explanation identifies the holy objects that we present the offerings to. As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary we make offerings:

...to the supreme of beings, the Able One, and his children, respectfully in a good way. May those possessing qualities and great compassion consider me with affection and enjoy these offerings of mine.

The supreme of beings, the Able One refers to Buddha Shakyamuni, who is also referred to as the supreme being of the bipeds (those who walk on two legs, i.e. humans). The term *Able One* indicates that he has overcome all adversities and acquired all good qualities. *And his children*, refers to the bodhisattvas. The manner of making these offerings is *respectfully in a good way*. The term *good way* can refer to the actual arrangements of the offerings, but more specifically it relates to presenting the offerings with the bodhicitta attitude in our mind. That is the optimum way to make the offerings.

When we present the offerings, we are also making a request to *those supreme beings possessing great qualities and who have great compassion*. *Possessing qualities* refers, of course, to the great qualities of the enlightened beings such as Buddha Shakyamuni as well as the bodhisattvas. Here one can envision those bodhisattvas who were the close disciples of the Buddha, such as Manjushri, Vajrapani, Maitreya, Samantabhadra and so forth who possess incredible qualities and who have great compassion for all beings. The greatest quality of the Able One, Buddha Shakyamuni, and the bodhisattvas is, of course, their unbiased and unflinching compassion for all sentient beings who are experiencing unbearable sufferings. They have no ulterior motives; the only concern of enlightened beings and the bodhisattvas is how to free all beings from suffering.

As explained in other teachings, if, from our own side we have suitable faith, there will be no doubt whatsoever about the capacity and the willingness for the enlightened beings and bodhisattvas to help us. So if we, from our own side, pay respect, and more particularly develop faith, we will be suitable receptacles for receiving their help. So, *consider me with affection*, implies that if we open our own mind with faith, we will definitely receive unceasing benefit and help from the enlightened beings and bodhisattvas.

With respect to the actual offering, *enjoy these offerings of mine*, indicates that one needs to imagine that having made these offerings, the buddhas and bodhisattvas very

gladly and joyfully accept the offerings, and for each moment that they accept an offering, they experience a fresh, new uncontaminated bliss in their mind. Here we need to note that this newly generated uncontaminated bliss does not mean that they are obtaining a new bliss that they have not obtained before. That is because *obtain* implies obtaining something by the virtue of overcoming a defilement. Enlightened beings have already abandoned all adversities and negativities, so we need to understand the difference between the generation of uncontaminated bliss and obtaining uncontaminated bliss. *Generating* uncontaminated bliss doesn't necessarily mean that it is newly obtained but rather that it is freshly experienced. It is reasonable to acknowledge that each time we make a new offering the enlightened beings experience new uncontaminated bliss.

1.2.1.3. THE REASON FOR OFFERING SUBSTANCES THAT ARE NOT OWNED

I have mentioned these points many times before but I'm not sure if you are holding onto them or you have just let them wash over you each time.

The verse relating to this topic reads:

7. *I have no merits and am very poor
And have no other wealth to offer;
Therefore, may the protector who thinks
about the purpose of others
Enjoy them merely due to the fact of it being
for my purpose.*

Gyaltsab Je's explanation of this verse commences with a qualm.

Argument: Why offer only offerings arisen from the mind? It is appropriate to offer diverse pleasant offerings.

The implication here is this: isn't it more suitable to offer real substances, rather than mentally created ones? This is a reasonable argument. Will it be sufficient to make mentally generated offerings if one actually has the means to make actual offerings? One way to understand this is that one only offers mentally created substances when one lacks the means to make actual offerings. So by offering mentally created substances one is not deprived of making offerings.

Another way to understand mentally created offerings is that we don't limit the actual offering substances, such as flowers and so forth, to a mere bunch of flowers. Rather they are mentally multiplied to fill the entire space.

Now if one only makes mentally created offerings when one has the means to make physical offerings then, as previous teachers have indicated, that could be a way to create the karma to be reborn into an area where we can see many nice things, but which we lack the karma to use. Life in the western world is a good example. We see fancy cars and houses and many beautiful things, but we can't use them all because we don't have the wealth to purchase them. Thus one should not resort merely to mentally created offerings if one has the means to make actual offerings.

Then Gyaltsab Je gives a direct answer to the earlier qualm:

Answer: Because I have not accumulated extensive merit previously I have become destitute, without desired enjoyments...

One reason for mentally creating offerings is that one is destitute now as a result of not having previously accumulated extensive merit. This implies that while one may have the means to reach some level of enjoyment, one does not have the means now to obtain whatever one wishes for. The first thing we need to understand here is that being poor and destitute now and not being able to experience desired enjoyments, is a result of not having accumulated extensive merit through acts of generosity in the past. So we need to understand that the law of cause and effect, or karma, is also being presented here.

If one has not engaged in the act of generosity in the past, then one will experience the consequence of being destitute or impoverished in this lifetime. The direct implication is that this is a consequence of not having accumulated extensive merit previously. So in order to secure good resources in the future, we need to engage in acts of generosity now, when we will have the means to accumulate merit. Thus, if one does not have the means to make extensive offerings now, then one has to resort to offering mentally emanated ones to accumulate merit.

Then Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

Since I do not possess other wealth to offer, I request that the protector, who thinks singularly about the purpose of sentient beings, to enjoy this unowned offering for my purpose.

Gyaltsab Je is saying, 'Through being destitute and not having great wealth to make elaborate offerings as *I do not possess other wealth to offer*, I make this request to *the protector*, who is the enlightened being *who thinks singularly about the purpose of sentient beings*. Please accept *this unowned offering for my purpose*.'

Here, *my purpose* indicates for the purpose of accumulating merit, and abandoning both the deluded obscurations and the obscurations to omniscience. So for the personal purpose of overcoming the two main obscurations and amassing great extensive merit one requests those who have great compassion (such as the Buddha) to accept these offerings. In straightforward language, we are saying, 'Even though I don't have great extensive offerings, and I only have these meagre ones, please accept them out of your great compassion, as a way to fulfil my purpose of accumulating merit and so forth'.

However, we need to acknowledge that we do have the means to make basic offerings, such as water bowl offerings, flowers, fruit and so forth. But we should not limit whatever physical substances we may be able to place on our altar without too much effort or cost. Rather, that simple offering can serve as a base for the extensive, expansive offerings that one mentally creates. No matter how meagre or simple an offering may be, mentally turning it into an expansive offering is a way to accumulate extensive merit. This is the main point that we need to understand.

One needs to bring to mind that these are the extensive practices of a bodhisattva. Of course bodhisattvas have already generated bodhicitta, but prior to generating

bodhicitta they contemplated the benefits of bodhicitta as a way to develop that bodhicitta. As a cause for developing bodhicitta one needs to accumulate extensive merit, for which purpose one engages in the practice of making such extensive offerings.

Even if these practices involve some effort and hardship one will definitely reap the benefits and gain positive results. There was once an occasion where there were some other geshe visiting here, and as we were doing some practices, nice meals were brought to us. Geshe Jampel Sengye commented, 'Oh, they are bringing such nice food! We might be reaping the benefits of the difficulties and hardships we went through earlier in life'. I commented, 'Oh, I don't think we should limit the reaping of a good result to just merely receiving nice food now'. Geshe Jampel Sengye said, 'Well, that might be true, but couldn't we still consider the good things that we are receiving now are a result of our earlier hardships'?

1.2.2. Offering one's body

We now come to offering one's body, which is something that we definitely do possess.

The two verses relating to this outline read:

8. *To the conquerors and their children
I always offer my body completely,
May the supreme brave ones enjoy me!
With respect I make myself your slave.*
9. *Being perfectly held by you
I shall, without fear, benefit sentient beings
in existence.
I shall leave earlier negativities behind in
every respect,
And henceforth not create other negativities.*

In relation to the way of making an offering of one's body Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

Regarding the statement, "Since I have a body that can be offered thus I offer it":

To the conquerors and their children I offer completely and always this body of mine, giving up the mind that makes it completely mine. Please, supreme brave beings, enjoy it.

The **objects** to which one offers one's body are *the conquerors*, the enlightened beings *and their children*, the bodhisattvas. The **way** to offer it is *completely and always*; **what** one offers is *this body of mine*, and the **manner** is *giving up the mind that makes it completely mine*. Basically, this refers to giving up our sense of identity or attachment to our body. Normally, we naturally have a very strong sense of ownership of our body thinking 'this is *my body*', which is accompanied by very strong attachment and a very strong sense of identity. Leaving aside that strong sense of ownership and identity, one offers one's body to the conquerors and their children to use as they wish.

Next Gyaltsab Je states:

Please, supreme brave beings, enjoy it. The purpose of offering it is that I make myself your slave with faith and respect and will follow your advice according to your instructions.

Normally we use our body as a slave to our senses and to sustain ourselves. Here, one decides to use one's body to fulfil the wishes of the conquerors and their children. Offering ourselves as a slave or servant means to willingly follow every advice of the conquerors and their children. The king's commands to his ministers and subjects are followed because the king is their ruler, so they have to obey whatever command the king gives. Similarly, as specified here, one offers oneself with respect, willingly following the advice and instructions that have been given by the conquerors. Thus we are putting ourselves into the service of the conquerors and gurus and follow their wishes.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary then raises another query: what does one accomplish by having offered one's body as a servant to the protectors? The answer is:

Having offered it, whatever action I do, since I am being held by you, the protector, I am unafraid of cyclic existence because I am relying on a refuge that is free from all fears, and I will benefit sentient beings.

The specific implication of the benefits of offering one's body to the supreme beings is that a supreme being is an ultimate *refuge that is free from all fears*. Offering oneself to a supreme being who is free from all fears, will free one from all fears, particularly the fears of cyclic existence. Because one does not fear the shortcomings of cyclic existence, one has a courageous mind, which is then used to *benefit sentient beings*.

So that is the ultimate purpose of offering one's body as a slave to the supreme protector, the ultimate refuge—as a way for oneself to become fearless in benefiting other sentient beings.

To extract the main points from these few lines; being a servant implies following every wish or command of the supreme beings. The object to which one is making this offering is the Supreme Being, who is free from all fears, the ultimate protector and refuge. From that one enjoys a state of fearlessness. However, it is not as though one is achieving that fearless state just for personal gain, to further strengthen one's sense of pride and ego. But rather, the purpose for being in a fearless state is to utilise that state to benefit other sentient beings. Here, one again reflects upon the elements of love and compassion in benefiting sentient beings.

Those of you who have received initiations will recall a similar pledge made to the guru at the end of the initiation: As I have offered myself to you as a servant, I will now follow whatever instructions you give.

Then Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the further endeavours in which one engages:

I will leave behind all the meaningless negativities that I have accumulated before, and I will not create new negativity, even at the cost of my life.

This is indicating the importance of purifying the negativities one has created in the past, and of making a resolution to no longer create any negativity. So, with a strong sense of regret of the previous negativities one has amassed, one feels compelled to purify them and not to create any new negativity.

1.2.3. Offerings that are emanated

Here there are two subdivisions:

1.2.3.1. The common offerings

1.2.3.2. Peerless offerings

Some translate the Tibetan terms, *lana yopa* and *lana mepa* as *surpassed* and *unsurpassed*, respectively. When we use the term *surpassed*, translated here as *common*, then that indicates that there are even greater offerings beyond that. *Unsurpassed*, translated here as *peerless*, implies there is nothing that surpasses that. So an unsurpassable offering is the highest form of offering, and there is no offering greater or grander than that.

There are twelve common or surpassed offerings. These all relate to normal worldly activities of our everyday life, which we transform into offerings.

The twelve common offerings are:

1.2.3.1.1. Bath

1.2.3.1.2. Clothes

1.2.3.1.3. Ornaments

1.2.3.1.4. Scents

1.2.3.1.5. Flowers

1.2.3.1.7. Food

1.2.3.1.8. Light

1.2.3.1.9. Crystal palaces

1.2.3.1.10. Blessing parasols

1.2.3.1.11. Instruments

1.2.3.1.12. The blessing that they may be continually in the aspect of offerings

1.2.3.1.1. Bath

This has three subdivisions:

1.2.3.1.1.1. Bathing house

1.2.3.1.1.2. Way of bathing

1.2.3.1.1.3. Drying the body

One of our everyday activities is bathing ourselves. In order to do that we need to have a bathhouse, without which we cannot take a shower; then there is the manner of how to bathe; after which we need to dry ourselves. These are all normal daily activities which can be turned into offerings.

We can go through these quite quickly as they are easy to comprehend, and we don't want to take up too much time with them.

1.2.3.1.1.1. Bathing house

10. *In a fragrantly smelling bathhouse
With crystal ground, bright and sparkling,
With pleasant pillars ablaze with precious
objects,
Decorated with canopies made from bright
pearls,*

There are some variations in how to offer the bathing house: some mention visualising it in the space above. But, in our practice, if we have the merit field in the space above us, then it is good to visualise the bathing house in front of ourselves, in between ourselves and the merit field.

Again, Gyaltsab Je begins his commentary with a query, followed by an answer:

Where does one offer the bath?

In a bathhouse smelling fragrantly because of sprinkled sandalwood, with a floor of crystal, clear of colour, bright and completely clean...

So one visualises a beautiful bathing house with crystal panes and crystal floors.

...having adornments like conch shells and pillars blazing with precious objects,...

The *pillars* refers to the pillars at each corner of the bathing house, which are adorned with beautiful ornaments.

From the top being adorned with a canopy glowing from the bright pearls permeating it.

So basically the bath house is sheltered by a canopy adorned with many pearls.

We will not go into an elaborate explanation of these points here as I have explained them previously. So you can refer to previous notes. They are also explained in the preliminaries of the lam rim teachings, so you can refer to that text. The main point here is that one visualises that the holy beings in the merit field actually come into the bathing house, and take off their garments, which they put in beautiful places and so forth.

1.2.3.1.1.2. Way of bathing

As presented in the teachings one visualises dakinis around the bathing house where the enlightened beings of the merit field are bathing. There are three particular dakinis: one which holds a vase; another holding a substance for cleaning the body, like what we call soap, and the third dakini holds a towel to dry the holy bodies.

11. *To the tathagatas and their children
Out of many precious vases well filled
With pleasant incense water, accompanied
by
Music and dance, I offer in various ways a
bath.*

Gyaltsab Je's explanation is:

One offers a bath to the tathagatas and their children out of many vases made from gold and other precious materials...

Here the dakinis use the vases to scoop up the scented water from the basin, and then pour that out as a way of showering.

That bowl is:

...filled with pleasant incense water that is fragrantly scented and has beautiful flowers in it, accompanied by music and dance.

The water has flower petals in it, which gives the water extra fragrance and scent. There are also dakinis who are playing music and offering dances.

1.2.3.1.1.3. Drying the body

This visualisation involves drying the holy bodies at five points. First the water on the top of the body is dried, then the water on the right side of the body, followed by drying the water gathered on the left side. Then the water at the heart of the body is dried, followed by the water below the navel.

In the bathing ritual, a mirror is used to visualize the entire merit field in it. One needs to understand that the

five dots or points of drying represent the five Dhyani buddhas.

The next two lines of the verse relate to drying of the body:

*12ab. I thoroughly dry their bodies with
Unequaled cloth, clean and infused with
scent.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Then one dries the bodies of the objects of offering with unequalled cloth, which is soft and clean, and infused with pleasant scents.

Here *unequaled cloth* implies a very special cloth is used to dry the bodies of the holy beings. We don't appreciate towels that are too coarse or rough and need to have soft towels and soft clothing. Likewise, here we visualise the best cloth for drying the holy bodies.

1.2.3.1.2. Clothes

I have previously extensively explained the specifics about the garments that are to be offered and you can refer to that.

The next lines of verse are:

*12cd Then I offer them holy and well-scented
Clothes of nice colour;
Various pure clothes, thin and soft.*

Here Gyaltsab Je explains:

Having dried their bodies I offer them holy fragrant garments of good colour...

If they are of the aspect of an ordained Sangha, then one offers the three types of robes, or:

...If they are in the aspect of a householder [or a layperson] then I offer them a variety of soft, fine clothes of good size and colour.

It is good to take note that in addition to making offerings to the normal objects of refuge, such as ordained Sangha, one also makes offerings to bodhisattvas in the lay aspect. This is another way to see the unbiased nature of Buddha's teachings. Suitable objects are to be venerated and are objects of offerings, whatever aspect they may be in. A bodhisattva having the aspect of a lay householder is depicted in lay garments, such as Manjushri, Maitreya and so forth. Ordained bodhisattvas include Shariputra and Maudgalyayana, who were the close disciples of the Buddha.

I have already explained how to discard old clothes.

1.2.3.1.3. Ornaments

In our worldly life, it is not enough just to have fine clothes. It seems that one needs to beautify oneself even further with ornaments. So we can make offerings of these.

The verse relating to this is:

*13. And hundreds of supreme ornaments
I offer also to the supreme Samantabhadra
and Manjushri
And to the ruler of the world and so forth.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je says:

I offer hundreds of supreme ear ornaments, bracelets, anklets, necklaces and so forth, to, among others, Samantabhadra, Mipham, Manjushri,

bodhisattvas in a lay aspect, and to the ruler of the world.

These are examples of bodhisattvas in the lay aspect, which implies that one need not make offerings of ornaments and so forth to ordained Sangha, bodhisattvas and so forth.

Of course in the worldly manner, after beautifying oneself with nice ornaments or jewellery, one will also apply nice smelling substances, scents and so forth. That is the next offering, which we can leave for our next session.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

16 July 2013

Based on the motivation we have just generated in the recitation of the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, we can now engage in the practice of meditation.

[meditation]

You may come out of your samadhi now!

We have just attempted to engage in the practice of giving and taking in the form of a meditation practice. It would be very worthwhile if we could develop the determination to engage in this practice as much as possible in our everyday lives, so that our thoughts, actions and speech contribute to giving our happiness to others, while taking away their suffering. If we can apply this in our everyday life as much as possible, this would, of course, be most worthwhile.

The benefits one derives from doing such a practice are quite obvious. In countries like Australia, people are generally not deprived of sufficient food, clothing or shelter, and if that is the case then there are many practical ways to help them.

The most prevalent kind of suffering experienced here in the west tends not so much to be physical suffering, but suffering on a mental or psychological level. When suffering is of a psychological nature, people don't need physical help with food, shelter and so forth. Rather, the best form of assistance to someone who is experiencing mental or psychological suffering is companionship. We often see how true companions and friends really assist and help others. So we can see that there are many ways we can help others and that we don't need to be wealthy in order to extend our help to others.

We also need to apply the giving and taking practice in practical ways to those who are close to us, because if we can't apply it to them then there aren't many other practical ways to engage in practice. As mentioned previously, the problems of our companions are mostly psychological or mental ones, conflicts of interest and so forth. These problems are very prevalent because they often arise through their relationships with their companions and the partners and so forth. So the problems need to be solved within those relationships.

My way of taking a practical approach is to deal with the immediate situation, and then use that as a basis for improving and expanding one's practice. The practice can then be extended to help others on a broader level. If we are inclined to engage in this supreme practice of giving and taking then we need to remind ourselves again and again what it is that we are attempting to practise. Basically, it is a practice to increase and to further develop the sense of love and compassion within oneself. So it is worthwhile to make this determination: 'I need to try to implement the practice in every possible way, beginning with those who are close to me'. Many of you have found that the practice of *tong len* or giving and taking is a very beneficial one. If you want to gain further benefits from it then this is the way to go about practising it.

1.2.3. Offerings that are emanated

1.2.3.1. THE COMMON OFFERINGS (CONT.)

1.2.3.1.4. Scents/Perfumed balms

The Tibetan word *jukpa* refers to perfumed balms that are applied to the body.

14. *The supreme smell that gives rise
To all the smells of the three thousand worlds
I apply to the able ones' bodies
That are glowing like polished refined gold.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains this verse thus:

The supreme smell that gives rise to the fragrant smells of all the three thousand worlds I apply to the bodies of the able ones, ...

Here *smells of the three thousand worlds* implies that the fragrance of the balms pervade the whole universe. The *bodies of all the able ones* refers to Shakyamuni Buddha and all the enlightened beings.

Then the quality of the bodies of enlightened beings are presented:

... that are glowing and blazing like polished refined gold.

At this point one brings to mind the incredible qualities of the Buddha's body which are enumerated in the list of the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks of the Buddha. As mentioned here, the Buddha's enlightened body is *glowing and blazing like polished refined gold*—it has a natural radiance that fills the entire universe.

When refined gold is polished it has a brilliant glow, and the radiance of the Buddha's body is much greater than that. *Blazing* indicates that the Buddha's holy body has such beautiful radiance, that the more it is seen by sentient beings the more they want to look at it. That is, by merely seeing the Buddha's holy body it produces great joy in the minds of sentient beings.

Earlier, when we were studying *Precious Garland*, we covered the qualities of the Buddha's body, speech and mind in detail. The qualities are also explained when identifying the objects of refuge. So here we can immediately relate to the qualities of the holy Buddha's body. Thus we can see that the earlier explanations serve as a basis to understand further references in the text. Otherwise we would have to spend significant time now in explaining the Buddha's qualities in detail.

1.2.3.1.5. Flowers

We usually offer flowers in front of the image of the Buddha, enlightened ones and deities. In addition, we can also visualise offering flowers to Tara's head ornament, when we do the offering in the Tara practice. For enlightened beings who are in the aspect of a renunciate, we can also imagine offering flowers as a canopy above them. So we should not be limited to offering flowers in just one way.

Also, as depicted in some drawings, dakinis make offerings of flowers by sprinkling them from the sky. My interpretation of this offering is that it is said that certain celestial deities can't come too near humans because we have a foul smell!!! So, from the sky above, they sprinkle flowers onto enlightened beings who are on Earth.

On another level, when His Holiness the Dalai Lama teaches, he is addressing the humans sitting on the ground below him. But there are definitely celestial beings who are listening to the teachings at the same time. They don't sit at the same level as the humans but they are in the space

above. So we need to visualise them above a great lama or a master when they are teaching. Even where one has to give a teaching oneself, there may be celestial beings listening to it. So we need to visualise that. There are of course *nagas* at ground level, but celestial beings such as gods and *dakinis* are in the space above. So the main point is that offering flowers includes visualising sprinkling flowers from the sky.

The verse that relates to the offering of flowers is:

15. *To the offering objects, the able ones,
I offer beautiful flowers, mandarava, lotuses,
Utpala and so forth; all that are well smelling,
In beautiful well-arranged garlands.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins with an answer to a rhetorical question, 'Who should I make offerings to?':

I shall make offerings to the able ones, the supreme objects of offering.

Then Gyaltsab Je poses another question, which he also answers:

With what? With pleasant flowers like mandarava, lotus, utpala flowers and so forth, which disperse all the fragrant scents. I also offer flower garlands well spread out and beautiful.

These flowers are not only beautiful to behold, but they have a beautiful smell. The Tibetan word *selma* is used here, which refers to loose petals or flowers that do not have stems. Thus, flowers with stems are offered as garlands, while flowers without stems are sprinkled or *spread out*. So the offering of flowers to the objects of refuge includes beautiful stemmed flowers as well as loose flowers.

1.2.3.1.6. Incense

The first two lines of the next verse read:

16ab. *I also offer billowing clouds of smoke from
supreme incense
Pervaded by a scent that robs one of one's
senses.*

The Tibetan word translated here as *incense* has a connotation of a substance which, when burnt, produces a beautiful aroma. This is an offering to the smell sense.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of these two lines as follows:

I offer billowing clouds of incense, spreading into the ten directions, of supreme well scented incense that robs one of one senses, like *akaru*¹ and so forth.

The offering here is substances that, when burnt, produce a sweet-smelling scent in the form of smoke. So in this visualisation we can imagine continuous billowing clouds of smoke being emitted from a sweet smelling substance such as incense or other substances which create that beautiful smell or scent.

1.2.3.1.7. Food

The next two lines of the verse relate to the offering of food to the taste sense. They are quite easy to understand so we need not spend too much time on them.

16cd. *I also offer divine feasts made of
Various foods and drink.*

As Gyaltsab Je explains:

I offer to the conquerors and their children various foods, like sugar cane, and various drinks; both as

divine feasts possessing various colours, smells and tastes.

One needs to be mindful about presenting the food offerings in beautiful clean containers. The food offering presented to the taste sense includes drinks as well, and it should have a variety of colours and taste and an enticing aroma. With some practices, we offer things that represent the traditional offering called a *torma*, which is a food offering to the deities or the enlightened beings.

Those who are familiar with tantric practices will recall that we visualise deities accepting the *torma* offerings by visualising a hollow tube of light descending from the enlightened being's mouth to the *torma*. The outside of the *torma* has the appearance of a hard substance, and inside is a nectar-like liquid. It is this nectar which is accepted by the enlightened being when they suck up its essence through the tube of light that serves as a pipe.

The reason why I relate this here is that there are many who do a regular Tara practice. When offering the *torma* in the Four Mandala Tara practice, the *sadhana* indicates that a HUNG at the tongue transforms into that hollow tube of light through which the Tara deity partakes of the essence of the *torma*. That is the visualisation that one does. However one does not need to do that visualisation every time one makes an offering.

One important thing to visualise is that one makes an offering of food or flowers to the deities respectfully and with both hands. So that would be good to visualise when presenting the offerings.

1.2.3.1.8. Light

The first two lines from the next verse read:

17ab. *I also offer precious lamps
Mounted on golden lotuses.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary then explains the meaning of these two lines:

I offer bright precious lamps mounted on bases of many arranged golden lotuses.

The *golden lotuses* serve as containers in which to offer the lamps. So, one can visualise light being offered in many beautifully arranged *golden* containers, which are in the shape of *lotuses*.

As the offering of light is an offering of illumination, it is an offering to the eye sense. However ordinary beings like ourselves may feel uncomfortable offering light which is placed too close to the eyes; we may feel that it is too bright and may actually burn the eyes. So as a way to comfortably make these offerings, we can imagine offering them the illumination of light by arranging them in front of the deity.

1.2.3.1.9. Crystal palace

The next six lines of verse read:

17cd. *On clean ground anointed with incense
I arrange delightful fresh flowers.*

18. *A beautiful crystal palace reverberating with
melodious praises
Ablaze with tassels of pearls and precious
substances;
Infinite, becoming an ornament of the skies,
I also offer to the great compassionate ones.*

In explanation of this verse the commentary reads:

I offer to those in the nature of great compassion a beautiful [priceless] crystal palace ...

¹ A sweet smelling substance.

The Tibetan word *shalme*, translated here as beautiful, has the connotation of being priceless.

... where the well-polished floors are sprinkled with scented water, where delightful flowers are laid out,...

Again the Tibetan word *selma* specifies either petals or flowers without stems. Although not mentioned here, other presentations indicate that one visualises a beautiful throne, which is supported by eight snow lions (two on each side), in the middle of the palace.

... where goddesses sing melodious praises, and which are beautified with tassels made from pearls and various precious substances blazing with their splendid infinite light. With its infinite qualities it beautifies the essence of space and such becomes an ornament of the skies.

That is how the palace is visualised.

1.2.3.1.10. Parasols

The verse relating to this heading reads:

19. *Precious beautiful parasols with golden handles,
Seamed by dazzling ornaments,
Well-shaped and uplifting when seen,
I always offer to the able ones.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

I always offer beautiful parasols made from a variety of precious substances, with golden handles, the edges of the parasol are seamed by many dazzling jewel ornaments, and magnificently shaped so that it is uplifting for the mind just to see it.

Here we visualise a parasol of magnificent shape, with a rim encrusted with various beautiful jewels and ornaments. It is so beautiful that merely seeing it brings much joy. One offers the parasol to shade the heads of the enlightened beings.

1.2.3.1.11. Instruments

Next is an offering of instruments for making music.

The verse for this reads:

20. *Further, may arrays of offering clouds
Of instruments with delightful melodies
That dispel the suffering of sentient beings
Be scattered about.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

In addition to the earlier mentioned offerings, I also present offering clouds of instruments, such as clay drums, with delightful melodies that dispel the sufferings of sentient beings, and satisfy them just through hearing.

May arrays of such offering clouds be scattered about.

The Tibetan word *sosor ne*, translated as scattered, indicates 'may an array of such offering clouds manifest, residing separately in various locations'.

1.2.3.1.12. The blessing that they may be continually in the aspect of offering

This is basically an aspirational prayer that all the offerings that have been presented continually abide, to please the senses of the enlightened beings.

The verse relating to this reads:

21. *May it rain unceasingly
Precious flowers and so forth
On the holy Dharma and all Jewels,
Stupas and the holy bodies.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

May it rain unceasingly precious flowers and other offerings on the twelve types of scriptures ...

The *twelve types of scriptures* refers to the Dharma Jewel in the aspect of scriptures. When we make offerings to the Three Jewels, we can visualise texts to represent the Dharma Jewel, which is the speech of the Buddha in the form of writing.

The commentary continues:

... that are contained in the truth of cessation and the truth of the path

This is the actual Dharma jewel.

... on stupas that contain relics of the Buddha and physical representations of the body of the Buddha, such as paintings and so forth.

In the Tibetan translation, the aspirational prayer comes at this point.

May it rain unceasingly, until the end of cyclic existence, precious flowers and other offerings.

As mentioned previously, this is in a form of an aspirational prayer, referred to as 'blessing the offerings'.

1.2.3.2. Unequaled or unsurpassed offerings²

The verse relating to this heading reads:

22. *Just as Manjushri and so forth,
Make offerings to the conquerors,
I make offerings in the same way to
The tathagatas, protectors and their children.*

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

Just like the empowered bodhisattvas Manjushri, Samantabhadra and so forth make offerings to the conquerors by emanating them into the whole of space, ...

Empowered bodhisattvas refers to high level bodhisattvas who, because of the level of concentration they have attained, are able to manifest incredible, expansive offerings that fill the sky. Taking that as an example to emulate:

I also make offerings to the tathagatas, the protectors of gods and humans, and their children.

In other words: 'Just as these great bodhisattvas present unsurpassable offerings, likewise I make these offerings'.

Then the commentary quotes from another sutra:

From the sutra *Precious Lamp*:

Most flowers are like canopies and are sent out by light rays; having arranged various flowers everywhere the great ones make offerings to the conquerors.

To further explain how to present unsurpassable offerings; as explained in other teachings, one visualises the entire space filled with offerings. This involves visualising the bodhisattva called the Supreme Being Samantabhadra in the aspect of a renunciate (i.e. wearing the robes of one who is ordained), his hands folded at his heart, holding a jewel between his palms. There is a more elaborate form of visualisation, but the condensed form is visualising oneself as Samantabhadra holding at one's heart the jewel held between one's palms. The jewel radiates innumerable rays of light which fills the entire universe. The method of building this visualisation involves visualising each tip of radiated light emanating further offerings. At the tips of each of the light rays that are radiated from the jewel, one visualises

² Previously presented as Peerless Offerings.

various types of offerings manifested. Then from each of the offerings, further light rays are emanated and then from each of the tips of the light rays emanated from the offerings, further replicas of the offerings manifest. Then from those offerings, light rays again radiate forth and from the tips of each of those light rays, further offerings are presented. So because there are infinite offerings that are manifested from infinite rays of light, the entire universe is filled with offerings, which is what we present to the enlightened beings; the buddhas and bodhisattvas. It is said that this visualisation is the easiest one for us ordinary beings to do as a way to present unsurpassable offerings.

Another interpretation of what unsurpassable offering means is that the unsurpassable offering is to engage in the practice of Dharma, and to uphold the doctrine. More specifically it refers to listening to the Dharma and putting it into practice. This form of unsurpassable offering is, of course, a very significant one.

Another way of explaining unsurpassable offering is to visualise one's own virtues from the three times transforming into offerings and then presenting those offerings.

Then there is the most supreme of offerings, which is the actual generation of bodhicitta.

It is good to also take note that these forms of unsurpassable offerings are not beyond our reach. We are already making attempts to engage in these practices. Upholding the doctrine means that if we are contributing to the preservation and proliferation of the Dharma, we are, in fact, making an unsurpassable offering. Furthermore, when we listen to the Dharma and make our own attempts to try to practise it, we are also making unsurpassable offerings. The very fact that we make attempts to accumulate virtue means that we have a basis of virtue to transform into offerings. And to whatever extent we are able, we are at least trying to aspire to generate the bodhicitta motivation.

We need to recall the earlier explanations to ensure our practices, such as upholding the doctrine of the Buddha, listening to the doctrine and trying to put it into practice and so forth become an offering. As mentioned earlier, the real offering is pleasing the minds of the enlightened beings and our gurus. When we engage in, or make an attempt to engage in this practice of upholding the doctrine, which is the source of happiness and goodness for all, or make attempts to uphold that, then that is definitely a means to please our gurus and the minds of the enlightened beings. Furthermore, listening to the Dharma and trying to put it into practice and so forth are the optimum means to please the minds of the enlightened beings. This is how we can ensure our practice becomes an offering.

There will be a bit of a change in our usual routine for the next few Tuesday evenings. Next Tuesday, 23 July, and the following Tuesday, 30 July, I will continue to teach. So, discussion night will be on 6 August. The seminar will be on 11 August, and you have to participate in that well. Tuesday 13 August will be the exam evening and as usual it is good to participate in that exam. On 18 August the annual White Tara initiation takes place.

It would be good for you to organise the seminar well, with good subjects, complemented with some meditation. If it is arranged early enough, people will have time to prepare well. In the past these seminars have been in the form of two groups engaging in discussion or debate. So, if it is done in that way, each group has to know what the subject is in

order to present it, and they also have to know the other groups' subjects, so that you will be ready to raise questions on their topic. And of course you have to be ready to answer questions that are raised by the other group.

As I regularly mention to the Monday night presenters, it is not sufficient just to write down notes of what you will be presenting. You also need to prepare yourself so you can answer questions when they are asked. Also one needs to be mindful when you present topics that have lists of different things. You do have to be able to list what they are. I wouldn't blame you if you get stuck in that situation once in a while. There have been some geshe who have prepared to explain a topic, but who were not prepared enough to give a precise list of the things they were presenting.

It is important for those presenting the Dharma (such as on Monday evenings) not to be satisfied with just preparing material from books and notes. It's important to do some internal preparation as well, which involves spending some time meditating and thinking about the topic that you are going to present. In that way the presentation will not be merely dry words, but because one has spent some time internalising it, it will carry some weight.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

23 July 2013

With the motivation generated with the bodhicitta prayer, we can now engage in the meditation practice.

[meditation]

It would be good to train our mind to the extent that, whenever we see any living beings, we feel a spontaneous wish for them to be happy and free from all suffering. That would be an incredible state of mind to develop. Right now, however, we find it hard to develop a mind of wishing even one sentient being to have happiness and be free from suffering. However it is possible to develop that wish if we further develop our mind.

Right now the only example we have in this world of someone who has spontaneous genuine concern for another being is the love and concern of a mother for her child. If we could develop a similar attitude of genuine love and compassion towards all living beings, then we would, as defined in the teachings, have developed great love and great compassion. It is called great love and great compassion because the wish is directed towards all living beings.

As explained in the teachings, the positive outcome of meditation is said to be the lessening of the delusions. So the more we familiarise our mind with developing this sort of wish for all beings to be happy and free from suffering, the more our delusions will definitely lessen, which will be of direct benefit for our mind. Stronger delusions can definitely be weakened and we can even overcome certain delusions. So if we sincerely practise any genuine form of meditation, the delusions will definitely lessen.

Training our mind in love and compassion means training our mind to be able to immediately respond to the plight of sentient beings. As soon as we see them we will immediately relate to the suffering that they are experiencing and develop a keen wish for them to be free from that suffering. This comes about when we really think about the experiences of sentient beings in cyclic existence.

We are already quite familiar with the teachings of the lower scope, which describe the suffering nature of all existence, and in particular the three types of suffering. Relating to the various levels of suffering in cyclic existence is also a way for us to be able to relate to any kind of sentient being. For as long as they are a sentient being, then, whatever their status, even if they are temporarily enjoying good conditions, they are still an object of our compassion.

Personally, when I see someone enjoying their wealth and opulent lifestyle I immediately feel, 'Ah, they look very happy – but only if they didn't have to die'. Indeed if they were immortal, then perhaps their wealth and luxuries would bring them some form of everlasting happiness. It often might be hard to recall my own mortality, however when I see the seemingly very joyful states that others are enjoying, I am reminded that in reality we all have to die some day and leave behind whatever seeming pleasures that we enjoy now. Underneath that seeming pleasure that others

are experiencing on the surface they are constantly experiencing the suffering of all-pervasive suffering. And of course, they may be experiencing the suffering of change, and the suffering of suffering. Of these, the dormant suffering is the all-pervasive compounded suffering.

This is because of the fact that sentient beings possess the appropriated contaminated aggregates. So the very fact of having the contaminated aggregates serves as the basis for the all-pervasive compounded suffering. This level of suffering is said to be very subtle and deep rooted. In fact it could be rightly said that we can only find the explanation on the subtleties of this form of suffering in the Buddhist teachings. So, to the extent that we relate to the subtler level of sufferings of sentient beings, the more profound our compassion for them becomes.

This is something that we really need to pay attention to, as it is the very basis of our practice. It would be quite presumptuous to eagerly want to practise higher levels of practices without first developing a strong foundation. We can see this with external examples, such as a building construction; if the foundations are not sound then the whole building collapses. That is a fact, isn't it? It is the same with our practice. We need to really train and pay attention to forming very strong foundations for our practice, based on the principles of love and compassion.

EXPLAINING THE TEXT OF THE CHAPTER

2. PROSTRATION

Having covered the section on the various types of offerings, how to present them and so forth, which the text and the commentary explain in great detail, we need to actually try to put the advice into practice. There are no other more profound sources with instructions for making offerings other than what has been presented here. If, after having been exposed to these explanations we still feel, 'Oh, I wonder how I should make an offering', then we have definitely missed the point! Thus, if we are keen to practice then we need to rely on the very detailed instructions that are presented in this text.

If we are not careful we might end up finding ourselves with books stacked up in the bookcases in front of us, but when it comes to our actual practice we might start wondering about, 'How do I actually make offerings? How do I do prostrations? and so forth'. Having access to these teachings and books and not being able to use them would be completely missing the point. That would be a great pity. Thus, having studied these texts and manuals of instruction, when it comes for us to do a certain practice, we need to be able to readily recall, 'OK, this teaching has a very good explanation on this point about this practice, and that teaching gives that explanation'. So in this way, we are able to access what we need for our practice. And of course, many of you have the transcripts, which serve as notes, so that is another reference for you.

A while ago someone who had come to some of my classes here was asked to lead a meditation in Auckland. He said that he initially thought, 'Oh, what should I talk about?' and felt a little bit apprehensive. Then, he said, he remembered that he had some notes from the meditation sessions that I had been giving, so he took them out and read them, and found that he was not short of material to present to others.

As explained earlier, the purpose of presenting offerings to the objects of refuge is so that we can amass great merit to further develop ourselves. So amongst the various types of offerings, as explained earlier, hearing the Dharma and

putting it into practice is the best offering. We need to really take this point to heart. As the great yogi and adept Milarepa said in one of his songs, 'I have no other offerings besides my practice that I offer to please my gurus'.

This section on prostrations is presented with two subdivisions:

2.1. Verbal praise

2.2. Physical homage

Here we can take note that that verbal praise is listed in this commentary as part of prostration, whereas other commentaries on *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life* present verbal praise under the category of making offerings. As an offering, verbal praise takes the form of melodious hymns. Here, however, it is listed under the heading of prostrations. It can fit comfortably into either category.

Benefits of prostration

- As a practice, prostration is one of the supreme antidotes for overcoming pride.
- Another specific benefit is that one creates the amount of merit to be reborn as a wheel-turning king.
- A further benefit is that prostration is one of the greatest forms of purification practices. Thus, it is an optimum method for cleaning our mind to improve our mental health.
- Another practical benefit is that since it involves physical exertion, it is actually a very good form of physical exercise. So we derive some physical benefit from the practice as well.

If someone were to ask, 'Is there any form of practice in Buddhism that has physical benefits?' we can confidently say, 'Oh yes, prostrations'.

As explained in other teachings as well, along with physical prostration there is also verbal and mental prostration. When one engages in the practice of prostrations, it is important to recall the qualities of the objects of refuge, such as the enlightened beings. That is how we derive much greater benefit and merit from the practice. As many of you would already be aware, the physical prostration begins by putting your palms together with your thumbs tucked in between your palms.

Before prostrating onto the ground, we place our hands at either three points or four points on our body.

If it is *four points*, the first is above one's crown, which symbolises obtaining the crown protrusion of the Buddha, which is one of the qualities of the enlightened body. The second is at our forehead which symbolises obtaining the Buddha's spiral hair. Next is placing our hands at the throat, which is to acquire the merit of obtaining Buddha's holy enlightened speech, and fourth is at the heart, which signifies creating the causes to obtain the quality of a buddha's mind.

If it is *three points* then the first is above the crown, then at the throat and then the heart, which symbolise obtaining the qualities of the holy body, speech and mind respectively.

The Tibetan word for prostration is *chag-tsal*, which has two syllables. Each syllable carries a specific meaning which doesn't come across in the English word *prostration*. The first syllable, *chag* has the connotation of clearing away, which indicates clearing away the negativities and imperfections of our body, speech and mind. The syllable *tsal* has the connotation of acquiring, in this case the qualities of the holy body, speech and mind of the enlightened beings. It is good to bring this meaning to mind when one actually does the

prostration and really think about the qualities of the enlightened body, speech and mind. Then, as we do the prostration we can really feel that we are receiving the blessings of an enlightened body, speech and mind.

As with any other Mahayana practice, the motivation needs to be bodhicitta; so try to generate the bodhicitta attitude as best as possible. I have explained this many times, so bring to mind the bodhicitta attitude prior to engaging in the practice.

During the recitation of whatever prayers or praises you may be reciting during the prostration, remind yourself that you are clearing away and purifying the negativities of body, speech and mind that you have accumulated from beginningless times. At the same time think that the blessings of the enlightened body, speech and mind actually enter into your heart; keeping these points in mind while engaging in the practice will ensure that the practice becomes most meaningful and beneficial.

2.1. Verbal praise

Verbal praise refers to praising the qualities of the enlightened beings, which takes the form of a verbal salutation. The relevant verse reads:

23. *I eulogise an ocean of qualities
With an ocean of melodious limbs of hymns;
These clouds of melodious praises to hear,
May they arise everywhere.*

Gyaltsab Je's explanation of this verse begins with:

This oceans of qualities of knowledge, such as love and so forth, I eulogise with limbs of melodious hymns that express infinite qualities.

The commentary explains that the Tibetan term *yang*, translated in the verse as *hymns*, refers to words or sound of the praise, while *yenlag* or *limbs* refers to the cause of the praises, and *ocean* has the connotation of *many*. These are good points to remember as they come in many other texts as well.

Then Gyaltsab Je further explains:

Thus, carry out the praise by visualising that each body has many heads and each head has many tongues.

This visualisation is also presented in *The King of Prayers*, which is a specific practice to gain extensive merit. One does this visualisation to multiply the praise that one is offering by imagining that one has many bodies, and that each body has many heads and each head has many tongues. Thus there are many manifestations of oneself offering the eulogy at the same time.

The final part of Gyaltsab Je's explanation of this verse reads:

Further, even if one does not actually sing the melodious hymns oneself to the great numbers of superiors, may infinite clouds definitely reach them in every place and at all times.

Even if one is not actually singing melodious hymns oneself, hold in mind 'May the infinite clouds of praise and eulogies constantly be presented to the numberless superior beings in all places and at all times'. The last line of the verse should read, 'May they definitely arise everywhere'.

2.2. Physical homage

This has three subdivisions.

2.2.1. To the Triple Gem

2.2.2. To the basis for generating bodhicitta

2.2.3. To abbots, preceptors and so forth

2.2.1. To the Triple Gem

The root text reads:

24. *I prostrate humbly with as many bodies
As there are atoms in all the realms
To all the buddhas gone in the three times,
To the Dharma and the supreme assembly.*

Here, Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

I prostrate humbly to all the buddhas who have come and gone in the three times, to the scriptural and realised Dharma and to the supreme assembly of superior bodhisattvas ...

The objects of refuge

Of the three objects of refuge, the first is the prostration to the Buddha. Offering prostrations *to all the buddhas of the three times* refers to the buddhas who have come in the past, who are residing in the present and who will come in the future. Prostrating to all buddhas means that you are not just limited to one or two buddhas of the past and present and future. Rather, you are visualising all the buddhas who have come in the past, which is an infinite number of buddhas; all buddhas resident throughout the universe at this very time, which is also an infinite number of buddhas, and all the buddhas yet to come in the future, which is again an infinite number of buddhas. Thus one offers the prostration to an infinite number of enlightened beings.

The next prostration is *to the scriptural and realised Dharma*. Here, *scriptural* refers to the three baskets of the Buddha's teachings in general, and *realised Dharma* refers to, for example, the practices derived from the scriptures on three higher trainings.

When we refer to upholding the Dharma it is good to understand that the Dharma one is upholding has these two aspects of scriptural and realised Dharma. *Upholding the scriptural Dharma* means to study, listen, contemplate and think about the subject matter of the scriptures, such as the three baskets of the Buddha's teaching. *Upholding realised Dharma* refers to, having studied the scriptures to actually put the meaning of the scriptures into practice. This would be, for example, engaging in the three higher trainings of morality, concentration and wisdom; or actualising the truth of the path and the truth of cessation.

We can relate this distinction between scriptural and realised Dharma to the Buddha's doctrine; there is the doctrine that is the scriptures or speech of the Buddha and there is realised doctrine. The doctrine of the Buddha's speech or words is the three baskets of the Buddha's teaching, and the realised doctrine of the Buddha is putting the meaning of his scriptures (or words) into practice. More specifically, the Dharma here is Mahayana Dharma, which relates to the Mahayana truth of the path and the Mahayana truth of cessation.

This forges a direct link to the Sangha jewel which is identified here as *the supreme assembly of pure bodhisattvas* who are practising the Mahayana path and actualising the Mahayana cessation.

In summary, when prostrating to the first of the Three Jewels, the Buddha, one is prostrating to infinite numbers of buddhas. The Dharma relates to the scriptural and realised Dharma of the three baskets of teachings and the three higher trainings. More specifically, it refers here to the Mahayana Dharma, which is the Mahayana truth of the path and the Mahayana truth of cessation. Sangha, in general

terms, relates to any assembly of arya beings, and more specifically here to the supreme assembly of superior bodhisattvas, which is specifically identifying the Mahayana Sangha.

The next part of Gyaltsab Je's commentary is a response to a hypothetical question.

How does one prostrate?

... with bodies emanated as many as there are particles in all the buddha fields

That is how one prostrates.

The visualisation that one does during the prostration is to emanate one's body as many times *as there are particles in all the buddha fields*. As explained in *The King of Prayers*, there are numerous buddha fields within just one atom. From this we come to the conclusion that there are many more buddha fields than there are atoms. That is how we actually create the visualisation of prostrating with as many bodies as the infinite numbers of buddha fields, where the Buddha resides.

That covers the explanation of how to do physical prostrations to the Three Jewels.

Explanations in other teachings

According to explanations in other teachings such as *The King of Prayers*, in addition to visualising one's body manifesting as numerous bodies and offering prostrations to infinite numbers of enlightened beings, another way is to visualise oneself as being surrounded by other sentient beings, each of whom manifests numerous bodies. So one is prostrating to the entire universe filled with *infinite numbers of enlightened beings, manifesting infinitely*.

Here it is relevant to present the unique instruction that has been passed down from the earlier masters, which is that when one does the prostration, one visualises *manifesting one's body over the infinite lifetimes of the past*. Thus, one imagines each and every life that one has taken in the past in a human aspect, rather than in whatever form it might have been. Thus one is surrounding oneself with an infinite number of manifestations of oneself in human form.

Benefits

As one does the physical prostration one imagines all of these manifestations of oneself prostrating at the same time, thus purifying all the negative karma created in all those previous lifetimes. It is said that the uniqueness of this practice is that even doing just one prostration purifies heavy negative karmas one has created over beginningless lifetimes in the past. So we purify an incredible amount of negative karma because of our intention and visualisation. Likewise, because one is prostrating to an infinite number of enlightened beings at the same time, one accumulates an infinite amount of merit at the same time. So this is an incredibly powerful way to do the practice of prostration.

Prostrating in this way, with these visualisations and an appropriate motivation, is an incredible practice. During the practice itself our mind is really calm and peaceful, because we have a virtuous frame of mind as a consequence of focusing our minds on a virtuous object. In addition, as we are engaging in a real sense in true virtuous activity, we definitely purify negative karma and accumulate vast amounts of merit. That is a great benefit of this practice. It is really good to understand that this is a really beneficial practice and bring these points to mind when you actually do the practice.

The action

Another point to mention here is that a *full physical prostration* involves touching the five limbs — which are the two hands, our head and our two knees—on the ground. If you are doing a full-length prostration you need to be mindful to stretch out completely on the ground and then to stand up immediately. You should not remain on the ground for too long.

Some teachings explain that we need to ensure that all *four aspects of ourselves are straightened out*. This begins with stretching out our body, which allows the channels within us to be straightened out. When the channels are straightened out then that allows the wind to be straightened out, meaning that it will be flowing well within the channels. As a result of that the mind will be straightened out, meaning that it will be in a good frame; a fresh and clear state of mind. As these instructions are given in the teachings, they must definitely be significant.

That covers physical prostration, explained here under the heading Physical Homage.

2.2.2. To the basis for generating bodhicitta

This is covered in these two lines of verse:

*25ab. To the bases of the awakened mind
And to stupas I prostrate.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

The basis of bodhicitta refers to the causes from which that mind is generated:

There is a Tibetan term *nam* in the verse which indicates numerous, and this refers to the numerous causes of bodhicitta.

Then the commentary lists the causes from which that mind of bodhicitta is generated. The first is:

The three Mahayana baskets;

This refers to the Mahayana scriptures, which give specific instructions on how to develop bodhicitta, such as the seven point cause-and-effect method of developing bodhicitta, and the exchanging self with other technique of developing bodhicitta.

This text we are studying, Shantideva's *Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, is definitely an object of prostration as we always have access to it and by studying it we can understand the supreme method to develop bodhicitta. So this text definitely serves as one of the causes.

The individuals who become a condition for generating that mind;

This refers to genuine individual beings who help us understand what bodhicitta is. They show us the way to generate bodhicitta that has not been generated; they help us to maintain whatever bodhicitta we may have already developed; and they encourage us to further develop and increase that bodhicitta. Such genuine individual beings who help us in that way are definitely causes for developing bodhicitta.

The place where it is generated;

This refers to holy sites where enlightened beings and holy beings have generated bodhicitta. They are places that inspire us to generate bodhicitta ourselves.

The body of the Buddha and so forth;
Stupas;

The body of the Buddha refers to actual representations of the Buddha. As other teachings explain, one can take the bodhisattva vows, either from a living teacher or in front of a

holy image such as a Buddha image or a *stupa*, which represents an enlightened being's mind.

To put all this together, once we have gained an understanding of what this precious mind of enlightenment is, we develop that keen determination to develop it ourselves. Then all the causes and conditions for developing that mind naturally become an object of great respect and veneration. Thus we naturally generate great respect for the teachings and the texts that present the ways and means of how to develop bodhicitta. Then the living masters, the virtuous friends or gurus who present these explanations and give us the vows and so forth, definitely become objects of veneration and respect, along with the place where it is generated, such as holy sites, images of Buddhas as well as stupas. All of these causes are naturally worthy of great respect and veneration, and thus an object of prostration.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary concludes with:

To these I prostrate

2.2.3. To abbots, preceptors and so forth

Here *abbots* refers to abbots who bestow the novice vows, as well as abbots who bestow the full ordination vows.

Preceptors refers to teachers of novice vows as well as the lay person vows.

The lines of the verse relating to this are:

*25cd. I prostrate to abbots and likewise to preceptors
And to the supreme adepts.*

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

I prostrate to the abbots who connect and complete the earlier and later words of individual liberation; likewise I prostrate to the preceptors who bestow the vows.

As mentioned here, abbots confer the rituals of taking individual liberation vows; abbots and preceptors can also refer to one's spiritual teachers.

... and to the supreme adepts who carry the burden of training in the supreme disciplines of the path to liberation.

So the prostration is to the abbots and preceptors who bestow and explain the vows of self-liberation. It is also to those who have taken those vows, and who actually uphold that discipline, which is the path to achieve liberation.

3. REFUGE

We will leave this for our next session.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcribed by Su Lan Foo

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འདུག་པ་བལྟགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

30 July 2013

As usual let us spend some time engaging in the meditation practice. [meditation]

We can now generate a positive motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings by removing them from all suffering and leading them to ultimate happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

REFUGE

In the *Lam Rim Chen Mo*, or *Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, refuge is presented in four subdivisions. *Liberation In The Palm Of Your Hand*, however, adds a fifth subdivision. The four subdivisions of refuge are: the cause of going for refuge, identifying the objects of refuge, the manner of going for refuge and the commitments after having taken refuge. Lama Tsong Khapa's four-point presentation of the essentiality of refuge is very meticulous.

Having a good understanding of what refuge entails is essential. It is considered to be the doorway, or entrance, into the Buddha's doctrine. So refuge is the foundation of the Buddha's doctrine. As presented in the Buddha's teachings, it is also the basis on which one can receive the vows.

1. Causes of going for refuge¹

The causes of refuge can also be understood as the reasons for seeking refuge. As explained in the teachings there are two main causes, the first is to generate fear of the general sufferings of cyclic existence and in particular, the sufferings of the lower rebirths. The second cause is, having generated the fear of the sufferings of cyclic existence and lower rebirths, generating the confidence that the objects of refuge have the ability to liberate one from these fears. Thus one seeks refuge in the objects of refuge.

Refuge in the Three Jewels with these two causes intact will be a pure and stable refuge. Of course, one may initially have a general sense of refuge in the Three Jewels; however a pure and unflinching refuge is one which has these two causes intact. Having complete reliance on the Three Jewels means believing in them one hundred per cent, acknowledging from the depths of one's heart that the Three Jewels have the full capacity to free one from all fears and sufferings. The essential point here is to cultivate an unflinching and absolute reliance upon the Three Jewels.

The greater the fear and sense of reliance one has, the stronger the mind of renunciation one also develops. So we need to see how taking refuge and developing renunciation have a connection and are complementary.

If we are keen to practise the Dharma, then we cannot underestimate the value and essentiality of understanding and taking refuge properly. As explained in many teachings,

it is the very foundation of the Dharma. Generating a true sense of longing to be free from the general sufferings of cyclic existence, and the lower realms in particular, arises from contemplating the plight of having to experience these sufferings over and over again. Would you be able to bear the thought of having to repeatedly experience these sufferings, over and over again? When we really consider this plight, we will definitely generate a keen wish to be free from all suffering. Then, automatically, we will start to think about how best to free ourselves, and who can help us. It is at this point that we turn to the objects of refuge as the unmistakable source of help. The more we gain a deeper understanding of the qualities of the refuge, the greater our confidence and reliance in the objects of refuge will become.

When someone experiences the symptoms of a severe illness, they feel extremely uncomfortable and really long to be free from the sickness and their suffering. It is at the point when they keenly want to be free from their sickness that they seek a skilled and trusted doctor who can prescribe a treatment that will cure their illness. This is a very good analogy that illustrates the need and appropriateness of going for refuge to the Three Jewels.

Gyaltsab Rinpoche mentions in his *Commentary on the Uttaratantra* that an intelligent and sharp-minded trainee needs to have the realisation of emptiness if they are to take unmistakable refuge in the Three Jewels. Other texts also indicate, that even if one has not realised emptiness directly, one would, at the very least, have to have an unmistakable and correct understanding of emptiness that has been established through reasoning.

As mentioned previously, because strong refuge is dependent on developing a sense of renunciation, we need to reflect on the reason why we experience suffering. Suffering doesn't not come about randomly or arise spontaneously from nothing; rather, it is dependent on its own causes and conditions. So what are the causes and conditions of suffering? When we contemplate in this way we realise that it is as a result of negative karma that one created in the past that we experience suffering now.

Taking that further one can ask: why did one create such negative karma? It was because our intentions and actions were influenced by the delusions. When we look further into which specific delusion influences us to create negative karmas, we come to realise that the main delusion is the fundamental ignorance of grasping at the self. At this point one comes to the understanding that without applying the antidote to this fundamental root ignorance, there's no way that the inevitable consequence of suffering will cease. At this point one arrives at the understanding that the antidote for overcoming the ignorance of grasping at the self is none other than selflessness or emptiness. We can relate this to two of the four noble truths: that suffering is to be known, and the origination of suffering is to be abandoned.

When one thinks about the various types of suffering that one experiences, and the origin of that suffering, then an understanding of the need to abandon the causes of suffering will arise. Understanding this will definitely help us in daily life. Whenever we experience any kind of uncomfortable difficulties we can immediately reflect, 'Whatever uncomfortable feeling I am experiencing now has not come about randomly without causes and conditions. It has been caused by something!' So, contemplating in that way actually lessens our pain and suffering, and in this way helps us to cope and better deal with that difficulty or problem.

¹ Ed: These headings have been introduced to relate the teaching to the structure presented in the lam rim.

In summary, there are two main causes of going for refuge, and it is by contemplating those two causes that one develops that keen wish to rely upon an object of refuge to help free oneself from the causes of those fears. With this understanding we need to be able to come to the conclusion that we cannot develop a genuine and strong sense of refuge without reflecting on those two causes.

2. Identifying the objects of refuge

The definition of the **Buddha jewel** is the ultimate source of refuge having the eight qualities of being non-produced and so forth. The Buddha jewel has two subdivisions: the conventional Buddha jewel and the ultimate Buddha jewel.

Conventional Buddha jewel: Of the four bodies of the Buddha, the form body and the emanation body are examples of the conventional Buddha jewel.

Ultimate Buddha jewel: The remaining two bodies, the wisdom truth body and the nature truth body identify the ultimate Buddha jewel.

The definition of the **Dharma jewel** is a completely purified truth in the continuum of a superior being which has any one of the eight qualities, such as being inconceivable and so forth. The Dharma jewel is also sub-divided into two:

Conventional Dharma jewel: The twelve limbs of the Buddha's teachings are an example of a conventional Buddha jewel.

Ultimate Dharma jewel: the truth of cessation and the truth of path.

The definition of a **Sangha jewel** is a superior being possessing any of the eight good qualities of realisation and freedom. It is also subdivided into two main categories: the conventional Sangha jewel and the ultimate Sangha jewel.

Conventional Sangha jewel: This is an arya being i.e. a being who has gained the realisation of emptiness.

Ultimate Sangha jewel: The truth of cessation and truth of the path within the arya being's mental continuum. So it needs to be understood that the two truths can be related to both the Dharma jewel as well as the Sangha jewel.

If one wonders, 'Why do we need to have three jewels as objects of refuge?' then the answer lies in this prayer:

To the Buddha jewel, the unsurpassable supreme guide; the Dharma jewel, the unsurpassable supreme protector; and the Sangha jewel, the unsurpassable supreme companions;

To these Three Jewels that are objects of refuge, I make offerings.

This verse presents the reason for the identification of Three Jewels, which is that we need a supreme guide to guide us in the right direction on the path leading to liberation and enlightenment. So reliance on an unsurpassable supreme guide is most essential to gain the unmistakable method. We also need to have the ultimate protection, which is identified as the Dharma jewel. Likewise we need to rely upon unflinching and compassionate companions to help us along the path, which is the Sangha jewel. So in this way we can understand the need to rely on the Three Jewels.

Now again, if one wonders, since it is the Dharma jewel which is the actual protector, then why do we need to rely upon the Buddha jewel and the Sangha jewel? Doesn't that make them redundant? Are the Buddha jewel and Sangha jewel not protectors as well? The answer is that all three objects of refuge are equally supreme protectors. But the reason why the Dharma jewel is identified as the actual

protector is because ultimately the only way to liberate oneself from suffering is by practising and actualising the Dharma jewel within oneself.

Here we need to gain this very profound understanding that while the Buddha has unbiased and unlimited love and compassion for us, and the Sangha jewel are also completely dedicated and committed to assisting us and being our companions, they are however not able to liberate us just by themselves. Without applying the Dharma jewel within our own mental continuum and actualising it, the Buddha and the Sangha jewel cannot by themselves liberate us. If that were possible, then we would have been liberated long ago; we certainly would not be suffering in cyclic existence now!

The fact that we are still in cyclic existence and experiencing various sufferings is because we have not yet actualised the Dharma jewel within our mental continuum. To give a practical example, we can all identify the ten non-virtues and their opposites, the ten virtues. Making a commitment to avoid the ten non-virtues is the basis for morality, and it is this practice of ethics that will help to protect us from taking rebirth in the sufferings of the lower realms. We need to understand that taking the initiative to adopt the practice of avoiding the ten non-virtues and adopting the ten virtues has to be our own decision. It is by practising that commitment and actualising it in one's mental continuum that one actually establishes the protection that is necessary to avoid the sufferings of future unfortunate rebirths. That is how we need to understand how the Dharma jewel is the actual protector.

As the Buddha himself said, 'I have shown you the method and path to liberation. Now it's up to you to adopt it and put it into practice'. So the Buddha clearly mentioned that, while he presented the unmistakable methods and paths leading to liberation, the decision to actually get there lies with the individual themselves. Furthermore, the Buddha gave this very good analogy of how Dharma practice works: which is of a patient, the doctor and the treatment. When a patient comes to a doctor with certain symptoms, the skilled doctor will definitely prescribe the unmistakable treatment, which is giving, for example, the correct medicine. However if the patient refuses to take the medication or treatment, the patient cannot hope to be cured. Skilled doctors and kind nurses cannot help the patient if the patient is not willing to undertake the necessary treatment.

If someone practises the abandonment of the ten non-virtues, and then observes morality of abiding by the ten virtues then, because they are leading an ethical life, it will be a life that is relatively free of complications and problems. Most importantly, at the time of death, such a person will have a natural confidence that, having to the best of their ability practised avoiding the ten non-virtues and adopting the ten virtues, they will not go through an unfortunate rebirth in the next lifetime. That level of confidence can definitely manifest at that time. So to that extent we need to pay attention to this very crucial practice.

With all of this explanation we can come to another very profound understanding. While one regards, the Buddha jewel, the Dharma jewel and Sangha jewel as supreme and holy objects, one might however relate to them as having being holy from time immemorial, thinking that they have always existed as holy objects. That would be a completely wrong understanding. If we view them as some sort of primordial supreme being, then we might also develop a false belief that they can help or protect us without any effort on our part. So that would be the wrong conclusion.

The right profound understanding is that the supreme objects of refuge that we rely upon did not come about spontaneously without depending on causes and conditions. Rather, they reached that state as a result of practising avoiding every smallest misdeed, and by adopting every small virtue along the path. It was that practice along the path that led them to achieving the ultimate result. What that shows us is that this is exactly how we need to engage in our practice right now. We need to avoid the smallest misdeeds and adopt every single small virtue. Slowly accumulating small virtues is the way we create the causes and conditions for reaching the ultimate state of enlightenment. So this practical approach is actually a very profound level of understanding to adopt.

Here I have covered only the very basics of the objects of refuge. You can rely on the lam rim teachings for a more elaborate and complete explanation. Then, as we go through the text, covering refuge briefly, it will supplement the study you've already done.

EXPLAINING THE TEXT OF THE CHAPTER

3. REFUGE

Unlike most other subdivisions in his commentary, Gyaltsab Je's commentary on the Refuge section of the chapter does not begin by quoting the relevant verse from the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*. Rather it begins by explaining the meaning of refuge as follows:

The meaning of refuge is to mentally hold and verbally express the objects of reliance for liberating one from dangers and suffering.

Thus refuge carries two main causes. As explained here succinctly, *the meaning of refuge is to mentally hold*, refers to mentally holding that full confidence in the objects of refuge. With that full confidence in the objects of refuge, one expresses verbal refuge. These are *the objects of reliance for liberating one from the dangers of suffering*; this encompasses all suffering. That is the meaning of refuge as explained here.

Then Gyaltsab Je goes on to state:

There is causal refuge and resultant refuge. The first is to hold the Three Jewels that already exist as objects of reliance for liberation from dangers.

The causal refuge is a refuge *that already exists*, such as Buddha Shakyamuni and other enlightened beings who are already enlightened; as well as the Dharma jewel and Sangha jewel that are present now. Here *reliance* can be understood as relying on an unfailing friend, someone who will help us at any time; especially when faced with many difficulties. Thus the objects of refuge such as the Buddha are definitely unfailing friends who present us with so much inspiration, advice and so many teachings about how to overcome and uproot our misery and suffering. By relying on them we can definitely achieve *liberation from all dangers*.

Then Gyaltsab Je describes resultant refuge:

The second is to hold the Buddha jewel and Dharma Jewels that one is going to realise in one's own continuum, as objects of reliance for liberation.

This refers to the fact that one will develop Buddha jewel or Dharma jewel in one's continuum in the future.

Practically speaking, we normally take *causal refuge* in the Buddha jewel that already exists as an enlightened being that we relate to, and to whom we make offerings and salutations and so forth. We relate to this causal refuge as an entity that has already obtained the qualities of enlightenment. These supreme enlightened beings are an

object of our reliance because of their kindness to us and the unmistakable advice that they present to us. So one visualises the Buddha and the Dharma and the Sangha from whom one receives inspiration and kindness.

The *resultant refuge* relates to the future objects, where one actualises the Three Jewels; becoming an enlightened being, actualising the Dharma jewel and the Sangha jewel within oneself. Contemplating that is the resultant refuge.

Gyaltsab Je' commentary continues:

The causes for refuge, the refuge objects, and the four ways of going for refuge—by knowing the qualities, by knowing the differences, by acceptance, and by not asserting other refuges—as well as the advice of refuge and so forth one can know from the *Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path of the Perfections* by the great lama. Hence I do not explain them here.

3. The manner of going for refuge

Here Gyaltsab Je presents the third subdivision of the topic of refuge with four further subdivisions:

- *by knowing the qualities* refers to knowing the particular qualities of the Buddha jewel, the particular qualities of Dharma jewel and Sangha jewel;
- *by knowing the differences*, which is explained in six categories in the lam rim
- *by acceptance*, and
- *by not asserting other refuges*,

4. The commitments of taking refuge

In stating *as well as the advice (or commitments) of refuge* and so forth, Gyaltsab Je is referring to the final subdivision of the topic of refuge. The addition of *and so forth* indicates the benefits of taking refuge. This is also explained extensively in the lam rim, as Gyaltsab Je himself mentions:

... one can know from the *Great Expositions of the Stages of the Path of the Perfections* by the great lama. Hence I do not explain them here.

Here, the text is explaining the four divisions of refuge exactly as I mentioned earlier in the overview of the topic of refuge.

Gyaltsab Je further mentions:

The refutation of the mistaken assertion that the truth of the path is never an ultimate refuge, the general presentation of refuge, the difference between ultimate and conventional refuge and so forth I have already explained in the *Commentary on the Uttaratantra*. Thus you can learn from that.

The refutation of the mistaken assertion that the truth of the path is never an ultimate refuge is presented in Gyaltsab Je's *Commentary on the Uttaratantra*. The truth of the path within the Buddha's continuum is explained as an ultimate refuge.

With *the difference between ultimate refuge and conventional refuge*, conventional refuge is understood as a *temporary source of refuge* while *ultimate refuge* is to be understood as a permanent refuge.

Thus far, the commentary is identifying the objects of refuge in terms of a general presentation that can apply to all the tenets of Buddhism. The presentation from this point onwards is based on specifically identifying the Mahayana refuge.

The difference between the common refuge and the uncommon refuge, which refers to the Mahayana refuge, can

be understood in the manner of how the refuge is taken. With common refuge, when one takes those vows of refuge the commitment is, 'I'll seek refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha until the end of my life'. So the commitment is only for the duration of this life. Whereas the uncommon or Mahayana refuge is taking refuge with intention to take refuge until one reaches the state of enlightenment.

The actual Buddha refuge in both the common refuge and uncommon refuge is the same object, the Buddha. However, when it comes to the Dharma jewel, the uncommon or Mahayana Dharma jewel relates to specifically the Mahayana truth of path and the Mahayana truth of cessation; while the Sangha jewel relates specifically to the Mahayana arya Sangha.

Different texts have slightly different presentations of causes of the uncommon Mahayana refuge. The commentary on the lam rim called *Manjushri's Words* indicates that by contemplating the qualities of the Three Jewels, one generates a reliance on them, specifically by thinking about how they have the full ability to liberate one.

In relation to the fear of suffering, one uses one's own wish of not wanting to experience suffering to understand how all other beings are exactly the same; they too do not wish to experience any kind of suffering and they also want to experience all happiness. So one generates a specific fear in relation to oneself, and extends that to all other beings who will also have to experience these various sufferings again and again. Extending that wishing to be free from suffering, as well as being free from those fears to all beings, is the particular cause for taking refuge.

The verse from the root text is placed at this point in Gyaltsab Je's commentary:

26. *Until attaining the essence of enlightenment
I go for refuge to the buddhas;
Likewise, I go for refuge to the Dharma
And to the assembly of bodhisattvas.*

In addition to this verbal assertion of taking refuge one generates the motivational thought that, 'In order to liberate all beings from all suffering, I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I take refuge. Until I achieve enlightenment, I take refuge in the buddhas, the Dharma and the bodhisattvas.

In the Tibetan version the next lines in Gyaltsab Je's commentary are:

... by taking the Three Mahayana Jewels that already exist in the continuum of others, and the Three Jewels that will exist at one point in one's own continuum as the focal object, ...

So, as mentioned previously, this object of refuge is a causal refuge:

... from now until the attainment of the essence of highest enlightenment, when one manifests the dharmakaya at the foot of the bodhi tree,

This is indicating that one takes refuge until one achieves both the place and the state that one aspires to. Specifically the place is *at the foot* or *site of the Bodhi tree*, and the state is the dharmakaya body of a buddha. One achieves the dharmakaya body of a buddha at Bodhgaya, or in the *Akanista* buddha field where the sambhogakaya form of buddhas reside. So one goes for refuge until one is at the place of the seed of the bodhi tree which is in Bodhgaya, and until one achieves the dharmakaya or a buddha's truth Body.

Gyaltsab Je then further explains:

Until that time one takes refuge in the buddhas and likewise in the Mahayana Dharma jewel and takes refuge in the assembly of bodhisattvas, the superior bodhisattvas.

Again, this is identifying the specific objects of refuge: *until that time one takes refuge in the buddhas and likewise in the Mahayana Dharma jewel and the assembly of bodhisattvas, the superior bodhisattvas.*

Furthermore:

One takes the buddhas that are already established as guides of the path, the Dharma jewel that one will generate in one's own continuum as the actual refuge, and Mahayana superiors who have already achieved the Dharma jewel, as companions to achieve refuge.

This description of the way one takes refuge is exactly as I presented earlier.

Next week is the discussion night, so please engage in the discussion well. Following that is the exam, so try to do that well too. And the seminar is coming up, so it is also good to prepare for that and try to participate in it well.

The main thing is to utilise all of this study and practice as a way to ensure that your mind and heart becomes a bit more gentle and kind. That is the main purpose. If we ensure that whatever practice we do helps to reduce the unruly, negative states of mind that are so prevalent within us, then the more that unruly mind is tamed, the more a kind and more gentle mind is manifest and developed further. Then, not only this life, but also at the time of death and in all future lives, we will definitely experience a much more joyful and happier state of mind.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcribed by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

20 August 2013

Based on the refuge and bodhicitta motivation we have just generated, we can now engage in the meditation practice. [*meditation*]

For next week's class I would like to ask Tara Garward to lead the prayers before the meditation. It is important that the younger generation start to take a more active role by training in how to lead prayers and so forth. Tara Institute definitely needs to continue to exist, regardless of how long I am around. So my intention is to provide the means for that continuity to be maintained. I am constantly thinking about what will benefit the centre; when things are working well for the centre it brings me great joy! Of course if it's beyond my ability to help then I can't do much, but I do think about what is best for the centre. I am not intending to boast but I have personally done over a thousand Tara pujas for the success of the centre. Mentioning this now might sound as if I am seeking compensation for buying offerings and so forth, but this is definitely not the case. Normally I am not the type who announces what I do for the centre; rather the main thing is if it is beneficial for Tara Institute.

When I first started teaching at Tara Institute, Wayne and Jeremy were the younger generation—I think Jeremy might have been the youngest. Wayne used to have a good voice then. When we were up at Atisha centre Geshe Dawa used to say, pointing at Wayne, 'Oh, that young lad there has a good voice. If we ask him to lead the pujas, it would be good!' Of course now we can hear that his voice has changed a fair bit; in the recent guru puja his voice was quite hoarse. [*loud laughter*] Wayne himself may not think that he's much older, but the fact remains that he has aged! In any case, the main point is that it would be good for the younger students to start taking initiative in leading pujas and so forth.

In the past I have commented that there always needs to be an assistant for every role. For example a director needs to have an assistant, so that if the director is unavailable then the assistant can temporarily fill that position. The Spiritual Program Co-ordinator also needs an assistant who can step into that role if need be, and in relation to even myself, the teachings will continue to be presented regardless of whether I am around or not.

I remember being in Adelaide once when Jampa Gendun was anticipating going to Italy. I was asked, 'What will we do if he leaves?' I said 'Khensur Rinpoche is here, so why don't you check with him. Why do you need to ask me when Khensur Rinpoche is still here?' Apparently there was no other western teacher who was trained well enough to be able to teach if Jampa had to leave. So they asked, 'What do we do now? How would we find someone to replace him?'

However it's not really our business to think about what is happening in other centres!

Nevertheless, I am always happy when I see a flourishing, well-run Buddhist Dharma centre because it serves a great purpose in helping others. Beyond Dharma centres, even when I see a Christian church for example, running well with a good community, that brings me great joy too, for it fulfils the purpose of the congregation. Thinking in this way and maintaining such positive attitudes will definitely lessen mental pain and agony, and contribute to one's own mental happiness. So, this is a very important point that I am passing on to you.

4. CONFESSING WITH THE FOUR COMPLETE POWERS

Here confession refers to the practices that purify negativities. This need to purify negativities is based on an acceptance of karma. If someone doesn't believe in karma then they would not see the need or relevance for engaging in any purification practices.

The need to purify negativities comes about because one does not wish to experience the consequences of negativities, which are not limited to the suffering of pain. In fact any kind of unwanted or unpleasant experience is the consequence of having amassed negativities in the past. Likewise, if we wish to experience pleasant circumstances we need to take an interest in accumulating virtue, as any happiness that we experience is a result of virtue. So, we need to know how to accumulate virtue and how to discard and purify negativities.

A keen interest in wanting to purify negativities arises from an understanding of the cause and effect sequence of the law of karma. One might wonder about the purpose of engaging in purification practices. The simple answer, as presented in the lam rim teachings, is because one wishes for happiness and does not wish to experience any suffering. As will be explained, purification is achieved when the four opponent powers such as regret and so forth are intact. These four opponent powers are also explained extensively in the lam rim teachings on karma.

When one understands that the causes of suffering are negativities, and one does not wish to experience suffering, then one understands the need to purify those negativities. Likewise if one wishes to experience happiness, one needs to create the cause of happiness, which is virtue.

This understanding of karma, even at this very basic level, can be related to our everyday experiences in this very lifetime. When we relate the various unpleasant experiences we have in our everyday life, as well as the sense of fulfilment and joy when things go well to the explanations of karma, then our understanding of karma deepens and is firmly established. We have all experienced the ill-effects of anger. Because it is such an unpleasant experience, no-one willingly chooses to feel angry, so in order to overcome the unpleasant experience of anger one will attempt to practise patience. As one develops more patience, one will notice that the mind of anger becomes weaker. It is through one's own experience that one will see the positive effect of

practising the virtue of patience. Thus, acquiring virtuous states of mind, such as developing patience to oppose the non-virtuous state of mind of anger, will help to overcome disturbing and unpleasant states of mind.

We would all consider ourselves Dharma practitioners who engage in some form of practice. So if we are really inclined to practise the Dharma, then we need to ensure our practice is one that is essentially based on the actions of discarding and adopting, which means discarding negativity and adopting virtue. If our practice does not comply with this practical aspect, then we won't really have much of a basis for real practice. We need to understand that this is how we need to engage in practice.

There are two subdivisions to this section of the text:

4.1. General presentation

4.2. The individual meaning

4.1. General presentation

Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins his explanation with:

One should strive to not have any negativity from the very start. However should one, although striving in this way, receive faults through the power of carelessness and the many afflictions, then it is unsuitable to just leave them thoughtlessly.

As the commentary explains, it is best to strive from the *very start* to not engage in *negativity*. However, due to the faults of *carelessness*, or lack of conscientiousness, and the *many afflictions* we continue to accumulate negativities. This is actually indicating one of the four ways that compel us to engage in negativity. As explained in the teachings, the four conditions for creating negativity are:

1. Lack of conscientiousness
2. Having many delusions
3. Lack of faith
4. Because of not knowing

So when one does incur negativity it is *unsuitable to just leave them thoughtlessly* or carelessly. Rather, as the commentary further explains:

One should strive in the method for confession as laid out by the Compassionate Teacher.¹

The confession of downfalls should be done as explained in the higher and lower vows. The confession of negativity should be done with the four powers.

Higher and lower vows relate to the particular set of vows. For transgressions of the tantric vows there is a particular confession method explained in the tantric teachings. Likewise, if one has committed a downfall of a bodhisattva vow, the way to confess that is explained in accordance with the bodhisattva vows. It is the same with the self-liberation vows, with particular methods of confession for fully ordained monks and so forth.

Having mentioned that *confession of negativity should be done with the four powers*, the four powers are thus introduced.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

From the *Sutra of the Four Dharmas*:

Jampa, if bodhisattva mahasattvas possess the four dharmas then, although they create and accumulate negativity, it will be cleared away.

This refers to one of the four ways of amassing the karma that is both created and accumulated; also referred to as the karma where the result is definitely to be experienced.

To continue with the quotation from the sutra:

If the four are stated they are: thorough application of strong repudiation, thorough application of the antidote, the power of reversing from the fault and the power of the basis. These are as it is explained.

If the created and accumulated karmas are karmas definitely to be experienced, then what need is there to talk about those that are not definite.

It is important to not only be able to identify what the four opponent powers are, but to recall them when engaging in purification practices.

The power of regret

Then Gyaltsab Je goes on to explain the four opponent powers individually:

The first power: This is generating many regrets for the non-virtuous karma created. To generate this, one needs to meditate well on the way the three results are generated from non-virtuous karma.

To explain this point we can use the example of the negative karma of killing. In order to develop regret about the negative karma of killing, one needs to contemplate the three types of results that will be experienced as a consequence, which are:

1. The ripened result
2. The result similar to the cause
3. The environmental result.

As explained extensively in the lam rim teachings, there are specific consequences that accompany each of the types of results. So when one thinks about the prospect of having to experience one of these results, then strong regret about having engaged in the negative act of killing will develop. As explained in the teachings, the intensity of the regret should be to the same degree as regret about having consumed poison, where there is a profound wish to expel the poison from your system. Another example is a poisonous snake suddenly dropping on your lap; you immediately want to get rid of it!

With the example of consuming poison, three individuals consume the same type and quantity of poison at different times. The first person is already dead and the second person dangerously ill and facing death. The third person, having seen that the first person has perished and that the second person is very ill, becomes very anxious when he realises that he has consumed the same substance. With one dead and the other dangerously ill and facing death, the prospect of having to face the same consequences is quite apparent!

While that third person may not have experienced the effects of the poison right away, seeing the fate of the other two he would develop very strong regret and would definitely want to get rid of that poison from his

¹ Here *Compassionate Teacher* refers to the Buddha.
Chapter 2

system. This analogy is presented as a way of indicating the extent of regret about having engaged in negativity.

As the teachings explain, if someone develops strong regret about having engaged in some negativity, then half of the negative karma can be purified just by developing that regret. Furthermore, when strong regret is developed then that will automatically encourage the individual to refrain from engaging in negativity again, thus the power of reversing from the fault will be applied. Then the means to purify negativity, with thorough application of the antidote and the power of the basis, will also naturally arise in the mind. So we can see that the application of the later three opponent powers is related to having developed a strong regret first.

To return to that illustration of the three individuals who have consumed poison, the first person is analogous to the person who has created negativity in the past and, as a result, has been reborn in the lower realms. The second person is analogous to one who is about to be reborn in the lower realms. The third person, seeing the fate of the first and second persons, realises that the negativity that they have created is the very same cause that will lead them to the same consequence experienced by the first and second persons, which is to be reborn in the lower realms. So by contemplating the suffering of the lower realms and realising that one has created the causes to be reborn there oneself, the urgency to purify those negative karmas will naturally develop. In this way a keen wish to purify negative karma will naturally be developed. This is how the understanding of the cause and effect sequence of karma is definitely related to the intensity of our determination to purify our negative karma.

The analogy of the three individuals who have consumed poison, in particular the third individual who is facing the prospect of the same fate of the first two, is a very powerful one. The third person still has a chance to rid themselves of the poison so that they won't have to experience the same fate as the first two. If the poison is identified quickly, there are ways of neutralising or eradicating it. When someone is bitten by a snake, for example, there are anti-venom injections to counteract that poison.

But if measures to eradicate the poison are not taken, it is quite certain that the third individual will have to experience the same consequences as the first and second individuals. So it is up to the third individual to do something about it and to take urgent measures to get rid of the poison. It is good for us to identify ourselves as the third person, who has created negativity but who still has a chance to purify negative karma. When we think about the prospect of having to experience the consequences, we will develop an urgent need to purify negative karma.

It is appropriate to relate ourselves to the third individual. It gives us some sense of hope, in the sense that we are not in the position of the first and second individuals. As an example of the third person, we still have good prospects as we have the chance to purify our negative karmas. So this is a very relevant example to use to encourage ourselves.

Earlier we mentioned the four conditions that compel us to engage in creating negativity. We have just dealt with

the first, lack of conscientiousness. The second is having many delusions, the third is lack of faith and the fourth is the lack of knowledge. These are really important points to consider.

How true it is that we lack conscientiousness?

When the delusions are very prevalent, then they are a doorway to engage in negativity.

Third is the lack of faith, which can be directly related to the lack of faith in karma. If we don't have faith that negativity will result in unpleasant suffering, and that virtue will result in happiness, then there will be nothing to prevent us from engaging in negativity. One will also not take any interest in accumulating virtue.

The fourth condition is quite obvious—if we lack knowledge we won't know how to avoid creating negativity. Lack of knowledge is overcome by gaining knowledge. Once we gain the knowledge of how to engage in virtue and abandon negativity, we will develop the necessary measures for the desired outcome. The whole purpose of our study is to remedy the lack of knowledge. The lam rim teachings tell us that if we lack the knowledge of how to apply the antidotes, then when we come out of meditation there will be nothing to prevent us from engaging in negativity again. The lam rim teachings, which I have covered in the past, explain these points thoroughly.

The power of remedy

Having described the first power the commentary then presents the second power, known as the power of the remedy or, more literally, the application of the antidote. One should not take a limited view of these remedies. Some teachers explain that all virtues can be the application of the antidote. Others explain that all virtues done with the intention of a purification practice will become the application of the antidote. However the fact remains that all virtues serve as a means to become an antidote to negativity. This is a good point to keep in mind.

Gyaltsab Je's presentation in his commentary reads:

The second power: There are, as explained in the *Compendium of Trainings* ...

Shantideva's text *Compendium of Trainings* presents six remedies:

1) ... relying on profound sutras, ...

Here *relying* means to actually recite profound sutras.

2)... meditating on emptiness, ...

This is one of the most profound remedies.

3)... relying on recitation ...

Recitation specifically relates to the recitation of mantras of particular deities, which are powerful for purification.

4)... relying on the holy form, ...

This implies constructing holy images such as statues, and stupas and so forth.

5)... relying on offerings ...

This refers to making offerings.

6)... relying on the names ...

Here *names* means reciting the names of holy beings such as buddhas and bodhisattvas.

The power of resolve

The third power: Refraining perfectly henceforth from creating negativity.

This implies developing a strong commitment that 'Henceforth, I will not create negativity'. One of the points in *refraining perfectly henceforth from creating negativity*, is that in order for it to be a sincere and honest resolve, one needs to develop the strong intention, 'I will not engage in that negativity again'. At that moment one develops a strong intention to refrain from negativity. If, however, later on, due to the earlier mentioned conditions, one finds oneself creating negative karma again, it will not incur the extra negativity of lying, because of the fact that one was sincere and honest at the time the resolution was made.

There are also explanations about how one can make a promise to refrain from negativity for a specific period of time, such as a few hours, one day, two days and so forth.

The power of reliance

The fourth power: Meditating on bodhicitta and so forth.

Although not mentioned explicitly here, this also refers to generating refuge as well as meditating on bodhicitta. This is as explained in other teachings.

Some may think that the power of reliance, or the power of basis, only refers to the three objects of refuge. However, as indicated here, generating bodhicitta is also the power of reliance. One needs to understand this point.

As explained in the teachings, any negative karma we create is in relation to either the objects of refuge or ordinary sentient beings. The negative karma that one creates in relation to the objects of refuge is purified by taking refuge in the objects of refuge. The object we rely upon is the very object with which we created the negative karma! The negative karma we create in relation to sentient beings is remedied by generating bodhicitta for sentient beings. That is why refuge and bodhicitta are specifically listed as being the powerful basis.

Gyalsab Je then explains in the commentary:

Here the first power is explained elaborately.

Here indicates the first power being explained elaborately in this chapter.

Furthermore:

Regarding this one needs to remember the time of the negativity, the cause, the doorway, the action, the object and how often one did it.

This is a very meticulous presentation of how to purify negative karmas. In relation to the *time* we engaged in *the negativity*, it might be hard to recall all of the details of the negativities one has created in the past, such as when we were quite young. But we can definitely recall on a day-to-day basis the kind of negativities we engage in now. *The doorway* indicates the three doorways of body, speech and mind. *Action* refers to the kind of action the negativity involved. *The object*, refers to the object of the negativity *and how often one did that*. As mentioned earlier, although we might not recall specific details from our

past, we can definitely relate to instances of the negativity that we create now.

This can also be related to the might of the omniscient mind. The mind of the Buddha is an omniscient mind, thus it is the only mind that is said to know karma in its entirety; i.e. which knows the most subtle and detailed aspects of karma. Only an omniscient mind is able to know the details about past lives. As ordinary beings we cannot recall any instances of our past lives—we don't have that memory. However when an omniscient being looks at our continuum, they are able to see each and every instance of our past lives and details of how and when we created negative karmas. *The time, the specific negativity, the cause* and so forth, all of these details would be known in great detail. That is why the subtleties of karma are said to be extremely obscure phenomena, which only an omniscient mind can know in full detail.

4.2. The individual meaning

This is subdivided into four categories:

This section explains the meaning of each opponent power again, which are:

4.2.1. The power of thorough repudiation

4.2.2. The power of the basis

4.2.3. The power of the thorough application of the antidote

4.2.4. The power of reversing from faults

4.2.1. The power of thorough repudiation

This is also subdivided into four:

4.2.1.1. Generating regret by analysing the way one created negativity

4.2.1.2. Meditating on regret by fearing dying with negativity and going for refuge

4.2.1.3. Meditating on regret by considering elaborately the way one meaninglessly generated negativity

4.2.1.4. Considering the way negativity is frightful

4.2.1.1. GENERATING REGRET BY ANALYSING THE WAY ONE CREATED NEGATIVITY

Again this is also subdivided into four:

4.2.1.1.1. Making requests to the object of confession

This involves declaring one's negativities and making requests to the object of one's confession.

4.2.1.1.2. General confession from the point of view of time, cause, aspect and so forth

4.2.1.1.3. Confessing heavy negativity created with regard to special objects

4.2.1.1.4. Confessing with regret generated by contemplating the undesired results of non-virtue

4.2.1.1.1. Making requests to the object of confession

The verse relating to this reads:

27. *The complete buddhas residing
In all directions, and the bodhisattvas,
Those possessing great compassion,
I request with folded hands.*

In his commentary Gyalsab Je explains the meaning of this verse thus:

With hands folded I request the fully enlightened buddhas [such as Buddha Shakyamuni] and the bodhisattvas abiding in all the directions, those

endowed with great compassion, to listen to my regretful confessions of negativities.

At this point one visualises the enlightened beings, the buddhas, in the space in front of oneself surrounded by the bodhisattvas. Thus the *buddhas and bodhisattvas* are the objects of reliance to whom one is confessing one's negativities. Even reading this verse itself can be a very meaningful way to build up that visualisation, and to remind oneself of the object of focus for one's confession.

One is pleading with the *buddhas and the bodhisattvas abiding in all the ten directions* to 'Please listen to my regretful confessions'. Here *regretful* has the implication of very strong regret about having engaged in such negativities, to an extent similar to the analogy of having consumed poison and wanting to immediately get rid of that poison. Thus in the presence of these enlightened and holy beings, buddhas and bodhisattvas, who have great compassion and the means to help us to purify our negativities, we declare our negativities and plead with them to please listen to us.

Earlier I explained the analogy of the three beings who consumed poison. When one really thinks about that in relation to the negativities, then one's regret will not just be fleeting. Rather we will definitely develop a very strong and deep sense of regret, and the wish to purify the negativities will naturally be quite strong as well.

It is really important that we reflect upon the consequences of the three types of results of negativity in order to develop that strong determination to purify our negativity. The three types of results are extensively explained in teachings such as the lam rim and it would be good for you to refer to that, to familiarise yourself with those types of results and so forth.

We need to understand the real significance of engaging in preliminary practices such as purification, which is a prerequisite to further developing our meditation practices. The reason we find that it is very hard to focus on the meditation object now, and that our mind is very dull and unclear, is because of negativity, specifically the strong negative imprints that we have on our mind. So, negativity is what hinders our further development.

Another important point to note is that there is a difference between negativity and a negative mind. For example, attachment in the desire realm would be a negative mind and the imprint of attachment left on the mind is the negativity. This is to be understood as follows: whenever one creates any negative action, in the very next moment that particular action will have ceased, however an imprint is left upon the mind in the form of a potential to produce negative results. That imprint left upon the mind is the negativity. Therefore a distinction needs to be made between a negative mind and negativity, and likewise, between virtue and a virtuous mind. While a virtuous mind and non-virtuous or negative minds are consciousness, virtue and negativity are not consciousness. I have explained these distinctions previously as well, and it is important to keep them in mind.

Generally we would say that there are no redeeming qualities in negativity. However the lamas have a common saying, 'Negativity does have one good quality,

which is that it can be purified'. This is also an important point to acknowledge. I have also explained previously that the purification of negativity actually takes place when one engages in a practice that will prevent one from experiencing the negative results of a previously created negative action. So, when a purification practice is done properly, one will not have to experience the negative result of that negativity. There is also a word in Tibetan, *jang* which, when used in relation to negativity, means to purify negativity. But when this particular Tibetan term is used in relation to virtue it implies *increasing* virtue.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcribed by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་པའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

27 August 2013

Based on the refuge and bodhicitta motivation that we have just generated, let us now engage in the meditation practice. (*Pause for meditation*)

You can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, to free them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

4. CONFESSING OF NEGATIVITY WITH THE FOUR COMPLETE POWERS

4.2. The individual meaning

4.2.1. The power of thorough repudiation

4.2.1.1. GENERATING REGRET BY ANALYSING THE WAY ONE CREATED NEGATIVITY

4.2.1.1.1. Making requests to the object of confession (cont.)

In our last session we spoke quite extensively about the purpose and need for purification practices. Then we covered verse twenty-seven. As presented in this verse and explained in the commentary, one first visualises the enlightened beings and the objects of refuge in the space before oneself. One then makes the request to these enlightened beings; in particular to the Omniscient and Compassionate One, Buddha Shakyamuni, to accept one's confession. One then engages in the purification practices. In fact, it is really very good to recall the Buddha's presence in all our activities, both mundane as well as spiritual. That is a really good way to be mindful about ensuring that one maintains a virtuous frame of mind.

In our normal activities such as drinking or eating, it is good to recall the Buddha and make offerings of the food and drink to the Three Jewels. When that becomes a habit, then whenever we consume food and drink, even if it is just a cup of tea, we will remember to offer it. If we were to forget to offer it in a rushed moment, soon afterwards we would start to feel a bit uneasy and feel regret, 'Oh, I didn't get the opportunity to offer my tea'.

When we start to feel uncomfortable in the event that we forget to make an offering, then that is one sign that we have actually incorporated the practice into our daily life. Likewise, it is good to remember the enlightened beings during other activities such as travelling and so forth. Also before we go to bed it would be really good to visualise the Buddha right above our pillow. Recalling the enlightened beings just before we go to sleep would indeed be a very good practice.

We can notice for ourselves that when we are not able to engage in a familiar activity we start to feel

uncomfortable. This is particularly true with mundane activities, such as when we have formed the habit of going to a movie once a week or watching an episode of a TV serial every week. When we don't get a chance to do that activity then we feel uncomfortable and regret what we might have missed.

It is because of our familiarity that there is a sense of unease and regret when we break that habit. Just as that is true for insignificant mundane activities, so too as we start to develop more and more familiarity with engaging in virtue, that same sort of regret will arise when we miss an opportunity to engage in virtue.

We need to make it part of our practice to periodically recall the enlightened beings such as the Buddha, so that we feel the presence of the Buddha at all times. Every time that we contemplate the qualities of the enlightened beings, we obtain immeasurable benefit. The more we become familiar in recalling the unsurpassable qualities of the enlightened beings, such as their great love and compassion, the more it benefits our own mind. Thus, any kind of mental disturbance that we may feel will subside the moment that we recall the qualities of the Buddha. Our mind will definitely feel at ease and we will feel a real sense of fulfilment. This is a very practical benefit.

By recalling the Buddha on a day-to-day basis we familiarise our mind with the qualities of the enlightened beings, which will naturally carry through all the way to the end of our life. Then, when we are facing death, due to our earlier familiarity we will naturally be able to remember the Buddha. Focusing on the Buddha at the time of death will definitely protect us from being reborn in the unfortunate realms in the very next life; that is because one's mind will be completely immersed in virtue. As explained in the teachings, when the last thought in our mind is a virtuous one, it will ensure that we will have a higher rebirth. This is how the Buddha, the enlightened beings, and the objects of refuge protect us, by enabling our mind to be in a virtuous state.

The following verse was presented last week:

27. *The complete buddhas residing
In all directions, and the bodhisattvas,
Those possessing great compassion,
I request with folded hands*

These lines exhort us to recall the enlightened and noble beings, buddhas and bodhisattvas, all of whom possess great compassion. The essence of the qualities of the enlightened beings and bodhisattvas is great compassion, and just recalling this will ensure that our mind is in tune with great compassion. This is an incredible method to generate a virtuous and positive frame of mind, as well as a way to amass great merit. As mentioned previously, through the familiarity with this state of mind in our daily life, we will automatically be able to anchor our thoughts and focus on the objects of refuge at the time of death. Our mind will be clear and calm and focused on the essence of the practice, which is going for refuge.

If we don't pay enough attention to this fundamental aspect of practice and constantly seek some higher form of practice, then the danger is that at the crucial moment of death we will be confused as to what to focus on. If we

have never developed real familiarity with any one practice, then at the critical moment when we face death we may wonder what practice to do and what object to focus on. A confused mind is not a conducive state of mind to be in at the time of death. So we really need to acknowledge the essence of the practice and try to familiarise ourselves with it. At our level we may not yet be able to engage in grand or high level practices, however we can definitely manage to focus on the objects of refuge.

4.2.1.1.2. *General confession from the point of view of time, cause, aspect etc.*

This is another meticulous presentation. Here we go into detail about the time, cause and aspect of the negativities that one has engaged in. Recalling these details and confessing them makes our purification practice a complete form of practice.

The following verses are quite easy to comprehend, so we can go through them quickly.

28. *From beginningless cyclic existence,
In this life and in others,
The negativity that I have done by myself
Or induced others to do,*
29. *Which I hid due to being confused by ignorance,
That I rejoiced in,
Seeing these faults
I confess them to the protector from the depth
of my heart.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Since beginningless time I have circled in cyclic existence. I confess all negativities in this and other lives due to being confused with regard to the ripening result of karma.

Time

The first part refers to the duration. In terms of duration we have circled in samsaric existence since beginningless lifetimes. It is said in the teachings that we cannot pinpoint our first life, thus there is no beginning to samsara; the continuity goes back endlessly. We could hypothesise about our beginning, but it is in fact impossible to determine the first human race on earth. Likewise with going back through our past lives; it is impossible to determine that there was a beginning. Thus, as indicated here, we have been circling in samsara over beginningless lifetimes.

Cause

One confesses all the negativities one has done in this life, as well as all other previous lifetimes. The cause of those negativities is being confused or, more literally, not knowing the ripening result of karma. So confusion or ignorance particularly refers to ignorance of karma, i.e. not knowing the cause and effect sequence of karma, such as that engaging in non-virtuous actions will bring about unpleasant consequences, and engaging in virtuous actions will bring about happy results. So here ignorance specifically means not knowing the cause and effect sequence of karma. In particular, as explained here, the ripening results of negative karma are suffering; particularly to be reborn in lower realms. That covers causes.

Aspect

Because of confusion or ignorance one does not know that by engaging in virtuous actions one will experience happy results, and by engaging in non-virtuous actions one will experience suffering. Without knowing this, how would one possibly avoid creating negative karma and adopt virtue? Without that knowledge there is no encouragement to practise in that way.

This understanding of the cause and effect sequence of karma helps to prevent one from creating negative karma, while at the same time adopting virtue. Most importantly, it will help one to generate great compassion for others who are engaging in non-virtuous activities. Normally when we see someone engaging in grave negative deeds, we might scorn them or feel hostile, thinking that they are really bad and evil. But with this understanding we will feel great compassion for them, knowing that they are engaging in deeds that will bring about the grave consequences of great suffering. Then our attitude towards them will be naturally one of great compassion, because we understand that they are creating these negative deeds out of ignorance. Overpowered and controlled by ignorance, they are compelled to engage in those negative deeds. This is the reason why we should feel great compassion for them.

We can relate to this with our own experiences. Whenever we have engaged in negative deeds it was because we felt that we were compelled to do so; we either didn't know the consequences or because we were controlled by strong delusions.

The way to really contemplate how beings who are voluntarily engaging in great misdeeds have no control over their actions, and indeed are compelled to engage in these negative deeds, is to relate it to ourselves. We are supposed to have an understanding of karma, knowing that engaging in non-virtue will bring about suffering and engaging in virtue will bring about happiness. Yet we still find ourselves engaging in negative deeds under the influence of strong delusion. If that is case for us who have some understanding about karma, then how much more so will it be true for those who don't have any understanding about karma?

When we bring that understanding to mind, then instead of feeling hostile and generating anger towards those who are creating misdeeds, we can develop a sense of great compassion for them. Understanding karma becomes a means for one to develop compassion and also develop a sense of patience with them. These are really important points for us to consider. Whenever we relate to passages in the teachings such as those presented here, it is always good to try to reflect upon the main points. How does it become personal instruction? How does it encourage us to engage in the practice of developing essential points about the path? How does it help us to develop a sense of renunciation? How does it help us to gain higher levels of understanding? How does it encourage us? To relate the teachings to one's own understanding of the essential points of practice is most important.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary then further explains:

I confess the negativities that I have done myself and those that I have induced others to do, as well as the faults of having rejoiced in the negativities of others, due to being oppressed by the confusion of ignorance regarding the law of cause and effect.

As the commentary explains, we are confessing *the negativities that I have done myself*. Thus we are confessing negativities we have engaged in ourselves, as well as those that we *have induced others to do*. The negativities that we have engaged in include non-virtuous actions such as killing, stealing and so forth. Inducing others means influencing others to engage in negative actions. Here it is important to note that in order to incur a negativity of killing or stealing and so forth, one does not need to perform the action oneself. If one influences or orders someone else to perform an action on behalf of oneself, or for the purpose of both, then when they complete that action, one incurs the negativity of that misdeed oneself. It is essential to understand this.

Furthermore there is the fault of *having rejoiced in the negativities of others*. This refers to feeling glad when others are engaging in negativity, rather than acknowledging their actions as being a fault or a misdeed. One incurs negativity when one is happy to see others engaging in negativity.

One commits these negativities *due to being oppressed by the confusion of ignorance*. As explained previously, one engages in these negativities as a result of being completely confused or ignorant about the law of cause and effect.

Thus there are three main types of negativity: those performed by oneself; those that one has induced others to do; and rejoicing in the negativities that others perform.

In his commentary, Gyalsab Je further explains how to develop regret and make a confession.

Generating an understanding of these faults of mine I regret them, and accordingly confess them from the depth of my mind to the protectors, not hiding or concealing them.

As explained here, *generating an understanding of these faults of mine*, indicates that one actually recognises the negative actions that one has created and acknowledges them as faults. There is a part in the confession ceremony for monks and nuns where the abbot asks, 'Do you see the faults as faults?', to which the response is, 'Yes, I do'. That response indicates that one is acknowledging the faults as being faults and taking personal responsibility for them. Following that, the next question is, 'Henceforth will you apply restraint well?', and the response is 'Yes, I will'.

Confessing faults *from the depth of my mind* indicates acknowledging one's negative actions as being misdeeds, and from the depth of one's heart generates a determination to confess and purify them. As mentioned here, one confesses these negativities *to the protectors*, which means the enlightened beings and bodhisattvas. So the enlightened beings are the object of one's confession, and one does not hide or conceal negativities in their presence. This indicates that one completely declares all the negativities one has accumulated since beginningless time.

Following that confession with a strong regret that is generated from the depth of one's heart, one then develops a strong commitment not to engage in negativity again. That is the third power, the power of resolve or refraining henceforth from creating negativity. So we can see in these two verses a summary of the four opponent powers.

As the past masters have indicated, if one develops very strong regret for any negativity that one has engaged in, then half of one's negative karma is purified. This shows how important it is to develop a strong regret. When one applies the third opponent power of resolve or refraining from creating negativity, then one has secured an intact practice of purification; it is in this way that negative karmas are definitely purified.

One also needs to take note that regret can be either virtuous or non-virtuous. As the great master Vasubandhu indicated, when one develops regret about non-virtuous actions, then that is a virtue. Whereas, if one regrets doing good deeds, that is a negativity.

When one recalls the misdeeds and negativities that one has engaged in in the past and develops strong regret about that, then that becomes a major part of the purification practice. Later, after having engaged in other forms of practice to accumulate virtue, if one rejoices in the virtue that one has accumulated, then that becomes the means to further expand and increase one's virtue.

So it is good to know that developing regret about misdeeds is a way to purify them, while rejoicing in good deeds will be a means to accumulate virtue. Otherwise we could fall into the danger of actually regretting having engaged in good deeds, which would be a complete waste of positive energy.

On a practical level it is good for us to take this as a personal instruction. As ordinary beings it is quite impossible for us to completely avoid engaging in negativity, because we are still oppressed by the confusion of ignorance. But we do have these methods for purifying that negativity. So it is good for us to develop a sense of regret whenever we find ourselves engaging in any kind of negativity. If we can remind ourselves to immediately regret any negative action, then slowly we can improve to transform ourselves. Of course, this will be explained in more detail later.

As mentioned in last week's session, past teachers have indicated that one quality that negativity has is that it can be purified. This means that we don't have the excuse, 'I can't do anything about it'. We definitely can purify negativity if we engage in purification practice. However, one needs to be mindful not to become complacent thinking, 'Oh well, if negativity can be purified I might just as well engage in negativity'. That would be a lame excuse for creating more negativity.

4.2.1.1.3. Confessing heavy negativity created with regard to special objects

These special objects are presented in Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*, the last text we studied. The special objects are those objects that are endowed with unsurpassable qualities, such as the objects of refuge; the Three Jewels; those who have been personally kind and benefitted us, such as our parents; and objects that are the

source of whatever understanding that we have gained, who are our abbots and teachers, our spiritual friends. Spiritual friends can be the source of kindness as well as a source of knowledge and qualities.

Any negativities with respect to these objects are very heavy negativities, and need to be purified.

The root text reads as follows:

30. *Whatever harm I have inflicted
To the Three Jewels,
Father, mother and other teachers
With body, speech and mind, due to afflictions.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

I confess all negativities that I, this confused person, created with regard to the Three Jewels, my father, mother and other fields of merit like teachers and others, due to the cause of the three poisons, with the three doors of my body, speech and mind.

The particular negativities that one confesses are the negativities relating to oneself as *a confused person* who is oppressed by ignorance. Due to this confusion, one has created negativities *with regard to the Three Jewels*, which are the objects endowed with great qualities, and *my father and mother*, who are objects of kindness and benefit to oneself. *Fields of merit like teachers* indicates one's own teachers, and *others* refers to those like the abbot, who have bestowed vows and so forth upon oneself. It can also refer to teachers with whom one may not have direct connection, or other beings who are special objects; so *others* can be quite expansive.

The *cause* for creating negativities in relation to the special objects is *the three poisons*, and the manner or doorway through which one creates those negativities refers to *the three doors of one's body, speech and mind*.

There is a possibility that, as a result of strong delusions, one might **physically** harm special objects such as one's parents or teachers.

Or we may have harmed them **verbally**, criticising what they are saying, or saying it is not true, or reversing their points against them.

Creating negativity through the doorway of one's **mind** would be generating wrong views in relation to the Three Jewels, one's teachers or one's parents, or having harmful intentions towards them.

Whenever one engages in any negativity, it is always through these three doors; there is no other way to engage in negativity other than through our physical actions, our speech and negative states of mind. Of these three, the most important to protect at all times is one's state of mind. That is because physical misdeeds and negative speech come about as a consequence of having negative intentions in one's mind.

As indicated in the Vinaya sutras, the main emphasis has to be on protecting and disciplining one's mind. Then, as one disciplines one's mind, one's physical and verbal actions will naturally be disciplined as well. So, that is where we need to really focus our attention.

On a practical level, we might in this lifetime have not found occasions where we might directly criticise the Three Jewels or create heavy negative karma in relation to the Three Jewels; we might not have been in close

proximity to teachers for long, thus have not accumulated heavy negativity with respect to them.

However, one arena where we have probably created heavy negative karma is in relation to our parents. We might have found many occasions where we have engaged in physical, verbal or mental negativities. So this is something that we need to really acknowledge and take ownership of. Then we will see that there is a definite need to engage in purification practice.

The confession and purification practice with regard to the special objects is to confess the negativities and engage in purifying them, by applying the antidote. Then resolve, 'Henceforth I will not create such negativities in relation to the special objects'. This is how we engage in the purification practice.

With respect to these special objects, the way to purify one's negative karma is by developing a strong sense of regret from the depth of one's heart, confess one's negativities, and then making the commitment, 'Henceforth I will not engage in these negativities'.

4.2.1.1.4. *Confessing with regret generated by contemplating the undesired results of non-virtue*

This is another significant point. Here one contemplates the undesirable results of non-virtue, where one thinks about the ripened result of each specific non-virtue, as well as other types of result of each of the negative karmas we have created. When one contemplates the prospect of having to experience those results, then a strong sense of regret and wishing to confess those negativities will arise quite spontaneously.

The relevant verse is:

31. *I, this sinner, afflicted with various faults
Of different negativities, whatever frightful
Negativities I created,
I confess to those that guide all.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

I, this sinner, who is afflicted with the many faults of attachment and the like, the causes that produce the results of the hell realms and so forth, have created many heavy negative karmas of killing and so forth. Whatever frightful negativity I created I confess to the ones that guide all.

The commentary indicates that the one who has created the negative karma is oneself, a *sinner afflicted with many faults*. The extent of the negativities we have amassed is such that we are the very embodiment of faults of attachment and the other two poisons. The *many negative karmas, such as killing and so forth* that we have created are *the causes that produce the results of hell realms and so forth*. So the faults within oneself act as the causes that produce the resulting suffering states, such as the hell realms. With a sense of a strong regret, one confesses all this frightful negativity to the omniscient buddhas, who are the guides to all sentient beings. Thus, by contemplating the undesirable result of non-virtue one will generate a strong sense of regret, and following that, actually engage in an action of confession and purification; then a sense of restraint will naturally follow.

4.2.1.2. MEDITATING ON REGRET BY FEARING DEATH WITH NEGATIVITY AND GOING FOR REFUGE

We can leave this for the next session.

*Transcribed by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

In relation to the points that have been covered this evening, it is good to really bring to mind and acknowledge any negativities one has created, with the understanding and knowledge that they can be purified. Then one develops a strong sense of regret, and in the presence of omniscient and compassionate beings, such as the buddhas and the bodhisattvas, one makes a confession. When we take the initiative in this way we will definitely reap the benefits of the confession.

The following verses in the chapter are an elaborate presentation of the ways one has engaged in negativities. Lest one is tempted to think, 'Maybe I am free from negativity', or 'I might not have engaged in much negativity', the following verses present very clearly the ways in which one has created negativities. They also explain the consequences of not confessing and purifying those negativities. Both the gravity of the situation and the urgency of having to purify those negativities are explained very clearly. So reading the following verses and contemplating them is a really meaningful personal practice.

We are quite familiar with the seven limb practice, which can be presented in a few lines. However, each of those seven limb practices can be practised very elaborately. Earlier in these teachings we covered the limb of offering, and then the limb of prostration was presented. Now we are in the limb of confession. Each of the seven limbs are actually presented very elaborately in this text in great detail. So when we recite the *Seven Limb Prayer* and do some sort of practice in relation to the seven limbs, all the material presented here will enhance our practice, because of our deeper understanding.

The *Seven Limb Prayer* that we recite regularly prior to engaging in teachings and other practices begins with:

I prostrate with my three doors.

This indicates the doors of body, speech and mind. So what does the prostration of the three doors imply? This was elaborately presented earlier.

I make actual offerings and mentally created offerings.

What those actual offerings are and what mentally created offerings are was also presented very elaborately. Do you remember?

I confess all negativities that I have created since beginningless time.

All of this has been explained in great detail tonight.

These verses might consist of just a few lines, but when one has a deeper understanding of what each practice entails, it will, as mentioned previously, really enhance one's practice.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

3 September 2013

Based on the motivation we have just generated, we can engage in the meditation practice. *[meditation]*

In order to ensure that our tong len practice is intact, we first need to familiarise our mind with meditating on compassion for all sentient beings. That entails bringing to mind the various sufferings that are experienced by sentient beings, and generating a strong wish that they be free from that suffering. Here we can think about the different types of sufferings that are experienced. We first contemplate on the suffering of suffering, which are the obvious physical and mental suffering that sentient beings experience. Then we focus on the suffering of change that sentient beings experience. Finally we focus on the all-pervasive suffering of sentient beings. As we contemplate the various forms of suffering that they experience, we generate the strong wish, 'May all sentient beings be free from every type of suffering'. So in this way, by bringing to mind the sufferings of sentient beings and wishing them to be free from that, we generate compassion.

To ensure our love and compassion for sentient beings is free from bias, we need to develop a state of mind that sees all sentient beings as being equal. We already have a spontaneous feeling of love and compassion for those closest to us. When we see them being deprived of happiness, it is natural for us to wish them to be happy. When we see them suffering, it is also natural for us to wish them to be free from that suffering.

When we go beyond those who are close to us, in particular, those who we don't get along with, or those we consider as enemies, we might actually feel glad when they are deprived of happiness and experiencing suffering. We often hear comments such as, 'Oh they deserve to suffer!' made by others when they see people they don't get along with experiencing suffering and hardships. They may even wish that their enemy experience even more difficulties and hardships. That attitude is the complete antithesis of the love and compassion that is to be developed here, which is an unbiased love and compassion towards all beings.

We need to change our attitude and our way of thinking, particularly in relation to those we normally don't get along with; those who irritate us and so forth. When they are suffering and deprived of happiness, if we can start to feel how wonderful it would be if they were to be happy and free from their suffering, then that is a sign of the transformation that is taking place in our mind—the benchmark of a true sense of love and compassion. So we need to familiarise our mind with developing an unbiased sense of love and compassion towards all.

When we feel love and compassion for those we feel close to, while feeling hostile towards enemies, wishing them even more suffering and deprived of happiness, then that is a biased form of love and compassion. We need to train our mind so that we can extend our love and compassion towards all beings, particularly to those who are difficult to

get along with. We begin to establish the real basis of unbiased bodhicitta when we genuinely wish them happiness, and that they not experience any kind of suffering.

While we may have not yet developed actual bodhicitta, we can definitely establish the basis of bodhicitta in our mental continuum. That in itself would be an incredible achievement in this lifetime. We would have then secured an incredible personal benefit for our own physical and mental well-being. When we start feeling a genuine sense of concern for others, wishing them to be happy and wishing them not to experience any suffering, then naturally we won't feel any hostility or ill-will towards them.

Furthermore, because it's an unbiased love and compassion, we will not be particularly attached to some and distant to others. That in turn enables a lot of disturbing thoughts based on attachment and hostility to subside. Then, quite naturally, our mind will become much more tranquil, happy and joyful. So, there is an immediate personal benefit. As mentioned earlier, if we can establish a firm basis of bodhicitta in our mental continuum, we can feel quite satisfied with this significant achievement in this life.

Familiarity with unbiased love and compassion towards all beings will naturally induce the intention to benefit others, which is also unbiased and without discrimination. That establishes the proper basis to benefit other sentient beings. Thus, whatever help one extends to others will be really pure, because it is not mixed with the self-cherishing attitude.

Even though we may not have developed spontaneous, uncontrived bodhicitta yet, we can definitely acquaint ourselves with a genuinely unbiased and indiscriminating wish to benefit others that is based on unbiased love and compassion. Through contemplation, we come to realise that if we are to benefit others by freeing them from all suffering and leading them to ultimate happiness, we need to achieve enlightenment ourselves. Even though that attitude may not be uncontrived bodhicitta yet, it is a very similar attitude; at our ordinary level, that is the closest we can get to actual bodhicitta. As it is similar to actual bodhicitta, it is a really worthwhile achievement. In fact, the unbiased wish to benefit others without discrimination, which is based on unbiased love and compassion for others, is essential.

Lama Tsong Khapa had a very significant purpose in mind when he emphasised the importance of first developing immeasurable equanimity as the first of the seven-point cause and effect technique for developing bodhicitta. In fact this presentation of developing equanimity first is said to be a unique presentation of Lama Tsong Khapa, as it is not found in the works of the other Kadampa masters. When the four immeasurable thoughts are presented, immeasurable love and compassion usually comes first and immeasurable equanimity comes later, but in the six-session practice immeasurable equanimity is presented first. So this is in line with Lama Tsong Khapa's presentation, which comes from his own experience of his practice of developing bodhicitta. I have explained this point many times previously which is really important for you to keep in mind.

Also in order to develop unbiased love and compassion, we need to first develop renunciation. Without developing renunciation there is no way that we can develop love and compassion in our hearts. Thus, the order in which these states of mind are developed is presented meticulously in the teachings. If we wish to develop this incredible state of

mind of bodhicitta, we need to establish the sequence by cultivating earlier states of mind.

If we are to subdue our unruly mind it is essential that we try to incorporate the understanding we gain from the teachings into our practice. Otherwise there's not much purpose in listening to and studying the Dharma. Although it will definitely leave a good imprint on the mind, there will not be much more benefit than that. We need to make an effort to really integrate the practice into our life so that our mind starts to be transformed from an unruly one to a more subdued, gentler and kinder mind. Otherwise our practice has not really served much purpose. However this transformation doesn't come about immediately. Rather, it requires investigating our state of mind on a daily basis, and analysing what kind of thoughts or attitudes are influencing our mind. A daily analysis of our thoughts and state of mind is crucial for our practice.

If we stubbornly remain just as we are, then the Dharma will not have much effect upon us. We can check whether any transformation has taken place so far by looking back at our lives. Before we heard and made any attempt to practise the Dharma, when someone out of attachment showed us nice gestures and so forth, we would have also responded out of attachment with nice gestures and the like. Likewise, when someone related to us with anger and hostility, we would have also immediately responded with anger and hostility. That's how our mind was prior to integrating the Dharma in our life. So have we changed or not? Has any true transformation taken place or not? This is something we need to gauge now. Do we react in the same way as we did previously? If we do, then we have remained stubborn, and a true transformation has not taken place. But if we find that our reactions have changed significantly, then a transformation has taken place.

Are we practising Dharma if we respond with attachment to someone who relates to us out of attachment? How could it be Dharma? If we really look into our situation we will see that it is because we react to attachment with attachment that so many complications and problems arise in our life. Alternatively, if we start to relate to others with a genuine sense of concern and a kind mind, then that is the gauge of a true transformation. When we start to become much more relaxed, joyful and happier in this life, that leads onto even more benefit in our future lives. So by developing a kinder mind, we experience both the long-term benefit in our future lives, as well as the short-term benefit in this very lifetime.

In summary, for any transformation to take place we need to integrate the Dharma into our life. Then we won't stubbornly hold onto our same old attitudes and same old behaviours. The way to make that transformation is to really analyse our mind, constantly being aware of our attitudes and our state of mind, and then making an attempt to overcome and change that, rather than holding onto the same states of mind and attitudes. By applying the Dharma in that way, we make that transformation come about. If we remain as we are with no change at all, then the Dharma is not having any effect.

These are points that are presented in the text we are studying, which is why I am highlighting them to you here. The next few verses indicate that we need to be mindful of how we have the perfect conditions right now for practising the Dharma and integrating it into our lives. We are human beings free of all adverse conditions and we have come into contact with the perfect Mahayana teachings, and the perfect Mahayana teachers who present those teachings. We also

have all the other conditions that give us leisure to practise the Dharma. So we have to make some attempt to utilise these incredible and fortunate conditions to transform our mind, and practise according to the basic principles of the teachings. Right now we have the good fortune of having sufficient food, shelter, clothing and all the rest of the good conditions associated with being human. But if we are not mindful to secure and protect our future wellbeing, then in twenty years or so we might find ourselves living amongst animals and surrounded by the conditions of the animal realm. We will then be deprived of all the good conditions that we enjoy now. This is not fantasy but a real probability.

So in order to protect ourselves from having to experience that fate, we need to really integrate the essential points of the practice of the Dharma into our everyday lives. That is what I personally feel. I feel liberation and enlightenment might be quite beyond my reach right now, but I can, at the very least, protect myself from unfortunate rebirths. If I cannot do some practice and integrate the Dharma to a certain degree, then having met the perfect Mahayana teachings and perfect Mahayana teachers would have been completely wasted.

If we cannot even protect ourselves from being reborn in the unfortunate realms, then what benefit would there have been in meeting with these perfect conditions now? We might aspire to the highest goals, but on a more practical level we need to ensure that, at the very least, we protect ourselves from being reborn in the unfortunate realms in the near future.

Before she passed away, a former study group member, Caryn Clarke said, 'I'm not really afraid of death itself. I don't feel too anxious about the actual experience of death, but what I do really feel anxious about is not being able to meet with similar opportunities again in the future'. Then she went on to say that studying with me for about seven years was an incredibly fortunate time, and that her only anxiety was, 'Will I be able to obtain such conditions in the future again?' In fact Caryn was giving us a really significant message. The conditions that Caryn was not sure she would get again are the very conditions that we enjoy now! So we have to utilise them as a way to gain something meaningful.

Caryn also confided in me that she felt much more relaxed and calmer at the hospice. Whenever she went back home, there were relatives and family and a lot of disturbances and distractions, whereas at the hospice she had more time to herself. So despite the pain and agony in her body, she was still considering what was best for her practice. She said, 'In the hospice environment I get the opportunity to do more Tara mantras and recite some prayers, and I feel much calmer, and my mind is much more settled'.

4.2.1. The power of thorough repudiation (cont.)

4.2.1.2. MEDITATING ON REGRET BY FEARING DEATH WITH NEGATIVITY AND GOING FOR REFUGE

Again, the outline just by itself presents a really significant point. It concerns how to develop a sense of regret about the prospects of having to die without purifying one's negativities. Having contemplated that, one takes the initiative of going for refuge.

We'll get to the explanation in the commentary shortly, but first we need to get a sense of the context of this heading. Fear of having to die with negativity refers to the fear of having to experience the ripened result of negativity. As mentioned in our last session, the ripened result of negativity is to be reborn in the unfortunate realms, which

are realms of intense suffering. The way to prevent that unfortunate outcome is to rely on an object that can protect one from having to experience them. Here the objects of reliance are the Three Jewels. Thus, *and going for refuge* indicates the fourth of the four opponent powers, the power of the basis or reliance. Here, relying on the Three Jewels means wholeheartedly taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha; this serves as an antidote for overcoming the consequences of negativity, which would otherwise have to be experienced as a ripened result in the lower realms.

When one generates that strong fear of having to experience the consequence of the suffering of the lower realms, a strong sense of regret arises. The greater the extent of the fear in our mind, the greater the sense of regret about having engaged in that negativity will be. Then one contemplates, 'Can I overcome this negativity?' 'What can I rely upon that will overcome my negativities?' If it is possible to rely upon something that will protect us, then obviously we will want to rely on it wholeheartedly.

It is at this point that one develops a strong sense of refuge in the Three Jewels. So the first part of the cause for developing refuge is the fear of experiencing the sufferings of the lower realms, and the second part is wholehearted reliance on the objects of refuge.

By relying on the Buddha we are able to rely on the unmistakable method and the teachings that the Buddha presented. The Sangha helps us to access the teachings and practise them. While the Buddha presents the unmistakable method, which is the teachings, and the Sangha are the helpers, the actual protector is the Dharma itself. When the Dharma is actualised in one's own mind, then it becomes our actual protector. So we need to understand that the Dharma is the real protector. This systematic presentation is helpful in understanding how the objects of refuge protect us.

The relevant verse of the root text is:

32. *Without having purified my negativity,
I will die before by having been killed.
Please rescue me from this with the method
That liberates quickly.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

If I do not confess my negativities immediately, then I will be killed prematurely by the lord of death while possessing unpurified negativity, and go to the lower realms.

Therefore I petition you to rescue me with all means, to quickly free me from the negativity.

We are now at the point where we have recognised and identified what the negativities are. Thus the need to confess and purify them naturally follows. Confessing one's negativities as a way to purify them means that one will not have to experience the ripened results of those negativities. That is the real meaning of purification. Negativity is purified when one applies a method that prevents one from having to experience the ripened results of negativity.

If I do not confess my negativities immediately conveys a sense of urgency. That is because the time of death is uncertain. Because of the uncertainty of when death will occur, there is a very strong probability that one could die before one gets around to confessing and purifying one's negativities. So if one confesses and applies a purification practice immediately, one can be comfortable about not having to experience the result in the next life, regardless of how soon one dies.

This presentation is related to the three main reasons why the time of death is uncertain, which are presented in the lam rim: death itself is certain; however the time of death is uncertain; and at the time of death nothing but the Dharma can be of benefit. The point being made by this verse is that the time of death is uncertain.

When the commentary says *then I will be killed prematurely by the lord of death* we need to understand that *the lord of death* is not some sort of mythological demon of death. We need to relate *lord of death* to the conditions of death and understand that we could meet with the conditions of death at any time. If we experience death while possessing unpurified negativity then we will be reborn in the lower realms. *Therefore, as mentioned here, I petition you, which refers to the three objects of refuge, to rescue me with all means, to quickly free me from the negativity.* So refuge is presented here as the ultimate protector, serving as the unmistakable objects of reliance to purify one's negativity.

Then Gyaltsab Je poses a query to introduce the next verse.

Query: Why should it be necessary to be rescued quickly, as one will not die before one has finished purifying one's karma?

The answer to that is presented in the following verse:

33. *This capricious lord of death
Does not rely upon whether it is accomplished
or not.
Hence everybody, the sick and healthy,
Cannot trust their adventitious life.*

In his commentary, Gyaltsab Je explains how the verse serves as an answer to that earlier query. As it reads:

Answer: This lord of death cannot be relied upon for even one moment. He will come, regardless of whether one has accomplished purifying one's negativities or not, regardless of whether one has finished one's projects or not, and so forth.

Hence, everybody, whether sick or not, whether the life force is finished or not, dies adventitiously, and it is uncertain even if one will die today or not. Therefore one should purify it quickly.

Again we need to remember that what is personified as *the lord of death* refers to the conditions of death, which *cannot be relied upon*. In other words death can happen at any moment. We all know of so many instances where one moment a person is around and the next moment they are not. They can be sitting on a chair, or standing up, and by the time they sit down on the chair their life has ceased. We might assume we will live to be 80, or maybe 70 or 75 if we are less ambitious! But there is no guarantee that we will live to such a ripe old age. When we look around there are so many who die prematurely; so death can occur at any moment.

Death does not wait until one has completed purifying one's negativities. So the answer to the opening query, 'What is the rush in trying to purify my negativities? I'll only die after I have purified my negativities' is that the time of death is uncertain. If we don't know when it will occur, how can we possibly guarantee that we will have purified all our negativities before we die? The fact is that death could easily befall us before we get around to purifying our negativities. Death does not wait around for us to finish whatever project we may have; it's not as if death says, 'I will let you finish what you're doing first and then I will come'. Death can come at any time. Furthermore it's not as if death only follows those who are sick and spares those who are healthy. Whether one is sick or healthy, death can occur at any time.

This gives us the impetus to immediately purify our negative karmas through confession. The simplest way to do this is by firstly developing a strong regret for the negativities one has engaged in, and then going for refuge. This is one very simple method that we can do at any time. Developing strong regret and based on that, taking wholehearted refuge in the Three Jewels, is a really simple practice that we can easily do.

In relation to the point that death does not wait around for us to finish our projects, previous masters have told this story about how a teacher promised to take a young monk on a picnic. So, the young monk would periodically remind the teacher, 'teacher, when are we going to go on a picnic? The teacher's usual response was, 'We will go, we will go, once I finish all my work'. On one occasion the teacher noticed something in the distance and asked the young student, 'What is that over there?' to which the student replied, 'Oh that is someone who is going on a picnic after having finished all their work!' What they were seeing, in fact, was the body of a dead person being carried to the cremation site.

The main point of the story is that death can happen at any time, so we cannot wait around thinking that we will have time to finish our tasks sometime in the future. This implies that we need to apply the antidotes for overcoming our negativities immediately, because death can happen at any time.

Another point we need to derive is that we need to put our mind to accomplishing whatever we have decided to do. If we just leave it as something to be done later, then we may end up never being able to accomplish it. Overzealousness can also be a problem. There is another story about an individual who neglected the practical aspects and was too ambitious about what he wanted to try to practice. He came to me and said, 'I am very, very determined to do a long retreat'. So I tried to give some practical advice, saying 'Perhaps focus on earning some money to secure your livelihood first'. But he was determined and he said, 'Well, you know, I could die before I am able to do a retreat, so I would rather do the retreat right away'. I said, 'Well, that's true. That sort of thinking is good, so OK, do what you wish'. As it turned out he ended up doing neither the retreat nor securing his livelihood, because he lost his job as well!

We need to put an effort into accomplishing Dharma practice, and put aside any thoughts of procrastination. There's no sense in saying, 'You know, maybe I won't do that now; I would rather not do it'. We need to try to accomplish our Dharma practice as a matter of urgency.

With respect to the point about the lord of death not waiting, regardless of whether someone is *sick or not*, I can share another story on this point. In Dhargye Monastery, which was near my home town in Tibet, there were two brothers, one of whom was quite ill, who was nursed by his healthy brother. However, the healthier brother suddenly died, while the sick one was still alive. When the other monks were consoling him he made this comment, 'It seems that the lord of death has brought the wrong message. Why did he take my brother who was healthy, when it should have been me?'

When the commentary states *whether the life force is finished or not*, it is referring to age. The lord of death, or more specifically the conditions for death, can occur at any time regardless of one's age. We have all seen many examples of someone dying, regardless of their age or physical condition. Just recently on the news there was a report of a house

collapsing during a wedding ceremony, which caused the death a number of people, and of course there are earthquakes and so forth where this happens. Not so long ago there was a story about a well-known person who went for a walk in the park and did not return, because he had suddenly died.

The emphasis here is on really contemplating the impermanent nature of our life, and the many examples of unexpected death, and use that understanding as a reminder of how our life is very transient and death can occur at any time. The reason for contemplating this is so that it can serve as an impetus to practise the Dharma, and integrate it into our everyday lives.

We need to regret our negativities and apply the measure of confession to purify them. If we look around we can see that while there are many who are completely distracted by frivolous and mundane worldly activities, there are very few who are seriously practising Dharma. Some people die before they even have a chance to understand Dharma, let alone being able to practise it. These are bare facts. So death is a reality that we need to keep in mind as an impetus for our own practice.

These points are really significant personal instructions, which should serve to encourage us to take our practice a bit more seriously, and put a bit more time and energy into it.

Now we will recite the Tara Praises, which we can dedicate to Lyn Coleman who is about to have surgery either today or tomorrow. As she hasn't had her surgery yet, there's time for us to do prayers for the surgery to go well and be successful, and that she may recover quickly, and be able to join us again in study group.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcribed by Bernii Wright

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

10 September 2013

Based on the refuge and bodhicitta motivation that we have just generated, we can now engage in the meditation practice. [*meditation*]

4.2.1. The power of thorough repudiation (cont.)

4.2.1.3. MEDITATING ON REGRET BY CONSIDERING ELABORATELY THE WAY ONE MEANINGLESSLY GENERATED NEGATIVITY

This is subdivided into four categories:

4.2.1.3.1. Regret for having created negativity for friends, relatives, body and possessions, not knowing that they are unreliable

4.2.1.3.2. An example of how it becomes a mere object of memory at the time of death

4.2.1.3.3. Regretting having generated negativity for them by directly seeing their unreliability now

4.2.1.3.4. Regretting having generated negativity, by not realising the uncertainty of the time of one's death.

From the headings alone we can see the meticulous presentation of the material of the text. We need to see this presentation as a personal instruction that will serve as a means to generate virtue and merit, and abandon or purify negativity. These are the two main aspects of practice that we need to develop.

4.2.1.3.1. Regret for having created negativity for friends, relatives, body and possessions, not knowing that they are unreliable

From this presentation one can derive an understanding of how negativities are created because of not knowing that friends, relatives, body and possessions are unreliable. This implies that once we gain an understanding of the Dharma and the points mentioned here, we will know all the reasons for engaging in the practice of avoiding creating negativity.

The verse that relates to this outline reads:

34. *Leaving all behind I have to depart.
Not understanding this
I create manifold negativities
For the purpose of friends and non-friends.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

Leaving everything behind, such as friends, possessions and even the flesh and bones I was born with, I have to depart alone to the other side.

Not understanding this, I generated many negativities because of protecting friends and destroying enemies. This I regret.

This is quite easy to understand. As explained in the commentary *leaving everything behind* indicates that eventually one has to leave everything behind, such as friends and possessions. Friends can turn into enemies, and those we once considered as enemies can turn into

friends. So to that extent they are also unreliable. However the main point is that we will eventually have to leave behind friends as well as possessions, which include all the things that are essential to sustain ourselves, such as food, dwellings, clothing and so forth.

Even the flesh and bones I was born with refers to our most intimate possession, our own body, which we have possessed from the moment we were born. So when we die we have to leave behind even our most intimate possession. In order to go forward to the next life we have to leave behind everything that we possess now. Inevitably we have to face departing from this life alone. We also experience the transition to the next life completely alone. However most of us fail to understand or accept this reality.

The important point to derive from this explanation is that we are unable to take anything with us onto the next life. Thus, friends, possessions and even our own body cannot help us at the crucial moment of death. This understanding can be of practical benefit in our life now because it can help to lessen our strong cravings and attachments to these things. Normally we have strong attachment to those we feel close to, such as our relatives and friends, and aversion to those who are distant, and because of that we create a lot of negativity. So a lot of negativity is incurred as a result of maintaining such attitudes.

As the commentary states, *not understanding this, I generated many negativities because of protecting friends and destroying enemies. This I regret.* As mentioned previously, we have created a lot of negativities under the influence of strong attachment to those we consider close. We have also created a lot of negativity when we have been under the influence of anger and hatred for our enemies. By bringing to mind all the negativities that we have created, and specifically thinking about the unpleasant consequences, i.e. the ripened results of these negativities, we develop strong regret about having created these actions. Developing strong regret has deep significance because, as the masters have explained in the past, strong regret in itself will purify at least half of the negativity that one has incurred.

In order to explain the meaning of the next verse, Gyaltsab Je begins his commentary with:

It is unsuitable to create negativity for their purpose ...

The verse comes at this point:

35. *Non-friends become non-existent,
Also friends become non-existent.
As I also become non-existent
Everybody becomes non-existent.*

Then Gyaltsab Je goes on to explain the meaning of this verse:

... as non-friends, friends and oneself all become non-existent immediately afterwards.

Similarly, relatives, possessions and the like become non-existent. They are completely unreliable, and any negativity done for their sake, out of attachment or anger, is regrettable.

Here *non-friends* refers to enemies, who *become non-existent*. Even if one is not able to vanquish one's enemies, they will naturally become non-existent when they die. Not only will our fierce enemies become non-existent when they die, but our close *friends* and dear relatives will also die, and also become non-existent. So there is no purpose in exerting ourselves in creating negativities to try to nourish and protect them.

The next point is that we also become non-existent. Not only will external friends and enemies become non-existent when they perish, but the very individual who discriminates between friends and enemies will also become non-existent. This is indicating that inevitably we all have to face the same fate of death. It is not just a matter of looking outwards and seeing what fate others will have to undergo, but we too will have to undergo the same fate. So, the main point is that we need to relate the reality of this situation to ourselves.

Having mentioned that one creates a lot of negativity in relation to one's friends and enemies, there might be some thought that although enemies and friends will perish, one will not have to experience that same fate oneself and therefore will not experience the results of those negativities in the future. However, that is not the case. The creator of that negativity will definitely perish and have to experience the consequences of the negativity they have created. That is the crucial point that one really needs to reflect upon.

4.2.1.3.2. Example of how they become a mere object of memory at the time of death

All worldly things become mere objects of memory at the time of death, so they cannot help us in any way at that crucial time. The only thing that will be of benefit at that time is the Dharma. That is the implication of this heading.

The verse relating to this heading reads:

36. *Like the experiences during a dream,
Each and every phenomenon we engage
Becomes also an object of memory.
All that is past becomes unobservable.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je states:

For example, the minimal happiness experienced during a dream is only an object of memory after we wake up. Similarly, the objects that we fantasised to be happiness at first, and which we engaged in, are, at the time of death, but a mere memory.

As explained here, when we dream we have all sorts of experiences; sometimes happy experiences and sometimes, when we have nightmares, very fearsome ones. However, whether it was a pleasant or unpleasant experience, when we wake up those experiences are not there anymore, and we realise that it was all but a mere dream. As the commentary explains, the happiness experienced in a dream is merely an object of memory after we wake up. Of course, we have all had that experience. We sometimes have dreams where everything seems to be so pleasant; the area we are in, and our friends are pleasant and everything is so very comfortable. But at other times there may be great fears and so forth. Of course, when we wake up, there's

nothing left but a memory, as dreams don't leave any physical residue behind.

Using that as an example, the commentary explains that *similarly, the objects that we fantasised to be happiness at first, and which we engaged in, are, at the time of death, but a mere memory*. What is referred to as *fantasised to be happiness* refers to all of the worldly or contaminated samsaric pleasures, which are just fleeting and momentary and not true objects of pleasure. At the time of death nothing but memories remain.

Then Gyaltsab Je goes on to explain:

- Therefore one should make repeatedly the decision to only practise the Dharma right now.

This is the main point: at the time of death, nothing is of benefit except the Dharma. What we normally consider as being of benefit, such as relatives, friends and possessions and so forth, cannot benefit us at the time of death. Likewise, what we normally consider as being harmful, such as enemies, cannot harm us at the time of death. The real harm comes from the negativity that we have accumulated, and the only benefit we can receive at the time of death comes from the Dharma.

To emphasise the main point again, it is not friends or relatives and the like who can benefit us when we die, but only the Dharma. Likewise, at the time of death enemies cannot harm us. Nothing can harm us but our own negativity. At the last stages of our life only our own negativities can harm us. Contemplating that prospect, we need to make the decision *to only practise Dharma*. That is the only concern we should have in mind. This decision to practise the Dharma comes as result of repeatedly thinking about these points, and then reaching the firm conclusion that one needs *to only practise the Dharma, beginning right now*.

4.2.1.3.3. Regretting having generated negativity for them by directly seeing their unreliability now

From this outline we can derive the understanding that we don't have to resort to memories of our past lives to see how friends, possessions and so forth and enemies are unreliable. From our own experience in this very life, we know the unreliability of friends, relatives and the like, and thus regret having generated negativity in order to benefit them.

The verse relating to this reads:

37. *Even during the short time we are alive
Many friends and non-friends have passed.
The negativity created for their purpose
Is so unbearable and remains before us.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

Further, even during the short time we are alive, we know from experience that many friends and non-friends have passed. Since the frightening fruitional result of the negativity that we created for their sake still remains in front of us, it is as explained, 'If it cannot be shared by others what use are obstructing friends?'

As the commentary explains, even during the short time you are alive you have experienced the passing of many friends and non-friends. This is particularly true for those in their late 70s, and 80s. Just looking around, we can

remember so many acquaintances and good friends who are gone, and even those with whom we clashed are also gone. Even the younger generation may have had the experience of someone you have known who has passed on and who are no longer around. We know from our own experience that so many friends, relatives and the like, as well as enemies, have passed on.

The next point in relation to this explanation is that *the frightening fruitional result of the negativity that we created for their sake still remains before us*. As so many relatives, friends and acquaintances, as well as enemies or those we didn't get along with have passed on, we might think that the negativity that we created in relation to them has passed on with them, and so everything is fine. However that is not the case. Although the individual beings have passed on, our negativity in relation to them still remains to be experienced as results in the future life. As the commentary states, *the frightening fruitional result of the negativity still remains in front of us*.

The main point we need to reflect upon is that the fruitional results of the negativity that we have created will have to be experienced in the next life. If not confessed, the negativity will not dissipate by itself, thus it will have to be experienced.

As a way to emphasise the earlier point, Gyaltsab Je gives this quotation:

If it cannot be shared by others, then what use are obstructing friends?

Even though friends and enemies may have passed on, the negativity one has created in relation to them remains. We might think it would be fair enough if we could share that negativity with the friends and enemies who were the object of that negativity. However, as this quotation explains, that is not the case. Rather, one will have to experience the consequences of that negativity solely by oneself. Thus, *what use are obstructing friends?* implies that as it is due to attachment to friends that one has created so much negativity, friends are of no real use or benefit to one. In fact, obstructing friends are actually detrimental to one's own well-being and happiness.

As I have indicated in the past, we cannot share either our happiness or our suffering with others. We might be able to share our possessions and wealth with others to some extent, but we can't really divide our own happiness and share it with others. Likewise, others cannot share their happiness with us. Nor can we divide and share unpleasant experiences and suffering. We have to experience that unpleasantness solely by ourselves. This is an important point we need to reflect upon. While we create the negativity in relation to others, the consequences of the negativity are experienced solely by ourselves. As a positive consequence of contemplating these points again and again, we will be motivated to reduce our attachment and aversion to others.

Then Gyaltsab Je concludes his commentary on this verse with the resolution one needs to make:

One should contemplate this again and again, according to the way it is taught, and generate regret for the negativity done for their sake.

This is a summary of the main point. We need to develop strong regret for the negativity that we have created. You

might think that if you have ten friends who were willing to share the burden of your negativity, your share would definitely be lighter, and you would not need to experience the consequences alone. However, that is not the case, as negativity cannot be divided.

It would indeed be quite consoling if we could share our sufferings and even happiness with others. There might be some friends or family who would quite willingly share and remove some of our suffering. But the fact remains that no matter how much concern they have for us (or how much we have for them), we cannot share our suffering.

It would be wonderful if we could actually share our happiness with others but we can't do that either. If that was possible, I can quite confidently say that I have quite a bit of happiness that I am willing to share with others. Unfortunately, I cannot do that. When I see others in a distressed state deprived of any sense of joy and happiness, I would definitely share my happiness and give it to them if I could. When we see the immense suffering of others we might feel compelled to help them, even to the point of taking on their suffering; but while that can be done in the form of a practice, it can't be done in reality.

4.2.1.3.4. *Regretting having generated negativity, by not realising the uncertainty of the time of one's death.*

This, in fact, is one of the main obstructions to practising the Dharma seriously. Even someone with a terminal disease still hopes that they will live for a while longer. In our everyday life, we engage in so many frivolous worldly activities, completely oblivious to the fact that we may die at any moment. The time of death is uncertain, and death can happen at any moment, but because we don't understand this, we continue to engage in amassing negativities.

The verse in relation to this outline reads:

**38. *In this way I am said to be adventitious.
Because I do not realise this,
I generate a multitude of negativities
Out of ignorance, attachment and anger,***

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

In this way it is explained that I am adventitious, with a mere, brief life where the time of death is uncertain. Not realising this, I have created a multitude of negativities out of ignorance, attachment and anger.

Because negativity causes downfall into the hells, one should meditate on regret many times for having created negativity, by contemplating the certainty of death, the uncertainty of the time of death, and that at the time of death only the Dharma is of benefit, as well as the faults of the lower realms.

This is a clear explanation here, however to emphasise a few of these points further, *I am adventitious*, means that one's life is adventitious, neither being reliable or steady. *With a mere brief life where the time of death is uncertain* refers to the reason why one's life is adventitious or unreliable, because the time of death is uncertain. By not understanding this point or ignoring it, one creates *a multitude of negativities out of this ignorance*.

Here *ignorance* relates specifically to the ignorance of grasping at an individual 'I' or self. It is due to this strong grasping at the 'I' that the sense of self-importance arises. With this sense of 'I am the most important', everything that one does becomes a means to gratify 'me, me, me'! Due to this ignorance of grasping at the self, which induces a strong grasping at the 'I', one develops attachment to one's relatives and those close to oneself who help 'me', and anger or aversion to those one considers being an enemy who might harm 'me'. So out of that strong grasping at the self one creates a lot of negativities.

If those negativities didn't hinder a fortunate rebirth in the next life, then we could rest assured that there would be nothing wrong with creating them. But these negativities lead to rebirth in the unfortunate realms. By contemplating this fact, one regrets many times over the negativity one has created.

The points to really consider again and again are that *the time of death is uncertain*, and that *at the time of death only the Dharma can help us, as well as the faults of the lower realms*.

Contemplating the faults of the lower realms means contemplating the various types of suffering that are experienced there. As mentioned previously, the prospect of having to be reborn as an animal, where one lacks all of the present conditions that we have now should instil a very strong sense of remorse about having created the negativity that leads to such an unfortunate rebirth. We need to think, 'I cannot let my negativity remain unpurified. I definitely have to confess and purify it'. Contemplating the consequences that one will have to experience leads to strong remorse and regret about having created the negativity.

4.2.1.4. CONSIDERING THE WAY NEGATIVITY IS FRIGHTFUL

This has four subdivisions:

4.2.1.4.1. Since nothing can be added to life and it runs out continuously one will definitely die, and if one were to die with negativity, it is fearful

4.2.1.4.2. If one does not purify negativity, then one must experience suffering even in this life

4.2.1.4.3. The reason why it is so very fearful

4.2.1.4.4. The way one will be overwhelmed by suffering later

4.2.1.4.1. Since nothing can be added to life and it runs out continuously one will die, and if one were to die with negativity, it is fearful

If we were destined to live to 100, and that span of a hundred years were to remain constant, then we may not be too worried about it. But from the moment we are born the number of moments, days, and years we still have becomes fewer and fewer. That is the fact that is being presented here.

The relevant verse is:

39. *As day and night have no abiding
This life is continually becoming less;
If there is no adding to the weakening,
Why would someone like me not die?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Regardless of whether one is walking, sitting or lying down, without day and night remaining for even one moment, this life is constantly running out and it is impossible to add anything to the lessening life. Why would that not become a reason for someone like me to certainly die? It does.

Regardless of whether one is walking, sitting or lying down indicates that whatever activity in which one may be engaged, without day and night remaining for even one moment, this life is constantly running out. Our life is running out with every moment that passes. Just as we look at a clock, for example, we can see how every hour decreases moment by moment. The second hand does not stop for even a moment. That is exactly how our life is—every second that passes is a second less of whatever lifespan we may have. Even if we have a long lifespan, it is decreasing moment by moment. Furthermore, as the commentary explains, *it is impossible to add anything to the lessening life.* While life is naturally decreasing moment by moment, there is no extra life that can be added on. So the conclusion is, *why would that not become a reason for someone like me to certainly die?* This is a rhetorical question that implies that we will, of course, have to die sooner rather than later.

The conclusion that we need to contemplate is:

Since one will definitely die, and the time of death is uncertain, one should exert oneself in purifying negativity.

The negativity remains with us as we approach death, moment by moment, unless it is purified. Because death *is uncertain* and can happen at any time, *one should exert oneself in purifying negativity* with the same intensity that was mentioned earlier i.e. by developing strong remorse and regret in one's mind.

Once one comes to accept and understand that one has amassed great negativity and develops a strong wish to purify that negativity, the next step then is to know how to purify the negativity with the four opponent powers. Being able to identify the four opponent powers and knowing how to apply them is essential if one is to purify negativities.

Next week will be the discussion week. As usual it would be really good to do the discussion in a good way. The week following that is the exam, and again, it is good for you to prepare well for that.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcribed by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

1 October 2013

Based on the motivation that we have just generated, we can now engage in the meditation practice. [meditation]

Let us now generate a positive motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines:

I need to obtain enlightenment for the sake of benefitting all sentient beings. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

4.2.1.4. CONSIDERING THE WAY NEGATIVITY IS FRIGHTFUL (CONT.)

4.2.1.4.2. If one does not purify negativity, then one must experience suffering even in this life

This has three subdivisions:

4.2.1.4.2.1. If one does not purify one's negativities, then one's friends and relatives cannot rescue us from the suffering of the life-force being cut

4.2.1.4.2.2. It is fearful because of not having created merit

4.2.1.4.2.3. One will be overcome by regret

4.2.1.4.2.1. If one does not purify one's negativities, then one's friends and relatives cannot rescue us from the suffering of the life-force being cut

This is an essential point because it relates to the most critical time of our existence, which is the transition to the next life. As the outline indicates, friends and relatives cannot help us at all at that time. The analogy that is given in other teachings is that the end of our life is like plucking a hair from butter; just like the piece of hair comes out solely by itself, there is nothing you can take with you when you go onto the next life.

The point here is that the consequence of not purifying our negativities is that we will experience suffering when our life force is cut, hence the need to purify negativities. If one were to die without having the opportunity to create any merit or virtue, the prospect of having to experience the consequences in a future life would generate great fear. However, as everyone here is engaged in purification practices, I'm sure no one here would have this fear!

Nothing can help us at the time of death except for our stock of virtue and merit, coupled with the purification practices we've done. So here we are being exhorted to actually engage in purification practices.

The lines relating to this section are:

40. *While I am lying on my bed,
Although I am surrounded by all my
relatives and friends
The feeling of being separated from life
Is experienced by myself alone.*

41ab. *When I am held by the minions of the lord
of death*

*What benefit are friends, what benefit are
relatives?*

Shantideva is saying, 'There is nothing to alleviate my fear; friends and relatives are of no use against the minions of the lord of death when he holds my frightened flesh'. This again is not very obscure or abstract—it is quite obvious that when someone dies, they are completely alone and nothing can help them at that time.

The explanation in Gyaltsab Je's commentary is also quite clear so we will go through the next few verses quite rapidly. As Gyaltsab Je explains:

If one does not create merit, then at the time of death, when I am lying on my bed, although friends and relatives surround me with their affection and sorrow, I will have to experience by myself alone the suffering feeling of having my life-force cut.

We can readily understand that merit is accumulated by abandoning the ten non-virtues such as killing, stealing and so forth. In fact, adopting the ten virtues and avoiding the ten non-virtues are very practical ways to accumulate merit. If one has not engaged in practices such as these, then, even though we are surrounded on our deathbed by loving friends and relatives, which is often customary, they cannot help us.

As the commentary explains, no matter how much affection they have for us, at that time *I will have to experience by myself, alone, the suffering the feeling of having my life force cut*. When the teachings refer to the suffering of death they are specifically referring to the suffering that arises when the mind, or the consciousness, is separated from the body. For those who are not prepared, that will be a time of great suffering.

While the main suffering at the time of death is the separation of the mind from the body, there are other kinds of suffering too, such as being separated from one's loved ones, one's wealth, possessions and all the enjoyments one was attached to in this life. This separation brings great mental agony and suffering.

As explained in the teachings, one form of suffering is not being able to meet with those we want to meet and not being able to accumulate the wealth we want and so forth. Having amassed a certain amount of wealth and met with loving people, we experience suffering when we have to separate from loved ones and discard our wealth. As explained in detail in the teachings, all of these sufferings become more pronounced and more intense at the time of death.

In this life, we all know that even a temporary separation from one's relatives and loved ones causes us suffering. But there is always the likelihood of meeting them again or finding another loved one, at which time the earlier suffering will be alleviated. But at the time of death, the separation is permanent; you will have to leave absolutely everything behind, never to be seen or enjoyed again.

As the commentary explains, friends and relatives cannot help us against the minions or messengers of death.

When the lord of death holds our frightened flesh, friends and relatives are of no use. Only the Dharma can rescue us at that time. It is said that those who have created a lot of negativity and have not got around to purifying it, will experience all kinds of fearsome visions at the time of death, which cause great fear and suffering. Conversely, it is said that those who have accumulated a lot of virtue and merit will have pleasant experiences which will help to soothe and settle down their mind, rather than causing fear. These sorts of experiences seem to take place when an individual's life force is being separated from their body.

What point is there in being excessively attached to wealth, friends, relatives and so forth when at the time of death they cannot be of any help to us? We spend so much time and energy trying to please them, yet when we need them the most they cannot help us. In order to apply antidotes to overcome strong attachment to worldly objects such as relatives, possessions and so forth, one needs to engage in accumulating virtue, which is the Dharma. So here we are being exhorted to realise that only the Dharma can rescue us and help us at the time of death.

Our ultimate protector is the Dharma, which brings us back to our practice. One particularly powerful practice that we regularly attempt to do in our sessions is the *tong len* practice of giving and taking. How incredibly beneficial it would be if we could implement this powerful practice at the time of death resolving, 'At this time I am taking upon all of the suffering of all beings and may whatever discomfort I am experiencing now be a substitute for the suffering of other beings. May their suffering ripen upon me and may other beings not have to experience such suffering'. If we are familiar with this practice we will be able to recall it without hesitation when we are dying. What an incredible practice that would be!

As a consequence of this amazingly powerful practice of offering love and compassion to all other beings, the mind will naturally become calm and peaceful. And if one were to die in that peaceful and tranquil state there is no question that one will be protected in the next life, and not be reborn in the unfortunate realms. Indeed the very purpose of the *tong len*, or giving and taking practice, is that it is a way to transform all difficulties on the path to enlightenment. This is really an important point and I want to emphasise the importance of not taking the *tong len* practice lightly; if we take it seriously now it will definitely be of help at that crucial time of death.

We might not be experiencing extreme difficulty or great suffering right now, and so we might not see the relevance of doing this giving and taking practice. The real purpose of doing the practice now is to familiarise our mind with it. Then, when difficult situations arise, we will be able to immediately and naturally rely upon this practice because of our familiarity with it. If we don't pay much attention to practices such as the *tong len* practice now, but familiarise ourselves with strong desires and attachments then, due to that familiarity, it will be quite natural for strong desire and attachment arise at the time of death. So it is really important that we prepare ourselves from now on.

The *tong len* practice is definitely one of the highest forms of practice as it protects one from unfortunate rebirths. As mentioned previously, it is based on love and compassion towards other sentient beings, and if one dies with a sense of love and compassion in one's heart, then there is no possibility of taking an unfortunate rebirth. Not only will dying with love and compassion in one's heart secure a good rebirth, but it will be a rebirth endowed with the conditions of meeting with the Mahayana teachings and the perfect Mahayana gurus, and all of the conditions that will enable one to practise the Dharma. These are essential points that we need to keep in mind.

Even though it will be explained in more detail further on, we need to see that this explanation relates to the real meaning of Dharma. The Dharma protects whatever virtue and merit we have accumulated within our own mental continuum. In the teachings the actual or ultimate Dharma is presented as the true cessation and the true path that are in the mental continuum of the arya beings. If that's what we relate to as the Dharma, then how could the truth of path and truth of cessation in an arya being's mental continuum actually help us? We cannot relate to that on a personal level. If we relate to the Dharma in that way then it is really hard to explain how Dharma serves as our protector. Whereas when we relate to the Dharma to the virtue and merit that we have accumulated within our own mental continuum, then it makes sense when the teachings explain that the Dharma is the actual protector. That is what is to be understood.

To restate the point, it is explained that the Dharma protects one from the unfortunate realms. So when we relate to the Dharma as a protector, we need to understand how it protects us from an unfortunate rebirth in the next life. When we understand that it is the merit and virtue within our own mental continuum that protects us from taking an unfortunate rebirth, we begin to understand how the Dharma protects us. When we see that, we can understand the literal meaning of Dharma, which is to hold its own entity. In the context of the Buddhadharma, this means holding one's mind from adverse conditions. This is the real meaning of the Dharma. The meaning of the word *dara* in Vajradhara also means to hold; thus Vajradhara literally means 'the one who holds a vajra'.

4.2.1.4.2.2. It is fearful because of not having created merit

This implies that if one has created merit, there is no need to be fearful at the time of death. We can relate this to the experiences of people who are facing death. When people who normally don't pay much attention to spiritual practice and so forth come to the end of their life and face death, it seems that it suddenly dawns on them that there is something beyond the material world. It seems that they realise that there is some intangible thing that is not found in the physical or material world. At that time, they may experience sadness that they had not paid any attention to this during their life, when they were completely immersed in the worldly aspects of the material world. This experience is not restricted to spiritual or Dharma practitioners—it dawns on ordinary people from all walks of life.

The next two lines of the verse are:

*41cd. At that time only merit can rescue,
But I also did not rely on that.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on these lines read:

At that time only merits such as refuge, keeping morality and so forth are the supreme refuge, but I also did not rely on them.

This shows regret because of not having practiced virtue.

When the commentary explains, *at that time only merits such as refuge, keeping morality and so forth are the supreme refuge*, the word *only* implies that, as explained earlier, one's wealth, possessions, relatives and friends are of no help at the time of death. The only thing of benefit is the merit that one has accumulated by taking wholehearted refuge in the Three Jewels and observing morality, which is referred to in the commentary as the *supreme refuge*.

Observing morality is based on abandoning the ten non-virtues, which we can all definitely attempt to practise. There is no need for us to take the life of others, so we can definitely avoid killing; we are fortunate enough that we don't have to engage in the act of stealing due to insufficient means; as lay people you can definitely avoid sexual misconduct such as adultery and so forth. None of this is out of your reach. Avoiding the remaining non-virtues is also within your capacity. So abandoning the ten non-virtues is not an obscure practice, or difficult to relate to.

In fact the *Abhidharma* says that most Dharma practices are actually subsumed into abandoning the ten non-virtues and adopting the ten virtues. It is good to really pay attention to observing the ten virtues. In everyday life, we all take refuge as part of our daily practice, and we should spend significant time considering the qualities of the refuge objects and how they are the supreme objects, rather than just giving lip service and merely repeating the words. Taking such wholehearted refuge in our daily life, as well as observing ethics and morality, is a way to amass merit and virtue, which will help us at the time of death. This is the point that is being presented here.

Today when I was reading the text I spent some significant time just reflecting on these essential points—I became quite immersed in them for almost an hour.

Our whole practice is subsumed in the heading *It is fearful because of not having created merit*. That is the crux of our practice, so I try in my daily life to spend time considering these points. It would also be good for all of you to really pay some attention to them and take them to heart.

When studying this text or referring to these points, it is good to relate them to the Lam Rim teachings. The topics of the Lam Rim should not be put aside when one is doing other study or practices. The points in the Lam Rim are the very basis of whatever practice we do, so we should complement the explanations in this text with the understanding we have gained from reading and studying the Lam Rim. Then our study will be more beneficial.

4.2.1.4.2.3. One will be overcome by regret

All of the earlier points relate to the power of regret which is one of the four opponent powers. This is an essential part of any purification practice because it is said when strong regret is generated it suffices to purify half of the negativity that one has incurred. So it is essential that we try to develop a strong sense of regret for any negativity that we may have created in the past, along the lines of, 'It is incredibly unfortunate that I was compelled to engage in this negativity, and I need to overcome and purify it by every possible means'. That is the kind of intention one needs to develop.

We are all here under the assumption that we are Dharma practitioners, so we need to really pay attention to what is essential for our practice, which is developing regret about negativity, rather than rejoicing in it. There is the danger that one may regret some virtue, feeling that it is too hard and difficult. There is also the danger of rejoicing in having an opportunity to create negativity, thinking 'For years I have wanted to experience this and I have not had the opportunity so far. It's really incredible that I have this opportunity now. How wonderful!'. Rejoicing in negativity in this way is completely contrary to the actual practice of Dharma. So we definitely need to protect our minds from this danger.

Since we all bear the name of Dharma practitioners it is not out of place for us to attempt to practise the Dharma in the most appropriate way, which means developing regret for negativities, and rejoicing in our virtues and so forth. I don't blame those who try to fill what otherwise seems to be an uncomfortable and lonely life by trying to find a girlfriend or a boyfriend, who may seemingly fill that void and provide some sort of pleasant experiences. However, when we really think about it, there is really no ultimate benefit in spending time and energy on that.

The verse under this heading reads:

*42. Protector, I, this careless one,
Did not search out these dangers.
Even though, in this impermanent life
I accomplish much negativity for them.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary quite succinct:

Referring to the object of refuge as *Protector* one proclaims: I, this reckless person, did not search out these dangers of the lower realms and I did not know about them. But I generated much negativity in this impermanent life for the purpose of this life, such as friends and so forth. This I regret.

As the commentary indicates, the objects of refuge such as the buddhas and the great bodhisattvas are protectors who are endowed with loving kindness. In proclaiming them as *protectors* the commentary is indicating that one must rely on them. Thus *one proclaims* in front of these objects of refuge who are endowed with great love and compassion, 'I, this reckless person, did not search out these dangers or fears of the lower realms'. Here *reckless* comes from the Tibetan word *bak-me*, which is the opposite of *bak-yo* which means conscientiousness. Thus reckless

refers to the lack of conscientiousness, which I've explained previously.¹

So a reckless person would be one who does not maintain a conscientious mind. Such a lack of conscientiousness would allow the delusions to overpower the mind, leading to actions that incur many faults. Thus, many faults are created under the influence of the delusions because of the lack of conscientiousness. Conversely when we apply conscientiousness, we protect ourselves from the influence of the delusions, and thus from engaging in many faults.

When one does not apply conscientiousness, one becomes a reckless person, and out of recklessness, or a lack of conscientiousness, *one did not search out these dangers of the lower realms because one does not know about them*. This implies that recklessness arises as a result of ignorance, in particular ignorance of how karma functions. Due to a lack of faith in karma one doesn't realise that the consequence of negativity is suffering and so forth. Here *dangers* refers to the suffering of death itself, both at the point of the separation of one's mind from the body, as well as the sufferings of the intermediate state.

Apparently there are particular sufferings that are experienced in the intermediate state such as visions, and of course there is the suffering of the next life in unfortunate rebirths. Not considering the consequences of negativity brings about this suffering. And, as explained here, 'Due to this ignorance, I generated much negativity in this impermanent life for the purpose of this life such as friends and so forth'. One's life is impermanent and by not reflecting upon the impermanence of one's life, one incurs a lot of negativities due to attachment to friends, constantly trying to please them, and trying to vanquish or overcome one's enemies, or those with whom one disagrees due to aversion. In this way, one will incur a lot of negativities. Having realised that, and understanding the consequences, one will develop strong regret about having engaged in these negativities.

The essential point of this verse is that it is by reflecting upon the various negativities one has accumulated in this very lifetime, one develops strong regret, along with the intention to purify those negativities.

4.2.1.4.3. *The reason why it is so fearful*

The two verses presented under this heading read:

43. *If a person is led today to the place
Where his limbs will be chopped off, he is
frightened.
One's appearance will differ to before,
With a dry mouth, burning eyes and the
like.*
44. *One will be held by the terrifying
Helpers of the Lord of Death
And befallen by the terrifying sickness,
What need is there to mention the very
pitiable?*

The commentary then presents the meaning of these verses:

A person who is being led today by other humans to the ground where his limbs will be chopped off, will be frightened. His mouth will be dry, his complexion will be pale, his eyes will burn and so forth. As such, his appearance will be quite different to before.

If that is so, then what need is there to mention the fear of the extremely pitiful person, whose flesh is being held by the fearful minions of the lord of death and who is stricken with the fear of death. Such a person will have great fear:

Hence, generate regret for negativity!

In the past those who stole were punished by having their hands chopped off. So being led to the place of punishment where *their limbs were be chopped off* would generate a lot of fear. Using this analogy the commentary explains that when such a person is led to the place of punishment, they will be stricken with great fear to the point of their mouth being dry, the complexion of their face becoming completely distorted and their eyes burning and so forth. When we see someone being led to a trial and so forth, their heads are bent down and you can see on their face a lot of embarrassment, and the fear they are experiencing, and how their very appearance is completely different to their normal state.

People are taken to the places of punishment by *other humans* who have the same nature and body and so forth. If being led to the place of punishment by other humans generates great fear, *then what need is there to mention the fear of the extremely pitiful person, whose flesh is being held by the fearful minions of the lord of death*.

As mentioned previously, those who have engaged in negativities will experience extreme and fearful visions at the time of death. When such a person has these visions of fearsome beings leading them away from their life source, it definitely gives rise to extreme fear. I've heard that when those who have engaged in warfare and have taken the lives of others, such as generals and so forth, approach the last stages of their life, they have visions of weapons coming towards them, or others coming to kill them with weapons and so forth. It seems that what they engaged in during their life comes back to them in the form of these fearsome visions. In their mind, it is very real and brings about tremendous fear.

The point in relating all of this is that one needs to generate regret for one's negativity with the intention of wanting to purify it. We might bring to mind whatever negativity we can recall from this very lifetime, but there might be occasions when we feel, 'Oh, I haven't done anything as bad as taking a life and so forth'. But if one considers one's previous lifetimes, one can definitely assume that one has accumulated all sorts of negative and evil deeds in previous lifetimes. All of that needs to be brought to mind, and we need to develop regret for that as well, with a sense of wanting to purify that negativity.

¹ See, for example, the teaching of 21 March 2006.

4.2.1.4.4. *The way one will be overwhelmed by suffering later*

This is referring to our future lives. The two verses under this heading are:

45. *'Who can perfectly rescue me from
These great dangers', I exclaim.
With fear showing in my wide open eyes
I look into the four directions for help.*
46. *Seeing that there is no refuge in the four
directions
My mind becomes completely dark.
If there is no refuge in that place,
Then what shall one do at that time?*

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcribed by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

In explaining these verses Gyaltshab Je's commentary reads:

Having been reborn in the hells and seeing the hell guardians, one becomes very afraid and exclaims: 'Oh, which person can rescue me from this great fear?'

With fear showing in one's wide open eyes, one searches in the four directions for a refuge. When one does not find one despite one's search, one's mind becomes completely dark. Hence one should go for refuge to the Three Jewels starting right now.

If there is no refuge in the hells that rescues one from dangers, then there is nothing to do then, and one must make an effort right now to becoming free from the causes of those dangers.

While the commentary is quite clear, the main point being presented is the importance of contemplating the prospect of having to be reborn in unfortunate realms such as the hell realms. The very nature that state is such that one has no immediate protector. Even if it occurred to one to search for refuge, one couldn't find it because that is the very nature of having such a rebirth, which, of course, is the result of one's negativities. If it is daunting to think about that prospect, the implication is that now is the time to rely upon the unmistakable refuge as protection from being reborn in states where there will be no refuge.

In very simple language, we are in the condition right now where protecting ourselves is definitely within our grasp! As the commentary concludes, *one must make an effort right now to becoming free from the causes of those dangers*. So, in simple terms, we rely upon ultimate protection and refuge, which we can all identify, and we can apply the practices of adopting the ten virtues and avoiding the ten non-virtues. We need understand that now is not the time to lay about thinking that this is something we can put aside until later. Rather we need to make the commitment to apply it, beginning right now.

4.2.2. The power of the basis

We can leave this for our next session.

The main point of this evening's presentation is to reflect on the negativity that one has incurred during one's life, and to develop strong regret about that. Then, based on that strong regret, one engages in purification practices in order to purify those negativities. This is an essential practice for our own benefit. These are really important points for our own personal benefit.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འདུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

8 October 2013

As usual we can engage in the meditation practice.

Now we can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put into it into practice well.

Generating this strong wish to benefit others will be extremely beneficial; it also encourages us and is really important for our practice.

As the Lam Rim teachings indicate, the states of mind that allow one to actually benefit other beings are great love, great compassion and the superior intention. These are three of the six causes of the seven-point cause and effect sequence, which produces the bodhicitta that compels one to actually benefit others. Whereas the first three - recognising all beings as one's mother, remembering their kindness, and wishing to repay that kindness - serve as the basis for developing that wish to benefit others. The Lam Rim presents very precise instructions on how to actually develop that bodhicitta state of mind. So if we rely on these instructions and put these very orderly steps into practice, then we can definitely develop the mind that compels one to benefit others.

The love and compassion that we need to develop, as presented in the teachings, is unbiased love and unbiased compassion. How wonderful it would be if we were to actually develop a love and compassion that does not discriminate between friends, enemies and strangers! What an incredible state of mind to develop! Once we develop that, then the Great Vehicle or Mahayana path will be established within our mental continuum. It will then be possible to practise on that path and obtain the fruit of the path. I personally feel that it is really important to put all one's energy into this core practice of developing unbiased love and compassion, which, of course, I attempt to do. It is definitely the case that without developing unbiased love and compassion, the rest of the Mahayana practices are not obtainable.

I feel like expanding on this point a bit more, however I will leave it for now. If one really analyses these points then the logical conclusion we reach is that this is really the core of our practice, for it is also a powerful means for accumulating merit and purifying negativities. So in this way we can see the great value of these practices.

4.2.2. The power of the base

We have come to the second of the four opponent powers. What is the first power called?

Student: The power of regret.

Regret is not the literal translation of the Tibetan term. Does anyone recall the term used in the commentary?

Student: Power of thorough repudiation.

That's correct. So what is that power of repudiation?

Student: Recognising that we have created negativity.

More specifically, what is the mind that one should generate in order to develop the power of thorough repudiation?

Student: Fear of the consequences of that negativity that we have created.

That is correct. The way to develop that opponent power of thorough repudiation is to contemplate the consequences of the negativity that one has engaged in in the past. When one really thinks about these consequences in detail, great fear will naturally arise, and then the power of thorough repudiation will be generated in one's mind.

The second opponent power is the power of the base or reliance. So, what is the power of reliance?

Student: Refuge.

The Tibetan word for the power of the base or reliance is *ten kyi top*, and *ten* means to *rely*. Here it means to rely on the objects for one's confession and purification. So, what do we rely upon? It is explained that whatever objects we created negativity with are the very objects we need to rely upon to purify those negativities. We create negativities in relation to either the Three Jewels or sentient beings, so we have to rely on both the Three Jewels as well as sentient beings for purification.

Thus, by relying on the objects of refuge, one is able to purify one's negativities.

As presented in the commentary, this section has three subdivisions.

4.2.2.1. Relying on the refuge of the Three Jewels, starting right now

4.2.2.2. Relying on the powerful prayers of the children of the conquerors

4.2.2.3. Having gone for refuge, practising according to the advice

4.2.2.1. RELYING ON THE REFUGE OF THE THREE JEWELS, STARTING RIGHT NOW

In accordance with the earlier explanation, when one is born in an unfortunate realm such as the hell realms, then there is no opportunity to rely upon the objects of refuge at that time. We need to take this as a personal instruction, and rely upon the objects of refuge ourselves, right now while we have all the conducive conditions, and not leave it for later when we may not have these good conditions.

The very outline itself presents the meaning of the verse of the text and it becomes most meaningful if we take it as a personal instruction. We need to take it as a reminder that relying on the objects of refuge will ensure that whatever practice we do becomes intact. We might assume that we are Dharma practitioners, but without genuine and strong reliance on the objects of refuge there is no real basis for our practice. Every attempt that we make in relating to this advice and putting it into practice makes the foundation of our practice established much more firmly.

To actually contemplate this, think about the words *relying on the refuge of the Three Jewels starting right now*. How do you understand them? Contemplating how it is essential to go for genuine refuge beginning from right now actually becomes the means to establish the foundation of our Dharma practice. The more we develop this mind of reliance on the objects of refuge, the more it lessens our clinging to the affairs of this lifetime. As the clinging to the affairs of this life reduces, to that extent, our Dharma becomes purer.

This is another way to relate to the meaning of what is presented here.

The two verses relating to this heading read:

47. *Therefore, from today onwards I take refuge
In the Conqueror, the protector of migrators,
Who works to rescue migrators
And who eliminates the powerful dangers.*
48. *I also take perfect refuge
In the Dharma that he understood,
Which eliminates the dangers of cyclic existence,
And into the assembly of bodhisattvas.*

Even though my intention is to try to go quite quickly through these verses somehow that doesn't seem to be happening! Gyaltsab Je's commentary on these verses is:

One does not find a refuge when one is reborn in the lower realms, even if one searches. Therefore I quickly take refuge in the Conqueror, the protector of migrators, who strives to rescue all migrators, and who has the perfect ability to eliminate all the very powerful dangers.

Further, I accept the Dharma that the Conqueror understood and taught, the Dharma Jewel that eliminates all the fears of cyclic existence.

I also accept the assembly of bodhisattvas that have attained the state of a superior, as friends helping to accomplish the path, and purely go for refuge to them.

When the commentary states *One does not find a refuge when one is reborn in the lower realms, even if one searches*, this is a clear explanation that as we will not be able to find refuge when we are reborn in the lower realms, we need to take refuge in the conquerors, from now on. What we need to understand from this presentation is that that developing a strong reliance on the objects of refuge, and taking refuge in them is the means to block the door to the lower realms. We actually shut the door to the lower realms by taking refuge.

If one were to ask, 'What is the method for blocking the doorways to rebirth in the lower realms?', then the answer is 'By taking refuge'. As presented in the teachings, if, at the moment of death, we have strong refuge in our mind that will, at the very least, definitely prevent rebirth in a lower realm in the immediate next life. Even if we have engaged in quite a lot of negativity during our life, if our mind is in tune with taking strong refuge at the time of death, then this completely virtuous mind will definitely prevent rebirth in the lower realms in the next lifetime. In contrast, if someone were to spend most of their life seemingly engaging in Dharma practice, but at the time of death their mind is not in a virtuous frame then, because of the non-virtuous state of mind at that time, they will have an unfortunate rebirth in the next life.

The only way that we can prepare ourselves to ensure that we are in a virtuous state mind at the time of death, is to continuously familiarise ourselves now with the conqueror Buddha Shakyamuni, which is done by meditating on and visualising the image of Buddha Shakyamuni while reciting the mantra. Whatever time we spend on a regular basis, such as meditating and reciting the mantra, even to the extent of remembering the Buddha in our daily activities, and every time before we go to bed, and perhaps even having dreams of the Buddha, then, due to that familiarity, it is said that an image of the Buddha will naturally come to mind very vividly at the time of death. Seeing an image of the Buddha and having faith in him at the time of death would be wonderful! Likewise with the familiarity one gains by

relying on a deity such as Chenrezig, or Avalokiteshvara as one's main deity; reciting the *Om mani padme hum* mantra and remembering Chenrezig daily and before going to bed, and even having dreams of Chenrezig, will also have the result of having very vivid clear image of Chenrezig at the time of death. It is said that it is as if one is actually in the presence of the Buddha or a deity at the time of death, which would have a soothing and calming effect, with no fears or anxiety whatsoever. This would be incredibly beneficial at that crucial time.

The commentary goes on to explain that due to this fear of a lower rebirth one *quickly takes refuge in the Conqueror*. The Conqueror is described as *the protector of migrators* because he entered the path that leads to enlightenment from the moment he first developed bodhicitta, and from that time onwards he completely dedicated his life to benefiting sentient beings through the practice of the six perfections and so forth. Through all of those practices, the Conqueror reached the ultimate state of having the perfect ability to help all beings eliminate all the fears of cyclic existence.

The qualities of the Buddha or the Protector are actually presented in the first line. When the text refers to *the protector of migrators, who strives to rescue all migrators, and who has the perfect ability*, the term *perfect ability* can also relate to the various enlightened qualities of the Buddha, such as the ten powers and so forth. The Conqueror has the ability *to eliminate all the very powerful dangers*, which are the sufferings of the cyclic existence of migrators. So for that reason, as presented at this point in the text, *I quickly take refuge in the Conqueror*, here, *quickly* indicates that from this moment on, one takes refuge in the Conqueror morning, day, and night.

Thus, the first paragraph of the commentary presents taking refuge in the Conqueror or the Buddha as a guide on the path. As this is a Mahayana refuge, one needs to also understand that the commitment one makes in taking refuge is that we take refuge in the Conqueror as our guide on the path until we attain the final state of enlightenment.

We need to understand that the second line, *I accept the Dharma that the Conqueror understood and taught*, refers to the two main aspects of the Dharma, which are the realisations and the oral teachings of the Buddha. Taking refuge in *the Dharma Jewel that has the ability to eliminate all the fears of cyclic existence*, indicates that one relies on the Dharma Jewel as the path that leads to the ultimate result of enlightenment. The Dharma Jewel also has two other aspects, which are the Mahayana truth of cessation and the Mahayana truth of the path.

When the third paragraph of the commentary states *I also accept the assembly of bodhisattvas that have attained the state of a superior*, the *superior* specifically indicates the *superior Mahayana state* of a non-returner. When the commentary states *as friends helping to accomplish the path, and purely go for refuge to them*, the word *purely* indicates that going for refuge to the Three Jewels needs to be free from deceit and doubt. It would be deceitful if one gives mere lip service to the words but does not actually have strong feeling of refuge. If one is not really convinced that the objects of refuge have the ability to protect oneself then that would be doubt. So *purely going for refuge* indicates having a heartfelt genuine mind of refuge that is free from deceit and doubt.

Purely also indicates having the conviction that the objects of refuge have the full capacity to free one from all fears. Having generated the fear of an unfortunate rebirth and cyclic existence, one develops an absolute conviction that the objects of refuge have the full ability to free one from those

fears. So, pure refuge is a heartfelt faith in the objects of refuge, knowing that they have the ability to free one from the lower realms and samsara.

To summarise the essential points, one goes for refuge with the two causes for going for refuge intact.

- The first cause is having generated fear of the lower realms and the suffering of cyclic existence in general, and urgently wanting to be free from those fears. Seeing that the objects of refuge have the ability to free one from those fears, one takes refuge in them.
- The second aspect of taking refuge is a heartfelt reliance on the Buddha as the guide, the Dharma, which is the Mahayana truth of cessation and Mahayana truth of path, and the Sangha, which is the supreme assembly of Mahayana arya beings. So one develops complete reliance on these three, and generates the mind, 'I will go for refuge to them until I achieve enlightenment'.

Having that single-pointed focus on the objects of refuge, and relying upon them single-pointedly is the way of taking Mahayana refuge. It is important to keep this summary in mind for your daily Dharma practice.

4.2.2.2. RELYING ON THE POWERFUL PRAYERS OF THE CHILDREN OF THE CONQUERORS

Here *the children of the conquerors*, refers to the eight close disciples of the Buddha, which I think we listed in an earlier session.

The next two verses read:

49. *Having become afraid of the dangers
I offer myself to Samantabhadra,
Also to Manjushri
I offer this body of mine.*
50. *Also the protector Avalokiteshvara,
Whose actions are non-deceptive due to
compassion,
I implore in anguish:
Rescue me, the sinner.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Having become afraid of the fears of the lower realms I offer myself to the child of the conquerors, Samantabhadra, who does many powerful prayers. Through this, please rescue me from the dangers.

Likewise to Manjushri, without others having to urge me I offer my body with a clear mind.

To Avalokiteshvara, whose non-deceptive actions for others are motivated by compassion spontaneously and uninterruptedly, I also implore in anguish to please rescue me, who is pitiful due to these dangers. Please rescue me the sinner.

When the commentary states, *having become afraid of the fears of the lower realms*, it is specifically indicating the three unfortunate rebirths that are explained in detail in the teachings. There are the unimaginable and unbearable sufferings of the hell realms, and the hungry ghost realm, and even in the animal realm, which is, of course, is familiar to us. It is unbearable to even think about the prospect of having to experience such suffering. Having generated such fear of the lower realms one *offers oneself to the child of the conquerors*.

The way to be free from the fears and the sufferings of the lower realms is to rely on, and take refuge in, the objects of refuge. As Lama Tsongkapa mentioned in one of his works, 'There is no certainty that we will not be reborn in the lower realms. Therefore we take heartfelt refuge in the objects of

refuge as only they have the power to protect us from this fear of a lower rebirth'.

Children of the conquerors refers to the disciples who were close to the Buddha. They are referred to as children because of being close disciples. Another implication of *children of the conquerors* is that it refers to those who hold the entire lineage of the teachings of the Buddha. So there are different implications of *child of the conquerors*.

Samantabhadra is one of the bodhisattvas who was a close disciple, *who does many powerful prayers*; while *I offer my body to the conquerors* is an entreaty, 'Please rescue me from the dangers'. Similarly with Manjushri, who was another close disciple, there is the proclamation, *without others having to urge me, I offer my body with a clear mind*.

Also *Avalokiteshvara*, whose non-deceptive actions for others are motivated by compassion spontaneously and uninterruptedly, indicates that Avalokiteshvara benefits sentient beings continuously and spontaneously. Avalokiteshvara is called Chenrezig, which in Tibetan means *that which constantly sees the sufferings of sentient beings*, and this indicates that Chenrezig's eyes are always open and always looking down at sentient beings with compassion. That is the connotation of the name Chenrezig.

I implore in anguish, means that out of desperation one implores the children of the conquerors, 'Please rescue me, who is pitiful due to these dangers. Please rescue me the sinner'.

Then Gyaltsab Je poses a question as an introduction to the next two verses:

If asked, 'In what manner?'

51. *The superior Essence of Space and
The Essence of Earth and
All compassionate protectors
I implore from the heart to rescue me*
52. *I take refuge into the Vajraholder
Whose mere sight causes the
Angry minions of the lord of death
To flee into the four directions.*

The explanation in Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Likewise I go for refuge to the bodhisattva superior Essence of Space and Essence of Earth, and to all greatly compassionate protectors who have love and have eliminated obscurations. I implore them from my heart: Please rescue me.

I also take refuge into the Vajraholder (Vajrapani), whose mere sight causes the angry minions of the lord of death to scatter into the four directions.

I implore is the translation of the Tibetan word *sol*, which has the connotation, 'I have something to request'.

Having listed three children of the Conqueror earlier, i.e. Samantabhadra, Manjushri and Avalokiteshvara, this verse refers to the bodhisattva *superior Essence Of Space* (Akasagarbha), the bodhisattva *Essence of Earth* (Ksitigarbha) and all compassionate protectors. The next verse refers to the Vajraholder, who is Vajrapani. I have explained the qualities of Vajrapani extensively in the past. Vajrapani has the power to eliminate adverse forces, obstacles and obscurations that hinder Dharma practice.

The other two close disciples which are not mentioned here are Maitreya and Sarvanirvarana Viskambhin (*Dripa nam sel* in Tibetan; the literal English translation is *clearing away all obscurations*). When the commentary says *I implore them from my heart*, it means that one makes a heartfelt request to be rescued by these children of the Conqueror.

The implication of mentioning the eight children of the Conqueror is that they are all *arya* beings and are worthy objects of refuge.

4.2.2.3. HAVING GONE FOR REFUGE, PRACTISING ACCORDING TO THE ADVICE

The real implication of going for refuge is so that one will practise according to their advice. Also there are specific commitments that we need to uphold after having taken refuge.

In essence, practising the advice encompasses the practice of the three scopes. Another way of presenting this is that relying on the objects of refuge is the means to achieve the ultimate goal of complete enlightenment. What the advice actually entails is adopting those practices we need to accomplish - which is to accumulate virtue and merit - and abandoning that which needs to be abandoned, which are negativities. So, refuge is actually subsumed into these two practices of adopting and abandoning.

This is presented in the following verse:

53. *Previously I transgressed your words
Now, having seen great danger,
I take good refuge in you; by this
Eliminate all dangers quickly I request.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this this verse reads

Previously I transgressed your words, committed negativities and did not practise virtue. Now, having seen the infinity of cyclic existence and the great dangers of the lower realms, I take refuge in you.

By my implementing what has to be practised and what has to be abandoned, according to your advice, please quickly eliminate all fears I pray.

Previously I transgressed your words refers to not following the advice of the Buddha. In essence, the Buddha advised us to shun negativity and create virtue. However, because of not having followed that advice, one has committed negativities and did not practise virtue, and as a result now finds oneself being completely overwhelmed by the sufferings of cyclic existence.

Seeing now that the consequence of not following that advice will lead one into *the infinity of cyclic existence*, the connotation here is that if one relies on the object of refuge to some degree, then it might free you from some of the great sufferings in the next rebirth. As explained earlier, by taking heartfelt refuge in the object of refuge at the time of death, one will be protected from rebirth in the unfortunate realms in the next life. However, merely taking refuge and not practising the advice means that one will still be reborn in cyclic existence, not only once or twice but for an infinite number of times.

When one thinks about that prospect, it becomes apparent that it is urgent that one follows the advice of the Conqueror and takes refuge in him, *by implementing what has to be practised and what has to be abandoned according to your advice.*

This means that we are saying that we will implement these practices of abandoning what has to be abandoned and adopting what has to be practised into our daily life. We really need to take this as personal advice. To this we can add a further essential, which is the three higher trainings of morality, concentration and generating wisdom. Practising the three higher trainings is another way to implement the Buddha's advice.

As mentioned previously, the more we really contemplate and take to heart the two causes of going for refuge, the

more firmly it is established, the stronger one's conviction in the infallibility of karma becomes. These are the essential practices that establish that foundation.

We will recite together the *Eight Verses of Mind Training*, and dedicate it to my old friend, Geshe Sonam Rinchen, who passed away on Saturday morning. He was a very dear Dharma friend; we studied together in the same class, under the same teacher, and went through many hardships and difficulties together. We shared whatever meagre food we had and escaped into India together, continuing our studies there later on. We shared difficulties and hardships and the joy of our studies and so forth for so many years. He was not just an ordinary geshe but someone who had accomplished great knowledge of the Dharma, both in understanding and in practice. Not only was he skilled in citing the teachings but he was also skilled in logic and reasoning. So he was endowed with the qualities of the scriptural understanding as well as the logic of the teachings. By sharing that great knowledge he benefited so many beings in his thirty-five years in the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. The many students and disciples who studied under him found him to be very kind in sharing his Dharma knowledge.

I tried to visit him when I was in India at the beginning of this year. I purchased a ticket to go up to Dharamsala but unfortunately the airline, Kingfisher, went bankrupt, so the ticket was useless. In any case the teachings didn't end on time. So I was not able to see him—in fact, I haven't been able to see him for many years.

From my side the best thing we can offer is our practices. With the recitation of the prayers we generate the wish that he come back again for the purpose of the teachings, and to benefit sentient beings. May he come back in another reincarnation and once again engage in the Dharma as a way to benefit other beings. With that sort of intention in our mind we make strong prayers, which will help us to make a connection with Geshe-la and meet him again in the future.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcribed by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་པའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

15 October 2013

With a motivation based on the *Refuge and Bodhicitta prayer*, we can now engage in the meditation practice. [meditation]

It would be very good to regularly engage in the *tong len* practice that we have just attempted to do. As it is a practice that increases one's love and compassion for other living beings, the *tong len* practice really seems to be the essence of the Mahayana practice. As one further develops and establishes love and compassion within one's own mental continuum, and as this becomes stronger and stronger, one will actually be able to engage in this practice of giving and taking.

4.2.3. The power of thorough application of the antidote

Having completed the power of thorough repudiation or regret, we can start to think about the order of the four opponent powers and how they are a means to engage in the purification practice. Relating to their sequence is in itself really beneficial.

It is good to have a general understanding of the term *the power of thorough application of the antidote*. In general, it is an antidote that counteracts the negativity that one has created. As presented in the teachings, any virtue accumulated with the intention that it will serve as an antidote to negativity is sufficient to overcome that negativity!

More specifically, there are the six different methods that were listed earlier and it is good to keep them in mind.

This section is subdivided into two:

4.2.3.1. The reason why it is appropriate to purify negativity

4.2.3.2. Why it is appropriate to purify soon

Here, the Tibetan term *jang*, which is usually translated as *purify*, can also mean *practice*. In this case the practice to overcome negativity refers to a method that counteracts the consequences of the negativity that one has created. So, as the translation suggests, *purify* in this case refers to purification practice. Practising virtue, on the other hand, refers to the practice of accumulating merit and so forth. By further developing and increasing the virtues within oneself one is practicing virtue. So the Tibetan term *jang* refers to practices that can have different intentions. I have explained this previously, but it is good to refresh one's memory.

4.2.3.1. THE REASON WHY IT IS APPROPRIATE TO PURIFY NEGATIVITY

It is good to consider the way the commentary uses headings to put the text into a logical context. Through their systematic, logical sequence the headings in themselves are quite profound. Rather than beginning with how to purify negativity we are first presented with the reason why it is appropriate to do that. If we

understand why it is appropriate to purify negativity then we will naturally be more inclined to engage in that practice. Next we can consider why it is appropriate to purify our negativity right now.

We actually gain a lot of insight just from the way the material is presented. In fact one could say that the manner in which it is presented is, in itself, a means to increase our intelligence and wisdom. It is important to first see the reason why we engage in an activity, and then analyse whether there is any benefit or not. When we find that there is benefit in a certain activity, we will then naturally be more inclined to adopt it. We can apply this practical principle to our everyday life activities. Even though these are classical teachings we can still derive a lot of practical advice that we can apply in our everyday lives. Basically, they are teaching us how to make best use of our intelligence and wisdom.

There are two sub-headings in this section:

4.2.3.1.1. Showing by example of sickness why it is necessary to purify soon

4.2.3.1.2. Showing the necessity to relate it to the example of the abyss

4.2.3.1.1. Showing by example of sickness why it is necessary to purify soon

This is subdivided into three:

4.2.3.1.1.1. Stating the meaning of the example

4.2.3.1.1.2. The sickness of the three poisons has many shortcomings and the medicine to destroy it is rare

4.2.3.1.1.3. It is appropriate to practice in accordance with the advice of the supreme physician

4.2.3.1.1.1. Stating the meaning of the example

The relevant verse reads:

54. *If one has to act according to the doctor's advice
Even when in fear of an ordinary sickness,
What need is there to mention one who
Is afflicted by the hundreds of faults of
attachment and so on?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

When one is concerned that one may die as one is afraid of the sickness, one has to implement the method to destroy the sickness in accordance with the advice of the physician, even to cure a common disease like a disturbance in the winds or bile.

If that is so, then what need is there to mention that it is appropriate to rely on the antidote according to the instructions of the Conqueror, the supreme physician, in order to be cured from the chronic disease of the three poisons of attachment, anger and ignorance, as one has been continuously beaten down since beginningless time by the sources of hundreds of thousands of shortcomings.

It is appropriate to rely on the antidote to negativity.

According to traditional medicine, the cause of many illnesses is *disturbance in the winds or bile*. When an illness worsens it is common to rely upon a doctor and, depending on the severity of the illness, to willingly undergo quite severe treatments such as surgery, or even amputation, in order to be cured. Harsh and severe treatments are necessary at times to save one's life. Thus

we are patient and are willing to endure them, knowing that they are for our own benefit. When the doctor prescribes a treatment that includes changing our normal lifestyle, regulating our diet to avoid certain kinds of food and drink, or taking up some sort of exercise, we take all that advice willingly in order to be cured. Rather than holding a grudge against the doctor for the severe treatment, we are quite happy to accept it.

The point of the analogy is that we willingly accept unpleasant treatment knowing it is for our own benefit. It has been statistically shown that if one doesn't have confidence in the doctor, then the prescribed medicine doesn't seem to be of much benefit. Mostly though, as the commentary explains, with respect to ordinary ailments we follow *the advice of the physician* in order to cure the disease.

Then the commentary uses the illustration of the analogy to conclude, *If that is so, then what need is there to mention that it is appropriate to rely on the antidote according to the instructions of the Conqueror, the supreme physician, in order to be cured from the chronic disease of the three poisons of attachment, anger and ignorance.* To these three poisons, we can add the other delusions.

When we really think about the harm that these delusions cause us, we realise that they are indeed a very deep-rooted disease. We experience the effects of the three poisons on a continual basis, and we have been affected by these afflictive delusions from beginningless lifetimes. The disease of the three poisons affects almost everyone regardless of their status and their physical condition; those who are physically healthy are not immune to the mental afflictions.

We can definitely see that most people have, at some time in their life, had to endure some form of mental distress caused by attachment, anger or some other delusion such as jealousy, pride and so forth. Even though they are seemingly well physically, there is always an underlying mental distress and agony; some sort of an unsettled and restless mind is always there in the background. As mentioned in the commentary, ordinary beings have been affected by this mental distress over countless lifetimes; *one has been continuously beaten down since beginningless time by the source of hundreds of thousands of shortcomings.* Because they are so very deep-rooted, they are classified as a *chronic disease*.

The delusions, and in particular the three poisons, are like a chronic disease because we have been continuously affected by them since beginningless time and they are *the source of hundreds of thousands of shortcomings* and suffering. In order to be cured of this chronic disease, it is appropriate to rely on the antidote in accordance with the instructions of the Conqueror, who is likened to the *supreme physician*. So the antidote for overcoming the chronic disease of the three poisons was presented by the compassionate teacher, the Conqueror.

Even though we have not seen the Buddha directly, we have definitely come into contact with qualified teachers who have presented the unmistakable teachings of the Buddha. So right now we have these incredible conditions where we can use the teachings of the Buddha as an antidote for overcoming this chronic disease. We

have the ability and intelligence to recognise what the delusions are, their shortcomings, how they affect us, and the need to overcome them.

We would be doing ourselves a great disservice if we do not take advantage of these perfect conditions that we have now to make a genuine attempt to apply the appropriate antidotes for overcoming the delusions in our mind. Trying to develop an attentive and focussed mind in meditation is not sufficient by itself. We need to really work at applying the specific antidotes for overcoming the different delusions, which involves first recognising them. As the great teacher and master Lama Tsong Khapa mentioned, the real sign of one's meditation and practice bearing fruit is when we develop strong faith in the Dharma, along with the confidence that if we apply the antidotes, we will be able to overcome the delusions in our mind.

So *applying the antidote* means applying the antidote to the very causes of negativity, which are the delusions; the three poisons in particular. In fact, these three are the fundamental cause of all our physical and mental diseases and suffering. So, as mentioned here in the teachings and in the commentary, we need to apply an antidote to the source of the hundreds of thousands of shortcomings, i.e. the delusions. That is what we need to focus on.

4.2.3.1.1.2. The sickness of the three poisons has many shortcomings and the medicine to destroy it is rare

As I have explained earlier, it might be difficult to find these good conditions again in the future. So not utilising these conditions now while we have them would be like not bothering to seek treatment for a chronic disease. There is no benefit in having access to an incredible panacea and not making use of it. If we don't take our prescribed medicine we will not be cured. Likewise, if we don't apply the practices and antidotes for overcoming our delusions, we can't expect the delusions to naturally fade away, leaving us completely cured! The heading alone, *the sickness of the three poisons has many shortcomings and the medicine to destroy it is rare*, actually points out the great conditions we have now, and that we have that rare medicine right now!

We have met with the unmistakable Dharma teachings and the pure teachers who present them, so it would be an incredible waste if we don't utilise this wonderful opportunity now. The point is that, as the teachings mention, if a skilled doctor has prescribed the best of medicine to cure a disease, but the patient doesn't follow the treatment, then the patient cannot expect to be cured from the disease. Likewise, we are not deprived now of the teachers and the teachings, so if we find we are not making progress in our practice of overcoming the delusions, it is not the fault of the Dharma or the teachers. The fault lies with us because we have not applied the practice to ourselves. So we need to ensure that we don't fall into this trap of not using this opportunity we have now.

We really need to take to heart just how essential it is to apply the antidotes to overcome the delusions. I assume you are afflicted by the disease of the three delusions—I certainly am! So if we are alike in being afflicted by the

chronic disease of the delusions, then we are alike in that it is up to us to try to cure it. It's not as though we are deprived of the means to do so. We all have the ability to apply the cure for overcoming the chronic disease of the delusions; more specifically the root delusion of grasping at the self.

In this way we see that the teachings gives us the way to overcome the very core of our chronic disease, which is grasping at the self. The more we gain an understanding of the selflessness, or emptiness, of persons and the emptiness of phenomena, the more profound that understanding will be. Then we can begin to actualise that understanding and gain even more insight into emptiness. As explained in the teachings, the direct realisation of emptiness is the ultimate antidote for overcoming the chronic disease of grasping at the self. So once we are able to overcome this grasping at the self we begin to shatter our grasping at all other phenomena, and then the delusions will slowly become weaker and weaker. It is good for us to really reflect upon how the realisation of selflessness or emptiness serves as an antidote that overcomes grasping at the self.

In order to understand that, we first need to understand how grasping at the self affects our perception. How do we perceive things when we are grasping at the self? How does grasping at the self cause delusions? The more we understand that the grasping at the self is the cause of all of the delusions and the problems and suffering that we experience, the more we will realise that we need to overcome that grasping. And the means to overcome grasping at the self is to realise selflessness, or the emptiness of the 'I' and other phenomena. That is the crucial antidote. These are the essential points to understand.

In his Lam Rim teachings Lama Tsong Khapa explained that we should begin by applying the antidote to the strongest and most prominent delusion. As presented very succinctly in the teachings, the antidote for overcoming strong attachment is to meditate on the imperfections of the object. To overcome anger one generates love and compassion for the object of anger. To counter ignorance, one meditates on emptiness. To eliminate pride one meditates on the various aspects and different categories of phenomena; and the best method to overcome discursive and disturbing thoughts is to meditate on the breath.

Although these methods will not overcome the very root of these delusions, they will definitely help to settle down the mind and to overcome the manifest aspects of these delusions, which means that the strong feelings these delusions give rise to will subside. So to that extent we will definitely benefit from applying these antidotes. We all know that during intense moments of anger we are really disturbed, and when that intense anger subsides, we definitely feel relief and a genuine sense of calmness. Of course we may not yet have overcome the very root of anger, but even at a manifest level the intense anger has subsided; so we do gain benefit from these techniques.

If one leaves these instructions to overcome strong and pronounced delusions in one's mind aside, and instead attempts to meditate just focusing on an object, I wonder how focused one could really be on any chosen object

while in the grip of strong delusions. Even if one were to achieve some sort of focus temporarily, it would soon be overridden by that strong delusion. So it is much more practical to overcome the strong delusion first, and then apply the meditation technique. Some people have confided in me that, 'When I attempt to meditate, I am able to focus for quite a long time. However after the meditation finishes and I come out and begin to interact with my partner, I immediately become very upset and angry!' That illustrates that the intended effect of the meditation is not taking place.

The term *three poisons* is very succinct, yet we can easily relate to it. As presented in the teachings, the three poisons are attachment, anger and ignorance. The ill effects of the three poisons are not obscure; we have all experienced them. Feeling ignorant about something is quite daunting and disturbing, and another form of ignorance is where the mind becomes very dull and dark. So we can see the ill-effects of ignorance. We definitely know the strong effects of anger as we have all experienced that! Then there are the ill-effects of attachment. It is attachment that keeps us very busy, rushing around all the time; it makes us go to work, to earn money and so forth. The driving force behind all this busyness is actually attachment.

On a subtler level ignorance is of course what prevents us from knowing the ultimate nature of phenomena, which is emptiness. As the teachings present, our problems arise because of this fundamental ignorance. So we can see how essential it is to gain the profound understanding and realisation of emptiness.

The verse relating to this heading is:

*55. Even a single one of these destroys
All humans of Dzambuling [or Earth]
If one does not find a different medicine
In all the directions to cure it.*

Here, Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

Even one moment of anger towards a bodhisattva can destroy all humans in Dzambuling and throw them into the lower realms. The medicine against this great sickness, meditating on the path and so forth, one will not find anywhere else, apart from the texts that reveal it.

If one cannot find it in any other place, such as the world of Brahma and so forth, then it is unfindable elsewhere and therefore rare.

As the commentary explains very precisely, *even one moment of anger towards a bodhisattva can destroy all humans of Dzambuling (our world) by throwing them into the lower realms.*

In his many texts Gyaltsab Rinpoche often refers to the great negativity that would be incurred by engaging with a bodhisattva in a hostile manner. There is, of course, a profound reason why Gyaltsab Je specifically uses the example of bodhisattvas in this way. In *A Commentary On Valid Cognition*, Gyaltsab Je mentioned that it is extremely difficult to know who really is a bodhisattva. So the great danger in harming others is that if they are a bodhisattva, which may not be at all obvious, then we will incur very heavy negative karma. Gyaltsab Je explains this with the analogy of a pit with burning embers at the bottom,

camouflaged with leaves and so forth on the top. If someone happened to step on the leaves over the pit, they would fall in and be burned by the embers. Just as we don't know where the camouflaged pit may be, likewise, we can't tell who could be a bodhisattva. There may be some bodhisattvas amongst us here right now. How are we to know? We wouldn't! So, as explained in many teachings, the best way to relate to others is by developing a pure view and seeing others in a good light and not focusing on their negativities. We need to always remember that what appears to us is not necessarily based on reality. In general we can say that it is best not to criticise those who have good qualities, who may also be quite learned! At least this can be quite obvious. Criticising someone who has good qualities is quite dangerous, so we need to be careful.

The particular delusion that Gyaltsab Rinpoche and other masters caution us against is anger towards these supreme beings. Of course, other delusions are also as damaging, but anger is the most likely one that we might develop and, as just explained, the consequence is very heavy negative karma. As mentioned in the commentary, *even one moment of anger*, or any other delusion for that matter, can cause a human to be reborn in the lower realms. If one delusion can cause so much harm and bring so much suffering, there's no need to mention the suffering created by all of the delusions combined together!

Having explained the great danger in allowing delusions such as a moment of anger to rule our behaviour, the commentary goes on to say that, *the medicine against this chronic disease is meditating on the path and so forth*, and this is something *one will not find anywhere else, apart from the texts that reveal it*. The teachings of the Buddha present the unmistakable antidotes for overcoming these delusions. As emphasised here, *one will not find it anywhere else*, which indicates that there is no instruction other than the unmistakable teachings that present the unmistakable methods for overcoming the delusions. *One cannot find it in any other place, such as the world of Brahma and so forth, therefore it is unfindable elsewhere and rare*.

We need to be able to apply this to ourselves, by recognising and acknowledging that we have met with these rare teachings that provide the unmistakable methods to apply the antidotes to overcome these chronic diseases. We have an incredible opportunity now, when we have these perfect conditions and have met with these rare teachings! So we need to really take it to heart and try to apply the practice as much as we can, while making strong prayers to never be parted from these profound teachings of the Buddha. In this life and in all future lifetimes we need to continuously meet with these perfect conditions until we reach our ultimate goal of enlightenment. So we must not waste this opportunity that we have now, and it is also important to make strong and fervent prayers to meet with these conditions again in the future.

Having explained how it is very rare to meet with these conditions, a question which may arise as to whether it is appropriate to practise according to the advice of the supreme physician. In other words, do we have the

capacity to practise in that way? The meticulous presentation here shows how this is definitely possible.

The verse relating to this reads:

56. *And if one thinks not to act in accordance
With the advice of the all-knowing
physician,
Which can cure all pain,
Then that is extremely ignorant and the
object of ridicule.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

If one stays obsessed with the causes of infinite cyclic existence and the lower realms, instead of putting the advice given by the all-knowing physician, who knows all the medicines to eliminate the sickness of the afflictions, and that liberates from all the pain of the afflictions, into practice, then that action is extremely ignorant and the object of criticism.

Therefore one should take refuge in the teacher from one's heart and practise the Dharma shown by him accordingly.

The opening lines from the Tibetan text are that *the medicines to eliminate the sickness of the afflictions* are presented *by the all-knowing physician*, which refers to the omniscient Buddha. Because the cure to overcoming the disease of the afflictions is presented by the omniscient one, that in itself answers the earlier hypothetical query, 'Is it appropriate to practise according to the advice of the supreme physician?' The answer is that it is definitely appropriate because it is presented not just by anyone, but by the supreme being who is all-knowing and thus free from all obscurations. Because the all-knowing omniscient Buddha is free from all obscurations, the methods and techniques presented by the Buddha will not have any mistakes or flaws. So it is appropriate for us to apply this medicine-like teaching and practice, because it is presented by the unmistakable Buddha, the all-knowing one free from all obscurations. Thus we put into practice *the advice given by the all-knowing physician, who knows all the medicines to eliminate the sickness of the afflictions; that liberates from all the pain of the afflictions*. But *if one stays obsessed with the causes of infinite cyclic existence and the lower realms*; in other words, if we don't put the advice into practice, then the flaw comes from our own side.

As the commentary explains, the medicine-like antidote to overcome the disease, which is presented by the all-knowing one, the Buddha, eliminates the sickness of the afflictions. It is also implied here that this antidote eliminates the sickness of the afflictions at its very core. As explained earlier, the very core of all our delusions, problems and mistakes is grasping at the self, and the Buddha presents the techniques and methods to overcome that grasping. Eliminating that grasping at self eliminates the sickness of all afflictions. When we overcome the very cause of the disease, then naturally the disease itself will subside. So when the core and the very root of those afflictions, self-grasping, is completely eliminated, all afflictions are eliminated.

If, rather than implementing this technique we intentionally create more causes to be in samsara, then as the commentary states, *that action is extremely ignorant and*

the object of criticism. Whenever someone wastes a great opportunity, they are scorned with comments like, 'How stupid that is'. We would fall into that category if we neglect to adopt the practices and intentionally create even more causes to remain in samsara. To avoid falling into this trap *one should take refuge in the teacher from one's heart.* This means that having understood the qualities of the Conqueror, the omniscient one, the great compassionate all-knowing one, who has no flaws and who is endowed with only great qualities, we need to take heartfelt refuge with the confidence that the Conqueror has the ultimate means to free us from the disease of the delusions. Then, having taken refuge, we practise the Dharma taught by the Buddha, which is the means to cure the disease of the delusions. Just like receiving treatment for a disease, we implement Dharma practice to cure ourselves. Accordingly, we should follow what the unmistakable teacher, the Buddha, taught.

As the Buddha very succinctly said, 'Don't engage in any negativity, accumulate all virtues, and subdue your mind; this is the teaching of the Buddha'.

The three higher trainings are the realisation of the Buddha's doctrine and the three baskets are the oral teachings of the Buddha's doctrine.

There followed a discussion of the translation of two specific Tibetan terms that are translated interchangeably as Dharma or the teachings.

In a general sense dharma refers to all phenomena because the literal meaning of *dharma*, is *to hold its own identity*. So whatever holds its own identity is the dharma. This glass, for example, holds its own identity. Whenever we see it, whenever we look at it, wherever we put it, it is always a glass.

Earlier we referred to the Buddha's doctrine or teachings as an antidote to overcome the delusions. Here Dharma refers specifically to the Buddha's doctrine or teachings, rather than general phenomena or dharmas.

If we refer to the Dharma as the Buddhadharmas, it might have a more specific connotation and relate more to the Buddha's teachings. Also there are many faiths which have personal benefits and we can then say that these are dharmas too, but they are not the Buddhadharmas or the Buddha's teachings.

As I have mentioned hundreds of times, whatever practice we do can become a Buddhist practice if it is based on the principles of non-violence and having sound faith in the Buddha.

This is my definition of Buddhadharmas: if one practises non-harmfulness and goes for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, then whatever one engages in will be a Buddhist practice.

*Transcribed by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

22 October 2013

By focusing on the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer* as a motivation we can now engage in the *tong len* meditation practice. [meditation]

To set the motivation for the teaching, we can think along these lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings, by liberating them from suffering and leading them to the ultimate state of happiness, I first need to achieve enlightenment myself. So, for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and practise well.

If one wonders, 'What is the purpose of coming to listen to these teachings?', then this motivation can serve as a reminder of the purpose of listening to the Dharma. This motivation indicates that it is not sufficient just to aspire to become enlightened; rather we need to actually put the Dharma into practice. When we set this motivation it actually ensures that our activities of teaching and listening to the Dharma becomes meaningful.

It is good to understand the significance of one's motivation. When one generates such a positive motivation in accordance with the altruistic wish to achieve enlightenment, that which encompasses the three principles of the path, then the whole Mahayana path is encompassed in that motivation. That's why it is extremely meaningful. While generating that positive motivation is crucial, the only way to bring that to fruition is through study and practice. Without both study and practice, one cannot actualise those good intentions.

Now let us return to the text; my intention is to try to go through the text a bit more quickly.

4.2.3. The power of the thorough application of the antidote

4.2.3.1. THE REASON WHY IT IS APPROPRIATE TO PURIFY NEGATIVITY (CONT.)

4.2.3.1.2. Showing the necessity to relate it to the example of the abyss

The outline uses the example of an abyss to show the necessity of purification.

The relevant verse in the root text reads:

57. *If one needs to be conscientious
Regarding ordinary small abysses,
What need is there to mention
The abyss that goes down a thousand bagtse?*

Gyalsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

If one needs to be very conscientious with small heights like hills, where falling down would merely cause injuries to one's limbs, then what need is there to mention that one has to be conscientious about not falling into the great abyss

of 32000 *bagtse*, only indicated here by one thousand, where one needs to remain for a long time if one falls down?

One needs to rely on the antidote to the afflictions.

The first part of the commentary presents the analogy of an abyss between mountains. One has to take great care and *be very conscientious* about not falling down into an abyss. Out of the fear of falling and breaking one's limbs and so forth, one applies conscientiousness to avoid falling down into such an abyss. Now if we normally take extreme measures to protect ourselves from physical injury, then, as the commentary mentions, *what need is there to mention* the need to protect ourselves from the great abyss that one would fall into if one commits negativities. Such an abyss is greater in depth than any abyss on mountains; the text mentions an abyss of 32000 *bagtse* or leagues, which is the measure of the depth of the lower realms. So the abyss that one would fall into by creating negativities would be that of the unfortunate rebirths, which are not only incredibly deep but also extremely difficult to escape from.

Therefore one needs to be conscientious and apply methods to protect oneself from falling into the deep abyss of the lower realms. One needs to ensure that one applies *the antidotes to the afflictions*, which are the cause of all negativities, within a virtuous frame of mind. There is a significant point why the power of thorough application specifies applying antidotes to the afflictions; that is because in order to completely eradicate all negativity one has to apply the antidotes to the afflictions.

What one needs to derive from this explanation is that the ultimate goal is to completely overcome and purify all negativity from its very roots. Thus, it is only by completely eradicating the afflictions from their very root that we can be satisfied that we have completely purified all our negativities, and that eradication is achieved through the purification practices that have been presented.

As explained in the teachings, the main afflictions are attachment and grasping. Due to the ignorance about karma and its effects, we are compelled to take rebirth again and again in cyclic existence. So when the link of grasping and attachment is severed, we will not have to take rebirth again in cyclic existence. Therefore attachment and grasping are the main links that we need to break in order to achieve the cessation of rebirth in cyclic existence, and the lower rebirths in particular. The main point is that without overcoming attachment and grasping, one will have to continuously experience the consequences of negative karma in cyclic existence.

4.2.3.2. WHY IT IS APPROPRIATE TO PURIFY SOON

This outline indicates that it is not adequate to think that we will purify our negativities some time in the future, by thinking, 'Oh, I can gradually and slowly purify negativities'. The point presented here is that one needs to engage in purification right now!

There are two subheadings to this heading:

4.2.3.2.1. Strive in the antidote to the afflictions starting today.

4.2.3.2.2. It is unsuitable to be lazy in meditating on the path, because there is no reason to be unafraid of suffering.

With respect to the first subheading, we need to see that this is an exhortation to strive to apply the antidote for overcoming afflictions, starting right now, and not leave it for another time. We are so habituated to procrastinating and leaving things for later! This teaching cuts through all of that and points the finger at us saying, 'You can't leave it for later; you have to do it right now!' If we actually take heed of this presentation, we will find great purpose and meaning in this exhortation.

The second subheading is very profound. *There is no reason to be unafraid of suffering* also implies that when one achieves the state of being certain of not having to experience the consequences of negativities, then at that time there is no need to be afraid of suffering. This means that one should be very afraid of suffering if one has not purified the negativities and applied antidotes to one's afflictions. *It is unsuitable to be lazy in meditating on the path*, means that one needs to apply the meditations and practise *on the path*.

4.2.3.2.1. Strive in the antidote to the afflictions starting today

The verse from the root text reads:

58. *It is unsuitable to abide comfortably
Saying 'I won't die right today'.
The time of the self becoming non-existent
Will come about without any doubt.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of this verse quite clearly, so I might not have to elaborate too much. I will of course elaborate when I feel capable of doing so, but when I am not too sure about something then I won't! The commentary begins with a rhetorical proposition:

One may think: Although it is necessary to strive in the antidote, it is good enough to start next month or year.

The answer to that is:

It is appropriate to start right from today because it is unsuitable to remain comfortably, not applying the antidote and being lazy, thinking that one will not die today. As there is no certainty that one will not die today, the time for me to become non-existent will most likely be tomorrow.

Hence I shall not be lazy and strive from today.

This of course relates to the points I've mentioned earlier. As a way to overcome the thought that it is not necessary to strive to apply the antidote right now, this is an exhortation to apply it right away. Immediately! The rationale behind the hypothetical proposition is that it may be acceptable to apply the antidotes to the delusions and negativity later. The response is in fact *it is appropriate to start right from today because it is unsuitable to remain comfortably, not applying the antidote and being lazy, thinking that one will not die right today*. Thinking that one will not die today implies that there is no certainty about when death will occur.

Here, *laziness* refers to the laziness that is associated with feeling comfortable about indulging in frivolous

activities, or having a good time in a worldly sense—socialising with friends, having a party, perhaps going out for a picnic and having a drink or two, enjoying a nice meal and so forth. The underlying state of mind that makes these plans definitely gives no thought to the fact that one could die at any given moment. That is the laziness of comfort, where we *remain comfortably*, engaging in worldly pleasures.

Actually all forms of attachment have an aspect of laziness. The definition of enthusiasm or joyous effort is being happy and joyful about creating virtue; the opposite of that is laziness, which is being happy to engage in non-virtue. Laziness does not necessarily refer to being inactive and passive, lying around doing nothing—some forms of laziness involve being very active. Indeed, the definition of laziness here is applied to someone who would normally be seen as being very active and talented, but only in pursuing their attachments.

Therefore we are being exhorted to not give in to the laziness of being comfortable, thinking we will not die today and not applying the antidote. This is inappropriate, *as there is no certainty one will not die today, the time for me to become non-existent will most likely be tomorrow!* As death could come as soon as the next day, the conclusion is *I shall not be lazy and strive from today*.

Then Gyaltsab Je quotes from a text called the *Letter of Kanika*

From the *Letter of Kanika*:

This is for tomorrow, today I do this—
This is not a pure action for a human
Because the time to become non-existent,
The tomorrow, is certain to come.

The practical implication of these instructions is that we need to ensure that we apply the antidotes to negativity by following the process of purification throughout the day. As ordinary beings it is inevitable that we will commit some negativity, however as soon as we realise that we have done so, we need to apply the antidote, which is purification; this is essential. If we commit negativity in the morning we need to try and confess and purify that by noon; if negativities have been committed at noon, we need to purify them by late afternoon; and at night we recall the negativities committed in the evening or throughout the day and apply the antidotes for purifying them. If we were not to purify them that evening, and die before we get out of bed the next day, then some of our negativity would remain unpurified, which would be most unfortunate.

To re-emphasise the point, if we purify our negativities before going to bed, then even if we were not to wake up the next morning, we would have purified at least some negativities. That is the attitude we need to carry throughout our lives.

The way to purify negativities is to apply the four opponent powers, which are being presented here in this second chapter.

- The first part of the confession and purification is to develop strong regret about having committed that negativity, thinking, 'It is extremely unfortunate that

I have again fallen victim to the delusions and have thus committed such negativity'.

- Having generated that remorse one will naturally want to do something about it. 'What can I do to rectify that negativity I have committed?' At that point one needs to rely on an object that will help one to rectify that negativity. So the next opponent power is the power of reliance on the basis, which is the Three Jewels and sentient beings. When one develops a strong reliance on the objects of refuge, the relevance of that strong refuge becomes most apparent.
- Even though they are essential, developing regret and relying on the objects of refuge is not sufficient, as they do not completely eradicate the negativity. The next opponent power is the power of thorough application of the antidote. Here one needs to engage in the activity of applying the antidote to the negativity, in particular to the delusions that are the cause of the negativity. So applying the antidote and understanding how to apply the antidote is really essential.
- To seal all of that, one resolves not to commit that negativity again.

This is how we purify negativity. We need to be aware that we can very easily engage in negativity. Just as we might be compelled to engage in some negativity within a few moments, by the same token it is also possible for us to apply the purification practice within a few moments. When we know the method then it's just a matter of bringing it to mind and acknowledging the negativity one has committed, feeling regret and so forth. So these four opponent powers can be applied in the same time that it takes to commit the negativity! So, as we have the means on hand at all times, it is most appropriate that we apply them.

As many of you would already be aware, the preliminary practices before engaging in a committed meditation practice, such as a long retreat, mainly consist of purification practices, and we need to understand their significance. Without purifying the negativities that our mind is still carrying, our meditation would not be fruitful as we would not be able to maintain any clarity or focus. We need to apply that principle to our regular practice, as purification practice is not just important but essential. I feel that as beginners, it would be more worthwhile to spend fifteen or twenty minutes doing a purification practice, rather than sitting cross-legged, with our eyes closed trying to focus on an object, while still being affected by distractions, and assuming it is meditation. Because we have not purified our negativities, our mind will not be focussed and will drift here and there. So I feel that it would be much more worthwhile to use one's time for a purification practice. Indeed, without having purified negativity the mind will be neither settled nor focussed. I'm relaying an important point here.

In relation to the appropriateness of applying the antidote to afflictions, let us take the example of attachment. If one has applied the antidote to overcome attachment, then to the degree that one has successfully done so, the mind

will not be affected by attachment and so one's meditation would be much more stable. Otherwise attachment will be a hindrance to one's meditation, and most of the obstacles to meditation are in the form of attachment. Because of this, Shantideva explains the antidotes for overcoming attachments in great detail in the eighth chapter of the *Bodhicharyavatara* text.

4.2.3.2.2. *It is unsuitable to be lazy in meditating on the path, because there is no reason to be unafraid of suffering*

As mentioned previously, there is no certainty about not having to be afraid of suffering, so *it is unsuitable to be lazy in meditating on the path*.

The verse relating to this reads:

59. *Who will offer me freedom from fear?
How will I be freed from danger?
If I am definite to vanish
How can I remain with a happy mind?*

Again, Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins with a hypothetical proposition:

Even though death occurs, being afraid of it will not help, so there is no need to be afraid.

Then the commentary continues:

One sees and hears that all others die. Thus while the fear of falling into the lower realms is there, what holy person can bestow fearlessness by saying that there is no need to be afraid of negativities and death?

Since there is nobody that can bestow freedom from negativities and death, how will one attain liberation if one does not strive in the antidote? One will not, and through death one will definitely become non-existent.

So why do you, due to the force of laziness, remain with a happy mind, and not strive in the antidotes to the negativities? This is unsuitable. Strive in meditating on the antidote!

We all operate under the assumption of the preliminary hypothetical statement. We often make comments like, 'Oh, I'm not afraid of death? Why should I be afraid?' Yet even though we say this casually, that fear might definitely arise quite strongly when the prospect of death is imminent. As the commentary explains, *one sees and hears that all others die and the fear of falling into the lower realms is there*. This is something that we can all relate to.

What holy person can bestow fearlessness on you emphasises the earlier point, that while *one sees and hears that all others die*, and *the fear of falling into the lower realms is there*, and since there is no holy being who can bestow fearlessness on you, you need to purify negativities.

Since there is nobody who can bestow freedom from negativities and death, how will one attain liberation if one does not strive in the antidote? One will not, and through death one will definitely become non-existent means that life as one knows it will completely end. It doesn't mean that one becomes totally non-existent, rather that this life will be severed, thus becoming non-existent in the context of this present life.

Thus the conclusion is, *so why do you, due to the force of laziness, remain with a happy mind, and not strive in the*

antidotes to the negativities? This is unsuitable and one should strive in meditating on the antidote!

Again, *laziness* does not refer to the laziness we understand in the worldly sense, which refers to someone who is inactive and just laying around and not doing anything. In this context a lazy person could be very active and engaging in much frivolous activity, and be enjoying the comforts of life out of attachment. To be more specific, applying the antidotes requires some exertion and some effort. Thinking that everything is fine and that we are just enjoying life, while not considering the negativities one is engaging in, let alone the need to apply the antidotes, is the laziness that is referred to here. As indicated earlier, the laziness of procrastination is also included here. We also need to protect ourselves from the sort of laziness that thinks, 'Oh, I can do it tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, or next week, or next month and so forth'.

As mentioned in the teachings, all virtues can become an antidote when they are practised with the intention of purifying negativities. As we all attempt to engage in virtue on a regular basis, and do some practices and so forth, it is good to ensure that these practices become a means to serve as an antidote.

4.2.4. The power of not reversing into the fault again

The fourth power is the power of not reversing into the fault again. It is good to remember the significance of the actual order of the practices of the four opponent powers. As explained previously, the first power, the power of thorough repudiation is, in short, the power of regret. The stronger the sense of regret one has, the more readily the intention to do something about the negativity one has committed will arise, and the more stable the next opponent power, the power of the basis, will naturally be. Then the third opponent power, the power of the thorough application of the antidote, will also be strong.

The power of not reversing into the fault again is divided into three:

4.2.4.1. Restraining oneself henceforth because of regretting the negativity

4.2.4.2. Confessing what one did before

4.2.4.3. Making a promise to refrain from the negativity after having requested attention

4.2.4.1. RESTRAINING ONESELF HENCEFORTH BECAUSE OF REGRETTING THE NEGATIVITY

This is sub-divided into two:

4.2.4.1.1. Purifying meaningless negativity

4.2.4.1.2. Striving day and night to be liberated from negativity

4.2.4.1.1. Purifying meaningless negativity

This is further sub-divided into two:

4.2.4.1.1.1. It is unsuitable to be attached because possessions are unreliable

4.2.4.1.1.2. It is unsuitable to be attached to family and so forth

4.2.4.1.1.1. It is unsuitable to be attached because possessions are unreliable

The verse relating to this reads:

60. Of past experiences, which have ceased,

What has remained of them?

By grasping at them

I transgressed the advice of the teacher.

The commentary's explanation of this reads:

The experiences of enjoyment of past cyclic existence were unreliable and have ceased. Now what is left of these enjoyments that I took to have essence? There is nothing left.

Therefore, regret having transgressed the advice of the teacher, and then generated negativity due to having grasped at, and being attached to, these phenomena without essence.

As the commentary explains, *the experiences of enjoyment of past cyclic existence were unreliable*. This also implies that one has experienced all types of enjoyments within cyclic existence. That is definitely true! There are no enjoyments that we have experienced in this life that are not related to the five senses—we have seen beautiful objects and sights, we have heard beautiful sounds, we have tasted beautiful tastes and enjoyed fragrant smells, and have experienced beautiful tactile feelings. If we think of past lifetimes then we can definitely say that there is nothing that we have not experienced. But while we have definitely experienced every pleasure in relation to the five senses, they were *unreliable*, meaning that there was no real value and substance to them.

When the commentary mentions that they *were unreliable and have ceased*, it is indicating that because they cease, they are unreliable. So there is an interrelationship between cessation and unreliability. Whatever the enjoyment or pleasure we may have experienced from the five senses, the moment of actual pleasure is the first moment when the sense consciousness meets with the sense object. But the very next moment, the pleasure that one has experienced ceases. Therefore nothing remains; there is no substance and nothing remains. So what remains from the enjoyments in the past? They were only momentary and there's nothing left to show the enjoyment we experienced.

When the commentary says *now what is left of these enjoyments*, the implication of *now* is, why do we still become attached to the enjoyments, failing to see that they were momentary and unreliable? Why are we still so attached to the enjoyments of the five senses when they have no essence? We experience pleasure or enjoyment at the moment of contact between the sense and the sense object, but at the very next moment the enjoyment ceases and there is nothing left. Not having realised this, we have continuously engaged in negativities.

Having considered that, we need to take the initiative, and *regret having transgressed the advice of the teacher and then generated negativity due to having grasped at, and being attached to, these phenomena without essence*. Here, *teacher* can refer to one's own teacher, the teacher of the three times, the Buddha Shakyamuni, and the bodhisattvas. We have *transgressed* or completely ignored the advice they presented in the past, and have continuously engaged in negativities by grasping *and being attached to phenomena*. The verse under the heading *It is unsuitable to be attached because possessions are unreliable* has thus explained succinctly that the enjoyment that we experience is only momentary and is thus unreliable. So why continue to

engage in that, as there is nothing to be gained? The Tibetan word used here, *lhakpa*, means *extra*. So there is nothing extra to be gained by engaging in the enjoyments of the five senses. Having understood and acknowledged that, one needs to apply the opponent power of regret about having transgressed the advice of the teachers and so forth.

4.2.4.1.1.2. It is unsuitable to be attached to friends and so forth

The verse relating to this reads:

61. *If, in a similar fashion to this life,
I have to give up friends and relatives,
And I have to go alone,
How suitable are all friends and non-friends?*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

This body I have while alive is without essence, and leaving behind friends and relatives in a similar fashion, I have to go, without certainty of the direction and without freedom.

Regardless of whether they are friends or non-friends, they do not have the slightest benefit, and it is unsuitable to have attachment to them.

This body I have while alive is without essence indicates that even though one is alive, one's body is already without essence. If that is so now, how much more so when, at the time of death, one has to discard one's body, friends and relatives. Those to whom one would otherwise have been attached will be of no help.

One has to leave behind the things with which one is most familiar such as one's cherished body, one's friends and relatives, and go completely alone on an unfamiliar journey. We have no choice; while it is certain that we have to go on to the next existence, the next life, we don't have any knowledge or wisdom regarding how to go about that. We are not sure how that journey is taken and how we will go on that journey. There is no certainty. So here again, we are exhorted to be wary about having too much attachment to our body, our possessions and particularly to our friends and relatives.

Now is the time to train our minds to prepare for the time of death. Here we are being given a succinct presentation of the method and means to prepare ourselves for our death, which is inevitable. The main point is that neither friends nor relatives can benefit us or help us at the time of death, the crucial moment when we have to go on a journey all by ourselves. So we need to reduce our strong attachment to our possessions, body, friends and relatives, which will release the mind so that it will accept and be ready for death whenever it occurs.

As one of the great masters mentioned, our body is just like a guesthouse where we spend a night or two, where the consciousness is the guest!

As explained and emphasised in this and other teachings, at the time of death nothing but the Dharma will help. Since it is only the Dharma that will benefit us at the time of death, we need to rely upon it now, and try to integrate the practice of the Dharma into our lives now. Without applying ourselves to practise now, we cannot expect the Dharma to miraculously help us at the time of death. So the way to practise the Dharma now is to avoid creating

negativity in relation to our possessions and friends and so forth, and to create virtue.

The next session is a discussion session followed by the exam, however my intention is to try to finish the third chapter this year. So we can have the discussion night, skip the exam and then we continue with the teaching straight after the discussion.

It seems that there are many who like the discussion and who seem to benefit from it.

Student: Some prefer the exam.

Maybe that's something we can look into at the next session. It is good to find a general consensus of what works and what doesn't work based on our experience. When there is a general consensus of what works, then it is worthwhile following. Of course, we can't always accept the opinions of one or two people, but when there is a general consensus of what works and what doesn't work, we can follow that.

It's good to follow the opinions of the younger generation such as Tara, who comments that she likes the discussion.

So as a compromise, this time around we will have the discussion but no exam, and continue the teaching after that, but next time around we will have the exam and no discussion. Next year we will see how we should proceed. Of course from my side, I like to try to go through the text, but I think that two teachings a week might be too hard for you.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcribed by Bernii Wright

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© *Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་པའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

5 November 2013

As we have already generated our motivation while reciting the prayers, we can now engage in the practice of meditation. [meditation]

You can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So, for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put it into practice well.

4.2.4.1.2. Striving day and night to be liberated from negativity

The implication of the outline is that there will be grave consequences if we do not strive day and night to be delivered from negativity. So we need to contemplate this, and follow this advice. The relevant verse reads:

62. "From non-virtue arises suffering
How does one become free from that?" you say.
It is suitable that I contemplate
This alone day and night.

With respect to this, Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins:

'From non-virtues such as killing arise the sufferings of the hells and so forth. How can I become free from that?' As presented:

It is suitable for me to contemplate day and night only karmic cause and effect.

The quote from *non-virtue arises suffering* is from Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*, which explains that the sufferings of the hells and so forth arise from non-virtues such as *killing*. While killing is specified here, the rest of the ten non-virtues are implied as well. When one engages in non-virtues such as killing, the definite consequence will be suffering in unfortunate rebirths such as in the hell realms. The implication here is that karma is infallible—once the cause is created one will definitely have to experience the consequences.

One has definitely engaged in non-virtues such as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and so forth in the past, so a great amount of negativity has already been accumulated. By contemplating the law of cause and effect, one realises that the consequence of engaging in such negativity is that, if it is not purified, then one will definitely take unfortunate rebirths in the hell realm, or hungry ghost realm or animal realm and experience great suffering. Faced with this prospect the question arises, 'How can I free myself from the consequences of my negative acts?' Thus, *it is suitable for me to contemplate day and night only karmic cause and effect*.

The Tibetan word *tak-tu* means *at all times*, so the implication here is to think about karma at all times—*day*

and night. Also when the root text says *this alone*, it is emphasising that one should be contemplating the essential points of karma at all times. When one really contemplates the effects that arise from the creation of negativities, then the need to purify those negativities will inevitably become a primary concern.

The next part of Gyaltsab Je's explanation is this essential point:

If one does not gain certainty with regard to karmic cause and effect, then one will not have certainty for any Dharma that makes the Conqueror happy.

Therefore everybody should strive in this.

This really encapsulates the essence of the verse. *If one doesn't gain certainty with regard to karmic cause and effect*, refers to the understanding one needs to gain from contemplating that the consequence of engaging in non-virtue is definitely suffering, and that the consequence of engaging in virtue is definitely happiness. There is no room for negotiation: negative karma definitely brings about unpleasant and unhappy results, and positive karma or virtue definitely brings about happy results.

Until one gains *certainty* about this point, whatever *Dharma* one does will not be in accordance with what would *make the Conqueror happy*. The emphasis here is to always be mindful about the infallibility of karma in all our activities. When we really take the initiative to contemplate the infallibility of karma, then the more we contemplate this, the more confidence we will gain about the certainty of karmic causes and effects. And as we gain more confidence about the certainty of karma, the stronger our determination and willingness will be to refrain from engaging in non-virtues such as taking the life of other sentient beings, and so forth. Likewise, our willingness to engage in accumulating virtue will naturally increase. So the essential practice of shunning negativity and adopting virtue comes about from an understanding of how karma works. Thus, cultivating certainty about karma is essential.

This is also in line with the advice of the Kadampa masters, who said, 'We regard any person who engages in the practice of avoiding the ten non-virtues and adopting the ten virtues, while encouraging others to do likewise, as a real practitioner and a true adept, regardless of the tradition that they may be following'. The great Kadampa masters said that that they were not concerned about particular traditions or particular appearances, i.e. whether they are a monk or a lay person; if they are truly practising this essential point then they are a real practitioner, a true adept, a noble being, and a real virtuous friend. This is something that we need to keep in mind.

It is also good to reflect on the common ground of all traditions, which is to acknowledge that adopting the ten virtues and avoiding the ten non-virtues is common to all religions. There are differences in explaining what it means to hold a wrong view, but the importance of avoiding killing and so forth is common to all religious traditions. In fact anyone with some commonsense would definitely accept the ten non-virtues as misdeeds. Thus, as presented in the commentary, abiding by the law of

karma is an essential practice that makes the conquerors happy.

The commentary concludes with:

That some say they have gained certainty with regard to emptiness but do not value karma is clearly a distorted understanding. They have not ascertained that emptiness is in actuality dependent arising.

If someone claims that they have gained some understanding of emptiness, and that they do not need to abide by karma (the law of cause and effect), then that in itself proves that what they are claiming is distorted and a completely wrong understanding. The reason it is a wrong understanding is because they have not ascertained that emptiness is in actuality dependent arising.

The point that is raised here is *that emptiness is in actuality dependent arising*. I have explained this extensively hundreds of times. So, if you have paid good attention then you will recall those explanations. This explanation is based on the teachings of the great master Nagarjuna and his disciple Chandrakirti. These great masters gained a profound understanding of emptiness by exhaustively applying themselves to understanding the Buddha's teachings particularly those on ultimate truth. They then very kindly presented this unmistakable view to us through their written works. We need to regard these great masters as being extremely kind in presenting the unmistakable view of emptiness to us, as without their clarification we would definitely be lost. We would come to wrong conclusions and develop a distorted view of emptiness.

This point is encapsulated in these words from the *Heart Sutra*, '*Form is empty, and emptiness is form*'. This indicates that while form is completely empty of inherent existence, it is within the sphere of emptiness that form is able to manifest and function interdependently. It is because things are empty of inherent existence that it is possible for things to exist interdependently as form, sound, smell, taste, tactile objects and so forth. When the *Heart Sutra* states, *Form is empty, emptiness is form*, it is explaining that while form and so forth are ultimately empty of inherent existence, conventionally they do exist interdependently. You need to remember this essential point always.

4.2.4.2. CONFESSING WHAT ONE DID BEFORE

This has two subdivisions:

4.2.4.2.1. What one has to confess

4.2.4.2.2. The way of confessing

4.2.4.2.1. What one has to confess

This refers to the negativity that one needs to confess. The verse relating to this point reads:

*63. I, out of unknowing ignorance,
Have created natural non-virtuous actions
And accepted negativities. Any of these
That I have done,*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Due to unknowing and ignorance with regard to karmic cause and effect, I have created either natural non-virtues which are a negativity whoever commits them—regardless of whether one has vows or not,

and misdeeds through decree which are committed only by those who have taken vows. Thus, I declare whatever wrong doings that I have committed.

One has *created each and every negativity* because of a failure to recognise actions as being negativities *due to unknowing and ignorance*, specifically ignorance of the karmic law of cause and effect.

Here, *whatever* refers to the two ways of creating negativity—the misdeeds of a person with vows who creates negativity with respect to their vows, and those without vows who create natural non-virtues.

The Tibetan text presents *natural non-virtue* first. Killing is a natural negativity or *misdeed* because it is a misdeed, regardless of whether the perpetrator knows it is a misdeed or not, regardless of whether they have taken vows or not, and regardless of whether they are ordained or not. Anyone who engages in the negative act of killing, for example, will incur negativity. That is why it is called a natural misdeed.

Whereas *negativity by decree*, which is translated in the root text as *accepted negativity*, is negativity committed by those who have taken particular vows, such as ordained monks and nuns, who incur negativity if they break their vows. If a lay person engages in the act of killing, they would incur the natural negativity or misdeed, but a monk or nun who engages in the act of killing would incur both the natural misdeed, as well as the negativity or misdeed by decree, because they have taken vows to refrain from killing.

With both natural negativities and the negativity of decree one creates negativity in relation to *self and others*.

So, confession involves confessing negativity incurred by either natural misdeeds, or a negativity that one has incurred because of decree. Regardless of how the negativity was committed, it has to be purified.

To summarise the main point, one needs to recall whatever negativity one may have created in the past and identify it as negativity by confessing it. This then gives one the impetus to engage in practices to purify it.

That covers the point about what one has to confess, which are the negativities incurred in the past.

4.2.4.2.2. The way of confessing

The verse relating to this outline is:

*64. Before the eyes of the protectors,
With hands folded and a mind seeing the
fears of suffering,
I prostrate again and again
And confess all of them.*

The explanation in Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

One should confess all one's negativities by prostrating repeatedly in front of the buddhas and their children with folded hands and a mind that sees the dangers of the negativities.

As the commentary explains, the way to confess negativities is to begin by visualising *the buddhas and their children*, indicating the bodhisattvas, *in front of oneself*. We really need to pay attention to the importance of visualising the buddhas and bodhisattvas as the objects of reliance. When we do a purification practice such as prostrating, it is important to really bring to mind the

buddhas and bodhisattvas, and try to generate as much as possible a strong sense that they are actually present in the space before us.

This has great significance because the more we develop that awareness of the presence of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, the stronger our inclination to confess and engage in a purification practice becomes. It also guards us against engaging in further negativities.

An awareness of the presence of buddhas and bodhisattvas helps to develop a conscientious mind, as well as the mental factor of shame and embarrassment. Basically, when there is the awareness of the buddhas always being present, one will be hesitant about creating negativities. The awareness that because the buddhas are omniscient they always know what one is doing, will protect one from engaging in negativity.

Prior to prostrating, one can kneel in front of the buddhas and bodhisattvas with one's palms together, recalling the negativities one has engaged in the past, and being moved to tears by strong regret and remorse, one now acknowledges the great opportunity that one has to purify this in the presence of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. So with that understanding in mind one can then engage in the purification practice such as prostrating, which also encompasses taking refuge in the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

The word *repeatedly* in the commentary indicates that one needs to engage in confession and purification practice again and again.

As mentioned previously, the degree of regret that one feels is dependent on recalling the consequences of the negativities. When one has a strong sense of how the consequences of the negativities will result in suffering, then strong regret and remorse will definitely arise; which will then be followed with the strong wish to refrain from negativities; followed by making a promise to refrain from such negativities in the future. This is how to engage in this practice.

4.2.4.3. MAKING A PROMISE TO REFRAIN FROM NEGATIVITY AFTER HAVING REQUESTED ATTENTION

The meaning of this heading is quite clear. The relevant verse is:

65. *I request the guides to accept my
Negativities as mistakes.
Since they are not wholesome
I shall not do them again.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Oh guides, for these reasons, please accept my negativities as mistakes. Since these negativities are not wholesome I promise not to do them again, even at the cost of my life.

Make the promise in this way, not to do the negativity henceforth, by cutting off the continuity.

As the commentary explains, one pleads with *the guides*—the buddhas and bodhisattvas—for *these reasons*,—referring to the negativities that one recalls and their great consequences—*please accept my negativities as mistakes*.

Since these negativities are not wholesome I promise not to do them again, even at the cost of my life is where one makes a promise to refrain from negativity in the future. As mentioned previously, this is also in line with the confession ceremony for the sangha where the abbot asks, 'Do you see your faults as faults?' and the reply is, 'I do'. 'Henceforth will you refrain from engaging in them again', to which the reply is 'I will'. It is the same with any confession and purification practice. Having pleaded with the guides or the buddhas and bodhisattvas to pay attention, one proclaims one's negativities and accepts them as negativities, and then makes the promise, 'I will not engage in negativity again even at the cost of my life. This should be the extent of one's promise.

As I have mentioned previously, when one promises not to engage in negativity it needs to be a very sincere promise, from the depth of one's heart. There must be a definite determination not to engage in any negativity by clearly accepting them as faults. If one thinks, 'I am not so sure if I wish to avoid engaging in negativity', then the 'promise' is more like a lie, because there is no actual intent to avoid engaging in negativity. So making the promise with keen determination to avoid negativities in the future is essential. This is emphasised in the commentary which explains that one makes the promise not to commit negativity *by cutting of the continuity*.

Then Gyaltsab Je continues:

Although there are many doors for purification explained in the teachings and treatises, that which has the antidote complete is to purify by way of the four powers intact. Thus, this is the way to purify.

As explained here there are *many doors for purification*, meaning that there are many purification methods. For example, those negativities incurred by breaching the commitments of tantric vows are purified by engaging in the practice of Vajrasattva, while the negativities incurred by breaching the commitments of the bodhisattva vows are purified by engaging in practices such as *Thirty-five Buddhas* practice. This practice commences with the indication it is the means to confess and purify the negativities incurred by breaches of the bodhisattva vows. While there are different methods, one needs to apply the four powers for them to be a complete antidote. In order for the Vajrasattva practice of purification and the Thirty-five Buddhas practice of purification to be complete antidotes, one has to actually apply all four opponent powers, thus all four powers have to be intact. This is the actual way to purify negativity.

Then Gyaltsab Je's commentary goes on to say

That this purifies also the karma definitely to be experienced is explained in the *Togke Barwa* and *The Great Commentary to the Eight-thousand Verse Sutra*.

I had explained previously that when the four opponent powers are intact, even the karma that is to be definitely experienced can be purified. And, as explained previously, the karma that is to be definitely experienced is that which is both created and accumulated. This is explained in the Buddha's teaching in sutras such as *Togke Barwa* and *The Great Commentary to the Eight-thousand Verse Sutra*.

Then Gyaltsab Je exhorts us with the following lines:

We, who do not know the instances of karmic cause and effect well, ...

This means that we might lack a complete knowledge of the instances of karmic cause and effect

... and who, although knowing a little, do not practise what has to be abandoned and what has to be practised accordingly, should confess on a daily basis, uninterruptedly, by way of the four powers.

This is really succinct advice reminding us that while we may not know about karmic cause and effect in great detail, we do have some understanding. But while we do have some understanding we may not really engage in the practice of abandoning negativity and adopting what has to be adopted, which means that we still find ourselves engaging in negativities on a daily basis. So because we find ourselves engaging continuously in such negative deeds, it is befitting for us to engage in confession by way of the four powers, continuously, on a daily basis.

As I have explained in the past, it will be really worthwhile at the end of the day, before we go to bed, to really recall the day and if one has engaged in negativities, to confess that, and then rejoice in the virtues that one has accumulated. It is important to reflect on these points.

Actually it would be a good idea to memorise these few lines so that you can recall them regularly.

The commentary concludes its explanation of this section thus:

Especially one should practise by focusing on purifying the obstacles to the generation of bodhicitta.

This presentation returns us to the main topic of the root text, the methods of generating the altruistic mind of bodhicitta.

Summarising verse

Then the author of the commentary, Gyaltsab Je, presents his summarising verse:

Those tormented by the faults of attachment, jealousy
And conceit due to exaggeration will not generate the
supreme mind.
Hence, whatever mistakes one made with body,
speech and mind,
Confess them from the depths of one's heart to the
protectors.

In *Those tormented by the faults of attachment, jealousy and conceit*, the Tibetan word *zir*, translated here as *tormented*, also has the connotation of being *intoxicated*. So the first two lines of this verse mean that it is not possible for the altruistic mind, the supreme mind of bodhicitta, to be generated by those who are tormented or intoxicated with the faults of attachment, jealousy and conceit, which can only result in the continuous creation of negativity.

Realising that, one needs to exhort oneself to confess to the protectors whatever mistakes one has made in body, speech and mind, from the depths of one's heart. The confession practice is essential if one is inclined to purify one's mind.

II. THE TITLE OF THE CHAPTER

The root text reads:

This is the second chapter on confession, from the Introduction to the Actions of the Bodhisattvas.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary concludes with:

This is the commentary on the second chapter called Purifying Negativities from the commentary on the *Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas*, called *The Entrance for the Children of the Conquerors*.

Of the seven limbs, this chapter has covered the limbs of prostration, offering, and confession, in addition to refuge. However the chapter is called the chapter of confession, because the primary focus is on confessing and purifying negativities.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcribed by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་ཀྱི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

12 November 2013

Based on the motivation we generated with the prayers we have just recited, we can now engage in the practice of meditation. [*meditation*]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

2. THE ACTUAL EXPLANATION OF THE STAGES OF THE PATH¹

2.2. The method for taking the essence

2.2.2 Explaining the individual meanings

2.2.2.1. CONTEMPLATING THE BENEFITS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

2.2.2.2 THE WAY OF TRAINING IN THE PRACTICES UPON GENERATING THE TWO BODHICITTAS

2.2.2.2.1. Taking the mind of enlightenment²

2.2.2.2.1.2. The actual taking of the mind of enlightenment after having applied the conducive conditions of accumulating merit such as rejoicing in virtue and so forth.

As I have mentioned previously, with anything that we wish to achieve there are certain factors that oppose that achievement and certain factors that contribute to it. Likewise with the development of bodhicitta, there are certain opposing factors and certain conditions that are conducive. The opposing factors are the negativities that have to be removed through purification practices, which was the topic of the second chapter, and the conducive conditions are the means by which we accumulate merit.

Some of the means of accumulating merit, such as prostrations and so forth, were discussed in the second chapter, and this outline continues that presentation, beginning with rejoicing.

As the outline indicates, the actual mind of enlightenment is generated after having built up the conducive condition of merit through rejoicing and so forth. This also implies having rid oneself of the opposing factors, which is done by confession and purification. What we need to derive from this outline is that if we wish to develop the mind of enlightenment we need to overcome the opposing conditions as well as acquiring the conducive condition of accumulating merit. Without engaging those two aspects, there is no way we can establish the basis for generating the mind of enlightenment.

Using sound reasoning and logic we can also understand that whatever result we wish to achieve, there are bound

to be some opposing factors that need to be overcome, and some conducive factors or conditions that need to be acquired, and both are necessary for success. So whatever result we seek, we need to endeavour to overcome the opposing factors and acquire or establish the conducive factors.

The heading *Taking the mind of enlightenment after having built up the conducive conditions of merit and rejoicing in virtue and so forth* is covered in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3: TAKING THE MIND OF ENLIGHTENMENT³

I. Explaining the text of the chapter

II. The title of the chapter

I. EXPLAINING THE TEXT OF THE CHAPTER

The chapter has three sub-divisions.

1. Preparation
2. Actual
3. Conclusion

1. PREPARATION

This section has five sub-divisions:

- 1.1. Rejoicing in virtue
- 1.2. Requesting to turn the wheel of Dharma
- 1.3. Requesting not to pass beyond sorrow
- 1.4. Dedicating virtues
- 1.5. An auxiliary of the perfection of generosity: training in the thought of giving away body, possessions and roots of virtue

1.1. Rejoicing in virtue

This is further subdivided into three:

- 1.1.1. Rejoicing in the virtues that are the causes of higher status, and in their effects

Here the merit from rejoicing in virtues is held in conjunction with the causes for higher status and their effects. This means that the merit is not held with renunciation, or the mind of awakening (bodhicitta), or the wisdom realising emptiness.

- 1.1.2. Rejoicing in the virtues that are the causes of mere liberation, and in their effects

Here the merit from rejoicing in virtues is held in conjunction with obtaining liberation.

- 1.1.3. Rejoicing in the causes of highest enlightenment, and in their effects

1.1.1. Rejoicing in the virtues that are the causes of higher status, and in their effects

Higher status refers to taking a fortunate rebirth in the god realms or as a human being. This was explained in detail in *Precious Garland*, which was the last text that we studied.

The first verse of the chapter reads:

1. *In the virtues that give respite from the sufferings
Of the lower realms of all sentient beings,
And in the abiding in happiness of them that suffer,
I rejoice with pleasure.*

Gyaltshab Je's commentary explains the meaning of this verse as follows:

¹ These headings relate to the structural overview of the entire text. The numbering of each chapter is self-contained.

² The first subdivision of this heading was covered in Chapter 2.

³ The heading numbering begins again with the new chapter.

I rejoice in the causal virtues that give respite from the sufferings of the lower realms to all sentient beings abiding in cyclic existence, and which cause them to attain special higher status.

The Tibetan text begins with the words *all sentient beings abiding in cyclic existence*. By specifying sentient beings who are abiding in cyclic existence the text is referring to sentient beings who have the contaminated aggregates, also known as the appropriated aggregates. Having these contaminated aggregates means taking uncontrolled rebirths in cyclic existence again and again. We need to relate *sentient beings abiding in cyclic existence* to beings who are still suffering and bound to samsara, such as ourselves. There are of course many sentient beings who have abandoned cyclic existence, such as the arhats or foe destroyers, as well as the bodhisattvas abiding on the eighth ground and above.

For sentient beings who are bound in cyclic existence, rebirth in a higher status gives some *respite from the intense sufferings of the lower realms*, so we rejoice in the virtues that are the cause for obtaining that high status. Here virtues does not refer to virtues that are held by renunciation; rather we are rejoicing in the virtues that are the cause for merely obtaining the good result of higher status. Seeing others accumulating such virtues is also an opportunity for us to rejoice.

We need to be mindful that when we rejoice in virtuous activities it doesn't mean that we are developing an egotistical pride in our achievements. Rather, rejoicing is an act of great humility, in which one acknowledges that one has had a great opportunity to accumulate some virtue. When one dedicates that virtue for the benefit of all beings then it becomes a pure practice.

Rejoicing has many qualities: when one rejoices in the virtues of others it serves as an opponent to jealousy, and it actually serves as an antidote to overcome jealousy we might feel in relation to the good deeds of others. In addition, as Lama Tsong Khapa mentions, rejoicing is the optimum way to accumulate extensive merit with the least effort. Furthermore, whenever one rejoices, it can help to increase whatever merit one has accumulated in the past, it gives an impetus to accumulate more virtue now, and further encourages one to accumulate virtue in the future.

As explained in the teachings, the merit that one accumulates from rejoicing is vast and extensive. It is said that when one rejoices in the merit of those who are superior to oneself, one will obtain at least half of the merit that they have accumulated, just by virtue of rejoicing in their merit. If the other is of equal status, one will achieve the same amount of merit as they have. When one rejoices in the merit of someone who is lesser than oneself, one will obtain even more merit than they have accumulated. This is explained in sutras that I mentioned previously regarding the offerings made by King Prasenajit to the Buddha.

One of the main points about rejoicing is that it helps to increase merit by acknowledging that one has had a great opportunity to accumulate virtues. One needs to focus on the fact that one has had a great opportunity to accumulate merit, rather than feeling pompous that one has done a great practice. Holding this kind of attitude

will help to overcome pride. Otherwise one might develop an egotistical pride about meagre attempts of accumulating merit. Developing pride defeats the purpose of engaging in virtue—far from achieving good results from one's practice it can bring harmful results. Whatever virtue and merit that one accumulates needs to serve the purpose of reducing pride, rather than increasing it by thinking, 'I have done a great deed! I have accumulated so much virtue'. One needs to adopt a sense of humility and rejoice in the great opportunity of creating merit, and generate the thought, 'May I further get such opportunities to engage in virtue and accumulate merit again'.

The essential point is to recognise the difference between egotistical pride and genuine rejoicing. With pride, one starts to feel pompous and self-righteous about one's achievements, thinking 'I have done great practice!'. Whereas, rejoicing implies a feeling of genuine modesty, of subduing the mind and making it more gentle. If one ensures that the effort one puts into accumulating virtue becomes a means to subdue one's own mind, then one's attempts to accumulate virtue have served their purpose.

The main point is that rejoicing serves as an antidote to the negativities or vices that may otherwise arise in our mind. Genuine rejoicing opposes pride, while rejoicing in the virtues of others helps to overcome jealousy. This text and other teachings mention that by the mere fact of rejoicing in a bodhisattva's virtues and great deeds we accumulate extensive merit. These are important points to keep in mind.

So we can see the great practical value of the practice of rejoicing. We don't have to exert ourselves and go to great lengths of engaging in extensive practices—it basically comes down to having the right attitude. We can accumulate great merit thinking about the great deeds of the noble beings and rejoice in their great deeds, even while lying down.

The first part of Gyaltsab Je's explanation relates to rejoicing in the cause of the higher status. The second part is rejoicing in the results of the higher status. As the commentary reads:

I also rejoice in the result, i.e. the abiding of the suffering sentient beings in the happiness of higher status.

Rejoicing in the result refers to rejoicing in the result of the virtues that one has accumulated, which is obtaining the higher status. Beings who are *abiding in suffering* refers to beings who are abiding in the three types of suffering: the suffering of suffering, and/or the suffering of change, in addition to pervasive conditioned suffering. When beings who are experiencing the immense suffering of the lower realms are placed *in the happiness of the higher status*, they are temporarily relieved of the suffering of suffering of the lower realms. However they are still in the nature of suffering. So, as a result of the virtues that have been accumulated, beings who would otherwise have to repeatedly experience sufferings in the lower realms have now been placed in a temporary state of happiness in higher realms.

In the human realm we are familiar with the qualities of high status. There are those who have great wealth, good

physical features, who are renowned, and those who have fame and power. These are all qualities that we normally admire and even wish for ourselves, because there is a certain amount of happiness and wellbeing associated with them. So if we see others who have any of these qualities, then we can rejoice in their qualities rather than being jealous. This can then prevent many unhappy states of mind.

The immediate benefit we gain from rejoicing is that it releases our mind from the pangs of jealousy, as well as being a means to acquire merit. As mentioned previously, if we find ourselves with any of the good conditions that promote our wellbeing, we should rejoice as a way to overcome pride. When we rejoice in these conditions rather than being proud, we are acknowledging that we enjoy these conditions as a result of the virtues we have previously accumulated, which becomes the means to accept the good conditions we have now. This will enhance our sense of humility about having obtained these good conditions.

What I'm attempting to explain here is that one rejoices in the happiness of higher status obtained by those who are otherwise still abiding in the suffering of cyclic existence. A more vivid example is our own condition of having been reborn in the higher status of a human being. While we have been born as human beings, nevertheless we still experience all three levels of suffering; the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change and pervasive compounded suffering. Yet the mere fact of being born as a human comes with conditions that can provide a certain amount of happiness and wellbeing. Many of us are not deprived of resources such as wealth, being renowned, or having good features, which are some of the qualities of the high status. So while we still abide in suffering, we nevertheless have these good conditions that allow us to experience a certain amount of happiness and wellbeing. Many others also experience these good qualities and conditions, and we should rejoice in their happiness too.

Another significant point to grasp is that enjoying the happiness of higher status also gives us respite from the suffering of the lower realms. While we would all have experienced the suffering of the lower realms in previous lifetimes, it is as if we are now taking a break and enjoying a rest from the otherwise intense suffering of those realms. So we need to acknowledge that. If we don't utilise this opportunity in a proper way, the immense suffering we have previously experienced in the lower realms might continue in the future. Therefore we can't afford to be complacent; we really need to take on board that this is just a mere rest from the otherwise intense sufferings of the lower realms, and that we need to utilise these conditions now to the best of our ability.

So rejoicing is an incredibly profound practice and we should not underestimate its value. There are many different ways of rejoicing in the virtues, good qualities, status and so forth of others, as well as our own good deeds, virtues and merits of the past, present and future. In particular, we should keep in mind that rejoicing is a really practical practice that helps subdue our own mind and relieve a lot of unnecessary angst.

If we think about it, whenever we feel mentally unsettled, we will notice that it is very much related to what we see

and hear about others. We may see others doing very well and being successful and so forth, or hear about their achievements, which can cause us to feel very uncomfortable and unsettled, and create much mental pain. Then, out of jealousy, we may start to engage in criticism and so forth. So a lot of vices arise out of not being able to bear the good qualities and successes of others.

If we can really take on board the practice of rejoicing, then all of this unnecessary angst can be overcome. The achievements of others will no longer bother us because our mind will be happy and joyful about their achievements. If, whenever we see or hear about others doing well, we can immediately relate that to the fact that they are experiencing the good results of their past virtues and merits, and feel joyful about that, then that can really help to settle down our own mind.

As mentioned previously, it is very easy to develop a sense of pride in our own good deeds, virtues and achievements. Such egotistical pride destroys whatever virtues and merits we have otherwise accumulated. It is said that all of the Buddha's 84,000 teachings serve as an antidote to overcome the ego. So we need to understand how the practice of rejoicing is a means to overcome pride. When we develop a genuine sense of rejoicing, it helps to subdue the mind. Rather than feeling elated and pompous, we should feel grateful about having this opportunity. We should not be content with whatever skill or virtue we have developed but rather foster a keen wish to engage in practices to further develop ourselves. In this way we can see there are great benefits in this practice.

It would be really wonderful if we could find the means to overcome that which causes mental agony, such as a strong sense of pride as well as jealousy. There are those who have confided in me, 'I suffer from a strong ego'. When one acknowledges how ego hinders one's development, one can see how it is a great obstacle. Any simple practice that overcomes the agony and pangs of pride and jealousy, like the practice of rejoicing, is truly wonderful and of immense benefit.

1.1.2. Rejoicing in the virtues that are the causes of mere liberation, and in their effects

Here the virtues that one is rejoicing in *are the causes for mere liberation*. One needs to understand that in this context liberation refers to the liberation of hearers and solitary realisers from samsara or the cyclic existence. The very meaning of liberation is freedom. What are hearers and solitary realisers free from? From being bound to cyclic existence by karma and delusions. The analogy is of a person who is bound by a rope to a pole, who will gain his freedom when freed from those bonds. In applying the analogy, karma and delusions are like the rope which binds the person to the contaminated aggregates, likened to the pole, and we are the ones who are bound to contaminated aggregates by karma and delusions. Thus we experience various types of suffering as a result of being bound by karma and delusions to our own contaminated aggregates. That is how we need to understand the analogy of being bound by karma and delusions, and thus having to experience the various

types of suffering in cyclic existence. So the state of liberation is freedom from cyclic existence.

Mere liberation indicates that the virtues specified here are the virtues that are the cause for liberation from the sufferings of cyclic existence, but not the ultimate state of liberation, which is enlightenment.

The verse relating to this outline is:

2. *I rejoice in the accumulation of virtue
That becomes the cause for enlightenment.
I rejoice in the definite liberation
Of embodied beings from the sufferings of
cyclic existence.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

I also rejoice in the accumulation of the virtue which becomes the cause for the enlightenment of the hearers and self-liberators, such as the virtues that harmonise with liberation.

As mentioned previously, in this context *virtue* refers specifically to the virtues that harmonise with liberation. The *accumulation of virtue* refers to all of the virtues that are held with renunciation. Hearers and self-liberators achieve liberation by engaging in the ten virtues and the practices of the three higher trainings, which are morality, meditation and wisdom, on the basis of renunciation. So here we rejoice in our virtues that are in harmony with liberation, without any sense of pride, and we develop a joyful state of mind in having had the opportunity to accumulate such virtues.

Next comes rejoicing in the result, about which Gyaltsab Je says:

I also rejoice in the attainment of definite liberation from the sufferings of cyclic existence by embodied beings as a result of that virtue.

The *sufferings of cyclic existence* refers in general to the suffering of cyclic existence, and more specifically to having overcome pervasive compounded suffering, which serves as the basis for the other two types of suffering. The state of liberation is obtained when one is completely free from pervasive compounded suffering. One *rejoices* in the attainment of liberation from the sufferings of cyclic existence by the embodied beings, arhats or foe destroyers, the hearers and solitary realisers. So here rejoicing does not relate to ourselves, as we have not yet obtained liberation. The term *definite liberation* indicates that we need to rejoice in others having obtained that state. As we have not obtained liberation it refers to beings such as the hearers and solitary realisers and arhats, who have definitely achieved this state.

The practical benefit of rejoicing in this way is that it will establish an imprint in our mind to obtain the state of liberation ourselves. When we feel joyful and happy about others obtaining that state, we are acknowledging the great value of the achievement of that state of liberation, which is the state of being completely free from suffering.

Rejoicing like this encourages us to accumulate virtues which are held by renunciation. Any virtues we accumulate that are not held or based upon the mind of renunciation will merely become a cause for obtaining higher status. Rather than being completely free from the actual sufferings of samsara, higher status is only a

temporary release from the intense sufferings of the lower realms.

In comparison, the virtues which are not held or based on the mind of renunciation are not of much value. This encourages us to ensure that when we engage in virtue, it is based on a mind of renunciation, which means directing one's virtues towards the goal of being free from all the sufferings of cyclic existence, rather than just a temporary release from the suffering of the lower realms.

From this presentation we can also derive a greater understanding of the presentation of the three principals of the path, which are renunciation, the mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta, and the realisation of emptiness.

- Virtues cannot serve as a cause for obtaining liberation if they are not held by the mind of renunciation. So the mind of renunciation is an essential element of the path, because it will ensure that whatever practice one does becomes a means to obtain the state of freedom from the suffering of cyclic existence.
- For any practice to become a cause for obtaining enlightenment, it has to be accompanied by the mind of awakening or bodhicitta. This altruistic mind ensures our practice of virtues and merits becomes the cause to obtain enlightenment. In other words, enlightenment is achieved in dependence on the merit accumulated held with the altruistic mind of bodhicitta.
- The realisation of emptiness ensures that whatever practice we do becomes an antidote to the very root of all our suffering, which is grasping at the self. Without the realisation of emptiness, we cannot overcome the grasping at the self.

That is why renunciation, bodhicitta and the realisation of emptiness are referred to as the three principal aspects of the path.

1.1.3. Rejoicing in the causes of highest enlightenment, and in their effects

The next two verses cover this heading

3. *I also rejoice in the enlightenment of the protectors
And in the grounds of the conqueror's children.*
4. *In the ocean of virtue that is the mind generation,
Which works for the happiness of all sentient beings,
And in the actions benefiting sentient beings
I rejoice with pleasure.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

I also rejoice in the complete enlightenment of the protectors of migrants, and in the ten grounds of the Conqueror's children.

Here, *complete enlightenment* has the connotation that there is no enlightenment greater than the full enlightenment of Buddhahood. Nothing can surpass that final state of enlightenment.

The next part of the commentary reads:

I also rejoice with joy in the causes of these, the ocean of virtue that is the mind generation for complete enlightenment, which works for the happiness of all sentient beings, and also in the actions that benefit sentient beings.

Having presented the ultimate state of enlightenment and the ten grounds of the Conqueror's children, the commentary explains that *the causes of these* are firstly, *the ocean of virtue that is the mind generation for complete enlightenment*. The *mind generation of complete enlightenment* refers to the bodhicitta that is developed within the mental continuum of bodhisattvas. This bodhicitta is the cause of a great *ocean of virtues*, which indicates an incredible amount of virtue that bodhisattvas accumulate by working solely *for the happiness of all sentient beings*.

The second cause, *also in the actions that benefit sentient beings*, specifically relates to the actions or the deeds of the bodhisattvas which, as mentioned many times previously, are the six perfections. One thus acknowledges the great deeds of the bodhisattvas in practising the six perfections: the extent of their generosity, the deeds practised by the bodhisattvas to benefit sentient beings; the great extent of their morality and ethics that the bodhisattvas observe in order to benefit sentient beings; and likewise their patience, joyous effort, meditation and wisdom. Recalling the incredible deeds arising from engaging in the practices of the six perfections, one develops a genuine sense of appreciation and rejoices in the incredible deeds and merits of the bodhisattvas. As I have mentioned many times over, a glance summary of the bodhisattva path contains these two aspects: a being who is endowed with the mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta, and who engages in the actions of the six perfections. The way to rejoice about this is then explained in the commentary:

On all of these I meditate with clear faith that is combined with mental happiness, and rejoice with pleasure.

So the way to rejoice is by *meditating* or contemplating these two aspects of bodhisattvas *with clear faith*. Of the different types of faith, clear faith refers to having a sound understanding of the qualities, combined with a sense of happiness and joy in acknowledging their great deeds. This is the way to rejoice in the causes of highest enlightenment and in their effects.

The different aspects of rejoicing are not too obscure. They are quite easy to understand and comprehend, so we can go through the following verses quite rapidly. Keep in mind that the practice of rejoicing is essential, a point specifically indicated when we take the bodhisattva vows when these lines are recited:

I take refuge in the Three Jewels
I confess all my negativities individually, and
I rejoice in the good deeds of myself and others.

As explained in the teachings, in order to develop even an aspirational mind of bodhicitta, the two main conditions need to be intact: purifying one's negativities, and accumulating merit. The rejoicing specified here is

one of the optimum methods for accumulating merit, and that is the significance of the practice of rejoicing.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcribed by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་པོ་འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷོ་ལྷན་པ་ལ་འཇམ་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

19 November 2013

Based on the motivation that we generated with the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, we can now engage in the practice of meditation. [meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment myself, so for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

In previous sessions we went into quite a bit of detail about the significance and purpose of rejoicing, and it is important to remember those points.

1.2. Requesting to turn the wheel of Dharma

The verse relating to the next limb of the seven limb practice reads:

5. *To the buddhas of all directions
I request with my palms folded:
Please light the lamp of Dharma
For sentient beings confused in the darkness of suffering.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je begins his explanation of this verse as follows:

The respectful request is made with palms folded to the buddhas of all the directions, who became enlightened recently and have not started to teach the Dharma yet:

This also relates to the life story of Buddha Shakyamuni. After he became enlightened the Buddha didn't teach the Dharma right away but remained in meditation for seven weeks. It is said that the gods Brahma and Indra requested him to turn the wheel of Dharma. Brahma offered a thousand spoked golden wheel while Indra offered a right turning conch shell, which to this day is quite rare, and together they exhorted the Buddha to teach proclaiming, 'You engaged in amazing great deeds in the past and as a result have now surpassed all practices and have become fully enlightened. We, the people of Magadha¹, are capable of listening well, we are of sound mind and have intelligence and faith, request you to please turn the wheel of Dharma for the benefit of all'. The Buddha accepted this request and gave his first teaching, thus turning the wheel of Dharma. I have already explained this in detail in previous teachings, so you can refer to your notes and the transcripts.

Of course, because of their great compassion, enlightened beings will naturally and spontaneously teach the Dharma to benefit sentient beings, regardless of any request being made. However, requesting Buddha Shakyamuni to turn the wheel of Dharma illustrates the

eagerness to receive the Dharma. It also establishes an auspicious interdependent connection with the teacher, thereby ensuring that the Dharma teaching benefits the listeners and becomes the means to subdue their minds and accumulate great virtue. So making this request is very meaningful and of great benefit. As one of the seven limb practices, it is also the means for accumulating great and extensive merit.

While making the request, the physical gesture should be as indicated in the commentary; a *respectful manner with one's palms folded*. When doing this practice it is appropriate to visualise that one is presenting a thousand spoked golden wheel as an offering to request the buddhas and one's gurus to turn the wheel of Dharma. As explained extensively in the *gor chor* preliminary practice, when making the request to turn the wheel of Dharma, one visualises numerous bodies of oneself—as many bodies as there are enlightened beings—and a replica of oneself in front of each and every enlightened being requesting them to turn the wheel of Dharma. This visualisation is a supreme means to accumulate vast and extensive merit.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues with the actual request:

Please light the lamp of scriptural and realised Dharma that clarifies the path to liberation, for the purpose of sentient beings who suffer and who are confused in the darkness of ignorance.

Having said that one makes a respectful request, the commentary then indicates that the request is *for the purpose of sentient beings who suffer, and who are confused in the darkness of ignorance*. As indicated here, the request is specifically to *light the lamp of scriptural and realised Dharma that clarifies the path to liberation*. Here, the lamp is an analogy for the *scriptural and realised Dharma* that dispels the inner *darkness of ignorance* within sentient beings, which is the cause of all suffering. In accordance with the *gor chor* preliminary practice, a mandala is traditionally offered at this point to accompany the request. One then imagines that the buddhas are actually accepting the request.

We need to understand that this practice of requesting the buddhas to turn the wheel of the Dharma is a means to accumulate extensive merit for ourselves. It is also said to be a supreme antidote for overcoming the negativities of disparaging the Dharma, which is one of the heaviest negativities that one can incur. Engaging in this practice will purify such negativities. Furthermore, one's wrong views, held due to ignorance and so forth, will also be purified, so that in all future lives wrong views will not be generated in one's mental continuum. In addition, one will not be separated from the light of the Dharma.

1.3. Requesting not to pass beyond sorrow

This again establishes an auspicious interdependent connection with the buddhas and our teachers. Here we request them to remain with us, rather than showing the aspect of passing into nirvana or passing beyond sorrow. The explanation in the commentary is quite clear, so there is no need to clarify much.

Since we engage in the seven limb practice regularly it is really worthwhile to fully understand the practice and its

¹ Known today as Bihar.

significance. For example, we do the *Ganden Lha Gyama* prayer regularly in our sessions here, which consists of the seven limb practice. It is good to note however that in the *Ganden Lha Gyama* prayer the request not to pass beyond sorrow and remain steadily with us is presented before requesting to turn the wheel of Dharma.

The relevant verse is:

6. *Requesting with palms folded*
The conquerors wishing to pass beyond sorrow
To not place these migrators in blindness
And remain for uncountable eons.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

The request with folded palms is made to the conquerors who wish to go beyond sorrow:

Please do not cause the wisdom eye of these migrators to be blinded by ignorance. Rather, please remain for uncountable eons to illuminate the darkness of ignorance.

As mentioned previously, the buddhas and the enlightened beings may show the aspect of *going beyond sorrow*. So here we are requesting them to remain with us as our guides and not pass beyond sorrow. Again, the request is made *with one's palms folded* at one's heart.

The actual request is, *Please do not cause the wisdom eye of these migrators to be blinded by ignorance. Rather, please remain for uncountable eons to illuminate the darkness of ignorance.* So we are requesting the conquerors to remain with us *for many eons* in order to remove the *darkness* from sentient beings who are *blinded by ignorance*.

The immediate personal benefit derived from this practice of requesting not to pass beyond sorrow is that one establishes the cause to attain the state of immortality. It is said that a supreme practice to ensure one's own long life is to request a lama to live long. Furthermore, it is an antidote to overcome the negativities that one has accumulated through losing faith in the guru, which might include disparaging or upsetting the guru, or inflicting any kind of harm on the guru's body and so forth.

We have covered the benefits in brief although there are many more benefits that can be enumerated.

1.4. Dedicating virtues

This is subdivided into four:

- 1.4.1. General dedication
- 1.4.2. Dedication for the sick
- 1.4.3. Dedication to alleviate hunger and thirst
- 1.4.4. Dedication for the fulfilment of all wishes

As we can see, these are really beneficial aspirations.

I recall that when the late Geshe Ngawang Dhargye was teaching at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala, he would encourage his students to regularly recite the *Seven Limb Prayer* with a very melodious tune.

Geshe-la then sang the first two verses of dedication using a tune that he said was very similar.

1.4.1. General dedication

The verse under this heading reads:

7. *Having thus done all of this,*
Whatever virtue I have accumulated,

May through it all sufferings
Of all sentient beings be cleared away.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

Through these virtues, from making offerings up to making requests, as well as all other virtues that I have accumulated, may the suffering of all sentient beings be cleared away.

The virtues *from making offerings up to making requests* that are to be dedicated are those that are accumulated from the first six of the seven limb practices. The first three limbs, prostrations, offerings and confession, were the main focus of the second chapter, and we have just completed rejoicing, requesting to turn the wheel of Dharma, and requesting not to pass beyond sorrow. Now comes the final limb, which is to dedicate these practices.

As well as the specific virtues accumulated through these practices, one also dedicates all other virtues that one has accumulated in the past, thus dedicating all one's accumulated virtues to *clearing away all suffering of all sentient beings*. This suffices as a general dedication.

In summary, all of the virtues that have been accumulated, from the specific practices such as making offerings and so forth, are dedicated towards the end of completely clearing away all the suffering of sentient beings. This also shows the purpose for accumulating virtue. One accumulates virtue so that one can dedicate it to the alleviation of the suffering of all sentient beings. So here we are being shown in a very succinct way the purpose of accumulating virtue and merit.

As presented in the *yor chor* preliminary practice, dedications are made for the achievement of the ultimate state of complete enlightenment; for the long life of one's gurus; for one to be always held in the guru's care, i.e. always under the guidance of the guru; for the Buddha's teachings to expand and flourish; and to always be with the Buddha's teachings in all of one's future lives. This encompasses the general dedication of one's practice.

As I have explained previously, in order to dedicate a practice one has to have accumulated a root virtue. This means that one has to have accumulated some virtue in order to make a dedication. All dedications can be aspirations, whereas all aspirations are not necessarily dedications.

1.4.2. Dedication for the sick

The verse under this heading reads:

8. *Until all migrators who are sick,*
Are cured from their disease,
May I be their medicine, physician,
And their nurse.

Here, Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Through the power of these merits may I be the medicine, physician and the nurse for the sick migrators until they are cured from their disease.

Through the power of these merits can relate to the merits that one has accumulated with the specific seven limb practice as presented here, as well as all the merit that one has accumulated in the past. The specific dedication is that, due to *these merits, may I be the medicine, physician and the nurse*. These aspirations are not just a mere wish. By dedicating one's merits in such a way, we are implanting the seed in our mind to be able to actually help those who

are in need, such as the sick. By making such dedications now in the form of aspirations, we will be able to assist the sick as doctors, nurses and so forth in the future, when we acquire the right conditions. These aspirations by the great bodhisattva Shantideva to directly benefit those who are sick are incredibly vast. When we dedicate our merits it helps us to accumulate the causes to help others in this way.

Again, we can recall the life story of Buddha Shakyamuni, who personally nursed the sick. Out of his great compassion, Buddha Shakyamuni led by example and showed how to benefit others, such as by personally taking care of the sick and disadvantaged. So it is important for us to make dedications and aspirations such as, 'May I be able to assist those who are sick and impoverished', and 'May I be able to be of service to them until all sickness is completely alleviated'.

1.4.3. Dedication to alleviate hunger and thirst

The verse relating to this reads:

9. *With a rain of food and drink
May I clear the suffering of hunger and thirst.
During the intermediate eon of famine
May I become food and drink.*

The explanation in Gyaltsab Je's commentary is not too obscure and is easy to understand.

May I be able to clear away all harm of hunger and thirst with a rain of various foods and drink for all those that are hungry and thirsty.

At the time of the intermediate eon of famine, one of the three intermediate eons, may I be able to pacify the hunger and thirst of sentient beings by becoming food and drink for them.

As with previous dedication, the dedication is also in the form of an aspiration. One of the three *intermediate* eons is the *eon of famine*. So we are making an aspiration for that specific time, 'May I turn into *food* and *drink* to pacify the *hunger and thirst* of sentient beings'. We can see the great extent of the bodhisattvas' intention to benefit sentient beings just from these aspirations.

In the event that we become a skilled doctor or a nurse in the future, then when the conditions are appropriate we will be able to benefit those in our care. Even in these times we find doctors and nurses who are genuinely kind and caring, and who really benefit the sick and their patients really respect them. Their capacity to benefit others comes not just from their skills but from their compassionate mind, which is the result of previous aspirations and prayers. So if we develop these aspirations and make these dedications now, we will definitely have the capacity to benefit others at the appropriate time. There is an indication of this in the words *accomplishing magnificent prayers*, in the short long life prayer for Lama Zopa Rinpoche. As with any other practice, it is good to relate to what *accomplishing prayers* actually means.

1.4.4. Dedication for the fulfilment of all wishes

The root text reads:

10. *May I become an inexhaustible treasure
For destitute and poor sentient beings,
And abide as various requisites and necessities
In front of them.*

Here, Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

For the sentient beings who are destitute and lack the requisites and necessities of life, may I become a treasure that is inexhaustible despite being used. May I abide effortlessly in front of them as the various necessities they need.

Again, the dedication is in the form of an aspiration. Here the aspiration is that one's merits will be a means to fulfil the needs of sentient beings who *lack the requisites and necessities*, by becoming a *treasure vase that is inexhaustible*. In other words, we are aspiring to become an inexhaustible treasure vault, which will naturally replenish itself no matter how much you take out of it.

May I abide effortlessly in front of them as the various necessities they need means being able to spontaneously and effortlessly fulfil the needs of those who are deprived. The specific connotation of *effortlessly* is that, while one might have an inexhaustible treasure vault, there might be some hesitation in using that wealth if effort is required to do so. If there is effort involved we might not be so inclined to use those resources to benefit others. So *effortlessly* has the specific indication that one has no hesitation and will be naturally and spontaneously able to give to others in need.

1.5. An auxiliary of the perfection of generosity: training in the thought of giving away one's body, possessions and roots of virtue

In order to be generous we first need to train our mind in generosity, such as when we do the *tong len* practice of giving and taking, where we give away our body, possessions and virtues.

As indicated here, we are initially *training in the thought of giving away our body, possessions and roots of virtue*. The significance of training one's mind in doing these practices is that there will be no hesitation and no sense of miserliness when it comes to actually giving. Without that training we might develop miserliness or hesitation when we give to others. So training the mind in the thought of giving is most important.

Having covered some specific dedications, it is good to come back to the significance of dedication in general. It is said that dedication in general is an antidote for overcoming negativities that one has incurred through holding wrong views, specifically the wrong view that there are no past or future lives, and wrong views in relation to the cause and effect of karma.

When one makes a dedication towards the achievement of complete enlightenment then imprints are implanted in one's mind to obtain the four enlightened bodies of a buddha. We need to understand that someone who does not believe in past and future lives, and who has the wrong view about karma, would not engage in any kind of dedication to benefit the future lives. Because they have no belief in the positive effect of karma for good deeds, the thought of dedicating towards future lives would not occur to them. When we intentionally engage in a dedication practice it actually serves as an antidote for overcoming negativities otherwise incurred from these wrong views held in the past.

This section of the chapter is subdivided into three:

1.5.1. Training in the thought of giving away one's body, possessions and roots of virtue

1.5.2. Dedicating it to be the cause of inexhaustible virtue

1.5.3. Dedicating it to be the cause of enjoyment

1.5.1. Training in the thought of giving away one's body, possessions and roots of virtue

This is further subdivided into three:

1.5.1.1. The way of giving

1.5.1.2. The reason why one should definitely give

1.5.1.3. How to practice after the offering

1.5.1.1. THE WAY OF GIVING

The verse relating to this is:

11. *Also my body, possessions
And all virtues of the three times
I will give away without regret
To achieve the purpose of all sentient beings.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Also my body and possessions, such as food and drink, and all my virtues of the three times that are related to and contained in the three bases, I offer with a mind free from regret and dependence, to achieve the temporary and ultimate goals of sentient beings.

In relation to the explanations here, one is again training one's mind in the thought to give away one's body and possessions, such as food and drink.

The three times refers to the past, present and future. One could not however be generous with food that has already been consumed in the past. You can't say, 'Oh, I will give you the lunch that I had yesterday.' How could you possibly give away food that you have already consumed? However one can be generous with food in the present and in the future. You can say, 'I will share my lunch with you tomorrow', or 'I will give you some food tomorrow', and it would not be a lie if you actually intended to do that. So dedicating in this way has a sense of being a promise.

- One can definitely dedicate virtues accumulated in the past. Even though the actual accumulation of the virtue occurred in the past, what remains of those positive actions is their imprints. Whenever one creates karma, an imprint remains in one's mental continuum. Therefore, the virtues of the past, refers to the positive imprints of the virtues accumulated in the past.
- Likewise the virtues one is accumulating in the present can definitely be dedicated.
- Dedicating now is also a way to encourage oneself to accumulate more virtue in the future, which will be a very significant means to accumulate merit, which is definitely significant.

Another point to note is that when one mentally offers food, possessions and so forth to the Sangha or others, it is permissible to consume food that has actually been offered, if it is for the purpose of benefitting others.

The *three bases* refers to the practices of the three trainings, i.e. generosity, morality and meditation.

The purpose of engaging in the practices of giving away one's possessions, food and drink and virtues is to fulfil the temporary and ultimate goals of all sentient beings.

1.5.1.2. THE REASON WHY ONE SHOULD DEFINITELY GIVE

We can leave this for the next session.

My intention is to try to finish this chapter by the end of this year.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcribed by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་པའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

26 November 2013

Based on the motivation that we have just generated, we can now engage in our meditation practice.

[meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment myself, so for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

1.5.1. Training in the thought of giving away one's body, possessions and roots of virtue

1.5.1.1. THE WAY OF GIVING (CONT.)

In our last session we introduced the topic of how we should give away our body, possessions and virtues of the three times.

The relevant verse reads:

11. *Also my body, possessions
And all virtues of the three times
I will give away without regret
To achieve the purpose of all sentient beings.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Also my body and possessions, such as food and drink, and all my virtues of the three times that are related to and contained in the three bases, I offer with a mind free from regret and dependence, to achieve the temporary and ultimate goals of sentient beings.

As explained in the commentary, one offers one's body, possessions and virtues to all sentient beings, for the purpose of *achieving the temporary and ultimate goals of sentient beings*. Giving should be *free from regret or dependence* on fame and so forth. Being free from regret, means that the gift should be free of any taint of miserliness. Any thoughts of, 'Oh, maybe I gave too much', or 'I wish I hadn't given that', would not be pure giving. Nor would giving in dependence on fame and so forth be a pure form of giving. In brief, giving should be done with the motivation of achieving either the temporary purpose of obtaining high status and liberation, or the ultimate purpose of achieving enlightenment. We need to keep that in mind.

One of the implications of being free from dependence is not to be dependent on a good result solely for ourselves, such as giving a meagre portion of our possessions with the intention of getting back more in return. Giving with such contrived intentions is not a pure practice of giving. Giving in dependence can also refer to giving in dependence on a greater return in the future, such as giving with the intention to accumulate the karma that will yield a good result in the future, just for ourselves.

That would be contrived giving because it is not free from self interest, i.e. it will be giving merely to achieve one's own purposes. The main point to understand is that if giving is contrived with impure thoughts of gaining good results merely for oneself, then that giving cannot be a cause for liberation and enlightenment. In fact, it is even doubtful whether it would be a cause for high status in one's future life.

We need to understand giving in the full context of the perfection of giving. As beginners we might not have developed the capacity to actually give away our body, possessions, and virtues right now; nevertheless these practices are presented as a significant method to help trainees develop the mind of giving.

As explained previously, the perfection of generosity can be divided into two stages. The *resultant state* of the perfection of generosity is where generosity has actually been perfected, thus reaching the stage of unsurpassed giving. The *causal aspect* of the perfection of generosity is to engage in acts of generosity while one is still training one's mind on the path to enlightenment. So the resultant name *perfection of generosity* is given to the cause—every act of giving, however meagre, being motivated by bodhicitta. Thus, we need to feel encouraged to practise generosity. We need to understand that this is how we train our mind to eventually have no hesitation in giving away our body, possessions and virtues for the benefit of others.

Another significant point is that this is a practice that overcomes self-grasping. Because of our self-grasping, we hold on to things very tightly, and so we are only able to give away limited amounts of our possessions and virtues, or our body. The stronger the sense of self-grasping, the more difficult it is to part from them.

If we begin by training in the thought of giving, then, as we develop the practice further, we can reach the point where we can give selflessly, without any hint of self-grasping. When one reaches the point where there is no hesitation in giving one's body, possessions and virtues for the benefit of sentient beings, then one has overcome self-grasping. If we are able to give away the very basis of our self-grasping, which is our body, our possessions and our virtues, then how could self-grasping exist alongside of that? It is just not possible. What we need to understand is that training in the perfection of giving is ultimately a means to overcome self-grasping, which is a much more profound way of understanding the benefit of practising generosity.

1.5.1.2. THE REASON ONE SHOULD DEFINITELY GIVE

This section is divided into two:

1.5.1.2.1. By giving up attachment to everything and offering one goes beyond misery or sorrow

1.5.1.2.2. Making offerings to sentient beings is appropriate as they are the supreme field for generosity

1.5.1.2.1. By giving up attachment to everything and offering one goes beyond misery, or sorrow

Here we can get the sense of the significance of the practice of generosity just from the outline. When the practice of generosity overcomes attachment, then by virtue of overcoming attachment at its very root, one will definitely obtain the state of liberation. As mentioned

previously, generosity is definitely connected with an understanding of selflessness, because without overcoming grasping at the self, one cannot possibly uproot attachment to one's body, possessions and virtues.

What I am sharing here is a more profound understanding of the practice, which is that by completely abandoning grasping at the self, one can overcome attachment to one's body, possessions and virtue. Then, as mentioned previously, there is no hesitation in giving, which in turn becomes a means to achieve the state beyond misery, or liberation. This is how we need to develop our understanding on a more profound level.

As we have learned from previous teachings, the essence of the path that is the main cause for achieving liberation, is gaining the realisation of selflessness, or emptiness. Thus emptiness, or selflessness, is the core realisation that one needs to obtain in order to achieve liberation. That is a key point to remember in this context.

The relevant lines of the root text are:

*12ab. Giving everything one goes beyond misery
My mind achieves the going beyond misery.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

My mind wants to achieve the non-abiding state beyond misery, and giving up one's body, possessions and all roots of virtue for the purpose of others, enables one to achieve that aim.

The *purpose of others* indicates that the giving has to be free from self-interest, and that one is giving entirely for the benefit of others. When it is free from self-interest, generosity *enables one to achieve one's aim*, which is to attain the *non-abiding state beyond misery*. From the very outset one practises with the aim of achieving that state beyond misery, which has two levels. One level of the non-abiding state beyond misery is where the deluded obscurations have been overcome. The other level is having overcome both the deluded obscurations as well as the obscurations to omniscience, i.e. the imprints of the delusions, and thus obtaining the ultimate state of enlightenment.

When taking the vows of ordination as a monk or nun the novice says, 'I take these vows with the intention of seeking liberation', so at the very outset the purpose of taking the vows is indicated. They are made with the intention of seeking liberation, which is why these vows are called the self-liberation vows. In fact any individual can seek liberation. If we have the mind that wants to achieve the non-abiding state beyond misery, then we can achieve that goal by engaging in the practice of giving up one's body, possessions and virtues for the purpose of others.

The commentary concludes with:

Hence it is appropriate to give up everything.

So giving one's body, possessions and merits is an appropriate practice.

1.5.1.2.2. Making offerings to sentient beings is appropriate as they are the supreme field for generosity

As sentient beings are the supreme field to accumulate merit, it is appropriate to make offerings to them.

The remainder of verse twelve reads

*12cd. To surrender everything at once
Is the supreme offering to sentient beings.*

The explanation in Gyaltsab Je's commentary is quite clear:

To surrender everything at once is equal to offering it, and to offer to sentient beings is the supreme offering, because through this offering one attains enlightenment.

Surrendering *everything is equal to offering everything*, but specifically making that offering *to sentient beings is the most supreme form of offering*. The main point here is that by offering to sentient beings, one attains enlightenment.

As explained here, the reason why sentient beings are supreme objects for practising generosity is because through the practice of generosity one will obtain the ultimate state of enlightenment. The very fact that we are able to engage in practices of purification and the accumulation of merit is due to the existence of sentient beings. As one of the lines in the *Eight Verses of Mind Training* reads, 'Sentient beings are more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel'. As explained in these teachings, sentient beings are extremely precious because by relying on them we will gain all our temporary and ultimate goals.

For example, meeting our temporary needs of food, clothing, and shelter is dependent on other sentient beings. Furthermore, the practices that are the causes for achieving liberation and the ultimate state of enlightenment are also dependent on sentient beings. Without sentient beings we could not engage in the practice of the six perfections—generosity, morality, patience, joyful effort, concentration and wisdom. We engage in these practices only in relation to sentient beings, so sentient beings are the cause for us to achieve the ultimate state of enlightenment.

If we wish to acquire wealth, we need to depend on others who have wealth—without the wealth of others how could we acquire wealth ourselves? Furthermore, to acquire knowledge we have to depend on teachers and instructors who can impart that knowledge. Thus, to achieve anything we have to depend on others.

As Shantideva mentions later on in this text, the moment we see sentient beings we need to generate the thought, 'It is through these beings that I will achieve enlightenment; thus I behold them with great love'. It is with this understanding that one looks at others with eyes of loving kindness. As Shantideva says so very succinctly, the moment we see any sentient beings we need to remember, 'These are the very beings that will help me achieve my ultimate goal of enlightenment'.

So the appropriate way to relate to any sentient being that we encounter is to recall their great kindness, and view them with loving kindness. Although these are very profound ways of training our mind they are quite easy to understand, and as we learn these techniques and methods we can slowly train our mind in appropriate conduct towards others. These are supreme methods to maintain our positive attitude towards other sentient beings.

If we are really keen on practising patience we will welcome those who test our patience! Otherwise how would we ever know what levels of patience we have actually developed? So rather than considering someone who irritates us as an enemy, or someone to be avoided, we can welcome the opportunity to further develop our practice of patience. Then we can definitely hold them dear, seeing them as a spiritual friend, a teacher, and an aid to our practice. When we really think about these truly amazing methods for developing our mind, we gain a sense of how astonishing the bodhisattva practices are. Then, at the very least, we can be inspired to undertake the same training. The great master Atisha was known to have a very irritating attendant. When others commented on that, Atisha said, 'It is thanks to him that I am rapidly developing my practice of patience!'

1.5.1.3. HOW TO PRACTISE AFTER THE OFFERING

Having made our offerings, how do we practise? What attitudes should we develop?

This has three subdivisions:

1.5.1.3.1. Henceforth I give up the idea of having control over my body

1.5.1.3.2. Explaining the meaning of this extensively

1.5.1.3.3. Relating it to suitable action

1.5.1.3.1. Henceforth I give up the idea of having control over my body

Gyaltsab Je begins his commentary on this section with this query:

How should one act after having offered one's body.

The answer to that is presented in this verse:

13. *Since I have offered this body
To all sentient beings, to do with it as they
please,
They can always kill it, criticise it,
Or beat it; whatever pleases them.*

The commentary goes on to explain:

Now that I have offered this body to all sentient beings to do with it as they please, it depends on what pleases them. They can always kill it, insult it with words or physically beat it and so on. I must give up attachment to my body and completely give up my anger towards others.

As the commentary explains, *I have offered this body to all sentient beings to do with it as they please*, which means you offer your body for others to do whatever they please with it. Since our body now depends on them, whether they choose to *kill* us or *insult* us or *beat* us is up to them. Thus by giving up attachment to one's body, one will *completely give up* any *anger* towards others when they inflict any kind of harm.

We can actually derive a great deal of inspiration from these words. We can see that that these extensive forms of dedications are also related to the practice of patience. When we reach the point of actually giving away our body, possessions, and virtues for the sake of others, then how could we become angry when this offer is taken up? There would be no reason to be angry when others harm one's body or criticise or insult one, because there is no longer any sense that one's body, possessions and virtues

belong to oneself. This is the optimal way to practise patience, as it gives us the means to not hold any grudge, or retaliate when others harm us.

Giving away our body, possessions and even our merits for the sole purpose of benefiting others is a supreme practice that prepares us for the last stages of our life. There will be no sense of attachment, because we will have already given up our body, possessions and even our merits, and dying with a mind free of attachment is the best way to experience death.

Giving away one's virtues for the purpose of others is, in fact, the best means to acquire an inexhaustible stock of merit. We can easily understand the process of using our body and possessions because they are tangible objects. But how do we use up our virtue? It is said that every pleasant experience is a result of virtue. So whenever we experience a temporary good result we are actually using up our merit and virtue. Whereas, if we dedicate our virtues for the benefit of all sentient beings, then whatever virtue we accumulate will be inexhaustible. So the act of selflessly giving away our virtue to all sentient beings is actually a supreme means to create an inexhaustible amount of virtue.

These practices are supreme methods to further increase our merits. When we understand the deeper benefit of this practice, we will develop a genuine sense of enthusiasm about engaging in the practice. Our strong sense of holding on to our possessions and body and virtues and so forth comes from a very narrow-minded and selfish attitude. Our self-cherishing is likened to an animal's horn, which is hard to its core. So, in order for this hard and tough attitude of selfishness to soften, we need to engage in these practices. When we take these practices to heart and gradually engage in them, then our strong sense of self-cherishing mind will start to loosen and become soft like wool. Indeed our whole demeanour will begin to transform to naturally become more gentle and kind.

1.5.1.3.2. *Explaining the meaning of this extensively*

14. *Whether they use it for play, amusement
Or to ridicule it,
Since I have already offered it
Why should it concern me?*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Since I have already unconditionally given my body to others, they should be able to do with it as they like. Henceforth, why should I concern myself with protecting it, even though they use it for play, amusement or ridicule it.

As the commentary explains, *since I have already unconditionally given my body to others they should be able to do whatever they like with it*. So *why should I concern myself with protecting it*, when others try to *ridicule* or *play* with it? There are times when people say things in jest that can go down the wrong way, which can be a source of hurt and so forth. If we have a strong sense of clinging to our identity, we are more vulnerable and prone to getting hurt.

The point here is that since we have given our body for the sake of others, then even though they use it for amusement or ridicule, it should not concern us—they

can do with it whatever they see fit. So here we can see the relationship between the practice of generosity and the practice of patience. As we have already given our body to others, we will willingly accept their ridicule or use of us as a source of amusement, and not retaliate by becoming angry.

1.5.1.3.3. *Relating it to suitable action*

This heading refers to ensuring that one's actions are suitable rather than inappropriate.

The next two lines of the verse read:

15ab. *I shall allow them any action
That does not harm them.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

I shall let them do any action with my body that benefits self and others and does not harm self or others at all times, now and in the future.

As the commentary explains, *let* others use *my body* with *any action* that will benefit self or others, and which will *not harm self or others*. Using the words *at all times* means now and in the future, referring to both temporary and ultimate benefits. One allows others to use one's body for whatever purpose they wish, as long as it does not cause harm, and brings benefit in this lifetime, as well as forming the basis to refrain from harm while benefitting others in future lifetimes.

1.5.2. *Dedicating it to be the source of inexhaustible virtue*

This heading has three subdivisions:

1.5.2.1. Dedicating it to be only the cause of the welfare of others

1.5.2.2. Dedicating the thought as the cause for inexhaustibility

1.5.2.3. Dedicating the action as the cause for inexhaustibility

1.5.2.1. DEDICATING IT TO BE ONLY THE CAUSE OF THE WELFARE OF OTHERS

This implies dedicating our practice to only benefit other beings and not cause them the slightest harm.

The next two lines of the verse are:

15cd. *May looking at me
Never be meaningless.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

May it never become the cause for sentient beings to be disappointed when they look to me for help.

These are really incredible aspirations which, if we reflect upon them, are really meaningful and inspiring. This dedication in brief is, *may* the mere sight of my body be *a cause* of benefit, and never a cause of harm, and *may it never* be a *cause* for others *to be disappointed*.

1.5.2.2. DEDICATING THE THOUGHT AS THE CAUSE FOR INEXHAUSTIBILITY

The verse relating to this is:

16. *Whether a mind of anger or faith,
Arises, directed at me,
May it become the cause for all their
purposes
To be continually fulfilled*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Regardless of whether it is a mind of anger or faith that has arisen, when directed at me may it become the cause that in all lifetimes all their temporary and ultimate aims are achieved.

Here *faith* can also refer to being appreciated by others. *Whether* others relate to me out of *anger* or out of appreciation, may that be *a cause* for the *achievement* of *all temporary and ultimate aims* in *all lifetimes*. So here is another incredible aspiration for the benefit of others.

1.5.2.3. DEDICATING THE ACTION AS THE CAUSE FOR INEXHAUSTIBILITY

The relevant verse reads:

17. *May whoever affronts me,
Harms me otherwise,
Or backstabs me
Have the fortune of enlightenment.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

May whoever affronts me verbally, or otherwise, physically harms me, or stabs me in the back, may all these actions become the cause for them to have the fortune of attaining the great enlightenment.

The Tibetan term translated here as '*affronts me verbally*' has a particular connotation of others criticising you to your face, rather than using slanderous, negative words behind your back. So the aspiration is that when someone harms me *verbally* in this way, or physically harms me, may all these harmful actions become the cause for them to have the fortune of attaining great enlightenment. We need to remember that these dedications are the great aspirations made by the Conqueror's children, the bodhisattvas.

1.5.3. *Dedicating it to be the cause of enjoyment*

This section is subdivided into three

1.5.3.1. Dedicating oneself to become the cause of necessities

1.5.3.2. Dedicating for time and expansive actions

1.5.3.3. Dedicating for uninterrupted continuum of object and time

1.5.3.1. DEDICATING ONESELF TO BECOME THE CAUSE OF NECESSITIES

There are three verses in this section of the text.

18. *May I become a protector for the unprotected,
A guide of those travelling along a path,
A ship, ferry or bridge
For those who want to cross.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

May I become thus a protector for those without a protector, in all lives a guide for those travelling along a path, a ship, ferry or bridge for those wishing to cross the waters.

The first aspiration is *may I become a protector* or refuge *for those without a protector* and who are in distress.

Next is *in all lives may I be a guide for travellers on a path*. In the past people like traders and so forth needed to travel long distances on foot, through treacherous, unfamiliar lands with many dangers. So, being a guide was a really useful and beneficial way to benefit others.

Furthermore, *may I also be a ship, a ferry and a bridge for those wishing to cross the waters*.

This relates to the distance to be crossed. To cross the oceans you need a ship. Over a shorter distance a ferry will suffice to make the crossing, while bridges can be built to cross small creeks and rivers. So the aspiration is to be a means for beings to cross over to the other side of the water.

19. *May I become an island for those wishing an island*
A place of rest for those who wish to rest
A slave for all embodied beings
Who desire a slave

Here the commentary explains:

May I become dry land for those who wish for an island, a lamp for those who desire a lamp, a resting place for those who desire to rest, a slave for all those who desire a slave.

When people have been at sea for a long time they need to find land where they can rest and replenish their supplies. So for those who desperately need to find land, *may I be like an island* with nice trees and so forth, for them to rest and enjoy.

Next is *a lamp for those who desire a lamp*. In ancient times it would be hard, if not impossible, to read texts and so forth in the evening without a lamp. So a lamp is essential to be able to read and study, for example. Thus a lamp can provide the means to benefit others. A more subtle connotation of a lamp is that it that removes the darkness of ignorance.

May I be a resting place for those who desire to take a rest. The Tibetan word *mal* also implies bedding. So here the aspiration is not only a place to rest but also for bedding, such as mattresses, cushions and for those in need to take a rest.

Lastly the text says, *May I be a slave for those who desire to have a slave*. The Tibetan word *dren*, literally translated as slave, doesn't carry a negative connotation. The connotation is more like an obedient assistant. So the dedication is to be an assistant that does everything for those needing help - such as the sick, the impoverished, the weak and the aged - helping them to fulfil all their needs and providing them with what they wish.

After calling for a show of hands of those who would not be going away at Christmas, Geshe-la then asked everyone to make an effort to attend the puja marking the passing away of Lama Tsong Khapa which, he said, would be very beneficial. He said that since there were so many staying home over the break there should not be an empty gumpa.

He reminded us that many have commented how beneficial it was that there were sessions being held over the teaching break. The leader of the puja and classes will be Allys Andrews and it would be good for her to have a few supporters.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcribed by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© *Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་ཀྱི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

3 December 2013

Based on the motivation we have just generated, we will engage in our meditation practice. [meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment myself, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

1.5.3 Dedicating it to be the cause of enjoyment

1.5.3.1. DEDICATING ONESELF TO BECOME THE CAUSE OF NECESSITIES (CONT.)

There are three verses under this heading, the first two of which we covered last week. The third verse reads:

20. *May I become a wish-fulfilling jewel, a pure vase,
A knowledge mantra or powerful medicine,
A wish-fulfilling tree or cow
For embodied beings.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je gives this explanation of the verse:

May I be a wish-fulfilling jewel and a pure vase for those desiring food and drink and the like; a knowledge mantra accomplishing the actions of pacifying and increasing and so forth for those wishing to achieve those actions; the great medicine called the extraction of essence, which dispels all sicknesses; a wish-fulfilling tree that gives what is desired, such as food and drink; and a wish-fulfilling cow that can give whatever is desired by embodied beings.

Dedicate in such a way repeatedly.

The first of the aspirations in this verse is to become a *wish-fulfilling jewel* and a precious or *pure vase for those desiring food, drink and the like*. A *wish-fulfilling jewel* is a metaphor for something that is able to provide whatever one wishes for. So dedicating one's virtues to become a wish-fulfilling jewel that fulfils all wishes, hopes and desires is an incredibly noble aspiration. The second metaphor is the mythological *pure vase*, which is an inexhaustible treasure-like vase that can provide all of the necessities such as food, drink and so forth.

The second aspiration is to be like a *knowledge mantra accomplishing the actions of pacifying and increasing and so forth, for those wishing to achieve these actions*. There are four specific actions that are accomplished through the great power of mantra as an aid to benefit sentient beings: they are the controlling, wrathful, *pacifying* and *increasing* actions. The dedication here is that one may be a knowledge mantra with which these beneficial actions are accomplished.

The next aspiration is to be like *the great medicine called the extraction of essence*. Medicines that extract the essence of all essentials are a panacea that *dispels all sickness*.

The next two lines of the verse refer to the mythological treasures of the *wish-fulfilling tree that gives what is desired, such as food and drink*, followed by the *wish-fulfilling cow that can give whatever is desired by embodied beings*. These are dedications to fulfil all the necessities of sentient beings. As you will recall, both the wish-granting tree and the wish-fulfilling cow are included in the *Long Mandala Offering*. The wish-fulfilling tree is also mentioned in the *Guru Puja* as part of one's visualisation of the merit field.

The final line in the commentary, *Dedicate in such a way repeatedly*, is an exhortation to dedicate over and over again whatever virtues one has accumulated in the manner indicated in verses eighteen to twenty.

1.5.3.2. DEDICATING FOR EXPANSIVE TIME AND ACTIONS

This heading refers to dedicating that our actions be expansive and timeless.

The relevant verse reads:

21. *Like the elements of earth and so forth,
And like space as well,
May I always be the basis for the many
necessities
Of the boundless sentient beings.*

Gyaltsab Je's explanation of this verse reads:

May I always become, in many ways, the cause for the necessities of boundless sentient beings, like the four elements of earth, water, fire and wind are the basis for the actions of sentient beings, and similar to space, which is permanent.

From the *Stacking of Jewels*:

Bodhisattvas work for the welfare of sentient beings like the five elements.

As indicated in the commentary, when bodhisattvas serve sentient beings they become the *cause for the necessities of boundless sentient beings like the four elements of earth, water, fire and wind*. We can all relate to the fact that the basis of both ourselves and the external world is the four elements, and that nothing can be sustained without these four elements. So the four elements are incredibly vast causes of every material object. Using the four elements as an example indicates the expansive nature of the aspiration to provide the necessities for boundless sentient beings.

The next part of the aspiration is to be like *space which is permanent*. Just like time, space has no limits, and this is another example indicating the extent to which one aspires to benefit sentient beings.

The commentary quotes from the *Stacking of Jewels Sutra* as a source, indicating that these are suitable and valid ways of dedicating. The five elements are the elements of earth, water, fire and wind, plus the space element. So the extent of a bodhisattva's wish to benefit sentient beings is the same as that of the five elements, which serve as a basis for all phenomena to function.

The five elements serve as the basis of all phenomena to function, including ourselves.

- The *earth* element is said to establish the basis and firmness of our existence. It holds everything firmly together. For example, the earth element holds the components of a flower together, just as it does with our bodies;
- The *water* element nurtures that which is established;
- The *fire* element helps it to mature;
- The *wind* element helps it to increase. Another aspect of the wind element is that it allows external substances like plants and so forth and our bodies to remain fresh. Without the wind element, bodies and flowers, for example, would rot and wither away.
- The *space* element is said to be that which allows phenomena to be established. Without the space element nothing could be established, because there would be no space in which to establish it. For example, you can put a lid on a cup of tea, and it remains there even when the cup is full because of the presence of the space element. Generally within space there is compounded space and un-compounded space. The space in the sky above us is an example of un-compounded space, whereas very tiny particles make up compounded space. This distinction is good to note as well.

The extent to which bodhisattvas work for the sake of sentient beings by providing all the basic necessities is similar to the extent of the five elements establishing all existence. So this extraordinarily expansive dedication of one's merits is an extremely noble dedication. When one has accumulated virtues, then one can dedicate them in this way. However, even as an aspiration it is incredibly worthwhile and meaningful.

The dedications presented here are also a personal instruction on how to engage in everyday practice. People often ask, 'What kind of aspirations should I hold?', 'What are the kind of prayers that I should do?' So if you are in doubt about the kind of prayers, or the extent of how to dedicate your merit, then you need look no further than Shantideva's *Bodhicharyavatara* which explains very clearly how to make extensive dedications and aspirations. Furthermore, if you wonder about how to engage in the practice of prostrations, then again, you will find the explanation in Shantideva's *Bodhicharyavatara*. Likewise the *Bodhicharyavatara* explains how to do confession and purification practices. Rejoicing and requesting the gurus and the buddhas to remain is also explained in this very noble text, as is making requests for turning the wheel of Dharma to ensure the flourishing of the Dharma. So whenever we have a question about practice, we will find it explained very clearly in Shantideva's *Bodhicharyavatara*. The point here is that the benefit of studying this text is that it is the optimum resource on how to engage in our practices.

1.5.3.3. DEDICATING FOR UNINTERRUPTED CONTINUUM OF OBJECT AND TIME

Basically *uninterrupted continuum* means to continuously extend one's dedications and aspirations, without any interruptions. This means that nothing should come between one's aspirations, and to the extent they will

benefit sentient beings. The verse relating to this heading is:

22. *Likewise, may I be the cause for the livelihood
Of all the realms of sentient beings,
That stretch until the edge of space,
Until they all go beyond misery.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Likewise, may I also become the cause for the livelihood of all the realms of sentient beings, which extend to the edge of space, by benefiting them in infinite ways, until they go beyond misery.

Train the mind like this again and again.

Likewise, may I also become the cause for the livelihood of all the realms of sentient beings, which extend to the edge of space is an indication of vast numbers of sentient beings. One *benefits them in infinite ways, until they go beyond misery.* That is a reference to the uninterrupted time over which one extends one's dedication—until all sentient beings, who are infinite as space, reach the ultimate state of going beyond misery—which is complete enlightenment. Then the commentary exhorts us to *train the mind*, or meditate in this way, *again and again*.

The personal instruction is that we need to take every opportunity to make as many expansive dedications and aspirations as possible. It is through this sort of training that we implant the imprints to actually work for the welfare of sentient beings as extensively as the buddhas and bodhisattvas. We also gain an insight of how the buddhas obtained their state of enlightenment. Thus we get an inkling of the vast activities of the buddhas and bodhisattvas from the fact that they have surpassed these very extensive aspirations.

Here Gyaltsab Je is exhorting us to train our mind again and again. This means that we need to take every opportunity, not just once or twice, but again and again, to familiarise our mind with making these expansive dedications and aspirations. These are the means of a supreme practice.

2. ACTUAL

Having covered the explanations under the first heading in the chapter Preparation, we now come to the second heading, Actual, which explains how to actually take the bodhisattva vows. This is contained in the next two verses.

23. *Just as the previous tathagatas
Generated the mind of enlightenment
And continued in the gradual
Trainings of a bodhisattva,*
24. *I too shall generate the mind of enlightenment
For the welfare of sentient beings,
And train step-by-step
In the trainings.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

When the previous tathagatas generated the mind of enlightenment they initially generated the supreme wishing bodhicitta in front of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, and then, to take the bodhisattva vows, they generated engaging bodhicitta. Subsequently, they trained and remained in the gradual bodhisattva trainings.

Likewise I, for the temporary and ultimate benefit of sentient beings, either in front of an actual preceptor

with pure bodhisattva vows, or in front of invoked buddhas and bodhisattvas, upon the request for attention, shall generate the wishing mind of enlightenment. Likewise, I shall train and remain in the gradual trainings upon having generated an engaging mind.

Repeat the verses three times, either after the preceptor, or, if there is none, after the invoked buddhas and bodhisattvas.

As the commentary explains, *we repeat these two verses three times after a preceptor if they are present, or if there is no preceptor, we imagine repeating them after the invoked buddhas and bodhisattvas.*

As you should know, there are two stages of generating bodhicitta: aspiring bodhicitta and engaging bodhicitta.

It is when one generates the engaging bodhicitta attitude that one actually takes the bodhisattva vows with all the commitments. Generating the aspiring bodhicitta on the other hand, is not defined by the ritual of recitation. It involves merely generating an altruistic mind such as, 'May I obtain the state of enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings', accompanied by a commitment to not give up the altruistic aspiration to achieve enlightenment; and to adopt the four white dharmas, and abandon the four black dharmas or negativities. These eight dharmas were mentioned in chapter one and your homework then was to find out what they are.

Basically, generating aspirational bodhicitta involves making the commitment to generate that mind of enlightenment three times during the day, and three times during the night, and not to give up that aspiration. As it does not involve making a commitment to uphold all of the bodhisattva vows, it is a mere aspiration and not actually a vow.

Now, can those of you who do the *Six-session Guru Practice* tell me the line that comes after the four immeasurables?

Student: Not to give up the mind of enlightenment even at the cost of my life.

With aspirational bodhicitta one promises not to give up that aspiration, whereas with engaging bodhicitta, as exemplified in the *Six-session Practice*, one promises never to forsake those vows even at the cost of one's life. That's the main distinction between aspirational bodhicitta and the actual bodhisattva vows.

Aspiring bodhicitta and engaging bodhicitta can be presented sequentially or simultaneously i.e. at the same time. This is a simultaneous presentation. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama indicated in Sydney earlier this year, when you take the vows sequentially, some lines relate to aspirational bodhicitta and other lines relate specifically to the engaging bodhisattva vows. He then very clearly distinguished the lines containing aspirational bodhicitta from the lines relating to the engaging bodhisattva vows. Do you recall that?

As presented in the *Six-session Guru Practice*, the manner of taking the vows is to first take refuge, followed by generating the four immeasurable thoughts and then generating aspirational bodhicitta, followed by engaging bodhicitta. Next comes the request to the gurus to please pay attention to us. Then one absorbs the deity and the

guru into oneself, and generates great joy. The main point is that the presentation in these two verses can be combined with the *Six-session Guru Practice* that some of you do regularly. Indeed, it is good to combine the two presentations to gain a complete understanding.

The purpose and manner of taking the vows

Returning to the commentary, *when the previous tathagatas generated the mind* refers to conquerors such as Shakyamuni Buddha, Mitrukpa, Amitahba, Medicine Buddha and so forth. At the beginning of chapter one there was an extensive explanation of what *tathagata* means.

Having generated *engaging bodhicitta the tathagatas subsequently trained in and remained in the gradual bodhisattva trainings*, which include the practices of the six perfections and the four means of gathering disciples. *Likewise I* indicates that just as the previous bodhisattvas generated aspirational bodhicitta, and then took the engaging bodhisattva vows, followed by engaging in the trainings of the six perfections and the four means of gathering disciples, I too will follow their example. The intention of this practice is *for the temporary and ultimate benefit of sentient beings*.

One way of taking the vows is *in front of an actual preceptor with pure bodhisattva vows*. Thus the preceptor should be someone who is endowed with pure bodhisattva vows. It is said that when one takes these vows in front of great pure masters who practise bodhicitta, it will help one to be conscientious about maintaining and upholding those vows. That is because the two mental factors of shame and embarrassment can easily arise when there is danger of breaching those vows. So taking the vows from an actual pure preceptor is quite significant.

If a preceptor is not present, one takes one's vows *in front of the invoked buddhas and bodhisattvas*. The commentary is clearly indicating that one does not have to rely on the presence of a preceptor in order to take the bodhisattva vows; one can also take the bodhisattva vows in front of the envisioned buddhas and bodhisattvas.

'*Upon the request for attention*' is another one of the elements of taking the bodhisattva vows. In the *Six-session Guru Practice*, there is this line: 'O lamas, buddhas and bodhisattvas, please pay attention to me'. So one seeks the attention of the lamas, the buddhas and the bodhisattvas in order to take the bodhisattva vows.

What follows from this is that, *I shall generate the wishing mind of enlightenment*. One generates the thought, 'For the sake of all sentient beings may I achieve enlightenment', which is aspirational bodhicitta.

Following that generation of aspiring bodhicitta, *I shall train and remain in the gradual trainings upon having generated the engaging mind*. Thus the engaging mind of bodhicitta is based on the earlier aspiration to achieve enlightenment for all sentient beings. What is added to the aspirational mind is the commitment, 'I will engage in the practices of the six perfections as way to develop my own mind, and engage in the practices of the four means of gathering disciples as a way to benefit others'.

As explained in the commentary, one *repeats* these two verses *three times*, and at the end of the third recitation the vows are actually established in one's mental continuum. As explained in the commentary, one repeats these verses either following a preceptor if a preceptor is present, or, if there is no preceptor, imagine repeating it after the invoked buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Of course, I have presented all of this previously, but I don't know how much you have retained. What also needs to be understood is that those doing, for example, the Nyung Nae practice, would take the eight Mahayana precepts in front of the preceptor if there is one present. If there is no preceptor present, then one takes those precepts in front of a visualised Avalokiteshvara; envisioning that one has taken those vows or precepts from Avalokiteshvara himself. Indeed, whenever one wishes to take the Mahayana precepts, it will suffice if one visualises all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, and takes the eight Mahayana precepts in their presence.

In relation to *I shall train and remain in the gradual trainings*, the term *gradual training* is as explained by Gyaltsab Rinpoche. There are some variations in other texts, but most versions are quite similar.

The meaning of training gradually

Gyaltsab Je goes on to explain the meaning of training gradually.

The meaning of training gradually: Practices like the generosity of one's body should not be done with an impure mind. Otherwise it becomes a fault. It should be done when it does not become a fault and rather becomes a great accumulation of merit.

Using the example of the practice of generosity as an example, one needs to train first in practising generosity within one's comfort zone, i.e. begin with giving something small. Then increase that generosity gradually, so that even though there is a greater level of generosity it is still comfortable to give.

More specifically one is advised against giving one's body initially, as it could become a fault if one is not properly prepared. The perfect time to give one's body is when one has reached the level of training where it is only a means to accumulate great merit. When one reaches that level of training, it is permissible and appropriate to give one's body. So this presentation explains the meaning of training gradually by using an example.

Gyaltsab Je further clarifies:

Some opponents posit that the meaning of sequential training is that one trains sequentially in the three moralities according to boundary, and this is incorrect.

The three moralities are the morality of restraint, the morality of building up virtue and the morality of benefiting others. *According to boundary* refers to the fact that some have posited that the morality of restraint is practised during the first path, the path of accumulation; the morality of building up virtue is practised on the path of preparation; and the morality of benefiting others is practised on the Arya paths, from the path of seeing onwards. So the practice of training *sequentially* refers to

assigning each of the three moralities to one of the bodhisattva paths. However that is not correct.

As I have explained previously, all of the bodhisattvas' activities can be subsumed into two main categories: engaging in activities to ripen oneself and engaging in activities to ripen other sentient beings. There are no activities that are not combined in these two.

The morality of restraint and the morality of building up virtue are practices that specifically relate to ripening one's own mental continuum, whereas the morality of benefiting others is an activity of ripening other sentient beings. This is how all the bodhisattvas' activities are subsumed into the three moralities.

The six perfections can also be subsumed into two: those that are mainly to fulfil one's own purpose and those that are mainly practices to fulfil the purpose of others. I have explained this extensively in the past, however it will be presented later in this text.

Furthermore:

Others posit the meaning as having a separate ceremony for the generation of the engaging mind, and the engaging vows. This is also incorrect according to any of the great pioneers.

To take the engaging mind after having first taken the wishing aspiring mind and then training in the wish to practice the perfections is the supreme method that accords with the differences in different persons. It is also suitable to take the two minds sequentially in one ceremony.

Then Gyaltsab Je summarises his commentary on the actual method of generating the mind of enlightenment thus:

The way of taking them and so forth one can know from the earlier mentioned treatises of the great teacher.

The *great teacher* specified here refers to Lama Tsong Khapa.

Thus, I shall not elaborate on it here.

This is a reference to the explanations in Lama Tsong Khapa's texts, which I have also explained earlier. Perhaps it may seem that I elaborate too much, however it seems that whenever some point comes up I have already mentioned it somewhere else—but I don't know how much of it you retain.

What is important for us to really keep in mind is that these are the instructions on how to take the bodhisattva vows. For those who are inclined and who have previously taken the vows, it is permissible, indeed necessary, to take these vows throughout one's practices. As we have seen, we take these vows on the basis of refuge. So reciting the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Praye*, with the proper motivation and intention, and appropriate visualisation will suffice as a means to take the bodhisattva vows.

3. CONCLUSION

The conclusion is subdivided into two parts:

- 3.1. Rejoicing oneself
- 3.2. Inducing others to rejoice

3.1. Rejoicing oneself

This again is subdivided into two:

3.1.1. Achieving one's own purpose

3.1.2. Achieving the purpose of others

3.1.1. Achieving one's own purpose

This has three subdivisions:

3.1.1.1. Rejoicing by uplifting the mind

3.1.1.2. Meditating on conscientiousness after having found such a mind

3.1.1.3. Having found a mind that is difficult to find

3.1.1.1. REJOICING BY UPLIFTING THE MIND

There are two verses under this heading.

25. *After the wise ones*

*Took very joyfully the mind of enlightenment,
To engage and increase*

They praise the mind like this:

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

After the wise bodhisattvas have taken the two bodhicittas with a very clear joyful mind and faith, they engage in methods for it to not degenerate and to increase its practice. Towards this end they generate joy and praise the mind.

As the commentary explains, when *the wise bodhisattvas* take the *bodhicitta* vows they do so *with a very clear and joyful mind* that is full of *faith*¹. With this mind *they engage in methods for it to not degenerate and to increase its practice*. Thus, *they generate joy and praise the mind* that has been developed. In other words, when they see what they have generated, they develop a great sense of joy, and their mind is uplifted.

Gyaltsab Je introduces the next verse in this way:

If we explain how:

Then comes the verse.

26. *Today my life has become fruitful,*

The human existence was well attained.

Today I was born into the buddha family

Now I have become a child of the buddhas

Gyaltsab Je's commentary to this verse reads:

Today, as I generate the mind of enlightenment and take the vows, my life has become fruitful, my human existence has been well attained and the freedoms and endowments have become meaningful. Today I have been born into the family of the buddhas and become a bodhisattva.

In relation to the aspiration, 'When will I become a child of the Buddha', you generate joy by thinking 'Now I have become a child of the buddhas'.

As the commentary explains, the way to uplift the mind is by contemplating in this way: At this time, *when I have generated the mind and taken the vows, my life has become fruitful, my human existence is well attained and the freedoms and endowments have become meaningful*. This is indicating the great value and worthiness of generating such a mind. When we ask, 'How do we take the essence of a precious human rebirth?' then this is the most supreme way of taking the essence of this human rebirth with its freedoms and endowments — using it to generate that mind of enlightenment and taking the bodhisattva vows.

Our mind is uplifted when we contemplate how, by generating this mind, we have made our life most worthwhile and meaningful.

One further contemplates how, 'I have been born in the family of the buddhas and have become a bodhisattva'. The indication here is that generating bodhicitta and taking the bodhisattva vows is the hallmark of entering the path of the Great Vehicle. In fact, it is actually the doorway to the Mahayana path. So we contemplate, 'Today I have entered the Mahayana path, so I have actually entered the ranks of the Conqueror's children, and become a bodhisattva'. This is how one uplifts one's mind.

It follows that having developed these aspirations, one is keen about becoming a bodhisattva, thus generating the thought, 'When will I become a child of the buddhas? When will I become a bodhisattva?' The answer is, 'Today! Today is the day when I have fulfilled my repeated aspirations and endeavour to become a bodhisattva and thus become one of the Conqueror's children'. Thus, one generates joy by thinking, 'I have fulfilled my aspirations; now I am a child of the buddhas'.

If we wonder why the bodhisattvas are referred to as the Conqueror's or the Buddha's children, we need to recall that just as the crown prince who automatically succeeds the king carries on the lineage of his family, the bodhisattvas are those who carry on the lineage of the Buddha's doctrine. That is why they are referred to as the Conqueror's children'.

Even though Buddha Shakyamuni is not present in these times, we are definitely receiving his teachings and doctrines through his many lineage holders. Nagarjuna also explained this clearly in his commentary on bodhicitta—you would have received those teachings many times in the past.

Next Tuesday will be our last session for the year as I will be going to India earlier than I anticipated.

In any case, we have come to the auspicious point where we generate bodhicitta and joy about having generated that bodhicitta. Generating a sense of joy in partaking activities with a bodhicitta mind and attitude is the best way to really enjoy life.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcribed by Bernii Wright

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© *Tara Institute*

¹ These are three points that are normally indicated in the teachings.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

10 December 2013

The *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer* that we have just recited will suffice as our motivation for the meditation practice, and so now we focus our minds on our meditation. [meditation]

It is important to engage in the practice of meditation, just as we have attempted to do in our short session.

Something that we really need to consider is using our precious human life with its eight freedoms and ten endowments meaningfully. So what does that mean? The worldly way of making life meaningful would be to exert oneself in amassing wealth, possessions, a good career, and to enjoy the status which that brings. But that is only a superficial view of a meaningful life. From the Dharma point of view, in order to make one's precious human life meaningful - which is also described as taking the essence of this precious human life - one needs to first generate the wish of wanting to do just that.

In order to generate that genuine wish to make one's precious human life meaningful, four types of attitudes must be generated. These are known as the four attributes for taking the essence of one's precious human life. I have explained these points previously and I find them very meaningful. The four attributes are: thinking about the need to practise the Dharma; thinking about the ability one has to practise the Dharma; thinking about how one needs to practise the Dharma in this very life; and thinking about why it is essential to practise the Dharma right now.

1. Thinking about the need to practise the Dharma

Why is there such a need? Put succinctly it is simply because we all wish for happiness and don't wish to experience any suffering. That simple fact has to be linked to the need to practise Dharma. In other words, we have to see how it is only through the practice of Dharma that we can fulfil our wish to experience genuine happiness and rid ourselves of all suffering.

Then we need to turn that understanding into a conviction that only the practice of the Dharma will fulfil that wish of gaining true happiness and eliminating suffering. Once that conviction is developed, we will spontaneously engage in accumulating virtues and shunning negativities. When we really think about this in detail we will be convinced that the only cause of happiness is virtue, while non-virtue or negativity is the cause of suffering.

What naturally follows is the conviction that it is only through the practice of Dharma that one establishes the means to accumulate virtue and shun negativity. To become a true Dharma practitioner, we need to contemplate these facts again and again and develop a deep sense of conviction in them.

2. Thinking about one's ability to practise the Dharma

Having contemplated at length on the need to practise the Dharma, and arriving at the conclusion, 'Yes, I definitely need to practise the Dharma', the next question that quite naturally arises, is, 'Do I have the ability to practise the Dharma?' So that question needs to be addressed. The reason that one does have that ability is because one has a precious human rebirth with the eight freedoms and ten endowments intact. That is the true meaning of a precious human rebirth.

The next step is to contemplate thoroughly the fact that one is free from the eight adverse circumstances in relation to personal favourable conditions, and thus endowed with the eight freedoms. In particular, one has the discriminating wisdom of being able to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. Furthermore, one is endowed with the ten endowments in relation to the external favourable conditions, such as meeting with the perfect Mahayana teacher and so forth.

Contemplating these factors again and again, thinking about the precious rebirth and how one has all of these faculties intact, is a very worthwhile meditation—in fact, it's an essential meditation practice. Contemplating in this way again and again, helps to calm down and subdue the mind, thus providing further encouragement to practise the Dharma.

I spent a lot of time contemplating like this when I was around 18 or 19 years old, and I can safely say that, even though I cannot claim to have any realisations about the Dharma, this practice definitely helped me. I didn't do it to become well versed so that I could become well known and famous through my understanding of these topics. That was not at the forefront of my mind at all! I was considering these points on a personal level as a way to help to subdue my mind, and to that effect I can safely say that it has definitely been of benefit.

It is really important to work with whatever helps one's mind in the moment, and to utilise whatever understanding one has of the Dharma, at whatever meagre level that may be. If a practice helps your mind, then make that your main practice, rather than aiming at higher forms of practice. Aiming high while putting aside the practical approaches can be quite destructive for one's own development. I'm not saying that one shouldn't aim high, but the point is that aiming to do high level practices, whilst neglecting more practical approaches, can definitely be harmful.

Last week we reviewed Gyaltshab Rinpoche's succinct explanation on how to practise in the correct sequence. We need to take that important instruction to heart. As you will recall, he said that it can be dangerous to aim at high level practices of generosity, for example, or adopt practices that are inappropriate. We need to take instructions like these to heart. They come from precious teachers, lamas, and great masters, so we need to take heed of them.

3. Thinking about the need to practise the Dharma in this very life

Having contemplated the need to practise the Dharma, and understanding that one has the ability to practise the Dharma, one might fall into the trap of thinking, 'Well,

maybe I can leave practising the Dharma to my next life'. To avoid that trap we need to think again and again about the rarity and difficulty of finding a precious human life. To contemplate the rarity and difficulty of finding a precious human life with the eight freedoms and the ten endowments intact, we need to consider the difficulty of acquiring the cause for such a precious human life.

The causes of a precious human life are the practice of morality aided by the practices of generosity and so forth, sealed with unstained aspirational prayers. So when we contemplate how difficult it is to acquire those causes, then we can see why the result, which is the precious human rebirth, is so rare and difficult to find.

When we really think about these points, asking ourselves, 'Do I have all of those causes intact?' and 'How difficult is it to obtain all of those causes?', then it will dawn upon us that obtaining such a precious human life with the eight freedoms and ten endowments intact is indeed very rare and will be difficult to obtain again in a future life.

4. Thinking about why it is essential to practise the Dharma right now

The fourth attribute of taking the essence of our precious human life is that we need to think about how this precious human life can so easily cease. We have already realised that we need to practise the Dharma in this life, but we might fall into the trap of thinking that we can practise Dharma next week, next month, or next year. To avoid procrastinating like that, we need to contemplate how the precious human life can so easily end in a moment.

How to take the essence of this precious human life

When we contemplate these four points again and again, then the outcome will be a genuine, unmistakable wish to take the essence of this precious human life, endowed with the eight freedoms and ten endowments. Having developed that wish, the next question that arises is, 'How, then, do we take the essence of our precious human life?'

As an answer to that we reflect upon the fact that there are three different levels of taking the essence of this precious human life: the small way, the medium way and the great way, and this is what we contemplate next.

To understand how these three scopes relate to what the Buddha taught, we need to recall that the Buddha taught the Dharma for the sole purpose of benefiting other sentient beings—the Dharma has no other purpose than that. There are three levels in which the Dharma benefits sentient beings. At the lowest level is the temporary benefit of being reborn again as a human or in the god realms; the medium benefit is becoming free from the cycle of samsara, in other words obtaining the state of self-liberation; and the optimum way to benefit sentient beings is to lead them to the ultimate state of supreme enlightenment.

These benefits can be grouped into temporary benefits and the ultimate benefit. With respect to the temporary benefits, the Buddha presented the unmistakable methods for obtaining high status, and most importantly that state

of nirvana or self-liberation. To obtain the ultimate benefit, which is supreme enlightenment, the Buddha further presented the paths and grounds and so forth. So if the question, 'How did the Buddha benefit sentient beings?' arises, then we know that these are the ways in which the Buddha benefits us.

So how do we take this as personal instruction? Beginning with the temporary benefits, by avoiding the ten non-virtues and adopting the ten virtues will definitely close the door to being reborn in the lower realms in the next life. While it may be difficult to overcome the causes for unfortunate rebirths entirely, we can at least affect the course of our next rebirth, ensuring that there will again be an opportunity to continue to practice to avoid being reborn in the unfortunate realms in the life thereafter. When we think in this practical way, we can see that we can definitely manage to engage in this practice.

Next, we need to consider what prevents us from engaging in the pure practices that secure the causes for obtaining the fortunate rebirth in the next lifetime. When we look into those opposing factors, we will see that from beginningless times we have had a strong clinging to the pleasures of life, and it is this strong grasping and clinging to the pleasures of this life that prevents us from working towards the goals of our future lives.

So the way to overcome this strong grasping at the affairs of this life is by contemplating and thinking about the need for taking refuge, the importance of karma and its effect, and engage in confession and purification practices with four opponent powers. When we engage in these practices, and change our attitude from one of clinging merely to the affairs of this life, to one of thinking about the purpose of our future lives, then we have actually engaged in the practice of Dharma. That is the true meaning of Dharma—when the mind is held fast against strong clinging to non-virtues.

The small scope

Dharma practice at the small scope is replacing the strong clinging to this life with an attitude focussed on the purpose of the next life. As mentioned previously, that involves avoiding the ten non-virtues, adopting the ten virtues, taking refuge, implementing the correct understanding of karma and engaging in purification practices. When the mind is transformed from a state of clinging to this life to one that holds the future life as being more purposeful and more meaningful, then that mind is being held by the Dharma. That is the Dharma practice of the small scope; this is taking the essence of one's precious human rebirth in a small way.

The medium scope

As presented in teachings, when one considers the pitfalls of samsaric or cyclic existence, and, with the aid of the wisdom realising selflessness and so forth, actually develops a strong sense of renunciation, then that will be engaging in the practice of the medium scope, and taking essence of one's precious human life in the medium way.

Here the practice of Dharma means replacing clinging to samsaric pleasures with a genuine longing for liberation, and this transformation comes as a result of the practices of the three higher trainings. That which actually

prevents us from having a true aspiration for liberation is clinging to the pleasures of samsara. For as long as we value the pleasures of samsara and cling to that, then the mind of longing for liberation will never arise. In fact, this clinging is the factor that obstructs the development of a true longing and aspiration for liberation. When one develops disenchantment with the pleasures of samsara, then that will be the antidote that overcomes clinging to samsara, and thus becomes an aid to developing a genuine aspiration for liberation.

The great scope

The supreme way to take the essence of the precious human life is to develop bodhicitta—if not actual bodhicitta right away, then a similitude of it. When that is developed and cultivated within one's mental continuum, and one engages in actions with that bodhicitta attitude, then that is the supreme form of practice. This was, of course, explained in earlier teachings.

The meaning of Dharma in accordance with the great scope practice is, when working for the purpose of merely oneself is replaced with an attitude of wishing to work for the benefit of all beings, when that mind of bodhicitta is generated, then that is the meaning of Dharma in accordance with the great scope.

Dharma in relation to the three scopes

We need to really understand how Dharma is defined in relation to the three levels of practice. The true meaning of Dharma is that it serves as an antidote for overcoming three types of attitudes. The Dharma of the small level serves as an opponent to clinging to merely this life's affairs. The meaning of Dharma at the medium level is when it serves as an opponent to overcome the clinging to the pleasures of samsara. Finally, when Dharma serves as an opponent to overcome the selfish attitude of clinging to merely one's own purpose, and replaces that attitude with one of working for the purpose of other sentient beings, then it becomes the Dharma of the great level.

The main obstacles for developing bodhicitta are these three attitudes of strong clinging to the affairs of this life, strong clinging to the pleasures of samsara, and clinging to merely one's own purpose. These selfish attitudes are definitely obstacles for developing bodhicitta. For as long as one harbours any one of these three attitudes, there is no way that one can develop bodhicitta. We need to consider these points thoroughly. There is nothing that prevents us from developing bodhicitta other than these three attitudes. So the more we develop ourselves and work towards abstaining from these three negative attitudes, and the more we distance ourselves from them, the closer we will get to developing actual bodhicitta. That's how the practice of Dharma works.

We can safely say that some are closer to developing bodhicitta than others. What determines that difference is none other than how closely the mind is related to these three opposing attitudes. The ones who are closest to the three opposing attitudes, holding them dear to their heart, are the ones who are furthest from developing bodhicitta. Those who are distant from these selfish attitudes, who don't hold them dearly in their heart, are

the ones who are closer to developing bodhicitta. No-one else determines that other than oneself. This, of course, is explained in great detail in the *Bodhicharyavatara*. As Shantideva says, 'What need is there to mention more? Look at where the Buddha is now. Look at where we are now!'

Using a more contemporary example, while there might be some in this room who have developed bodhicitta, generally we don't know if that is the case or not. However if we were to consider ourselves as being at the same level of not yet having developed bodhicitta, then who of the seventy-eight individuals in this room will be the first to become bodhisattvas and become enlightened first? The obvious answer is that it will be those who are genuinely striving to work for the benefit of others, thinking of the welfare of others and being more concerned about that than their own mere purpose. Those who are holding their own interest as being of primary importance, and who have minimum concern for the welfare of others, will be further away from developing bodhicitta. That is basically what Shantideva is saying — it is our own way of thinking and our own attitudes that determine whether we will develop bodhicitta and obtain the ultimate state of enlightenment. We need to take that as a personal instruction. In brief, Shantideva is saying 'Be careful or you might miss out'. So, to make sure that you don't, generate the appropriate attitudes and get rid of the opposing attitudes.

Taking the essence of this precious human life at the small scope means overcoming strong clinging to the affairs of this life. That is done by contemplating the purpose of our existence in our next life. The more we think about the importance of working for our future life, the more the strong clinging to this life's affairs will gradually be reduced. That is the way to slowly transform our mind and imbue it with the genuine practice of Dharma. We need to understand that the real meaning of Dharma is not merely counting the number of achievements, like how much one has studied, or the numbers of particular practices, but rather it is to slowly transform our mind.

Finally, what I wish to convey is that you have done very well with your attendance and study this year; you have definitely put an effort into your study. That of course is really fortunate, and I rejoice in that. From my side it has also been fortunate; I have presented the teachings with the best intention and motivation that I can. So I have definitely seen this year as being very fortunate for us all.

The material in Shantideva's text, the *Bodhicharyavatara*, which we have been studying, is quite incredible. It has been praised by all the masters as being a really great and masterly and succinct teaching. From whatever point of view we look at it—sutra or tantra—there is no greater teaching, in terms of personal instructions, than this text. We can contemplate how fortunate we have been in having this opportunity to attempt to explain and study and understand the *Bodhicharyavatara*. So we can dedicate the virtues we have accumulated from all of our efforts in studying and practising this text towards being able to continuously engage in the study, understanding and practice of this text again and again in all future lives, in the company of virtuous Dharma friends like ourselves.

We just might be able to meet with these conditions again in our future lives.

We can be certain that being able to assemble here, and enjoy each others' company, and study and practise in this way, is the positive outcome of previous karmic connections that we have had. We have created an appropriate cause in the past to enjoy our present conditions. That is definitely the case, and that's something we can be definitely be joyful and happy about!

This text, *Bodhicharyavatara*, is the supreme means for understanding bodhicitta, and indeed, it is a manual for actually developing bodhicitta—the mind of awakening. His Holiness the Dalai Lama mentions this again and again. Whilst I cannot claim that I have any experience of the intended result of this text, when a supreme being such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who is endowed with bodhicitta himself, confirms the importance of this text and mentions it again and again, then that helps me to develop a stronger conviction in it as well. So it is on that basis that I can confidently say to you that it is indeed a supreme means to develop bodhicitta.

It is good for each of us, individually, to generate the resolve to take the initiative to develop this altruistic mind, by first working on the seed of bodhicitta, which is a kind mind with a genuine concern for others—in short, developing loving kindness. When we work at developing loving kindness in our heart, being considerate of others as much as we can, and practise that with the intention of developing this altruistic mind of bodhicitta, then our attempts won't be meagre at all. In fact they will be a great practice.

In a practical way, we need to think about how the more we genuinely attempt to adopt virtues and practise kindness, the more happiness we will have in this very life, not to mention it being a cause for happiness in our future lives. So we really need to work on developing kindness, more specifically love and compassion, on a regular basis. We need to understand that love and compassion is the basis on which to develop bodhicitta. Therefore, we need to further cultivate that basis to develop that which is not yet developed. Where kindness and love and compassion have not been generated or developed, we need to work on developing it, and when it has developed, we need to further increase it. This is how we establish a sound basis for enjoying the accrued benefits in future lifetimes.

As I regularly mention, the attitudes of love and compassion are really our best friends. When we have secured them as our best companion then we will not feel too disturbed when we are separated from external friends. Without such an internal friend, being separated from external friends can bring so much suffering. As I have mentioned previously, I have not developed any experience of bodhicitta myself, but just thinking about the necessity of love and compassion, and contemplating on it again and again has really become my best companion, regardless of when I am with others or when I am alone. I can confidently say that I don't experience the suffering of loneliness, or feel a lack of connection with others and so forth. On the contrary, I feel quite joyful and happy even when I am alone in my room.

When I am alone, love and compassion suffice to uplift my mind. As Shantideva and other masters such as Lama Tsong Khapa have so succinctly mentioned, one needs to generate love and compassion, not just in meditation sessions, but also in the post-meditative sessions. We shouldn't restrict the development of love and compassion to some allocated time, but really take it to heart and make it our core practice in whatever we are doing, and wherever we are. That is how we familiarise our mind with these positive attitudes.

When one has developed a strong sense of loving kindness and compassion, then friends and companions will be loving and kind. Conversely, when that loving attitude and love and compassion begin to weaken, then others may seem to have become distant or even appear to be enemies. As we all wish to have good companions and friends, we might as well develop the causes for that.

As mentioned previously, we need to familiarise our mind with loving kindness in our everyday life, again and again. Putting that into practice means beginning with our Dharma brothers and sisters, ensuring that we try to help each other as much as we can, and, at the very least, avoid harming each other. In particular, we need to be very careful that we don't cause harm to other's Dharma practice. As mentioned in several texts, one of the heaviest negative karmas is to harm Dharma practitioners by obstructing their Dharma practices. Thus, we need to ensure that we don't create such negativity by having harmful intentions and hurting others in that way. So we begin our practice with each other—we try to help each other with the genuine attitude of kindness, at the very least ensuring that we don't hurt and harm each other. That is very important to keep in mind.

A very simple reason for not intentionally hurting or harming others is because we do not wish to be hurt or harmed ourselves. If hurting and harming others didn't incur any negative consequences for ourselves, then we might think that there is no reason to avoid doing that. However, since we do not want to experience harm and negative consequences ourselves, it is good to consider not harming or hurting others. A few individuals (not necessarily Dharma practitioners) have confided in me, 'I don't know much about karma, but it does seem that when you are kind to others, something good happens in return, and if I intentionally harm or hurt others, something bad happens to me. That is something I do notice'. These are people who confess that they don't know much about karma. So if people who are not religiously inclined, or who do not consider themselves to be Buddhist, appreciate there is such a thing as the consequences of one's actions, then we Buddhists, who have faith in karma, definitely need to give much more consideration to this point.

As I said earlier, you have all definitely put in a lot of effort this year, by coming to the classes and doing all of the related studies and so forth, and I definitely appreciate it. You have been extremely kind to me and I appreciate your kindness.

Christmas Program

On a another note, you will remember that last week I checked out how many of you are staying behind and

will be in Melbourne for the Lama Tsong Khapa Day puja. So, if you did raise your hands, then please make an effort to come to that puja on the 27th of December. I'll remember who raised their hands! Of course I can't really force you to attend, but if I later hear that you were not here then I might be a little bit disappointed! I might think, 'Oh, those who have not come to the puja may not be so keen about listening to my advice!'

The puja should begin with the recitation of the *Mig-tse-ma Prayer*, (the praise to Lama Tsong Khapa), followed by the guru puja itself. At the end recite the *Prayer for the Flourishing of Lama Tsong Khapa's Doctrine*, concluding with *Mig-tse-ma Prayer* at least eight or nine times. It would be good to begin with a silent meditation, generating your own good motivations. Rather than having someone speaking aloud, which could distract people, just sit quietly in meditation for a while before beginning the puja. Afterwards people can stay behind, have tea and interact with each other. It should be a joyful occasion, so you can announce, 'Geshe-la has said to stay behind and have tea, enjoy the company and have a good time'.

As there is also the tradition of staying up until midnight on New Years Eve, those who are so inclined might come together and do Tara Praises until midnight. You can take breaks for tea and so forth. However if you want to light firecrackers, then it's best to go down to the beach!

You will be aware that there will be a Medicine Buddha practice next Wednesday night, which will also be very beneficial, and another very good occasion for people to come together. I had thought about that anyway, before my change of plans.

Those who have family engagements at Christmas should generate the best motivation and intention, which will contribute to making it a joyful occasion. Some may decide to not engage in social or family gatherings. That's fine too, as long as you also generate love and compassion.

There are only two weeks where there are no sessions. Monday evenings begin on the 6th of January. My intention in having these sessions is so that you are able to maintain some kind of continuity in your practice. You could come and do your own practice if you don't feel like following what is being taught. Two of the Wednesday sessions in January will be Tara practice nights and the other two are Chenrezig meditation practices. These will be led by Allys and Jeremy, so that will also very good.

If those of you who live nearby want to gather for additional meditation sessions, you can take the opportunity to do those sessions here. When we were in St Kilda, there was a lady who would come regularly to the small gumpa that we had then, to do her meditation; she would come from her house, do her meditation and then go to work. So she was using the venue for her personal practice. Practising meditation in this gumpa will definitely make a difference because it is definitely a blessed place. The main thing to keep in mind is that the centre is always open and that there is a place to meditate if you want to come.

There used to be some people who would just come to sit in here for awhile. Apparently just spending a few minutes in this hall gave them a good feeling. So even though they might not have been meditating, just sitting here gave them some solace. I am not sure whether they still come or not.

So again, thank you everyone!

I have had to change my plans—I had no choice but maybe it has turned out for the better. The reason for the change of plans is that the reincarnation of one of my own teachers, Khensur Urygen Tseten, is being enthroned. The late Khensur Rinpoche was one of my main teachers; he really helped me to subdue my mind and I attribute this to his great kindness.

To give an indication of how close my teachers were to me, there was the occasion when I visited Khensur Urygen Tseten and Geshe Ngawang Dhargye in New Zealand. After spending some time there, when it came time for me to leave, Khensur Urygen Tseten and Geshe Ngawang Dhargye both wanted to come to the airport to see me off. I, who have no real qualities, was very moved that such great teachers wanted to see me off. At the airport, as I was waiting to pass through immigration and so forth, we spent the time chatting. As I went in, Khensur Urygen Tseten commented, 'Can't we come in there with you?' When they were told that they were not allowed to do so, Khensur Urygen Tseten commented, 'We will wait until we see your plane take off'. Apparently, as they saw the plane take off he commented, 'One of our friends has now left'. This shows how close we were, and the kindness my teachers showed to me.

Whenever I went to visit Geshe Ngawang Dhargye in Dunedin, he would always be there to greet me when I arrived. If I left early, he would excuse himself from accompanying me, saying, 'I have to finish my prayers'. But whenever I went there, he would always receive me, and his kindness was really remarkable.

Their consideration and care was really remarkable. They were never pompous. They never said, 'Oh I am the teacher', or felt there was no need to relate to their students. They really joined their disciples and showed their care in that way. Maybe some of those caring ways have rubbed off on me, as that is how I try to care for you too.

So as the volunteers bring in the tea, we can recite the Tara Praises. It is good to really make strong prayers to Tara—she is definitely unailing in providing assistance and help. I definitely have strong faith in, and a strong reliance, on Tara. This morning, for example, I did a Tara practice for over two hours, and tomorrow I also intend to do the same. She definitely brings a very swift result.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcribed by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute



*Shantideva's
Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

བྱུང་ཚུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Ven. Michael Lobsang Yeshe

2014 Notes

Tara Institute
3 Mavis Avenue
East Brighton VIC 3187
Tel: (03) 9586 8900

A branch of FPMT, the Foundation
for the Preservation of the
Mahayana Tradition, a network of
Buddhist Centres in Australia and
worldwide.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་ཀྱི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

11 February 2014

As usual we will devote some time to meditation and we can base our motivation on the Refuge and Bodhicitta prayer that we have just recited. [meditation]

Prior to taking up the practice of meditation it is very important that we understand both the conducive and the adverse conditions that affect meditation. Without recognising those two aspects, and making an attempt to overcome the adverse conditions and to adopt the conducive ones, our attempt to meditate will not be very successful. We may seem to achieve a temporary focus but apart from that we won't get much out of our meditation session. For a genuine meditation session, we really need to understand the way the conducive and adverse conditions affect a meditation session.

As mentioned regularly, the main purpose of engaging in the practice of meditation is so that one may be able to subdue one's mind. In order to subdue the mind we need to understand the process of gaining control over our own mind, otherwise we will maintain our habitual pattern of being controlled by our mind, which in turn is controlled by the delusions, and of the various delusions, the main culprit is the strong grasping at the 'I'.

We can assume that whatever activity we engage in is done with the intent of gaining happiness and eliminating suffering. Regardless of whether the activity actually serves that purpose or not, that is the ultimate goal. This is true for whatever activity human beings are engaged in—the pursuit of happiness and the elimination of suffering is always the goal. When we observe the activities of others we may notice that their activity is not serving that purpose. However, we can't tell them that, because everyone has the notion that they are using the correct methods to achieve their goal. Those methods are ingrained, and they believe that they will work for them, and so it is impossible to immediately change their approach, especially when they believe theirs to be the best method. So it is worthwhile for us to simply observe what others are doing and learn from that.

The practice of Dharma and meditation is a unique method for achieving happiness and eliminating suffering. However, we also need to understand that adopting meditation should not be presented to others as being contrary to leading a normal life in a worldly environment. Some may feel that adopting the meditation technique is a religious practice and therefore not related to their everyday life existence and wellbeing. If meditation is presented as having to lead a completely different kind of lifestyle, then it would be very difficult for ordinary people to see how meditation can benefit them. Rather, we need to present the meditation technique as being relevant to leading a happier life in their everyday existence. If one seemingly leads a normal lifestyle outwardly, but experiences a true inner transformation as a result of meditation and the practise of Dharma, then, based on that personal experience, we can share something of great value with others. Others from ordinary walks of life will

feel comfortable in our presence and easily accept what we present. This will be of real benefit to others.

It is by solving our own personal difficulties and problems through the practice of Dharma and meditation, and experiencing an inner transformation, that we will be able to confidently share the Dharma with others. And, as such, what we present will be accepted by others, because no-one can dismiss a personal experience of positive transformation—especially when it relates to overcoming problems and difficulties similar to the ones they are facing themselves. How can others say that meditation has no value when you share with them the fact that it has helped to solve your own difficulties and problems? No-one intentionally wishes to experience any kind of problem or difficulty and everyone appreciates a state of wellbeing. So when a genuine technique is presented from the basis of personal experience, it will readily be accepted by others. That is because they are also striving towards the same goal of happiness and wellbeing and not to experience any difficulties and problems.

The main point is to ensure that your practice hits the target of subduing and controlling your own mind. The great Gyalsey Thokmay Sangpo said in his *Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*:

If you do not analyse your own faults,
You might put on a Dharmic facade while
behaving in a non-Dharmic way.
Therefore, to continually analyse your faults and
then discard them,
Is the practice of a bodhisattva.

The essential point here is that one really needs to detect and acknowledge the faults within one's own mind and then strive to overcome them first. Otherwise, as the great master Gyalsey Thokmay Sangpo mentions, there is a great danger that we will completely mislead others by presenting them with a false appearance. If one does not attend to the real intention of the Dharma, particularly if one engages in actions contrary to the Dharma, then there will be great danger of creating doubt about the value of Dharma in the minds of others. It can cause others to think, 'How could someone behave and conduct themselves in a way that is contrary to what they preach?' If we create the conditions where others doubt the Dharma and generate a negative state of mind it is a grave fault on our part. We should strive for others to generate virtue and not more negativity.

So we need to really pay attention to the main cause of our own faults and mental unrest, which lies within our own mind, and not in external conditions and circumstances. When we are feeling a little down or depressed we may resort to going out with friends and having a good time, which may give some temporary relief. But when the enjoyment of being with others has faded away, the mental unrest and the uncomfortable feelings and negative emotions return. That is because we are not paying attention to applying antidotes to overcoming the root cause of our problems.

Seeking temporary relief each time we feel depressed and unsettled will not help to solve the real problem. Rather, we need to ensure that whatever meditation we do, and whatever Dharma practice we adopt, becomes an antidote for overcoming the real problem that lies within. Each one of us can detect a troubling state of mind, attitude or delusion in our mind that is always there to harm us. So it is

important for us to detect the cause of that, and work at overcoming the main culprit.

Of all the various delusions found in negative states of mind, the ultimate culprit is grasping at the self, an aspect of which is self-cherishing. There is some debate about whether the self-cherishing mind is actually a delusion but, regardless of that, it is quite clear that it harms us and hinders our happiness and joy. Grasping at the 'I' and self-cherishing are mutually supportive, and they work together like master and servant to cause us so much misery and pain.

Grasping at the 'I' is the root cause of all our problems, and when we are able to fully acknowledge that then the strong wish to overcome grasping at the self will develop. So what are the best methods and antidotes to overcome self-grasping? As the teachings present, the ultimate antidote for overcoming grasping at the self is realising emptiness or selflessness. There is no more supreme antidote to grasping at the self than to gain the realisation of emptiness. This is why the view of emptiness is held in such high esteem. It is considered a most precious realisation because it serves as the sole antidote for overcoming the root cause of all our problems, which is grasping at the self.

To see why grasping at the self is the cause for all unwanted misery and suffering we need to understand how it is the root cause of all other delusions and, in particular, the cause for the development of strong attachment and anger. This is not an obscure point. If we really think about it we will notice that this is true for ourselves. From strong clinging to the 'I' there naturally follows attachment to those things and individuals that are favourable to oneself, and aversion or anger towards those who oppose one's own interests. So, there is strong attachment to one's friends, relatives and the like, and anger towards enemies. Due to this strong attachment and aversion we engage in so many different activities that revolve around trying to please those who are close to us, while trying to subjugate those we consider our enemies and who oppose our interests, thus creating much heavy negative karma. In this way we come to understand how self-grasping is the root cause of all our unhappiness.

When we investigate further and look into how we carry these attitudes into our daily life we find that we make most of our decisions based on, whether 'I like this', or 'I don't like that'. Our strongly held opinions are based merely on the fact 'because I like this, I want it' or 'because I don't like it, I don't want it'. So, the driving force behind the decisions we make is mostly because 'I' like or dislike something.

We need to further investigate how that very strong opinionated 'I' appears to us. Through a sincere and thorough investigation we will come to realise that we view this 'I' as being independently existent; a very solid and unshakeable 'I' that does not depend on any other causes and conditions for its existence.

When we further investigate whether such an independent and solid 'I' actually exists or not, we come to realise that in fact such an 'I' does not exist at all. When we come to understand that such an independently existent 'I' does not actually exist, then one has identified the basis of the object of negation. Without abandoning the object of negation we cannot possibly overcome the grasping at the self. Thus, we come to understand the importance of realising selflessness.

When the Buddhist teachings present selflessness, it is not suggesting that the self does not exist at all and that there is no 'I'. Rather, it is a self-sufficient and independent 'I' that does not exist. Our wrong conception makes us believe and hold onto such a non-existent self or 'I'. However, when we

understand that there is no such self-sufficient and independently existing 'I', then we begin to gain the true understanding of selflessness and emptiness. We also begin to understand that we have to realise selflessness or emptiness because we need to overcome that grasping at the self, which is the main cause of our suffering. Furthermore, we begin to see for ourselves why the teachings on emptiness are held in such high esteem, and why it is necessary to gain an understanding of emptiness; to work on developing that realisation.

This also leads to the main point that His Holiness the Dalai Lama presented in his recent teachings in south India, which many of you attended. You might recall that he said that the purpose of this gathering can be summarised into two main points. 'The purpose of gathering here' he said, 'is to find a means to overcome grasping at the self and the self-cherishing mind. So if you can take this essential point with you and work on that, then it serves the purpose of the teachings'. He said that if you take these two points with you and think about them constantly, then coming to teachings will have served its purpose. So, it is good to take that succinct advice to heart and really try to implement it in our daily lives.

If we work on these two essential points, then the more we reduce grasping at the self and the self-cherishing mind, the greater our happiness will naturally be. Conversely, the more we hold on to grasping at the self and maintain a self-cherishing attitude, the more our happiness decreases and our suffering increases. This is very true. To give a small practical example: if, in a mutual relationship, you have to make a decision about something and the other person says, 'Let's do it this way', and you say, 'No, I don't accept that', then from that very moment the situation becomes tense and you both start to feel uncomfortable. The stronger that sense of 'I' or 'me', along with what 'I want' and 'don't want' becomes, the more we feel unsettled and uncomfortable. But if we say, 'OK, I accept and agree with you' then things settle down. There is no conflict and dispute with the other person and naturally the situation is calm. Indeed, the more we increase our genuine kindness and concern for others, the more our happiness will increase. Thus, concern for others and taking their interests into account opposes the self-cherishing mind. The more we rise above the self-cherishing attitude and think about the welfare of others the more our happiness will increase. This is the practical way to think about the benefit of overcoming self-cherishing.

Of all the antidotes for overcoming a self-cherishing mind, the optimum antidote is none other than bodhicitta, the mind of enlightenment, and this is the subject matter of the text we are studying. In this very text *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* or *Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, Shantideva explains what bodhicitta is, how to develop bodhicitta and the benefits of bodhicitta and so forth. It is important that we have a deeper understanding of what we are studying and the purpose of this text from the very outset. Having such an overview and implementing it in our practice is really important for whatever studies we engage in.

Having earlier mentioned the importance of meditation, it is good to also understand how to develop a sound, genuine meditation practice. First of all, the mind has to have a *single-pointed focus* on the object, and secondly, it has to be a *sharp and clear state of mind*. Those are the criteria which need to be met in order to develop concentration.

It is also important to acknowledge the opposing factors to this sharp, clear state of mind that is single-pointedly

focussed. The opposing factors are excitement and laxity. *Excitement* causes the mind to waver and is the main opposing factor to developing single-pointed concentration; whereas *laxity* is the main opposing factor to having a clear and sharp state of mind.

The conducive factors for developing and maintaining concentration are mindfulness and introspection. *Mindfulness* is the state of mind where there is a constant recollection of the chosen object, i.e. constantly bringing to mind whatever meditation object one has chosen to focus on. *Introspection*, on the other hand, is a state of mind that is constantly vigilant of our state of mind and our focus. If the mind starts to waver (either becoming distracted by excitement or when it starts sinking into stupor and laxity), one immediately notices that and applies the antidotes. The state of mind which allows us to do this is called introspection. So mindfulness and introspection are the most important conducive factors.

When one understands that genuine meditation requires a single-pointed focus and a clear and sharp state of mind, then the real meaning of meditation becomes apparent. Meditation entails choosing an appropriate object to focus on and then intentionally withdrawing the mind from all forms of distraction. The meditation begins when we intentionally focus on the object and maintain that focus.

An appropriate object for single-pointed focus is one that does not give rise to delusions. Because we have chosen an appropriate object to focus on, and because the technique of focusing on that object involves withdrawing from engaging in the delusions, we will naturally experience a mind that is genuinely settled. So, during the time of the meditation, at the very least, the manifest delusions will subside, thus creating a virtuous state of mind. By acquainting our mind with this technique the delusions will begin to have less influence on our mind.

As Lama Tsong Khapa said, when one notices that the delusions have become weaker, then that is the true mark of one's practice of the Dharma. Furthermore, when this is complemented with a stronger faith in the gurus, the buddhas and in the Dharma itself, that is a true sign of the fact that meditation and Dharma practice have worked for us. If, despite our attempts to practise, we find that the delusions are not weakening and remain the same or worse, becoming even stronger, then we need to acknowledge that something is not right and that we are not hitting the mark with our practice. Perhaps it's because we are not making sufficient effort or that we are not adopting the correct methods.

If one's meditation practice serves as an antidote that weakens the delusions, then it has served its purpose and one's practice has born fruit. However if our delusions start to increase then this is a sign that we have to be very cautious about how we are adopting the practice and the effects it has on our mind. An example of how one's practice does not serve the purpose of overcoming the delusions and, in fact, actually feeds one's delusions to a certain extent is starting to feel proud about one's practice of meditation and so forth. Such a sense of pride can manifest in feeling jealous of those who are practising. That is a sign that one's practices have completely missed the mark, and that the delusions are increasing rather than decreasing. If one's attempts to practice have been genuinely applied, then far from feeling pompous and proud and thinking one is doing better than others, or looking down on others, or even feeling competitive or jealous of those who are practising,

one will feel very joyful and happy when one sees others engaging in practice. One might then rejoice in one's own attempts to practice, feeling 'I am very fortunate to have this opportunity to practise myself, and it's really great to see others engaging in practice too.' Wishing others well in their practice and encouraging them is a true mark of one's practice having a positive effect.

We also need to keep in mind how incredibly fortunate we are to have this opportunity to engage in these studies and practices. Most of you are still young and have the opportunity with all the right conditions intact, with the Dharma being available, and teachers presenting it. With all of these conditions intact, we need to really reflect upon having this great opportunity now, and understand how we really need to utilise and not waste this opportunity. We really need to cherish these ongoing opportunities to engage in study and practices, and remind ourselves again and again that the purpose of practising is to overcome the self-grasping and self-cherishing mind within us. That, in summary, is the purpose we need to always bear in mind.

We are up to the third and final part of Chapter 3, which is:

3.1. Rejoicing

Here the headings are:

3.1.1. Achieving one's own purpose

3.1.2. Achieving the purpose of others

3.1.1. Achieving one's own purpose

This is subdivided into three:

3.1.1.1. Rejoicing by eulogising the mind

3.1.1.2. Meditating on conscientiousness after having found such a mind

3.1.1.3. Generating joy because of having found a mind that is difficult to find

Having covered the first of these three we move on to:

3.1.1.2. MEDITATING ON CONSCIENTIOUSNESS AFTER HAVING FOUND SUCH A MIND

This refers to making use of this rare mind that is difficult to find, and applying conscientiousness to this mind.

The root text reads:

27. *From now on I shall as much as possible
Engage in actions befitting this lineage.
I shall act in a way so as not to sully
This faultless and holy lineage*

Gyalsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

If one thinks whether this alone is enough:

From now on I shall engage in actions of the three doors that befit the lineage of the father Buddha

I shall strive in the method in a way that does not sully this holy lineage, which is adorned only by qualities and is faultless in the beginning, middle and end, with the faults and downfalls of the wishing and engaging advice.

Having warned the reader, *lest one thinks whether having found this mind is enough* by itself, the commentary goes on to explain what needs to be done *from now on*, which is *I shall engage in actions of the three doors that befit the family lineage of the father Buddha*. As explained previously, the Buddha is like a father and, because bodhisattvas aspire to develop the enlightened mind, they are like his children. A prince who carries the lineage of the king has the responsibility of upholding that lineage in a manner that befits that lineage and without damaging it. Likewise, those who have now become the children of the Buddha need to engage in a manner that befits that lineage of the Buddha. That is the

point being made here. The commentary then explains that the commitment is to *strive in the method in a way that does not sully this holy lineage of the Buddha, which is adorned only by qualities and is faultless in the beginning, middle and end*. One would sully the holy lineage by engaging in *the faults and downfalls of the wishing and engaging advice* or instructions.

Generating the aspiring wish to achieve enlightenment entails recalling that wish three times during the day and three times during the night, refraining from engaging in the four black dharmas, and adopting the four white dharmas. Engaging bodhisattva vows has eighteen root downfalls and forty-six auxiliary or secondary downfalls. So the commentary is urging us to refrain from committing these faults and downfalls, and if one finds oneself doing so, to immediately engage in purification practices.

Having taken the engaging bodhisattva vows, one adopts the practices of the six perfections such as generosity and morality and so forth. Not sullyng the practice of generosity, for example, would be to ensure that whatever one intends to give is given without any sense of miserliness, or pride, or other ulterior motives. In other words, in order to ensure that the lineage is not sullied, one needs to ensure that one counteracts the adverse conditions for the practices of generosity and so forth. There is a Tibetan word used here, *tsunpa*, which has the connotation of being ethical. However, the main point is to ensure we are free from strong delusions whilst engaging in the practice.

Recalling the meaning of this verse on a regular basis would be a good practice in itself. It will be a personal pledge that, in itself, is very powerful as it reinforces one's dedication to developing the bodhicitta mind.

3.1.1.3. GENERATING JOY BECAUSE OF HAVING FOUND A MIND THAT IS DIFFICULT TO FIND

Here we are being exhorted to really generate that sense of *joy of having found a mind that is difficult to find*, which is, of course, the actual awakening mind or bodhicitta. We can definitely generate a sense of joy about having that aspiration. We can, at the very least, safely assume that we have some sort of contrived bodhicitta attitude within our mind. The analogy in the teachings for contrived bodhicitta is that it is like the bark of sugar cane; while the bark doesn't contain the full sweetness of the actual sugarcane it does have some level of sweetness. Likewise, while we have not yet developed actual bodhicitta we can still generate a similitude of the bodhicitta attitude.

As I regularly suggest, we can, at the very least, generate on a daily basis this thought: I will not engage in any action that harms any living being and I will try my utmost to engage in as many ways as I can to benefit other sentient beings. We can definitely manage to generate that thought which, in itself, is a very precious state of mind. However, that thought is not generated naturally or spontaneously, so we need to put some time and energy into generating it. When we do generate that thought, even just for a moment, it is a very precious state of mind. So, if on a regular basis we could work on developing the mind, 'I will not harm any sentient being and I will do my most to benefit sentient beings', it will be a mind that we can cherish and we can feel great joy about having generated that intention.

The root verse is:

28. *Just like a blind person finding a jewel
In a heap of rubbish,
I generated this mind of enlightenment
Just by coincidence.*

As the commentary explains:

This mind of enlightenment was born within me by pure chance, just like a poor and destitute blind person finding a jewel on a heap of rubbish by sheer coincidence. It must definitely be through the force of the buddhas.

In the Tibetan text the commentary begins with the analogy of *a poor and destitute blind person finding a jewel on a heap of rubbish by sheer coincidence*. Not only is this person destitute, but they are blind, which makes it even much more unlikely that they might actually find a jewel. And of course in a place of great poverty, finding jewels lying around is quite unlikely. If a person who is destitute and blind finds a jewel in a heap of rubbish, then how much joy would that person feel? They would feel incredible joy at the extraordinary fortune and coincidence of finding this jewel.

The generation of this mind of enlightenment is similar. An ordinary being can be likened to a blind person in that we don't have the wisdom realising emptiness. The heap of rubbish is analogous to the delusions that infest our mind. Yet despite being riddled with delusions and blinded by ignorance we have encountered this precious mind, the awakening mind of bodhicitta. This is like the sheer coincidence of a blind person finding a jewel in a heap of rubbish. This has *definitely occurred through the force of the buddhas*, which means that due to the buddhas' blessings we have had the great fortune to have had this opportunity to generate this mind. Thus we are exhorted to develop a sense of great joy in having had this opportunity to develop this mind.

One of the main points we need to consider here is that while bodhicitta is indeed a difficult mind to find, it would be a complete mistake to put it aside thinking, 'Oh, it's too difficult to generate' and not make any effort at all. Even though it is a difficult mind to generate, it is definitely possible, and because of that possibility we need to strive towards developing it. If it was not possible to be generated then we might as well cast it aside as being a waste of our time, but that is not the case. This is the main point that we need to bear in mind.

The new program for our study group evenings will be eight teaching sessions followed by a discussion and then an exam. Maybe Ven. Lhamo could keep track of the number of sessions because in my old age I may start to forget!

There is mutual benefit in combining the wisdom of the elderly and the energy and clear mind of the young. The elders definitely have a wisdom that arises from whatever experiences they have had, whilst the younger generation have not had the experiences to generate that wisdom. So the elders can share their combined wisdom and experience. The younger generation have a full life energy force and a clearer, fresher mind, so they are less likely to be forgetful. So the combination of youth and age can be mutually beneficial. I think this is usually the way it works.

Transcribed by Bernii Wright

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

18 February 2014

Based on the refuge and bodhicitta prayer and motivation that we have generated, we can now engage in meditation.

The most important thing is to visualise sentient beings who are deprived of happiness and genuinely and sincerely wish them happiness and goodness. Focus on beings who are experiencing tremendous suffering, and develop a very strong intention to free them from that suffering; to do one's utmost to make it happen, for them to be free from suffering. So with that intention in one's heart, engaging in the practice becomes more meaningful. Without visualising sentient beings deprived of happiness and experiencing suffering, and wishing them to be free from suffering, then one's meditation practice is on the surface with no real substance. [*meditation*]

So we'll now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings, to lead them to ultimate happiness and free them from all sufferings, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. For this purpose I will engage in listening to the teachings and put them into practice well.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1. Rejoicing (cont.)

Having completed the topic Achieving One's Own Purpose we now turn to the second part of this section of the text.

3.1.2. Achieving the purpose of others

Achieving the purpose of others is based on aspiring to develop the mind of enlightenment, the bodhicitta attitude. What is being encouraged here is to develop that mind so that one will be able to benefit others. Benefiting others is really the ultimate point of why we are striving to develop this state of mind that aspires to achieve enlightenment. So, the main point is to familiarise one's mind again and again with the intention to benefit others. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama mentions regularly, at our beginners' level, whilst we might not have developed actual bodhicitta yet, we can definitely generate the intentions 'I will not harm any living being' and 'I will engage in benefitting others as much as I can'. His Holiness says that even generating this state of mind at a beginners level can serve as a substitute for bodhicitta. Thus, focusing on this intention regularly and establishing it firmly in our minds is highly meaningful.

When we intentionally devote ourselves to cultivating this state of mind and further strengthen it, then as it becomes firmly established the result is that our mind naturally becomes happier and more joyful. Through this familiarity one is in fact establishing all the right

conditions to develop actual bodhicitta, whereby the joy and happiness in our minds will increase unceasingly.

Indeed, developing this intention directly opposes the self-cherishing mind; an attitude that is completely obsessed with one's own self interests and which has a strong focus merely on 'I' or 'me'. As this positive state of mind that intends to benefit others opposes the self-cherishing attitude, it also serves as an antidote for overcoming the manifest levels of grasping at the self. Whilst it is not an actual antidote for abandoning the grasping at the self at its very root, it does serve as a means to minimise an otherwise strong sense of grasping at the self. For as long as one maintains a firm intention to benefit others and not to intentionally harm them in any way, there is no room for anger to arise, no room for jealousy to arise and no room for the strong sense of 'I' or 'me', that which focuses merely on one's own personal interests, to arise. Thus, whilst directly opposing the self-cherishing mind, it can also loosen the strong hold of the self-grasping mind.

If we were to sincerely investigate, we will come to notice that on a daily basis most of our thoughts, ideas and attitudes are driven by a strong grasping to the 'I'. An exception may be when we are sleeping, but in the waking period during most of our activities, if we were to ask ourselves, 'What is the driving force behind my actions?' we will find that it is mostly driven by self-interests which are related to a strong sense of grasping to the 'I'. As such, familiarising ourselves with a state of mind that opposes such a strong focus on the 'I' becomes a very high level practice. We need to adopt practical ways to cultivate the means to help overcome our chronic obsession with the self-cherishing mind.

Generating a positive attitude in one's mind and trying to maintain it becomes an optimum meditation practice in itself. As one becomes familiar with this positive attitude and maintains it, the mind naturally settles down to a clear and calm state. It is also an optimum Dharma practice because one is actively following the core advice of the Buddha: not to harm any living being and only benefiting sentient beings. This is really the ultimate intention and advice of all buddhas and bodhisattvas. Buddha Shakyamuni clearly mentions in the sutras: 'if you harm sentient beings you are harming me; if you benefit sentient beings you are benefiting me'. Notice the Buddha doesn't say, 'if you harm me then that is negative'. Rather, he says: 'If you don't wish to harm me stop harming sentient beings. If you wish to benefit me then benefit sentient beings'. So this shows the unequalled love and compassion that Buddha has for all sentient beings. Intentionally generating this state of mind and focusing on it becomes an optimum means to benefit oneself in this and future lives. In relation to both short-term and long-term benefit, it is really the optimum practice because it serves the purpose of fulfilling the wishes of all sentient beings. We can all relate to the fact that every single sentient being only wishes for happiness and does not intentionally wish to experience any suffering. So, when we actually generate a state of mind that wishes all sentient beings to experience happiness and further engage in ways to benefit them, whilst wishing all beings to be free from suffering and actively

refrain from harming them, then one is actually fulfilling the needs and wishes of *all* sentient beings. One is not leaving any sentient being out, because every sentient being ultimately has this same wish. Thus, the practical approach to understanding the great benefit of generating this state of mind is to remember that you are ultimately fulfilling the wishes of all sentient beings.

By understanding this we can relate to how the bodhisattvas are always engaged in fulfilling two purposes: their own purpose, which ultimately is to fulfil the purpose of benefiting other sentient beings. Thus cultivating this state of mind benefits oneself by calming one's own mind. While I cannot personally claim that I have much experience, I do spend significant time generating this state of mind. I find that it really helps to settle and quieten the mind and make it more receptive to being virtuous. To that extent it becomes a very practical means to induce a positive and pure state of mind. If one makes a genuine attempt, one will definitely see the practical benefit on one's own mind. Thus, I encourage you and remind you again and again of the practical benefits that such a state of mind brings.

This outline, *Achieving the Purpose of Others* is subdivided into three categories.

3.1.2.1. It can eliminate the sufferings of sentient beings

This points out again that serving the purpose of others requires eliminating their sufferings and very succinctly shows how this is done.

3.1.2.2. It can eliminate its cause (its obscurations)

Again, not only does this mind eliminate the suffering of sentient beings but also the very causes which are the obscurations. Even though it is not explicitly presented here, we can relate this to the Four Noble Truths, particularly the first Noble Truth of suffering, and the second Noble Truth, which is the origination of suffering. If you can relate generating the bodhicitta attitude to the Two Truths it helps to eliminate suffering of sentient beings as well as the cause, the origination of suffering.

The obscurations here relate specifically to the deluded obscurations and the obscurations to omniscience, which encompass the origin of suffering. We derive a deeper understanding when we relate it to the Four Noble Truths.

3.1.2.3. It can achieve all benefit and happiness

Take special note that this relates to not only being able to achieve some minor level of happiness, but all benefit and happiness. So this is the extent to which the bodhicitta mind can benefit.

3.1.2.1. It can eliminate the sufferings of sentient beings

This is further divided into five sub-categories:

3.1.2.1.1. It can destroy the lord of death

3.1.2.1.2. It destroys poverty

3.1.2.1.3. It destroys sickness

3.1.2.1.4. It destroys the suffering of existence in general

3.1.2.1.5. It destroys specifically the sufferings of the lower realms

3.1.2.1.1. It can destroy the lord of death

Amongst the various sufferings we experience e.g. suffering of birth, sickness etc. this heading relates particularly to the suffering of death.

The first two lines of the verse relating to this point are:

*29ab. It is also the supreme nectar
Destroying migrator's lord of death.*

The commentary explains:

This bodhicitta is also the supreme nectar that destroys the lord of death through whom migrators die without freedom of choice.

Dying without freedom means that sentient beings have no choice over their mortality and have to experience death. That is the meaning of dying without freedom.

Bodhicitta serving as *the supreme nectar that destroys the lord of death* indicates that while there are other kinds of nectars, like those produced through the achievements of humans and gods, bodhicitta is the most supreme, as it is the one able to destroy the very lord of death. Thus, bodhicitta is likened to nectar of immortality. The *Prayer to Maitreya* reads:

Bodhicitta bars the way to unfortunate destinies;
It is the great teaching that leads to the highest realms;
And even to the state beyond old age and death.
To the mind of enlightenment, bodhicitta, I prostrate.

We can relate here to how bodhicitta is the supreme method for overcoming the lower rebirths, the supreme means for achieving the higher realms, and the supreme means to overcome aging and death.

In praise of bodhicitta, His Holiness the Dalai Lama quoted this very verse in the teachings in Sydney last year. This verse definitely summarises the qualities of bodhicitta. This is exactly how it is presented in the text here — developing bodhicitta becomes the means to overcome all unfortunate rebirths, leads one to the higher realms and to the state of being free from aging and death. Here the ultimate state of immortality is liberation, and the ultimate liberation is enlightenment. While it is possible to obtain the self-liberation of the lower vehicles without developing bodhicitta, i.e. the hearers and solitary realiser's state of liberation, there is no way that one can achieve enlightenment without first developing bodhicitta. Bodhicitta is the optimum cause for achieving enlightenment, and by relating to the benefits of developing it and maintaining it in one's continuum, a strong sense of awe can be generated in one's mind. Thus, one contemplates how wonderful bodhicitta is and the extensive benefits it brings. By developing bodhicitta one is able to achieve the most incredibly profound goal. Thus, by relating to the benefits of bodhicitta in this way, one will develop a great sense of awe, and a real inspiration that will leave the strong positive imprints to develop bodhicitta in one's mind. One will be inclined to develop bodhicitta oneself, because one sees the great value in it.

One needs to understand the explanation here in its proper context. When it says it can *destroy the lord of death* it is not referring to obtaining a miraculous feat, such as going around destroying suffering in other beings and freeing them from death without them having to create

any causes and conditions; this is definitely not what is being implied here.

Developing bodhicitta will definitely have a great positive effect upon others. As the great Khunu Lama Rinpoche mentions¹:

The sheer fact of having bodhicitta within one's own mental continuum,
Naturally brings great solace to others
Even animals feel a great sense of comfort and fearlessness,
Not to mention humans and other beings alike.

So, developing bodhicitta oneself, even without any intentional activity on one's part, can bring so much comfort and ease to those around oneself.

However, the actual way that it eliminates sufferings and destroys the lord of death is by imparting the methods and teachings to others, particularly the teachings on what to adopt and what to discard. By presenting beings with the unmistakable teachings of how to accumulate virtue and abandon negativities, and when they adopt those teachings and practices, they will overcome their own sufferings and the causes of sufferings, ageing and death. Imparting advice to others needs to be in accordance with understanding their mental disposition and with a loving and kind attitude. Thus, presenting the unmistakable teachings to others with love and compassion is dependent on having developed bodhicitta oneself first. So this is how developing bodhicitta oneself actually helps to eliminate sufferings and death in other sentient beings. This is the proper way to understand this point.

As mentioned in the commentary, the way bodhicitta destroys the lord of death is by leading sentient beings to the ground which is free from old age and death.

3.1.2.1.2. *It destroys poverty*

The indication here is that bodhicitta becomes a cause to overcome or destroy poverty. The next two lines of the verse read:

*29cd. It is also the inexhaustible treasure
That eliminates sentient being's poverty.*

The commentary meaning is that

Because it gives inexhaustible material and Dharma, this mind generation is an inexhaustible treasure that eliminates the poverty of migrators.

Actually the meaning of the verse and explanation is quite clear. Generating bodhicitta also becomes the ultimate means for achieving the state where one has complete control over material gain as well as Dharma. When a bodhisattva reaches the eighth ground they obtain complete control over material wealth and knowledge of Dharma, and thus it becomes inexhaustible. It is like having an *inexhaustible treasure* house that can *eliminate the poverty of migrators*.

So this is how bodhisattvas benefit sentient beings. Initially, through their acts of generosity and kindness to others, they gather sentient beings close and then they impart their knowledge of the Dharma.

Other benefits touching on the same point are presented by Khunu Lama Rinpoche as:

The nectar of the mind is bodhicitta,
The jewel of the mind is bodhicitta,
The moon of the mind is bodhicitta
The sun of the mind is bodhicitta.

We can see that the way Khunu Lama Rinpoche presents the benefits of the bodhicitta from his own experience is aligned to how Shantideva presents the same meaning of the benefits of bodhicitta. Through his work from his own experience, we can definitely see that Khunu Lama Rinpoche was definitely a great practitioner of bodhicitta. Khunu Lama Rinpoche also said:

Bodhicitta is the optimum way to benefit others,
Bodhicitta is the optimum means for guiding others,
Bodhicitta is the optimum means to teach others.

It is presented in poetic form with very succinct meaning regarding the benefits of bodhicitta. Furthermore, he mentions:

If one wishes to benefit other sentient beings, that is done through bodhicitta;
If one wishes to be the friend of others, then the best way to do that is through developing bodhicitta.
Being a source of reliance, then that is achieved through bodhicitta.

Khunu Lama Rinpoche also mentions that if one wishes to be a virtuous teacher to others, then the optimum way is by generating bodhicitta. This is in line with what Lama Tsong Khapa mentions—without generating the wish for others to be free from suffering and for others to obtain happiness there is no way that one can really benefit others. So, the wish to benefit others is based upon wishing others to be free from suffering and to gain happiness.

3.1.2.1.3. *It destroys sickness*

The verse which relates to this is the next two lines:

*30ab. It is also the supreme medicine
Pacifying migrators' heavy diseases.*

The commentary reads:

It is also the supreme medicine that thoroughly pacifies all diseases of migrators.

The meaning of the verse is very clear here. The commentary explains *bodhicitta is the supreme medicine that thoroughly pacifies the disease of migrators*. The meaning here is linked to the earlier explanation, that the way it pacifies the diseases of other migrators is by presenting them with teachings of what to adopt and what to discard, to achieve the state of being free from disease.

As explained in the teachings, the ultimate source of migrators' sickness and disease is basically the three poisons: attachment, anger and ignorance. These really serve as the basis for all kinds of diseases and all sufferings. So the way bodhisattvas benefit beings to eliminate their sicknesses is by presenting antidotes to the three poisons. To overcome attachment, meditate on the unattractive features of the object of attachment. To overcome anger, meditate on love. To overcome ignorance, meditate on interdependent origination and emptiness. Presenting specific antidotes overcomes specific delusions, which are the very causes of all sufferings and diseases. Meditating on them and applying the antidote becomes the means to overcome the particular diseases of attachment, anger and

¹ Khunu Lama Rinpoche, *Vast as the Heavens, Deep as the Sea*.
Chapter 3

ignorance, thus overcoming all sickness. This is how bodhicitta becomes the means to eliminate the sicknesses of other beings.

3.1.2.1.4. *It destroys the suffering of existence in general*

The verse which relates to this is the next two lines:

*30cd. It is the fruit tree that is a resting place for
migrators,
Who wander the paths of existence and are
tired.*

The commentary reads:

It is also the fruit tree that provides a cool resting place for the migrators who are wandering on the paths of existence and are tired.

The analogy presented in the commentary is that like a tree that provides a cool resting place, those who need that rest are *migrators*, endlessly wandering on the path of existence and extremely tired. The teachings refer to the three types of existence: birth, death and the intermediate state. So, endlessly cycling through the three types of existence, migrating from one existence to the next, beings are extremely tired. Just as a large fruit tree would provide a cool resting place for those travelling in the heat and sun, bodhicitta is the optimum means for providing that ultimate rest for beings who are wandering in cyclic existence. Some texts would relate this explanation to the path of the medium scope, so bodhisattvas would show the path of the medium scope to those who are trainees in the medium scope, particularly solitary realisers and hearers. General existence is explained here and it means destroying the sufferings of the existence in general by leading to the optimum state of liberation.

The main point is that bodhicitta serves as a means for beings who are wandering on the path of cyclic existence to obtain that ultimate rest of achieving liberation, being free from all samsaric existence.

3.1.2.1.5. *It destroys specifically the sufferings of the lower realms*

The verse which relates to this is the next two lines:

*31ab. It is the universal bridge that liberates
All migrators from the lower realms.*

The commentary explains that

Generating the mind of bodhicitta is also the universal bridge that liberates all migrators from the lower realms.

The analogy of the universal bridge indicates presenting teachings on adopting the ten virtues. Beings then follow this advice, adopting the ten virtues as the means to free themselves from the lower realms or to be reborn again in the lower realms. So this is how to understand how the bodhicitta attitude becomes the supreme means to present the teachings in accordance to beings' capacity and mental disposition; to present unmistakable methods and ways to be free from various types of sufferings, particularly the lower realms. It shows that when bodhicitta has been developed, it spontaneously helps sentient beings without much effort from one's own side. Also, it establishes a very suitable foundation for those who listen to the advice and teachings to naturally be able to adopt that advice and benefit from it. So this again

shows the way by which bodhicitta becomes the supreme means to benefit others.

In summary, the main points that have been presented here are how bodhicitta serves as an optimum means to overcome the various levels of sentient beings' sufferings; that it destroys the sufferings of existence in general and particularly helps to destroy the sufferings of the lower realms. This is done by benefiting others. The first step of benefiting others is when bodhisattvas lead sentient beings to the state of liberation from the sufferings of cyclic existence in general. The next step of benefiting sentient beings is when bodhisattvas lead them to the higher status, free of the suffering of the lower realms.

Other commentaries explain the analogy of bodhicitta serving as a universal bridge. The connotation is from a Tibetan word for an actual bridge or platform from which you cannot go back. Providing this platform reverses beings from the lower realms and establishes them in higher rebirths to serve as the means to obtain the highest goal of liberation and enlightenment. This becomes the very basis for beings to further develop the causes which liberate them from samsara and the ultimate liberation of enlightenment.

3.1.2.2. IT CAN ELIMINATE ITS CAUSE

Cause refers specifically to the causes of a suffering existence (samsara) and a rebirth in a lower realm. The two main causes are explained in the subdivisions of this outline:

3.1.2.2.1. Eliminating afflictive obscurations

3.1.2.2.2. Eliminating the obscurations to knowledge

3.1.2.2.1. *Eliminating afflictive obscurations*

The verse which relates to this is the next two lines:

*31cd. It is the moon shining in the mind
That eliminates migrator's misery of the
afflictions.*

The commentary reads:

This mind generation is also the shining moon that eliminates the heat and misery of the afflictions of migrators. That is, it has the power to eliminate all afflictive obscurations.

As mentioned previously, Khunu Lama Rinpoche's verse indicated that bodhicitta is the moon of the mind and the sun of the mind. This explanation also relates to moonlight or the cooling light of the moon.

The commentary explains that this mind generation is like *the shining moon, eliminating the heat and misery of migrators' afflictions*. This is because *it has power to eliminate afflictive obscurations*. Using this analogy, moonlight has a cooling effect which eliminates the suffering of the heat felt during the day when it is very hot. As soon as the sun sets and the moon rises, the moon's cooling light eliminates the suffering of extreme heat. Likewise here, the heat is an analogy for the actual misery (or afflictions) of the migrators, all their sufferings. The analogy explains that bodhicitta is that which eliminates all the afflictive obscurations of sentient beings. The main afflictive obscuration is grasping at the self and the delusions in general, but particularly grasping to the self. When bodhicitta has the power to eliminate this, there is no way for sufferings to be

experienced, because when the cause of suffering is completely eliminated from the mind there is no way to experience the result, which is suffering. This is how bodhicitta serves to bring this about.

It is good to note here the descriptions of specific symbols, such as the moon, sun and lotus. For example, whenever images of deities or buddhas are presented on the moon, the symbolism of the moon represents bodhicitta. The symbol of the sun represents wisdom realising emptiness. Enlightened beings seated upon a lotus, sun and moon disc actually represent the significance of developing bodhicitta and the wisdom realising emptiness so the individual beings obtain the ultimate state of enlightenment and become a Buddha, an enlightened being.

3.1.2.2.2. *Eliminating the obscurations to knowledge*

The verse which relates to this is the next two lines:

32. *It is the great sun that dispels
The vitreous humour of not knowing.*

The commentary reads:

It is also the great sun that dispels from the root the non-afflictive not knowing of migrators, the cataract-like obscurations to knowledge. The reason for this is that the wisdom realising emptiness is adorned with great accumulations that exhaust the seed of the obscuration to knowledge.

As explained in the commentary, *it is also the great sun that dispels from the root the non-afflictive not knowing of the migrators, the cataract-like obscurations to knowledge*. Firstly, *the non-afflictive not knowing of migrators* refers to the obscurations to knowledge (which as the analogy refers to here, are like cataracts that causes the eyes not to see clearly). What obscures one from seeing ultimate reality directly is the mistaken appearance that obscures one from clearly seeing both truths simultaneously. For as long as one has obscurations to knowledge, one will not be able to see the Two Truths simultaneously, and one's current mistaken view serves like a veil to have mistaken appearance. Because bodhicitta serves as a means to overcome this obscuration to knowledge and remove the veil of mistaken appearance, it is like the great sun.

To further explain this analogy, the sun becomes the means to eliminate darkness because as soon as it rises darkness is completely eliminated. In a similar way, bodhicitta removes the cataract-like obscurations to knowledge completely. The commentary explains that *the reason for this is that the wisdom realising emptiness is adorned with great accumulation, and this exhausts the seed of the obscurations to knowledge*. Bodhicitta serves as the means for obtaining a great accumulation of merit. The merit based on love and compassion is generated when engaging in the practice of the six perfections; also extensive practice of generosity. All can be accomplished through the power of bodhicitta.

Furthermore, extensive practices of morality are accomplished through bodhicitta, also patience and joyous effort and meditation and finally, the wisdom realising emptiness. When the wisdom realising emptiness is complemented with bodhicitta, it becomes the optimum means to accumulate extensive merit and completely exhausts the seeds of the obscurations to

knowledge, by completely eliminating it from the mind stream.

It has now been explained that developing bodhicitta is the ultimate means for overcoming all faults and obscurations and acquiring all qualities to achieve the ultimate state of enlightenment. It shows how bodhicitta serves as a means, and from the moment it is developed along the path, it achieves all the realisations and leads to the ultimate state of omniscience. This is all based on having developed bodhicitta; it becomes the very root and cause.

We'll conclude for the evening by reciting the prayer *The Eight Verses of Training the Mind* and dedicate it to the late Norman Henderson who, while he might not have been a member of Tara Institute, was definitely a very diligent student, coming here regularly. I have known him from when I was at Chenrezig Institute in Queensland. He used to come when I was up there, so I remember him and have known him for a long time; he is like an old friend. As he passed away recently, we'll dedicate the merit of the recitation of the prayer to him and also to Liam's grandfather who passed away recently.

I had already explained the visualisation that we can adopt for this practice, so I don't need to do that again. So, we try to do that visualisation as we recite the prayer.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcribed by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

25 February 2014

The *Refuge and Bodhicitta* prayer that we have just recited should suffice to generate the proper motivation for our meditation practice.

Indeed the *Refuge and Bodhicitta* prayer is the most profound prayer that we say. If, while reciting the profound words through our mouth, we can also adopt the respectful physical gesture of prostration, and mentally go for refuge and generate the bodhicitta attitude then, within just a few minutes, we will definitely collect extensive merit. There is no doubt about that at all.

What needs to be purified are negativities, which we definitely have. But we also have the means to purify those negativities. And as explained previously, the optimum method to purify negativities is to rely on the objects of refuge and generate bodhicitta. We need to keep this point in mind.

If, after going for refuge wholeheartedly as we recite the prayer, we can visualise the objects of refuge merging into ourselves and thus blessing our mental continuum, our minds will definitely settle down. There is no question that any disturbing thoughts will definitely be appeased by taking refuge in this way.

Bearing that in mind we will now engage in the meditation practice for a few minutes. [*meditation*]

Now we generate the motivation to receive the teachings, by developing this strong intention:

In order to free all sentient beings from suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself, so for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

During the *tong len* practice that we engaged in earlier, our intention was to take upon ourselves all the sufferings of all sentient beings, as well as the causes of that suffering and the very imprints giving rise to those causes, whilst in return giving them our happiness and virtues. With that intention in mind, we generate the motivation for the teaching, to reaffirm that having taken on the sufferings of sentient beings we generate the intention to lead them to the ultimate state of happiness i.e. enlightenment. The motivation 'I need to engage in the practice of listening to the teaching' complements the *tong len* practice that we have just done.

Indeed, engaging in any activity with that motivation in mind will ensure that one's life becomes most meaningful.

3.1.2. Achieving the purpose of others

3.1.2.2. IT CAN ELIMINATE ITS CAUSE

3.1.2.2.2. Eliminating the obscurations to knowledge (cont.)

The relevant verse reads:

32ab. *It is the great sun that dispels
The vitreous humour of not knowing.*

We concluded the teaching last week with these lines, which indicate how bodhicitta serves as a means to remove the obscurations to knowledge, even the very subtle imprints in our mind that are the root of non-afflictive not knowing. This shows that it is our own responsibility to eliminate those imprints by applying the antidote to the obscurations to knowledge. We need to realise that we cannot expect others to remove our obscurations and that we need to take the initiative to do so ourselves. This is what we need to derive as a personal instruction.

3.1.2.3. IT CAN ACHIEVE ALL BENEFIT AND HAPPINESS

This is subdivided into two:

3.1.2.3.1. Achieving all benefit

3.1.2.3.2. Achieving every happiness

3.1.2.3.1. Achieving all benefit

This heading relates to achieving the ability to benefit all other sentient beings, and the lines that relate to this heading are:

32cd. *It is the essence of butter
That is derived from the milk of Dharma.*

We need to see the connection between what is presented here and what we are attempting to do in our own practice. Our earlier meditation was based on wishing to bring about benefit and happiness for all sentient beings and eliminate all their suffering. *Achieving all benefit* through developing bodhicitta relates to the same intention, and it is good to remember this point.

As you know, one of the methods for developing bodhicitta is the technique of exchanging self with others. In order to engage in that practice one needs to train the mind to the point where we have no hesitation in exchanging self-interest with the interests of other sentient beings. Thus the *tong len* practice of giving and taking serves as a basis for training the mind in exchanging self with others. When we actually attain that state of being able to exchange self with others and then develop bodhicitta, we will experience tremendous joy. That is because we will have achieved what we are striving to achieve, which is a state of mind that works for the welfare of other sentient beings. That naturally brings us great happiness and joy.

We need to understand how all of these practices - beginning with the meagre attempts of training our mind now - lead to the higher state of actually developing this incredibly precious state of mind called bodhicitta. We need to see the connection between what we are attempting to do now and the ultimate result we intend to achieve.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of this verse quite succinctly:

This mind generation is the butter essence arising from churning the great ocean of milk that is the holy Dharma, with the churning wood of wisdom arising from listening and contemplating.

It is the essence of butter that can generate the taste of achieving each and every benefit, and therefore everybody should strive in it.

Here, the teachings or the doctrine of the Buddha are likened to a great ocean of milk. Butter is created by churning the milk with a wooden paddle, likewise listening to, contemplating and meditating on the Buddha's doctrine, is analogous to using a wooden paddle. Just as butter arises from churning the milk with a wooden paddle, wisdom arises from listening to, and contemplating and meditating on the Buddha's doctrine. Butter is actually a coarse substance that can be further refined to its essence by boiling it, and just like clarified butter, bodhicitta is the very essence of the Buddha's doctrine. This is similar to the presentation in *The Three Principles of the Path*, which states that bodhicitta is the very essence of the Buddha's doctrine that is praised by all the buddhas.

As the analogy explains, just as the tastiest part of butter is the essence of butter, the tastiest part of the Buddha's doctrine, its essence, is achieving the benefit of all beings through having cultivated bodhicitta. Therefore, one needs to develop that which serves as the very essence of the Dharma.

Developing the essence of the Dharma, which is bodhicitta, begins with the meagre attempts we make now of generating a genuine mind of consideration for others, with a genuine wish to help and benefit others. Part of our training is to develop that intention now to whatever extent we are able to. It would be quite lame to think, 'Oh, since I haven't yet developed bodhicitta, there is not much point thinking about it'. It is because of the very fact that we haven't yet generated bodhicitta that we are being exhorted to strive to develop it.

As mentioned previously, we do that by cultivating loving and kind attitudes to others with whatever means we have now. Then, slowly through our training and familiarity our mind will gradually become more and more attuned to having a genuine sense of concern for the wellbeing of other sentient beings. This then serves as a basis to further develop a genuine sense of love and compassion. This is how we make progress, and further develop the mind of bodhicitta.

The peerless instruction on the generation of bodhicitta by means of listening, contemplating and meditating is none other than this very text that we are studying now, the *Bodhisattvacharyavata*. This is the best source of advice to listen to, contemplate on and meditate on. So we have the most supreme instructions at hand on how to develop bodhicitta.

3.1.2.3.2. *Achieving every happiness*

This section of the text is explained in the following verse:

33. *The migrating guests wander on the paths of existence
And wish to engage pleasant enjoyments;*

*It abides close to supreme happiness
And satisfies the great samsaric guests*

Here, Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

The migrating guests wandering in cyclic existence on the paths of the three existences wish for the pleasant enjoyments of gods and humans.

This mind generation abides close to the supreme method for establishing happiness, and satisfies the many guests from cyclic existence because it establishes the higher status and definite goodness of all sentient beings.

I have explained many times what *cyclic existence* connotes. As teachings explain, that which binds one to the appropriated aggregates again and again through the influence of delusions and karma is cyclic existence. In other words, the contaminated aggregates that we possess now are an example of cyclic existence. Over countless lifetimes we have uncontrollably obtained such contaminated aggregates, through which we experience the shortcomings of sufferings and so forth. So the real cycle is obtaining the appropriated contaminated aggregates again and again through the influence of delusions and karma. It is as if we are bound to these appropriated, contaminated aggregates which serve as the basis for all unwanted misery and suffering. This is the real meaning of cyclic existence.

The migrating guests are those who are bound by delusions and karma to this existence of obtaining the contaminated aggregates again and again. The *paths of the three existences* are the desire, form and formless realms. Thus, beings circle in these three different realms again and again. All those beings in the cyclic existence *wish for the pleasant enjoyments of the gods and humans*. So, not only does bodhicitta bring the ultimate benefit and goodness of liberation and enlightenment, but it also serves as a means to bring about the temporary benefits of humans and gods while circling in samsara.

Furthermore, *this mind generation abides close to the supreme method for establishing happiness, and satisfies the many guests from cyclic existence*. The reason for that is that *it establishes the higher status and definite goodness of all sentient beings*. So bodhicitta serves as a means to establish beings in the temporary wellbeing of the most fortunate rebirth in cyclic existence, and while bringing that temporary pleasure and enjoyment, it ultimately brings the definite goodness of the state of liberation and ultimately, enlightenment.

Thus bodhicitta is the supreme method to benefit sentient beings because the generation of this mind brings about the temporary and ultimate wellbeing of sentient beings; that is the main meaning of this verse.

Satisfying many guests also has a connotation of being a most supreme offering. There are explanations in the teachings that one of the best ways of gaining merit is making unsurpassed offerings to the enlightened beings and benefiting sentient beings. Of all the offerings that one can make to the buddhas and bodhisattvas, offering bodhicitta is the best, because it brings benefit for all sentient beings. So the generation of bodhicitta is the most supreme offering and method for accumulating merit.

We need to really contemplate these points, remembering how the generation of the mind of bodhicitta is dependent on first developing love and compassion. Thus, we need to really think about the great value of developing love and compassion again and again and train our mind daily in the development of love and compassion. This means that in whatever activity we engage, whether it is eating or drinking or going about our daily business, we constantly remember, 'I am doing this as a means to benefit sentient beings'. When we eat something, we offer it first to the objects of refuge and then we remind ourselves that we are consuming it to sustain ourselves for the purpose of benefiting sentient beings. When we drink something, we accumulate merit by offering it, and then drink it to quench our thirst and nourish us as a means of supporting ourselves so that we can benefit sentient beings.

If we can relate to every activity this way, seeing it as a means to benefit sentient beings, then we are familiarising our mind with the wish to benefit sentient beings and actually utilising our daily activities for that purpose. So, in this way we slowly and gradually establish a firm foundation for developing bodhicitta. Bodhicitta is not developed instantaneously; it requires effort and a great amount of training.

Of course, in explaining this I am not implying that I have obtained any great experiential levels from practising in this way, but I can assure you that I do attempt to practise in this way. So if you ask me whether I attempt to do these practices then the answer is definitely, 'Yes, I do try to practise like this in my daily life'. If you ask whether I have achieved any great realisation from this practice then the answer will be, 'No, I have not'. However I find that there is great benefit derived even from my genuine attempts to practice. Thus, I entreat you to really familiarise your mind again and again with these practices, and then, through constant familiarity you will gradually see a transformation taking place.

When the commentary says *this mind generation abides close to the supreme method*, the Tibetan word *nyi-war-ne*, has the connotation of 'definitely abiding'. So the meaning here is that the mind generation of bodhicitta definitely abides as the supreme method for establishing happiness.

Thus, the generation of bodhicitta is an unsurpassable offering to the supreme enlightened beings, as it is the supreme means to satisfy the many guests in cyclic existence. Why? Because, it establishes high status and definite goodness for all sentient beings.

3.2. Inducing others to be joyful

What is being explained here is that by generating the mind of bodhicitta, one induces joy in others. This can be understood with the analogy of someone who has the potential and ability to take care of all our needs by promising us, 'I will take responsibility for establishing your wellbeing and I will give you everything you need for your happiness'. Hearing such a promise would make us feel extremely joyful. Just the thought, 'Oh, I have someone who is going to take care of me', brings great solace and joy.

What actually is implied here, and this will be explained in the verse, is that someone who aspires to develop bodhicitta is making this promise to establish all beings in happiness: I will take responsibility for establishing all beings in a state of ultimate state of happiness and free them from all suffering. That is the vow that one makes.

The verse relating to this heading is:

34. *Today I have, in front of all protectors,
Served migrators the hospitality of
A tathagata and intermediate happiness.
The gods, demi-gods and so forth should rejoice.*

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

Today, in the presence of all the protectors, the conquerors and their children, I have invited all migrating sentient beings as guests and serve them the hospitality of becoming a sugata, one who has accomplished all ultimate benefit and happiness, and until they obtain that state I also give them the permission to satisfy themselves with the intermediate happiness of gods and humans.

'I' refers to oneself, and the time when the vows are taken is *today*. These vows or promises were made *in front of all the protectors, who are the conquerors and the children*, i.e. all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Then one continues, *I have invited all migrating sentient beings as guests and serve them the hospitality of a sugata*, which indicates that one has made the pledge to lead all sentient beings to that ultimate state of a sugata *who has accomplished all ultimate benefit and happiness*.

As indicated in the commentary, the ultimate intention is to lead all beings to the ultimate state of buddhahood, but until that state is obtained, one offers all beings the permission to be satisfied with the intermediate happiness of gods and humans.

Then Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

As such I have offered the supreme hospitality and from today onwards the gods, demi-gods, serpent kings and so forth should be happy.

This is to induce joy in others.

So others should be joyful because of the pledges that one has made today, in the presence of all the protectors, buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Then Gyaltsab Je exhorts us:

Preceding the generation of the two minds, as explained in this commentary:

This means that as a precursor to developing *the generation of the two minds* i.e. aspiring and engaging bodhicitta, one needs to:

Understand that mind generation upon having purified the disrupting conditions of the obscurations and building up the conducive conditions of the accumulations of merit, is the supreme way to take the essence of the precious human rebirth with freedoms and endowments, and strive in it.

This is an exhortation that the supreme means to develop the mind of bodhicitta is to engage in the practices of accumulating merit and purifying one's negativities. That is the supreme means to take the essence of one's precious human rebirth with its freedom and endowments. That is what we need to strive for.

Summarising Verse

Gyatso Je offers this summarising verse as a final exhortation:

They who understand they have attained a human
rebirth with freedoms and endowments
Should strive in generating the two bodhicittas,
The essential meaning of all the teachings of the
conquerors,
The sole path traversed by the tens of millions of their
children.

Anyone *who understands that they have attained such human rebirth with its freedom and endowments* indicates that those who have the wisdom to understand the value of the precious human rebirth, definitely need to strive in generating bodhicitta, which is *the essential meaning of all the teachings of the conquerors, and the sole path traversed by the tens of millions of their children.*

II. THE NAME OF THE CHAPTER

The root text concludes the chapter with:

This is the third chapter on taking the mind of enlightenment, from Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas.

The commentary reads:

This is the commentary on the third chapter called Taking the Mind of Enlightenment, from the commentary on the *Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas*, called *The Entrance for the Children of the Conquerors*.

Now we come to the fourth chapter, the title of which is Applying Conscientiousness. To explain the context of this chapter, we need to return to the subdivisions introduced in chapter 1.¹

2. THE ACTUAL EXPLANATION OF THE STAGES OF THE PATH

2.2. The method for taking the essence

2.2.2. Explaining the individual meanings²

2.2.2.2. THE WAY OF TRAINING IN THE PRACTICES OF GENERATING THE TWO MINDS

2.2.2.2.1. Taking the mind of enlightenment

This was the content of the last chapter. Now we come to:

2.2.2.2.2. The Way of Training in the Actions, the Perfections

This has four subdivisions:

2.2.2.2.2.1. The way of meditating on conscientiousness, the limb preventing the degeneration of the training in the mind of enlightenment³

2.2.2.2.2.2. Explaining the way of training in morality, by relating it to introspection and mindfulness, the methods for keeping virtuous dharmas pure⁴

2.2.2.2.2.3. Explaining the way of training in the remaining four perfections⁵

¹ See the teaching of 26 March 2013.

² The following two subdivisions were listed in the teaching of 2 July 2013.

³ Covered in chapter 4.

⁴ Covered in chapter 5.

⁵ Covered in chapters 6 to 9.

2.2.2.2.2.4. Explaining the way of practising the generosity of offering one's body, possessions and roots of virtue to others, by way of the limb of dedication⁶

This list encompasses all the remaining chapters.

The first three chapters of the text, as you would recall⁷, present the means of generating bodhicitta, which has not yet been developed. The next three chapters, Conscientiousness, Mindfulness or Introspection, and Patience present the means of maintaining the bodhicitta that has been generated. Chapters 7 to 9 present the means of increasing bodhicitta, and the final chapter dedicates the merits of bodhicitta.

2.2.2.2.2.1. The way of meditating on conscientiousness, the limb preventing the degeneration of the training in the mind of enlightenment

This section also includes other practices that are needed for developing bodhicitta.

Conscientiousness is defined as state of mind that prevents one from being influenced by the delusions, and by maintaining enthusiasm it protects one from contaminated states of mind and increases virtue.

This definition has two main elements:

- It is a mental state of mind that prevents delusions from arising
- While maintaining enthusiasm it protects one from contaminated states of mind and increases virtue

That which encompasses all these attributes is called conscientiousness. Without conscientiousness, it said that one will not be able to engage in any of the three trainings of morality, concentration and wisdom. Therefore conscientiousness is an essential state of mind that we must develop if we wish to engage in our practice properly.

CHAPTER 4: APPLYING CONSCIENTIOUSNESS⁸

The chapter has two elements.

- I. Explaining the text of the chapter
- II: The name of the chapter

I. EXPLAINING THE TEXT OF THE CHAPTER

The chapter has three subdivisions

1. Short explanation of the way to meditate on conscientiousness
2. Explaining it extensively
3. Summary

1. SHORT EXPLANATION OF THE WAY TO MEDITATE ON CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

The first verse of the chapter reads:

1. *After the children of the conquerors,
Have very firmly accepted bodhicitta,
They should unwaveringly strive always
To not transgress the trainings.*

Gyaltso Je's commentary explanation of this verse reads:

⁶ Covered in chapter 10.

⁷ See 12 February 2013.

⁸ To keep things manageable the numbering system starts again.

After the children of the conquerors, the bodhisattvas, took very firmly the two minds of enlightenment as explained earlier, they should unwaveringly protect them with conscientiousness, so as not to wander from them for even a second.

They should also unwaveringly protect the trainings of the six perfections and the four ways of attracting disciples, so as not to waver from them, and that they never decrease.

I have already explained in the past the connotation of *children of the conquerors*, and also what *conqueror* refers to, so you may recall that. Having *very firmly* established *the two minds of enlightenment*, which were *explained earlier*, we must *unwaveringly protect them with conscientiousness*, so as not to wander from them for even a second. Furthermore *they should also unwaveringly protect the trainings of the six perfections and the four ways of attracting disciples*, so as not to waver from them, and that they never decrease.

What we need to understand from this is that once a bodhisattva generates the two states of mind of bodhicitta, there are only two activities that they will engage in from then on—activities that encompass fulfilling their own purpose, and activities that encompass fulfilling the purpose of others. The *six perfections* are specifically the means to fulfil one's own ultimate purpose, although they also directly benefit others. *The four ways of attracting disciples* are the activities that specifically and directly benefit other beings. Bodhisattvas have no other activities than these two.

The six perfections serve as a means to fulfil one's ultimate goal of achieving enlightenment, solely for the purpose of benefiting other sentient beings. As explained in the teachings, having generated a state of mind of bodhicitta, bodhisattvas are committed to striving to achieve enlightenment, which takes many eons of practice. So bodhisattvas need to ensure that they are not deprived of good conditions and that they have sufficient wealth and so forth over the many lives needed to achieve the ultimate state of enlightenment. Because that takes many eons, one has to ensure that all the conditions are in place so as to be able to continuously engage in the practices until achieving the state of enlightenment. The supreme means of ensuring that one has the appropriate conditions of sufficient wealth and so forth is none other than engaging in the practice of *generosity*. That is how the practice of generosity is the optimum means to establish those necessary favourable conditions.

In order to engage in the practice of generosity to amass sufficient means in good conditions one needs to have a basis, which is a perfect physical body. This is obtained through none other than the practice of *morality*. Thus, morality is the main cause of obtaining a perfect body.

Furthermore, having amassed the perfect conditions of sufficient wealth and so forth, and having the perfect base of a sound body, one needs to have a good retinue if one is to make use of those conditions. In both a worldly context and for the Dharma, one needs to have an appropriate retinue to help us to utilise those good conditions. What brings about a perfect retinue is none other than the practice of *patience*. That is why the practice of patience is said to be essential.

We also need to ensure that whatever activity we engage in is completed. That which ensures that any activity reaches completion is none other than the practice of *enthusiasm* or joyous effort.

Then we need to make sure that all the earlier good conditions that we have obtained do not become a condition for delusions to arise. So we need to adopt the practice of *meditation* to ensure delusions do not arise.

Being able to discern what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded is essential, and the unmistakable discriminating *wisdom* is acquired through the practice of wisdom.

We can see the relevance of all of this to our own practice. By seeing the practical benefits of engaging in these practices of generosity, morality, patience, joyous effort, meditation and developing wisdom, we are further encouraged to engage in these practices to accomplish our ultimate goal.

The purpose of obtaining the perfect conditions we enjoy now is twofold: ultimately it is to benefit other sentient beings, and to achieve one's own ultimate goal. The first three perfections, generosity, morality and patience are a direct means of fulfilling the benefit of other sentient beings.

Our own ultimate purpose is gained through the wisdom that leads one to obtaining the bliss or happiness of liberation. However, if the mind is distracted and wavering then it is not possible to develop that wisdom. So, in order to cultivate that wisdom one needs to have a very stable and undistracted mind, which is established through meditation, in particular concentration.

The ultimate concentration is calm abiding and based on calm abiding one achieves the wisdom of special insight. The union of calm abiding and special insight can only occur after having first obtained calm abiding. So we need to understand that special insight is preceded by calm abiding. However concentration and wisdom cannot be established if one is lazy. Therefore the perfection of joyous effort is essential to achieve both one's own purpose as well to benefit other sentient beings.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་ཀྱི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

4 March 2014

Based on the motivation we had just generated, we can engage in the practice of meditation.

[meditation]

In our last session we started Chapter 4, which is Conscientiousness.

1. SHORT EXPLANATION OF THE WAY TO MEDITATE ON CONSCIENTIOUSNESS (CONT.)

The importance of applying conscientiousness was explained earlier as being essential to prevent bodhicitta from declining after it had been generated. I also explained how the bodhisattvas' activities are encompassed in the practices of the six perfections and the four means of gathering disciples.

Although I have already identified and explained the four means of gathering disciples previously, I will list them again. They are: giving whatever is necessary; speaking pleasantly; helping others; and consistency between words and deeds. Here we will notice that the incomparably kind Buddha presented these ways of benefiting others in very practical manner.

The first is giving people what they need through generosity. By engaging in giving, you develop an acquaintance with them where they begin to feel comfortable and develop a bond with you. Along with that, if you utter kind and pleasant words, that will really appeal to them.

We can all relate to the benefit of giving, however generosity needs to be accompanied with kind and pleasant speech so that the recipients can receive it gracefully, without fear or hesitation. For example, when you give food to animals, if you do so with pleasant words it creates a gentle atmosphere that makes them feel comfortable, and then they come close to you and gracefully accept the food. If even animals can appreciate this kind and gentle gesture, then there is no need to mention how humans would relate to it as well.

As you would know, generosity is classified into two types: generosity with material wealth and generosity with the Dharma. Likewise, speaking pleasantly can also be related to a worldly context—such as greeting and welcoming people with pleasant words, and presenting the actual meaning of the Dharma.

The third way of gathering disciples, helping others, particularly relates to presenting the Dharma. Taking the example of helping animals again, when an animal has been treated kindly (with food and pleasant words) it develops trust in the owner, who can then explain things which it will follow, like certain behaviour patterns or even tricks. Animals can learn quite a lot of skills willingly from their owners or trainers that they trust. In

the context of bodhisattvas helping sentient beings, it refers not only to temporary benefit, but that which will benefit sentient beings in all future lives, up until achieving the ultimate state of enlightenment. As part of the means to benefit other beings, you can see that these ways of gathering disciples play a very important role in developing a good relationship with other beings. It is very much in line with the worldly concepts of enacting good deeds for others, thus we can easily relate to this as being a practical ways and means to benefit others.

When we see how the teaching presents these points so meticulously and logically, it gives us the initiative to implement and integrate them in our own practice. It gives us a deeper sense of understanding, and entreats us to use our intelligence, our reasoning and logical way of thinking. For me it definitely provides very good ways to think critically and logically; I am sure you can relate to it as well.

As explained to me by my own teachers and previous masters, the fourth means of gathering disciples, consistency between words and deeds, means to act in accordance with the Dharma. This relates to both entreating others to act in accordance with the Dharma and to follow the advice of the Dharma oneself. So, the third means is to help others by explaining the meaning of the Dharma while the fourth is to implore others, as well as to follow the Dharma oneself.

In our last session I explained how the six perfections serve as a means to acquire good conditions. It is important to also take note of the opposites to each of the six perfections, as the exact opposite is a hindrance to engaging in the practice. For example miserliness is the opposite of generosity, so when we are affected by miserliness this obstructs us from being generous. We will not be able to perfect the practice of generosity if we don't overcome miserliness. Thus, we need to apply an antidote to overcome miserliness to become more and more accustomed to being naturally generous.

We can definitely relate to the ill effects of strong miserliness. Some are not able to make offerings because they are too miserly to use their resources. Furthermore, out of miserliness some are not able to benefit others with their wealth and may not even be able to use their own wealth to benefit themselves. So we can see in a very practical way how miserliness obstructs one from using one's wealth in an optimum way. The antidote for overcoming miserliness is none other than actually engaging in the practice of generosity, by seeing the advantages and benefits of being generous. As we gradually increase acts of generosity, we will begin to overcome miserliness.

To list the other opposites: the opposite of morality is corrupt morality; the opposite of patience is anger or hatred; the opposite of joyous effort is laziness; the opposite of meditation (concentration) is mental wandering and the opposite of wisdom is corrupt wisdom.

So identifying the opposites of the six perfections and overcoming them is necessary to engage in the actual practices. By relating to a bodhisattva's practice of generosity we can definitely understand how it enables a

bodhisattva to fulfil the purpose of others as well as one's own purposes. That should encourage one to also overcome miserliness and begin to practise generosity and so forth.

2. EXPLAINING IT EXTENSIVELY

This is subdivided into two.

- 2.1. Meditating on conscientiousness for bodhicitta
- 2.2. Being conscientious of the trainings

2.1. Meditating on conscientiousness for bodhicitta

This is further subdivided into two.

- 2.1.1. The reason why it is unsuitable to give up bodhicitta
- 2.1.2. The fault of giving it up

The first explains that having taken the bodhisattva vows and making that pledge, it is unsuitable to give up bodhicitta. The reason presented is encompassed in the second point, the fault of giving it up. That is, if one were to give it up, what would the faults be?

2.1.1. The reason why it is unsuitable to give up bodhicitta

The next two verses explain the meaning of this heading.

The first verse reads:

2. *Any action done in the spur of the moment,
Or done without having been considered
carefully,
Although having already committed to them,
It is appropriate to analyse whether to act or to
leave it.*

The commentary explains the meaning of this verse as follows:

Actions that were just engaged in impulsively, without consideration of their benefits and drawbacks, or actions that were minimally analysed but not well investigated before engaged in, are actions that are suitable to be investigated later on, to decide whether to continue them or not, despite having made an earlier commitment.

The first part of the translation reads *actions that were just engaged in* and uses the term *impulsively* which relates to the Tibetan term that has the connotation of not taking any measures to check whether the action one is about to engage in has any advantages or disadvantages, or benefits or drawbacks i.e. just engaging in an activity without first checking. For example, compare taking the bodhisattva vows without first checking the benefits and drawbacks, with first doing some analysis and then taking them. Taking the bodhisattva vows after analysing and understanding them is proper practice, whereas taking the bodhisattva vows without first analysing and understanding what they are would be improper and a fault.

The point to note here is that *without consideration of the benefits or drawbacks or actions that were minimally analysed but not well investigated, are suitable to be investigated later on to decide whether to continue or not, despite having made earlier commitment.*

The Tibetan commentary begins with *despite having made an earlier commitment*, which implies that one has already made a promise to do a certain action. However even if one has made a promise, there are actions that are

suitable to be investigate later on, and decide whether one should continue doing them or not.

The point being presented here is in relation to a bodhisattva's promise. While this may not apply to us directly, as we have not actually developed bodhicitta yet, nevertheless we can still relate this to other aspects in our everyday life. As I regularly share with you, don't be hasty making promises or commitments to others prior to fully understanding what you are committing to. I have often heard people speak of a commitment in a lamenting way such as, 'Oh, I have to follow this through now because I have already made a promise'. A promise is taken very seriously and even though you no longer find the action suitable, because of a promise you feel an obligation to do it. So my advice, which is in line with what is being presented here, is don't be hasty making promises or commitments prior to investigating whether it is something suitable or manageable for you do to. You need to apply this advice into your everyday life situations.

The main point being presented here is that if normal activities that need further investigation are not given up because a promise is made, then what need is there to mention not giving up bodhicitta! This is explained further in the next verse.

What is explained here can also be understood in terms of the two types of trainees on the path: those of intelligent faculty and those of dull faculty. Those of intelligent faculty investigate thoroughly before they actually undertake any activity or practice etc. whereas those of dull intelligence or faculty don't really have the means to thoroughly investigate. They just accept and engage in the practices without too much investigation.

It is explained in the teachings that when those of intelligent faculty make a promise, the commitment is much more firm and stable than from those with dull faculty. That is because the promise or commitment is made after employing thorough investigation and analysis.

However, there is also a phrase in a text which says that siddhis or attainments may be obtained more swiftly by those with dull faculty because they immediately engage in the practice. By taking much more time to investigate and analyse, those with intelligent faculty sometimes get held back and don't engage in the practice right away. So there can be some drawbacks in taking a longer time to achieve their goals.

This relates to stories about some trainees who actually investigated bodhicitta for twelve years before finally feeling committed enough to engage in the practice, whereas those who did not have much intelligence but strong faith, just engaged in the practice, and would have developed bodhicitta sooner.

In comparison to actions done without considering the benefits and drawbacks, or minimally analysed with further room to be investigated and decided upon, the next verse points out:

3. *But how can I discard that
Which has been analysed
By the buddhas and their children with great
wisdom*

And also analysed by myself repeatedly.

The meaning of this verse is explained with a quote from a sutra. It reads:

As it is stated in the *Sutra Requested by Subahu*, the buddhas, and their children such as Maitreya, ...

At this point you can relate to an earlier explanation about the close children or disciples of the Buddha, such as Maitreya, Manjushri and so forth, who

... investigated with great wisdom the mind, praised its qualities and taught it to be indispensable in the *Array of Stalks Sutra* and others. One had also investigated with various reasons why one should definitely take this mind, by thinking about its benefits and so on.

The sutra says *investigated with great wisdom the mind*, which refers to the mind generation of bodhicitta. The close disciples of the Buddha investigated with great wisdom the benefit of bodhicitta, praised its qualities and thought it to be indispensable in *Array of Stalks Sutra* and other sutras. Likewise one had also investigated with various reasons why one should definitely take up this mind by thinking about its benefits.

So, what is being explained here is that if one had already investigated and analysed the various reasons why one should definitely generate the mind of bodhicitta, by thinking of its numerous benefits (which were explained in the first chapter) then one should definitely see reasons to actually adopt it. Having taken such action to consider the benefits of bodhicitta, how can one discard it? One needs to protect it from degenerating until attaining enlightenment.

2.1.2. The fault of giving it up

This outline is further subdivided into three:

2.1.2.1. The fault of going to the lower realms

2.1.2.2. One will degenerate from the welfare of others

2.1.2.3. One has become far from attaining a ground

The thought of *giving it up* refers to the two stages of bodhicitta: aspiring and engaging. When one first takes the vows, one generates a genuine aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, and to bring about ultimate benefit and remove all suffering. Based on this very sincere and very strong intention, the aspiration to achieve enlightenment for that purpose is developed. So the aspiring bodhicitta is developed first and then based on that, one goes further and makes a commitment to actually engage in the practices of a bodhisattva in order to accomplish one's aspirations. So the pledges one makes when one takes the bodhisattva vows have great benefit in themselves. It is a great fault to give up bodhicitta after having taken the vows.

In one prayer about generating this mind, it mentions that one invites all sentient beings as guests to partake in the ultimate happiness and bliss of enlightenment. So having invited all sentient beings as one's guests, one then makes a further commitment to engage in the practices to serve the invited guests, to help them partake in ultimate happiness.

The fault, if one were to give up bodhicitta, is going to the lower realms. As one will have degenerated from the welfare of others, one has become far from attaining a ground.

2.1.2.1. THE FAULT OF GOING TO THE LOWER REALMS

This is subdivided into three

2.1.2.1.1. The reason for going to the lower realms

2.1.2.1.2. Stating supporting evidence

2.1.2.1.3. Refuting objections

2.1.2.1.1. The reason for going to the lower realms

The text reads:

4. *After having made this promise
If one does not engage into the actions,
Then one deceives all sentient beings.
How could one become a migrator?*

The commentary clearly explains the meaning of this verse:

Having made the promise to place all sentient beings in the state of enlightenment, if one then does not practice the path to achieve this aim, then one will have deceived all sentient beings. How will one then become a migrator, as one will never go beyond the lower realms?

The first part of the explanation begins with *having made the promise to place all sentient beings in the state of enlightenment, if one then does not practice the path to achieve this aim*. Many of you, who have already taken bodhisattva vows, will recall that taking the vows initially involves making the promise of generating the aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. Based on that strong aspiration to free all beings from suffering and lead them to ultimate state of happiness, you then generate the mind, 'I definitely need to achieve enlightenment myself'. So, based on that aspiration, the promise involves willingly making the pledge to engage in practices of the six perfections and the four means of gathering disciples.

The pledge one makes when taking the vows is done in the presence of all enlightened beings, the conquerors and their children, i.e. all buddhas and bodhisattvas, so it is in their presence that one generates the aspiration to achieve enlightenment. If it were just an aspiration then there wouldn't be much more responsibility than just being an aspiration, but the pledge involves making a conscious commitment to engage in the practices to achieve enlightenment. So since these vows and pledges are willingly made in presence of all buddhas and bodhisattvas, one has already taken upon oneself the commitment.

One has already promised sentient beings that one will do that. So having made a pledge, if one gives it up, then one will have deceived all sentient beings. Why? Because it is a lie. One promised to do something but one is not keeping that promise. One is not just deceiving one being. Telling a lie to one being is a non-virtue, so you can imagine the negativity one would incur by deceiving all sentient beings. *How will one then one become a migrator* implies how then could one ascend to higher and more fortunate realms? One would not. Having incurred the negativity of deceiving all beings one is certain to take rebirth in the lower realms. It is commonly accepted in all religions traditions that lying and deceiving others is a non-virtuous act, and that is what is being explained here.

2.1.2.1.2. Stating supporting evidence

5. *If one will become a hungry ghost
When one does not give to the person
Even the common objects
That one already offered in one's mind,*

In explaining the meaning of this verse, the commentary reads:

Regarding not giving the object of offering that one has already given in one's mind, even if it is just one morsel of food, it states in the *Sutra of Close Placement by Mindfulness*:

The sutra presents the faults of this mind using a particular example, the fault of not giving something that one has already promised to give. The fault relates to not giving even to one being something as small as a *morsel of food*. In relation to pledges made to provide happiness to all the sentient beings invited as one's guests; in the presence of all buddhas and bodhisattvas, one has made the pledge to offer them the temporary happiness of high status of humans and gods, and ultimate happiness which is the definite goodness of liberation and enlightenment. That is what one has promised to do for all sentient beings in the presence of all buddhas and bodhisattvas. The commentary next gives explanations from the sutras about the fault of not giving even a small object, such as a morsel of food.

The quote here from the *Sutra of Close Placement by Mindfulness* reads:

If they do not give even the little they intended, they will take rebirth as a migrator in the hungry ghost realm. If they do not give what they promised, then the sentient being will go to the hell realm.

The *Sutra Dividing Migrators* also states:

Whichever person, by not giving the rice and vegetables, the roots and fruits they intended to, they will experience the hungry ghost world and terrifying suffering.

The meaning of the sutra is quite easy to understand. It states quite clearly that for *whichever person, by not giving the rice and vegetables, i.e. the roots and fruits they intended to give*, but does not give it afterwards, the consequence is that *they will experience the hungry ghost world and terrifying suffering*.

The next verse in relates to this same subheading:

6. *Then how could one go to a happy migration
If one deceives all sentient beings
Concerning the highest happiness
To which one invited them from the depths of
one's mind*

The commentary explains the meaning of this verse:

If this is regarded as a cause to be reborn in the hungry ghost realm, then if one deceives all sentient beings with regards to the highest happiness and the temporary happiness of gods and humans, to which one invited all sentient beings, not just in mere words, but respectfully from the depth of one heart with a loud and clear voice, by discarding them, then how can one migrate to the happy realms? One will not.

The commentary clearly explains that when one makes a pledge and then does not give one's own food to others as intended, it creates the cause to be born in the hungry ghost realm.

If one deceives all sentient beings with regards to the highest happiness and temporary happiness of gods and humans, to which one invited all sentient beings, not just in mere words but respectfully from the depth of one's heart with a loud and clear voice: One has actually made a pledge, analysed the benefits and seen the purpose, so *the decision is made from the depth of one's heart* and one is not taking it lightly. One has considered the vows in all seriousness, not just mumbled them barely audible, but made the pledge in a clear loud voice. This relates to when we took the bodhisattva vows, when we all knelt down and put our palms together respectfully and we repeated the vows quite loudly after the master.

This point relates to those of us who have taken the vows and made those promises. We have followed in these footsteps, so while there are benefits in having taken the vows we also need be mindful of the faults of not upholding them.

2.1.2.1.3. Refuting Objections

As the text explained that the fault of giving up bodhicitta is that one will go to lower realms, an objection is raised:

The commentary first states the objection:

Question: The superior Shariputra, after having previously generated bodhicitta, was engaged in the practice of the perfections when he was asked by a demon for his right hand. Shariputra cut off his right hand and gave it to the demon with his left hand. Because of this he was severely abused by the demon and so Shariputra became sad and gave up bodhicitta. Yet he later attained the state of an Arhat. Does this not contradict what is taught in the quotes?

The objection here is that Shariputra apparently had given up bodhicitta, so Shariputra should have gone to the lower realms instead of attaining liberation.

The commentary explains that Shariputra, having previously generated bodhicitta, was engaged in the practice of perfections. When a demon disguised as Brahmin asked for his right hand and then abused him for giving it him with his left hand, Shariputra became disheartened thinking, 'I can't even help or please one sentient being', and that is when Shariputra gave up bodhicitta. So, we need to take notice that if one gives up the intention to benefit even one sentient being, one is giving up bodhicitta. From this account, we need to understand that giving up on one sentient being becomes a cause for giving up bodhicitta.

The objection here is how could Shariputra later attain the state of an arhat? *Does that not contradict what is taught in the sutras?*

The verse explains:

7. *Whichever person who gave up bodhicitta,
Their striving for liberation
Is karmic beyond thought,
And only known to the omniscient.*

In explaining the meaning of this verse, which refutes that objection, it explains that

Answer: When Shariputra, or anybody else for that matter, attains Arhatship despite having abandoned bodhicitta, then that is a karma that is beyond the knowledge of ordinary beings and can only be

understood by an all knowing Buddha. It cannot be understood by anybody else.

The point here is that despite having given up bodhicitta, Shariputra attained arhatship. This is actually a result of previous karma, but it is an aspect of karma that is beyond the knowledge of ordinary beings. Only a Buddha with an omniscient mind is able to see the subtlety of the karma which became the particular cause for him to attain arhatship. It is generally explained in the teachings that the subtleties of karma are known only by an omniscient mind.

The subtleties of karma are inconceivable in relation to the time a particular karma was created, the individual who created it, and particular circumstances under which it was created. These details are said to be known only by an omniscient mind, the all-knowing Buddha. Consider a contemporary example such as a glass. It is a fact that glass is a combination of many billions of atoms. How many atoms make up this glass and where they came from? It is not something that we are not able to know. It is only something that the mind of a Buddha would know. Likewise, karma with subtleties of time, duration, manner and location, details of previous karmas committed a long time ago, is only known by an omniscient mind. I recall one of the previous masters in Sera monastery, Gyalrong Khensur Rinpoche often used to mention the quote 'karma is unconceivable' is something.

Despite Shariputra having given up bodhicitta at a particular time, and later obtaining the state of arhatship, he not only obtained that state of arhatship as a personal liberation but also to benefit many others who had particular karmic connection with him. They definitely benefited from Shariputra after he had obtained arhatship. So these factors then, the karma that Shariputra would have created in the past to obtain those results is really something which is said to be inconceivable, something which just cannot be known and conceived by ordinary minds.

There are various other explanations as to why, rather than falling to lower realms, Shariputra actually obtained liberation. One explanation is that when Shariputra gave up bodhicitta it was only the conventional bodhicitta he gave up and he did not give up the ultimate bodhicitta which is the realisation of emptiness. And so because he did not give up the realisation of emptiness that is what caused him to obtain the state of liberation. Another explanation is that even though he had given up bodhicitta, it actually became the cause for him to obtain liberation because he hadn't given up his determination to obtain liberation. Both explanations are valid. The first explanation, that is because Shariputra didn't give up ultimate bodhicitta (the realisation of emptiness), is in accordance to Gyaltsab Rinpoche, the author of this commentary. It actually has a profound meaning.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་པའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

11 March 2014

As usual we will now spend some time in meditation practice.

[meditation]

Now we can generate the motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines:

In order to liberate all sentient beings from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I definitely have to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

If we carefully think about the meaning of this very brief motivation, we will realise that it encompasses both the aspirational bodhicitta attitude as well as the engaging bodhicitta attitude. It is aspirational in the sense of making a determination to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, whilst listening to the teachings and making a commitment to practise well encompasses engaging bodhicitta.

2.1. Meditating on conscientiousness for bodhicitta

2.1.2. The fault of giving it up (cont.)

2.1.2.2. ONE WILL DEGENERATE FROM THE WELFARE OF OTHERS

It is good to keep the essential points of the chapter in mind by relating to the outline.

There are three sub-divisions under this category:

2.1.2.2.1. If one's bodhicitta degenerates, then it is a heavy downfall and one's work for the welfare of others will degenerate

2.1.2.2.2. Even if one obstructs the virtue of another bodhisattva it is similar to that, and one will go to the lower realms

2.1.2.2.3. The reason why this is so

2.1.2.2.1. If one's bodhicitta degenerates, then it is a heavy downfall and one's work for the welfare of others will degenerate

If one's bodhicitta degenerates, then it is a heavy downfall, because it is one of the eighteen root downfalls of the bodhisattva vows. Relinquishing bodhicitta is said to be one of the heaviest of the eighteen root transgressions. One's work for the welfare of others will degenerate refers to the fact that if one gives up bodhicitta then that entails giving up the pledge to engage in the practice of the six perfections. As the very basis for benefitting sentient beings, i.e. bodhicitta, is uprooted, one will not be able to adequately benefit sentient beings.

The verse relating to this outline reads:

8. *This is for bodhisattvas
The heaviest of downfalls.
Therefore, if one receives it
One harms the purpose of all sentient beings.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je gives this explanation:

To degenerate from bodhicitta is for bodhisattvas, out of the root downfalls, the heaviest one. Since the wish to benefit degenerates, if one receives this downfall, then it harms the welfare of all sentient beings, because the basis for practice degenerates.

As the commentary clearly explains, allowing *bodhicitta to degenerate is the heaviest of the root downfalls of the bodhisattva vows*. Giving up bodhicitta *harms the welfare of sentient beings* because one's bodhicitta has degenerated as a result of having given it up. One harms the welfare of sentient beings because one breaks the pledge to help sentient beings. It is good to take note that giving up bodhicitta is one of the three ways in which a bodhisattva's vows degenerate. Another is giving up working for the welfare of even one sentient being; and the third is having an inclination to follow a path of the Lower Vehicle, e.g. the hearer's path.

Gyaltsab Je further explains that *it harms the welfare of all sentient beings because the basis for practice, which is bodhicitta, degenerates*. When bodhicitta degenerates, then the very basis for the practices of the six perfections, which are the means to bring about the welfare of sentient beings, is harmed, and hence the welfare of sentient beings is harmed.

Then the commentary quotes from a sutra:

From the *Superior Compendium*:

Although one has practised the path of the ten virtues
For 10 million eons, if one generates the wish to be a self-liberator arhat,
At that moment morality has received a fault and degenerates.
Generating such a mind is heavier than the defeat of a fully ordained monk's vows.

As explained here, if one generates the wish to be a self-liberator arhat (a state of liberation in the Lower Vehicle) then, at that moment, morality has received a fault and degenerated, even though *one has practised the path of the ten virtues for millions of eons. Generating such a mind is heavier than the defeat of a fully ordained monk's vows*.

Here we need to take note that bodhicitta degenerates the moment one generates the mind of a Lesser Vehicle goal, by thinking, 'Alas, achieving enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings is too hard'.

Furthermore, as mentioned previously, one gives up bodhicitta if one develops the thought, 'I will never, ever do anything to bring about benefit for this particular sentient being'. It is mentioned in another text that if one part of something degenerates then the whole is affected. The analogy given in the teachings is that if just one bead of a rosary falls off or is damaged, then the whole rosary is incomplete. Those of you who do the six session guru practice will recall that it mentions that giving up bodhicitta is a downfall of the root bodhisattva vows. Also, the tantric vows are broken if one gives up love for sentient beings.

The promise made in the bodhisattva vows is to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, who are as vast as space, and for that purpose one promises to engage in the practices of the six perfections. Thus, taking the bodhisattva vows encompasses all sentient beings. If

the promise made was to help only some sentient beings, then not working for the welfare of one sentient would not necessarily be giving up bodhicitta. But a pledge has been made to work for all sentient beings, so if, at some stage, one decides from the depths of one's heart, 'I am not going to benefit this sentient being or engage in working for their welfare', then the bodhisattva promise has been broken. It's good to know why giving up on even one sentient being is giving up bodhicitta.

Gyaltsab Je then explains the meaning of the quote:

As it is stated, if a bodhisattva with vows gives up bodhicitta, he receives a root downfall. If he has no vows, then his negativity is still heavier than the root downfall of the vows of individual liberation.

In Tibetan the last line of the verse, translated here as *one harms the purpose of all sentient beings*, contains the word *men*, which has a connotation of being inferior. As some commentaries explain, a bodhisattva, overwhelmed by the goal of achieving enlightenment for the purpose of all sentient beings, might change their goal to that of achieving the liberation of the Lower Vehicle. If they give up bodhicitta in that way, and then attain the state of an arhat, they will, of course, still benefit beings to their capacity. However, compared to the buddhas' ability to benefit sentient beings it is quite inferior; after all, buddhas are able to help liberate countless sentient beings with just one ray of light emanating from their body; that is one explanation of the meaning of this verse.

2.1.2.2.2. Even if one obstructs the virtue of another bodhisattva, it is similar to that and one will go to the lower realms

The verse relating to this reads:

9. *When another, even only for one instant,
Obstructs their merits,
They harm the purpose of sentient beings,
There is no other possibility than to go to the
lower realms.*

Gyaltsab Je begins his explanation with:

Whoever obstructs the merits, which are the virtues of a bodhisattva for even just one moment, harms the ability of that bodhisattva to accomplish the welfare of sentient beings. Where else could he go but to the lower realms infinitely?

Here Gyaltsab Rinpoche is emphasising a point made in the teachings, a point that I have presented several times in the past. The meaning of *whoever obstructs the merits, which are the virtues of a bodhisattva for even just one moment, harms the ability of that bodhisattva to accomplish the welfare of sentient beings* is quite clear. The consequence of this is that *there is no other possibility than to go to the lower realms many times over*.

Since any activity of a bodhisattva has the sole purpose of leading all beings to the ultimate state of enlightenment, anyone who obstructs the activities of a bodhisattva is obstructing the cause for the ultimate happiness of sentient beings. Such a person definitely creates the cause to take infinite rebirths in the lower realms. Another way of understanding *obstructing the merits* is that it refers to causing the bodhicitta of a bodhisattva to degenerate. As mentioned previously, that would be a very heavy

misdeed, which will be a cause for infinite rebirths in the lower realms.

The main point being emphasised here is that every deed of a bodhisattva is a cause for the unsurpassable happiness of all sentient beings, and if one obstructs those deeds even for a moment then one is obstructing the unsurpassable happiness of all sentient beings; that incurs great negativity.

To back up this explanation Gyaltsab Je quotes from a sutra.

From the *Sutra of Magical Emanations Definitely Pacifying*:

It is heavier to obstruct the virtue of a bodhisattva of offering one instance of food or drink to an animal, than to rob all sentient beings of Jambudvipa of their food and kill them.

As the quote says: *It is heavier to obstruct the virtue of a bodhisattva of offering one instance of food or drink to an animal, than to rob all sentient beings of Jambudvipa (or the world) of their food and kill them*. This clearly explains that obstructing a bodhisattva's deeds incurs much more heavy negative karma than actually robbing others of their food and life.

Then Gyaltsab Je's commentary further explains:

Because there are quotes like that, one should be careful regarding this point. One does not know who is a bodhisattva and so it is very easy to make this mistake. If one is able to protect oneself from this, then one is able to abandon the door of creating most faults with regard to people.

Here Gyaltsab Rinpoche is re-emphasising a point that he makes in his other works. We cannot judge other people from their appearances, and we cannot know another person's status just from their appearance. In other texts he says that one has to be very mindful and careful about judging and criticising others, because it could be similar to walking over a pit of fire that has been camouflaged with branches. If one is unaware of the pit of fire and, based on the external appearance, steps onto the branches, one will fall into the pit of fire and will be consumed by it. This analogy illustrates how we need to be very careful when it comes to judging and being critical of others, because we cannot know who is a bodhisattva. As Gyaltsab Rinpoche emphasises here, we cannot know who is actually a bodhisattva, because real bodhisattvas hide their qualities, and would appear as anything but a bodhisattva.

Here we can consider the example of the great Khunu Lama Rinpoche. When I had the great privilege of meeting him in Bodhgaya, he was wearing very simple clothes, almost rags really, and living very simply with only basic needs. If you saw Khunu Lama Rinpoche walking around in the street, you might think he was an ordinary beggar. People who didn't know him would not see his great qualities, but he was in fact a great practitioner of bodhicitta and a real bodhisattva. Even though I have not received any formal teachings from him I definitely had the opportunity to make a good Dharmic connection with him. When I went to see him he gave me a seed from the bodhi tree, and said I should recite the mantra of the Buddha and eat the seed as, 'That will be really good for you'.

Even though I didn't take particular note of it at that time, when I look back I really feel that it was a very significant gesture. Receiving that seed and instruction from Khunu Lama Rinpoche was almost a prediction that I would really try to take strong interest in teachings such as the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*. I received teachings on the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* from His Holiness, who received it from Khunu Lama Rinpoche. So it is a very close lineage—I received the teachings from a bodhisattva who received it directly from Khunu Lama Rinpoche himself. I have had that privilege of studying the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* and now I have the opportunity to teach and share it with you.

When I met Khunu Lama Rinpoche I definitely had the opportunity to make a good connection with him. Even though I did not have much money I did have a silver coin with me which I was able to offer to Khunu Lama Rinpoche; it was the greatest offering I could make at that time. And in return Khunu Lama Rinpoche gave me that seed from the bodhi tree.

To return to the commentary, since one doesn't know who is a bodhisattva and who is not, if one refrains from this misdeed of criticising and being judgemental of others, or, worse, harming them and their good deeds, one is able to avoid the great misdeed of potentially harming a bodhisattva.

Also, as explained in the *Precious Garland*, harming others who are engaged in virtuous deeds such as Dharma practice is a great misdeed, because one is depriving them of the opportunity to create the causes for their happiness over many future lifetimes. So we also need to be really mindful about not harming the Dharma practice of others by causing them to give up the Dharma and so forth; we really need to be mindful of these points.

So we really need to take on board this succinct advice from Gyaltsab Rinpoche and try implement it in our own lives, then we won't create those misdeeds.

2.1.2.2.3. *The reason why this is so*

Gyaltsab Je begins his commentary on this section with a question.

Why are the abovementioned actions of infinite negativity?

The relevant verse reads:

*10. If one degenerates just by harming the happiness
Of even one sentient being,
What need is there to mention
Harming the happiness of beings infinite like space?*

Then Gyaltsab Je states:

If one destroys the happiness of abiding with life of just one sentient being, one degenerates from one's high status.

What need is there to mention that one will be reborn in the lower realms if one destroys the cause for the highest happiness of all sentient beings equalling space?

If one destroys the happiness of abiding with life of just one sentient being is basically saying that if one robs just one sentient being of their life, then *one's high status degenerates*. This is an unequivocal statement that the

consequence of taking the life of just one sentient being isn't restricted to the loss of life of the other, but has the inevitable consequences of causing one's own high status to degenerate. That being the case with the life of one sentient being, *what need is there to mention that one will be reborn into the lower realms if one destroys the cause for the highest happiness of all sentient beings equalling space?* Again, we have a very clear explanation of the great negativity that one will incur in that instance; we need to be very mindful of that.

These explanations explain why obstructing the merits and virtues of a bodhisattva are a cause for infinite rebirths in the lower realms. If one creates a great misdeed of harming the happiness of even one sentient being, then by implication, obstructing the happiness of infinite numbers of sentient beings, who are as vast as space, will definitely be a cause for infinite negativity and infinite rebirths in the lower realms.

This is another very meticulous presentation: first there is an explanation, which is followed by logical reasons, which are illuminated with analogies and examples. It is important that when we read a text we are able to make that connection between its earlier and later parts, and so derive the full meaning of the text. It is good for us to know how to relate to the texts we study in this way.

The explanation we have just covered is also a profound explanation of the cause and effect sequence of karma. As mentioned earlier, one's high status degenerates if one destroys the happiness of abiding with life of just one sentient being. The implication is that those who are ignorant of the cause and effect sequence of karma will engage in acts of negativity, such as taking the life of others. It is basically through the ignorance of the law of karma that one incurs the fault of allowing one's high status to degenerate. So we can regard ourselves as being extremely fortunate to have been introduced to the law of karma. Through having some understanding and faith in the law of karma we are protected from creating misdeeds that would be the cause for one's own high status to degenerate.

2.1.2.3. ONE WILL BECOME FAR FROM ATTAINING A GROUND

As will be explained in the verse and in the commentary, it is implied here that if one generates very strong bodhicitta at one point, gives it up later and then strongly regenerates that bodhicitta, one will still be far from attaining a ground.

The verse relating to this heading reads:

*11. Thus, those with the heavy downfall
And with strong bodhicitta,
Should they further alternate in cyclic existence
Shall be far from attaining a ground.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Thus as explained earlier, those who have received the heavy downfall of abandoning bodhicitta, as well as those who re-generate bodhicitta strongly afterwards, will further circle in cyclic existence alternately, by taking alternate rebirths in the lower realms and in the higher realms due to afflictions and karma. It will take a long time to obtain the grounds such as Very Joyous and so forth. Therefore one

should strive to avoid the degeneration of one's bodhicitta, even at the cost of one's life.

This is clearly explaining that for anyone who has incurred the heavy downfall of abandoning bodhicitta, as well as those who regenerate bodhicitta strongly afterwards, will further take alternate rebirths in the lower realms and higher realms due to afflictions and karma. Thus, as explained here, *it will take a long time to obtain the grounds such as Very Joyous and so forth.*

This explanation is quite specific: once bodhicitta has been developed strongly it has to be maintained without degeneration to obtain the intended result of enlightenment for the sake of all beings. Even though this explanation is directed towards bodhisattvas who have developed bodhicitta, it is also relevant to us. We sometimes have a strong aspiration to develop a good attitude and meditate, and we try to practise the Dharma with a lot of zest. But sometimes we completely forget about that and allow the delusions to run rampant. This is particularly the case when we leave this room. During a session we might assume a pious aspect of meditating and so forth, and then as soon as we leave we become completely crazed with attachment. We need to take the advice given here as personal instruction, which is to maintain continuity in our practice. The habit of vacillating between practising and not practising does not bear any fruit.

2.2. Being conscientious in the trainings

This section is divided into three:

2.2.1. Conscientiously abandoning faults

2.2.2. Conscientiously meditating on virtue

2.2.3. Conscientiously abandoning the afflictions

2.2.1. Conscientiously abandoning faults

Here there are five subheadings:

These are quite empirical points; it is good to have a general understanding of the structure and sequence of the sub-headings.

2.2.1.1. If one does not abandon negativity and downfalls one will stay in the lower realms

This shows us the importance of recognising negativities and downfalls. Then we can protect ourselves from committing them, and if they are created, we need to purify them. Otherwise we will have to endure the consequence of staying in the lower realms for a long period of time.

2.2.1.2. The buddhas and bodhisattvas will remain impartial

This indicates that if we don't take the initiative to develop and to uphold the bodhicitta vows and so forth from our own side, then the buddhas and bodhisattvas will remain impartial because there is not much more they can do for us. They can't do anything extra for us if we don't take the initiative to implement these vows in our own practice.

2.2.1.3. The freedoms and endowments will be difficult to find

2.2.1.4. If reborn in the lower realms one has no opportunity to generate virtue

2.2.1.5. Why it is difficult to find freedoms and endowments

2.2.1.1. IF ONE DOES NOT ABANDON NEGATIVITY AND DOWNFALLS ONE WILL STAY IN THE LOWER REALMS

Again, this is a personal instruction; it is really important to ensure that whatever activities we engage in become a cause for attaining liberation and enlightenment. Thus it is important for us to check whether an activity is in line with creating the causes for liberation and enlightenment, or whether it could become a cause to be reborn in the lower realms. One needs to investigate and analyse one's activities in this way to protect oneself from these unwanted consequences.

The verse that relates to this outline is:

*12. Therefore I should practice respectfully
According to my promise.
If I do not strive starting from today
Then I will go from low to low.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

Therefore I should practise respectfully the trainings to attain enlightenment for the welfare of sentient beings according to my promise.

If, after having generated bodhicitta and taken the vows, I do not make an effort, I will continuously go from lower realm to lower realm due to heavy downfalls.

As the commentary clearly explains, because of the reasons explained earlier, *I should practise respectfully the trainings to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings according to my promise.* Having considered the consequences of giving up bodhicitta (or allowing bodhicitta to degenerate), one commits here to practise *respectfully*, which means with great reverence, and one practises and engages in the training with *great humility* to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings in accordance with the *promise* that one has made earlier. So this is what is clearly explained.

Furthermore, *if after having generated bodhicitta and taken the vows, I do not make an effort, I will continuously go from lower realm to lower realm due to heavy downfalls* reminds us again of paying heed to avoiding the downfalls. Here, downfalls refer to breaching a commitment of the bodhisattva vows. Likewise for those who have self-liberation vows, one incurs a downfall if one breaches a commitment of the self-liberation vows.

2.2.1.2. THE BUDDHAS AND BODHISATTVAS WILL REMAIN IMPARTIAL

The root text is introduced with this rhetorical thought:

One may think: I shall be all right because the buddhas and bodhisattvas will rescue me.

This section indicates that one cannot be complacent and think in this way. It is also indicating the unique manner in which the Buddha's teachings benefit sentient beings. You should take note of this.

The main point presented here is that we cannot be complacent, thinking, 'Even though I've not managed too well to date, things will be better later on'. We often fall into this habit of thinking, 'Oh, maybe I didn't do so well this year, but that's fine. I will do better next year' or 'Next time round, I will do better!' We often procrastinate in this way and rather than taking the initiative to put everything into practice now, we leave it for later.

Here, the fault is along the same lines: even if I have incurred some faults and so forth, the buddhas and bodhisattvas who are comparatively kind, will definitely rescue me and I will have no problem.

The verse which relates to this is:

13. *Although innumerable buddhas benefiting
All sentient beings have passed,
Due to my faults
I was not an object of their help.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins with:

Innumerable buddhas and bodhisattvas who have worked for the benefit of all sentient beings have passed already, but due to one's own fault of degenerating bodhicitta and the trainings, one did not become the object of their cure.

As the commentary explains, *innumerable buddhas and bodhisattvas who have worked for the benefit of all sentient beings have passed*, which means that they have come to this world and have passed on. But *due to one's own fault of degenerating bodhicitta and the trainings, one did not become the object of their cure*.

This is also in line with a verse in the *Guru Puja*, which states

Even with the countless buddhas who have
descended,
I have not been able to be subdued.

The implication of the heading *The buddhas and bodhisattvas will be impartial* is that if one allows one's bodhicitta and practices to degenerate then even though they are kind and have descended, one will not be an object of benefit from the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Then, Gyaltsab Je quotes this line:

From the *Ornament of Clear Realisation*:

Although the king of gods shower rain, and so forth

This is an analogy: even though the gods may send down heavy rains, if the seed in the ground is actually faulty or rotten then no matter how much rain descends, it will not be able to sprout. The fault is not the lack of rain, but lies with the seed. Likewise, the rain of Dharma from innumerable buddhas has fallen, but because of their faults many sentient beings have not benefitted from that, and thus realisations and so forth have not sprouted in their minds.

Then Gyaltsab Je continues his commentary with this:

One may then think: I will be all right because they will rescue me later.

Then follows the second verse under this sub-heading:

14. *If I continue to act like this
It will be the same again and again.
I will experience sickness, bondage,
Being cut and mutilated in the lower realms.*

Gyaltsab Je's explanation of the meaning of the verse reads:

If I continue to act recklessly, I shall not become the object of their cure and will have to experience suffering continuously. I will have to take rebirth in the lower realms and even if I take rebirth in the happy realms I will have sickness and lack of freedom.

Either that or I will have sickness in the lower realms, and experience innumerable sufferings there, such as my arms and legs being cut off, and my body being lacerated.

This is explaining that after having made the pledge and generated bodhicitta, if one actually gives it up and acts recklessly, then one will *not become an object of their cure*. Rather, one will have to experience suffering continuously.

In relation to the ripened results, one *will have to take rebirth in the lower realms*. The environmental results are that, *even if I take rebirth in the happy realms*, such as the human realm, *I will have sickness and lack of freedom*. Even when reborn in the human realm, one may still *experience innumerable sufferings such as arms and legs being cut off and my body being lacerated* and so forth. So these are the types of sufferings that can be experienced even in a higher rebirth.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་ཀྱི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

18 March 2014

As usual we will now spend some time engaging in the meditation practise.

[meditation]

It is important to generate the appropriate motivation to receive the teachings. The main point is to ensure that the motivation is not tainted with self-interest. Then it is important to familiarise our minds with the wish to benefit others, as this naturally reduces self-interest. We need to intentionally develop this approach because otherwise almost every activity in which we engage has 'What is in it for me?' at the forefront of our minds. The practical benefit of generating the wish to benefit others is that the more we familiarise our minds with this wish, the less likely we will intentionally harm others. At the very least it will prevent us from harming others and actually help us to benefit whenever possible. By cultivating this approach we can start to measure the extent to which we have developed the genuine wish to benefit others.

Lama Tsong Khapa highlights that if we genuinely engage in benefiting others then our own needs will be fulfilled subsequently; this is an essential point. At his recent teachings in India His Holiness the Dalai Lama twice emphasised this point; we need to derive the real meaning from this. And that is, if we genuinely benefit others, our own needs will naturally be fulfilled subsequently, which in turn implies that we do not need to intentionally think or worry about our own needs. This approach prevents one from feeling discouraged from benefitting others. To summarise, the main point is that if one knows that one's own needs will be met and that we are not missing out by benefiting others, then one will not feel overwhelmed or discouraged about helping others. These are the essential points to bear in mind.

2.2.1. Conscientiously abandoning faults (cont.)

2.2.1.3. THE FREEDOMS AND ENDOWMENTS WILL BE DIFFICULT TO FIND

In relation to oneself, the point here is that if we give up bodhicitta (as mentioned previously), then this causes difficulty in finding the freedoms and endowments again.

As the outline here presents, the *freedoms and endowments will be difficult to find*, so we need to take this as a personal instruction to be conscientious in utilising the freedoms and endowments that we have now obtained. This heading is subdivided into two:

2.2.1.3.1. If bodhicitta degenerates, the freedoms and endowments with the condition of four wheels are difficult to find

2.2.1.3.2. Although attaining one, as it disintegrates quickly make an effort

2.2.1.3.1. If bodhicitta degenerates, the freedoms and endowments with the condition of four wheels are difficult to find

Due to a lack of conscientiousness, if one's bodhicitta degenerates, then the freedoms and endowments and the conditions of the four wheels, which are necessary to traverse the Mahayana path, will be difficult to find.

I will list and then explain the four wheels:

1. Living in a conducive place
2. Relying on a sublime being
3. Making aspirational prayers
4. Accumulating merit

1. The first is to abide in a place which is conducive for the Mahayana path to be actualised. This is also presented simply in some texts as living in a place where one can accumulate virtue.

2. The second is to associate and rely on a sublime being, such as a virtuous friend, who leads one on a path to abandon negativity (overcoming faults) and adopt virtue (acquiring good qualities). Thus, the first indicates the kind of place that one should abide in, and the second is in relation to the kind of being that one should rely upon.

3. The third is to be endowed with the results of aspirational prayers that one has previously made.

4. And the fourth is to be endowed with the results of previously accumulated merit.

The conditions of the four wheels were also presented in *Precious Garland*. As direct advice to the king, Nagarjuna highlighted that the freedoms and endowments with the condition of the four wheels are difficult to obtain in the future. He exhorts the king, 'since you have obtained the eight freedoms and ten endowments with the conditions of the four wheels now, you must definitely use them to ensure that they don't go to waste, by practising the Dharma'.

To take this as personal instruction, we need to relate all the points in the four conditions to our own lives; that is, to actually see the significance of making aspirational prayers and see the significance of accumulating merit etc. Whatever attempt we make to accumulate merit is extremely important because the merit that we accumulate now will be experienced later as ripened results with favourable conditions. Likewise, making very strong aspirational prayers now when we have the opportunity is also important and has great significance. As mentioned in other sutras and teachings, the enlightened beings are constantly benefiting sentient beings now as a result of their past aspirational prayers. These are the points we need to keep in mind by understanding their significance.

The main point here is that it is not sufficient just to have the eight freedoms and ten endowments and the conditions of the four wheels. What we need to do is ensure that they are utilised by practising the Dharma to bring about the ultimate goals we seek. That is the main point. It is presented here that the freedoms, endowments and conditions of the four wheels are extremely difficult to find, so we definitely need to utilise them wisely. You will recall that at the end of the *Guru Puja* there is a dedication, 'May I not be separated from the four

Mahayana wheels'. This is exactly what is being explained here.

The commentary introduces the meaning of this verse with a hypothetical query:

One may think: I will make an effort when I attain the freedoms and endowments later on.

One may become complacent by thinking *I will make an effort when I attain the freedoms and endowments later on*. So, as a way to overcome this sort of apathetic resolution in one's mind, the verse presents:

15. *The coming of a tathagata
Faith and the attainment of a human body—
These, making it possible to meditate on virtue,
Since they are rare, when will they be attained?*

The commentary then reads:

To have attained the five personal endowments and the five circumstantial endowments that make it possible to meditate on virtue, is as rare as the Udumbara flower.

These are, among others:

- A tathagata has descended.
- One has faith in the three baskets of the Buddha's teachings.
- One has also attained a human body.
- One has been reborn in a central country.
- One has complete faculties.
- One has not transgressed the border of karma.

The commentary explains that *a tathagata* (or a buddha) *has descended* relates to one of the endowments. The ten endowments are categorised into five personal or internal endowments, and five that are circumstantial or external endowments. That a Buddha has descended to this earth is an external endowment. It relates to the fact that we are born in a light eon or an illuminated eon, which is at a time when the Buddha has descended to this earth; thus this condition is intact for oneself. There is also the period called a dark eon, which is a time when the Buddha has not descended.

The next line in the verse, *One has faith in the three baskets of the Buddha's teachings* is a personal endowment. The Lam Rim teachings present this in abbreviated form as having faith in the source, which is *having faith in the three baskets of the Buddha's teachings*. It is very rare indeed to have genuine faith in the three baskets of the Buddha's teachings.

The next lines are: *One has also attained a human body and not only has a human body been obtained, but one has been born in a central country*. These are both personal endowments.

The final two lines are: *One has complete faculties* and *One has not transgressed the border of karma* (or extreme actions).

The five personal endowments have been explicitly presented here: one has faith in the Buddha's teachings; one has obtained a human body; one has been reborn in a central country; one has complete faculties and one has not transgressed the border of karma, for example having wrong views about karma is concluding that karma doesn't exist, or that the objects of refuge don't exist and so forth.

Among the five circumstantial endowments 'a tathagata has descended' is presented here. The remaining four

after the Buddha has descended are: the Buddha has taught; the teachings still remain in the world; there are those who are practising the teachings; there are those who are kind and support practitioners.

For us, all these endowments are intact. There is no question we've been born a human; born in a light age when the Buddha has come to this world and taught, and where the Buddha's teachings remain; born in a central country where the Buddha's teachings are taught; and being born with full faculties. Even though we may not have met the actual Buddha Shakyamuni, the teachings are presented to us by great teachers of his direct lineage. As these teachers represent Buddha Shakyamuni, we have received the unbroken lineage of the teachings from the unmistakable masters who are practicing at this time.

The commentary continues:

If this is so rare, then to have attained a precious human rebirth where one trains in the two minds is even rarer.

The *precious human rebirth* refers to one with the endowments, and *where one trains in the two minds* refers to the two minds of bodhicitta. The key point here is that if it is difficult to obtain the endowments, then to actually attain a state where one develops the two minds of bodhicitta is even rarer.

2.2.1.3.2. *Although attaining one, as it disintegrates quickly make an effort*

The next verse is preceded by another hypothetical doubt:

One may think: This body I have currently attained has no obstructing conditions against it and is endowed with conducive conditions. Hence I shall practise later.

This doubt represents the need to contemplate on death and impermanence as a way to show how such doubts and queries occur and obstruct one from utilising one's perfect opportunities.

The verse reads:

16. *A day like this without sickness,
Although there is food and no harm,
Life is deceptive on a momentary basis,
The body is a one-time loan.*

The commentary begins with:

One should not act as if one has leisure.

We need to really consider this point, as we often procrastinate about our practise of Dharma by falling under the illusion that we have time to practise later. When we look at how this thought affects us in what we do now, it leads to mostly non-virtuous activities which incur negativities. One must judge one's own activities. If one finds one is leaving one's practise until later, then what is being done now is activities that will incur negativity. This is the fault of thinking that we have leisure and that we have plenty of time to practise later.

An understanding of death and impermanence definitely relates to this point in that the reason why *one should not act as if one has leisure* is because one's life with the freedoms and endowments could end at any moment and then one's opportunity to practise Dharma would have been completely wasted.

The commentary further explains:

A human body without the obstructing condition of sickness is like a day in the context of saying: 'A day like this'.

The key here is the word 'a day' (or 'a sun' in Tibetan) which means a day without sickness.

The commentary goes on:

But a day like this, without sickness, without the obstructing conditions of harm...

This line refers to factors that oppose one's health or wellbeing, oneself in general, or one's life conditions

...and with the conducive conditions of food and so forth, is deceptive....

This line explains that it is deceptive to maintain the view that one has everything going well for oneself (food etc.) because, as the commentary goes on to explain:

Life does not abide even for one moment and disintegrates quickly. This body is only a one-time loan and one has no power over it.

The point presented here is that our life is being used up on a momentary basis, and it can end at any given moment. Thus one should not fall under the deception that one has time to practise the Dharma later on.

The commentary uses the analogy *that the body is like a one-time loan*. This is a very significant analogy to illustrate the point that our body is indeed like a loan, because we have to give it back—we don't have real power over it; i.e. all the good conditions that we have with this body can end at any moment. Recall using something borrowed: we always know we do not have complete control over the object because it belongs to someone else, and eventually will have to be given back. Also, we cannot use it for as long as we want, or do anything we like with it. Because it is on loan we have to take good care of it and give it back at the appropriate time. Similarly, our bodies are like this. An analogy presented in the thirty-seven practices of a bodhisattva compares our bodies to a guest house with the guest being our consciousness. So just as a guest stays in a guest house for a short time and then moves on, our consciousness comes into this body, remains for a short time and then moves on.

The teaching emphasises that our body is like something which is on loan. If we ask ourselves whether our body belongs to oneself, then technically it does, however we also recognise that we don't have real power or ownership over it because we have to discard it. At the time of death, the consciousness moves on and we have to leave our body behind. The Lam Rim teachings state that since our consciousness will definitely depart from our body, only the Dharma will help us at that time. This is the point to recognise: that it is only the Dharma that will help one at the time of death when our consciousness departs the body. As only the Dharma can help us, we need to try and implement it in our everyday lives to the best of our ability. I have tried to emphasise these points to you, and of course I do this out of great concern and kindness for your well-being. Recognise that you have an opportunity to accrue virtue even in everyday activities such as eating and drinking, by making offerings, by reminding oneself that one is eating for the sake of

benefitting all sentient beings, that one is drinking for the benefit of all sentient beings etc. In this way, whatever activity one does, when one walks, sits, does tasks at work, in short, whatever activity one engages in can be utilised, and incorporated into one's practise so that it becomes a means to accumulate virtue. The practise of Dharma in short is to engage in creating virtue.

The commentary concludes:

Therefore, do not act as if there is time, and make an effort.

2.2.1.4. IF REBORN IN THE LOWER REALMS ONE HAS NO OPPORTUNITY TO GENERATE VIRTUE

Try to embrace what is being presented here and take it to heart. As I remind you again and again, don't lose the opportunity to practise or accumulate merit and virtue in whatever way you can now, when you have the opportunity, because if you were to lose that opportunity, it would be an incredibly great loss. It is hard for us to imagine being reborn in the lower realms (such as an animal) where one would not have the same opportunities again. In comparison to losing wealth, losing the opportunity to practise Dharma is a far greater loss. Recently you might have heard of instances where some very wealthy people, due to certain circumstances, lost their wealth and consequently became depressed, sick and died soon afterwards. All the sickness, the worry and the sadness was caused merely by losing material wealth. Compared to losing the opportunity to practise Dharma, losing material wealth is not really significant at all. Losing material wealth will not cause one to go to the lower realms, but losing the opportunity to practise Dharma is definitely a cause to go to the lower realms and be reborn as something like an animal. Therefore, pay attention to the following points.

Under this heading there are three subdivisions:

2.2.1.4.1. There is no opportunity for virtue in the lower realms

2.2.1.4.2. If one does not strive while in the happy realms one will be confused in the lower realms concerning what is to be practised and abandoned

2.2.1.4.3. It is extremely difficult to be liberated from the lower realms

2.2.1.4.1. *There is no opportunity for virtue in the lower realms*

The verse is again preceded with a hypothetical query:

It is unsuitable to relax, thinking: I will attain a succession of precious human rebirths, so I will practise later on.

The verse reads:

17. *With behaviour like this
I will not even attain a human body.
If I do not attain a human body
There will be only negativity and no virtue.*

The commentary reads:

Someone like myself, through actions that create negativity and no virtue, will not even attain a human body in the next life.

If I take rebirth in the lower realms, without attaining a human body I will only generate non-virtue and not the slightest amount of virtue, and it will be difficult to be reborn again in the happy realms.

As the commentary indicates we need to take the advice here as personal instruction. When looking into one's own behaviour, *someone like myself*, one is one's own best judge; one knows oneself best. Therefore looking honestly into oneself, if one's actions incur negativity and hardly any virtue *through actions that create negativity and no virtue* then the result is that one *will not even attain a human body in the next life*. This aims to counteract the notion we may have that: 'Oh, if I don't get around to doing well in this life I shouldn't worry too much because in my next life I can continue to practise.' But what does obtaining a human rebirth in the next life depend on - virtue or negativity? If the causes depend on virtue, then the question one needs to ask oneself is, 'Have I accumulated virtue?' Is one actually engaging in virtue now, or is one engaging more in negativity? This is something we have to look into. If, when you look into your actions you find that you are creating virtue and no negativity, then a good rebirth in your next life is guaranteed. But if, after looking into your actions you find you are creating more negativity and hardly any virtue, then, as the commentary states, you will not *even attain a human body in the next life*.

The commentary continues: *If I take rebirth in the lower realms, I will only generate non-virtue and not the slightest amount of virtue, and it will be difficult to be reborn again in the happy realms*. So, if one has found that one's actions are mostly negative, then the result is rebirth in the lower realms. If one were to be born in the lower realms, the opportunity to accrue virtue is almost none. Thus, since it is hardly possible to accrue virtue in the lower realms, it will be extremely difficult to be reborn again in the happy realms such as a human again.

The emphasis here is the importance of ensuring that one engages in virtue and shuns negativity. The cause for a fortunate rebirth in the happy realms is virtue, and the cause for rebirth in the lower, unfortunate realms is non-virtue. To be free from a rebirth in the lower realms, we must shun negativity and adopt virtue. At the time of death we don't disappear and become nothing; there is a continuity. Even those who believe in a creator or God agree that we don't completely disappear or disintegrate at the time of death and that there is continuity. They believe that if one has acted according to God's wishes then one will progress into a good state, and if not, one will go into an unfortunate state. The explanation here is the same: if we have created negativity we will have an unfortunate rebirth, and if we have accumulated virtues we will have a fortunate rebirth. The point is, as we will not disappear and become nothing after our death, we need to take responsibility for ensuring that we have a good rebirth. His Holiness explains that what the Christian faith calls the soul is similar to what we call the 'self'. So even in the Christian faith they say that after death the soul continues.

Again, why is it difficult to be reborn again in the happy realms? Firstly, we can relate to the existence of unfortunate rebirths. So, if we were to be reborn in any of these unfortunate states, such as the hell realms, the hungry ghost realms or the animal realms, we would be completely immersed in suffering. If this occurs there would be hardly any opportunity for virtue to occur in

the mind. Take the example of the animal realm, where we can see that with many, their very existence depends on preying on other animals and consuming their flesh. They must actively go out and kill other living beings for their very survival. If they didn't do that they would not survive. Imagine how much negativity they incur just having to survive by killing other beings. Hence there is hardly any opportunity for animals to accumulate virtues when in the lower realms, which is why it is difficult to go from a lower realm to a higher realm. Note that it is easy to go from a higher rebirth to a lower rebirth—that is very easy! However, ascending from a lower rebirth to a higher rebirth is very difficult.

To summarise the meaning of the text in more practical terms, it is suggesting it is better not to go to a place where you would have much suffering and misery and in which it would be very difficult to accumulate virtue. Rather, wouldn't it be better for you to remain in a happier state where you can accumulate virtue? If you're enjoying some leisure now in this realm, wouldn't it be better to be reborn into such a realm again in the future, rather than having to take rebirth in a state of much suffering? If you agree that you don't want to be reborn in a realm where there is more suffering, and you want to be reborn continuously in happy rebirths, then what you need to do is intentionally avoid creating negativity and proactively accumulate virtue. This is how we need to practise to create the causes for that outcome.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་པོ་འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷོ་ལྷན་པ་ལ་འཇམ་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

25 March 2014

As usual we can spend some time in meditation.

[meditation]

Now we can generate the motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, to alleviate all their suffering and bring them to ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put it into practice well.

2.2.1. Conscientiously abandoning faults

2.2.1.4. IF REBORN IN THE LOWER REALMS ONE HAS NO OPPORTUNITY TO GENERATE VIRTUE (CONT.)

2.2.1.4.2. If one does not strive while in the happy realms one will be confused in the lower realms concerning what is to be practised and abandoned

We need to consider how fortunate we are to have obtained this perfect human rebirth with its freedoms and endowments. If we were to be reborn in the lower realms we would hardly have any opportunity to engage in virtue, because of the lack of wisdom, and thus no opportunity to create the causes to obtain higher rebirths. So we need to remind ourselves again and again that it is like a miracle and pure chance that we have obtained such good conditions now. When we think about it in great detail we can see how incredibly fortunate we are to have these amazing conditions now, and in that way develop a great sense of joy. It would be extremely foolish to waste the good conditions that we enjoy now!

When we think of our own circumstances we can see how remarkable it is that we have all of these perfect conditions now. In my case it may seem more natural, in that that I was brought up as a Buddhist because of my birth into a Buddhist family. Traditionally, the very first thing Tibetan parents do is bring their child to a revered and respected lama or geshe. This happened in my case and I was given the name Lobsang Dorje. So we could say that the conditions were already there for me to be a Buddhist. Of course there was no choice—it was my destiny to be brought up in that way. As amazing as that is, your situation is even more amazing. Considering your background and so forth, it is really quite amazing for you to have met all of these conditions now.

The main point in considering all of this is that it should encourage us to engage in the practice of Dharma. Having considered how we enjoy these great conditions now, and how they will not come our way again easily, we need to take the initiative to utilise every minute of the day to practise the Dharma.

Newer students seem to find it hard to deal with the explanations of the sufferings. As many of you are already quite familiar with them it might be easier for

you, but it seems to be really difficult for new students to listen to the extensive explanations of sufferings. At his recent teachings in Sera, His Holiness the Dalai Lama commented on the late Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey's great skills in presenting the teachings. Those of you who were there would have heard him say that. Indeed, when Geshe Ngawang Dhargye presented teachings on bodhicitta, the students' minds would naturally become subdued. Apparently there was one occasion when a new student attended a class where Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey was teaching on bodhicitta and the kindness of others. He went into great detail and explained it in a way that made this person really inspired and drawn to the teachings. However, when Geshe-la started to explain the sufferings, it became difficult for this student to take it in, so he started to slowly come out of the teachings. He just didn't want to listen to accounts of suffering.

In 1985 when Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey came to Australia he gave teachings at Atisha Centre. This time there was a lady from Germany who later commented that when she went to the teachings she was really inspired and it was very helpful for her mind. She did, however, confess that when it came to the topic of suffering, it was hard to accept all of it. About three years later she came to see me and confided, 'Those sufferings that Geshe-la was explaining in detail were hard for me to accept then, but later I actually experienced those very sufferings. It was exactly as Geshe-la described them'.

Initially it was hard for her to accept some of descriptions of the sufferings—even the sufferings of the human realm were hard for her to accept. However, later she found from her own experience that they were definitely true. This is an instance of where it might be difficult to fully grasp some aspects of the teachings initially, but because they are the words of truth, they gradually become much clearer due to one's understanding and experiences.

The verse relating to this heading reads:

*18. If, although having the fortune to practice virtue,
I do not create virtue,
Then what am I going to do
When completely confused by the lower realm's sufferings.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

If, although having the fortune to practise virtue, I do not make an effort now to practise virtue, then how am I going to practise when I am in the lower realms?

At that time I am miserable because of continuously experiencing the feeling of suffering of the lower realms, and I am confused concerning what has to be practised and what has to be abandoned. As a result, I cannot practise anything.

Hence I need to make an effort now at this time when I have obtained freedom and endowments.

First of all, the commentary acknowledges that one has the *fortune to practise virtue*. Here we can use ourselves as an example of a fortunate one who is endowed with two types of fortune; the fortune of not being deprived of material necessities, and not being deprived of the conditions for practising the Dharma. I consider one is fortunate if one is endowed with both good external and internal conditions.

The Tibetan term *kal-den*, translated into English as fortunate, has the literal connotation of someone who possesses their share. So if we use that literal meaning from the Tibetan word, then *fortune* can relate to having our share of the perfect conditions to practise the Dharma, as well as having our share of material conditions.

As the commentary explains, *although one does have this fortune to practise virtue*, i.e. the good conditions that enable us to practise virtue, that is not sufficient in itself if *I do not make an effort now to practise virtue*. It is not sufficient to have these good conditions if we don't strive to put them into practice.

Here we need to understand that the emphasis is on the necessity for engaging in the practice of Dharma if we are to be saved from the sufferings. What is being implied here is that the Dharma Jewel is the real protector which needs to be cultivated within oneself. As the *Offering Prayer* reads:

To supreme teacher, the precious Buddha;
To the supreme protector, the precious Dharma;
To the supreme guides, the precious Sangha;
To these Three Jewels, the objects of refuge, I make
this offering.

The Dharma developed within oneself is indeed the real protector, which implies that one is one's own saviour and liberator.

What we really need to consider is how we are our own protector and guide. The person who guides us to fortunate rebirths in the higher realms is none other than ourselves. So we are the ones who need to take the initiative to guide ourselves to a higher rebirth and protect ourselves from lower rebirths. How foolish would it be to practise the reverse, and guide ourselves to the lower realms? Why on earth would you want to work towards an unfortunate rebirth? That wouldn't be wise at all. No-one else but ourselves can guide us to a higher rebirth, so it is up to us to take the initiative. Likewise, no one can lead us, or drag us down to the lower realm but ourselves. We are the ones who must take the initiative to prevent being reborn in the lower realms. Likewise, one cannot ultimately guide others to the higher realms or lead them to the lower realms. The point here is that we have to take personal responsibility for securing good conditions for ourselves in the future.

Thus, in very simple terms, if the finger is to be pointed, it has to be pointed at ourselves; we need to constantly remind ourselves, 'Don't lead yourself down to the lower realms, but lead yourself up to a higher rebirth'. This is the sort of internal dialogue we need to engage in to ensure that we are creating the causes for higher rebirth.

Even though it is not in the Tibetan root text, the commentary poses a rhetorical question: *how am I going to practise when I am in the lower realms?* The point here is that one will not be able to practise in the lower realms, because *at that time I am miserable because of continuously experiencing the feeling of suffering of the lower realms*. There is a Tibetan word here, which has a connotation of intense suffering. The point is that being completely immersed in intense suffering deprives one of the initiative to practise Dharma.

Furthermore, *I am confused concerning what has to be practised and what has to be abandoned. As a result, I cannot practise anything*. The point here is that because one lacks the intelligence or wisdom to be able to know what is virtue, which is to be adopted, and negativity, which is to be abandoned, one cannot engage in practice. How can you abandon what you don't know? These are actually quite pertinent and pointed points. They are a personal instruction that we really need to apply in our everyday thinking. Hence, Gyaltsab Je concludes, *we need to make an effort now when we have obtained the freedoms and endowments*.

It is also then good to complement these points with our understanding of the Lam Rim teachings, which explain the need to practise Dharma, and the need to practise Dharma right now.

2.2.1.4.3. *It is extremely difficult to be liberated from the lower realms*

One might think, 'If I were to go to lower realms, then I would eventually be able to free myself from that'. However, once in the lower realms it is very difficult to leave them.

Again, we need to relate this point to our understanding of the difficulty of finding the freedoms and endowments that we have gained from the Lam Rim teaching. The Lam Rim explains that finding the freedoms and endowments is difficult because accumulating their causes and so forth is extremely difficult.

The relevant verse reads:

19. *One did not generate virtue
And one accumulated negativity easily.
Even for ten million eons
One will not hear even the words 'happy
realm'.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

It is extremely difficult to later obtain the freedoms and endowments because in this life one has not generated any virtue, and accumulated negativity easily, and so one will not even hear the words 'happy realm' for ten million eons.

The essential point here is that it *is extremely difficult to later obtain the freedoms and endowments*. While the explanation in the commentary is quite easy to understand, the main point is that we really need to incorporate it into our minds so that it is a constant source of encouragement. As explained here, the reason why it is extremely difficult to obtain the freedoms and endowments in the future is *because in this life one has not generated any virtue and has accumulated negativities*. If one has not generated any virtue and accumulated negativities, then it is difficult to obtain the freedoms and endowments in the future. Again, we can relate this to the explanations in the Lam Rim, which say that the cause of obtaining the freedoms and endowments is virtue.

If we have not accumulated the causes then naturally we will not be able to experience the result, specifically the result of the freedoms and endowments. If one is reborn in the lower realms then *one will not even hear the words 'happy realms' for ten million eons*. This means that if one were to be reborn in the lower realms then, let alone being able to create the causes for the freedoms and

endowments, one will not even know what the freedoms and endowments are, just like a creature in the depths of the ocean could not be aware of other types of existence. Without even knowing about them, the chances of creating the causes for a happy existence would be very remote, to the point of being virtually impossible. Again, the main point here is to take this as an encouragement to actually practise the Dharma.

To explain this in practical terms, if we wish to obtain a perfect human rebirth with its freedoms and endowments in the next lifetime, then we need to shun negativity and accumulate virtue. We can wish as much as we want, to obtain good conditions and be born as human beings, but if we continuously create negativity and put little or no effort into accumulating virtue, then we are not creating the causes to enjoy these good conditions again in the future. All too often we fall into a state of procrastination thinking, 'Well, even if I don't do too well this time round I will probably obtain a human rebirth again next time and it might be better the next time round. I will do better then'. However, being able to obtain a perfect a human rebirth again in the future is dependent on the causes and conditions that we need to be creating now.

2.2.1.5. WHY IT IS DIFFICULT TO FIND FREEDOMS AND ENDOWMENTS

The relevant verse reads:

20. *For that very reason the Bhagavan taught
That merely becoming human is extremely
difficult,
As it is for a turtle
To put its neck through the yoke floating on the
great ocean.*

Gyaltsab Je begins his explanation of this verse with:

Because it is very difficult to find a happy rebirth from the lower realms, the Bhagavan taught in his perfect scriptures:

Then Gyaltsab Je quotes the *Perfect Sutra*:

Bhikkhus, if all this ground were to become a great ocean on which a yoke with one hole is moved by the wind. And in that ocean if there was a blind turtle that only sticks its neck out of the water once a hundred years.

Bhikkhus, what do you think? Is it easy for the turtle to catch the yoke with its neck? 'Tathagata, it is not so'. The Tathagata replied: Bhikkhus, similarly is it difficult merely to attain a human rebirth.

The commentary then continues

If one does not create virtue and accumulates negativity, then one does not even hear the word 'happy migration'. For that reason, the Bhagavan taught that merely to attain a human rebirth is much more difficult than for the blind turtle that comes up only every hundred years, to stick its neck into the single hole of the yoke floating on the surface of the ocean, being moved here and there by the wind.

Therefore one needs to make an effort to practise virtue when one is in the happy migration.

As the commentary explains, the freedoms and endowments are incredibly difficult to find, and even more so when one is in the lower realms. In the *Perfect Sutra* the Buddha gave a hypothetical example to illustrate the degree of difficulty this entails. We imagine

the whole ground becoming an incredibly vast ocean, and on that the ocean is a single yoke with only one hole in it, and this yoke is constantly moved by the wind. At the bottom of the ocean is a blind turtle, which surfaces only once every hundred years. The likelihood of that blind turtle entering its neck into that single hole of the yoke is very remote indeed.

Then the Buddha asked his disciples, 'What is the likelihood of this happening? Is it easy for a blind turtle to enter its neck into the hole?'. They replied, '*It is not so, it is very difficult*'. This, said the Buddha, is as difficult as attaining a human rebirth.

As explained in the teachings, each part of this example is an analogy.

- The blind turtle represents ignorant beings who are ignorant of the wisdom as to what to adopt and what to discard.
- Once every hundred years is an analogy to the fact that it is very rare to be reborn as a human being with all the perfect conditions.
- The turtle surfacing is analogous to being reborn in a higher rebirth.
- The yoke on the surface of the ocean represents the Buddha's teachings.

Just as the likelihood of that blind turtle placing its neck into the yoke is a near impossibility, taking a higher rebirth, with the chance of meeting with the Buddha's teaching is very, very remote. One might be reborn as a human, but in the country or place where his teachings are not available, or where there are no conditions for the Dharma to be taught or practised. So one might be born as human, but without the conditions to practise. From this analogy, we can see how extremely difficult it is to find all these freedoms and endowments intact.

Obtaining the freedoms and endowments of a higher rebirth, with all the perfect conditions, is said to be even more remote than this hypothetical example of the chance of a blind turtle sticking its neck into the hole of the yoke. That is how it explained in the teachings.

Then the commentary on this section concludes with, *Therefore one needs to make an effort to practise virtue when one is in the happy migration.*

2.2.2. Conscientiously meditating on virtue

This section is subdivided into three:

2.2.2.1. It is appropriate to strive in abandoning the infinite negativity accumulated previously

2.2.2.2. Why a single suffering in the lower realm exhausts that karma, but does not exhaust the karma of the lower realm

2.2.2.3. Why it is appropriate to strive in the antidote to negativity

2.2.2.1. IT IS APPROPRIATE TO STRIVE IN ABANDONING THE INFINITE NEGATIVITY ACCUMULATED PREVIOUSLY

This explanation follows on from the earlier explanation that if creating negativity is the cause for one to be born in the lower realm, then it is most appropriate that one strives to purify the infinite non-virtue accumulated previously.

The verse relating to this outline reads:

21. *If one remains in the naraks for eons
Due to one moment of negativity,
Then why even mention that one won't go to
the happy realms
Due to the negativity accumulated in
beginningless samsara?*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

If one has to remain in the hells without respite for eons due to only one moment of anger at a bodhisattva, then what need is there to mention that one will not go to the happy migrations due to the negativity in one's continuum that has been accumulated since beginningless time, and has not been destroyed by an antidote?

One should train in purifying negativity by way of the four powers.

When the commentary says, *If one has to remain in the hells without respite due to only one moment of anger at a bodhisattva*, it is referring to the impact of just one moment of negative karma. This is in contrast to the intense negative karma that is created over a long period in many previous lifetimes. Here, because the object of one's anger is a bodhisattva, a very superior object, the negativity created is a cause leading to the hells without respite, for a long period of time. We can also relate this to the fact that karma multiplies greatly, which is one of the four characteristics of karma. So the main point here is that even a short moment of negative karma such as anger can have heavy negative consequences.

The duration of the cause might only be *a moment of anger at a bodhisattva* but the result is that *one has to remain in hell without respite for eons*. Because of the short duration of the negative deed, one might think, 'Oh, this is a very small negative deed over a short period of time, so the consequences may not be too bad'. However, as explained here, if one were to create negative karma in relation to a supreme object such as a bodhisattva, even if it is of short duration, the consequence is that one will have to experience being born in the hell realms for many eons. Gyaltsab Rinpoche also explains this point very clearly in his other works, where he exhorts us to be mindful and particularly careful not to criticise and be judgemental of others with anger, because we cannot know who is a bodhisattva. So we need to protect ourselves from this grave misdeed lest we end up criticising and becoming angry with a bodhisattva.

The commentary then further explains that if one will remain in hell without respite for eons just from one moment of anger towards a bodhisattva, *then what need is there to mention that one will not go to the happy migrations due to the negativity in one's continuum that has been accumulated since beginningless times and has not been destroyed by an antidote?* As we have been in samsara since beginningless time, we have accumulated infinite negativities in the past. For as long as those negativities are still within our mental continuum, not destroyed by an antidote, there should be no doubt about the possibility of being reborn in the lower realms. The point here is that these negativities that have been accumulated since beginningless time can be destroyed when the antidote is applied. So *one should train in purifying negativity by way of the four powers*.

The four opponent powers were explained previously, and we need to take this advice to heart as a personal instruction. We need to remind ourselves again and again that we need to be constantly mindful of purifying the negativities that we have accumulated in the past by applying the four opponent powers. Then we need to guard ourselves from creating even more negativities. When we adopt this as our practice in our daily life then we will definitely be applying the antidote for overcoming these negativities. If we adopt the reverse of that i.e. keep virtues at bay and embrace the negativities, then the price will be rebirth in the lower realms.

However we also need to be mindful about not becoming disheartened because we have accumulated so much negativity in the past, or the fact that we find ourselves continuously engaging in negativities now, seemingly without control, which is due to our habituation with these negativities. While that prospect may seem quite daunting, we do have the ability to purify negativities. We have the knowledge and we have the means to firstly identify what is negativity, and when we find that we have engaged in some negativities, we have the means to purify them by applying the four opponent powers.

So it is not at all a hopeless situation because we do have that opportunity to purify our negativities. As I have mentioned previously, while an immediate negativity may be the trigger for a purification practice, when we actually engage in that practice it is very important that we also bring to mind any negativity that we have created in the past. In relation to this life we can definitely recall negativities that we had created in the earlier part of the day, last night, last week, last month, last year, and in the earlier part of one's life. By recalling them we can inevitably feel strong regret about accumulating those negativities.

As the teachings mention, when one develops a very strong regret then that suffices to purify a great amount of negativity. The four opponent powers entail being profoundly regretful that yet again one has been compelled to engage in these negativities; taking refuge, as a quick way of applying the antidote; and then resolving not to commit these misdeeds again. If we find that we have created negativity in the morning, we try to purify it by noon. If further on in the day one finds one has again created negativity then, towards the evening one again applies the four opponent powers of developing regret and so forth. In this way, by applying mindfulness we are able to apply the measures of purifying negativities through the four opponent powers, by taking refuge and so forth.

In fact, the practice of purification is, by default, also the optimum means for accumulating merit. So purification practice is incredibly worthwhile. When we conduct ourselves in our daily life by regretting negativities we have created in the past, then that regret will be the impetus to purify these negativities. Likewise, when we think about the virtues we have definitely created, we can rejoice. If we conduct our daily life in this way, rejoicing in good deeds and purifying our negative deeds, then we will secure a meaningful life. As we purify negative karma and engage in these practices the mind naturally becomes happier and happier, and there will naturally be

more joy in one's mind. That is a practical positive result of the purification practice.

A Dharma practitioner is one who, based on their understanding of karma, understands that virtue results in happiness and non-virtue results in unhappiness. Based on that simple principle, if we find that we have created some non-virtue, then, because we don't want to experience the result, which is unhappiness and suffering, we can take the initiative to purify those accumulated negativities. And then, in every possible way, we try to adopt a virtuous mind, and engage in virtuous deeds, because we wish to experience the positive result of happiness. When we conduct ourselves in that way then that constitutes a real Dharma practitioner.

Put simply, when we apply the purification practice with the four opponent powers then that very practice becomes the means to block the passage or doorway to the lower realms. And then, as when we engage in virtues and accumulate merit it opens the doorway or passage to a higher rebirth.

There are only two doorways and it is up to us to choose which one we want to enter. We have no other choice but these two doorways, so we need to make the right choice.

2.2.2.2. WHY A SINGLE SUFFERING IN THE LOWER REALM EXHAUSTS THAT KARMA, BUT DOES NOT EXHAUST THE KARMA OF THE LOWER REALM

The next verse is explained in the context of overcoming another hypothetical doubt; we might again think, 'If experiencing the sufferings in the lower realms will exhaust one's karma to be in the lower realms, then I will be reborn again in higher realm'. However, by virtue of being in the lower realms one will be continuously creating more causes to remain there, which is why it is not easy to free oneself from the lower realms.

As will be explained, once born in the lower realms one will quite naturally and spontaneously create further negative karmas to remain in the lower realms, continuously propelling one from one unfortunate rebirth to the next. We can avoid that by using our current fortunate rebirth to apply the causes and conditions to be born again in the higher realms. That would be a crucial way to practice, for just experiencing the consequences of one unfortunate rebirth does not mean that the karma to be born in the lower realms will be completely exhausted.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

1 April 2014

When we recite the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer* at the beginning of any practice, it is really good to reflect on it as an opportunity to generate the optimum motivation for doing the practice. We need to remember that taking refuge is the essential criteria for ensuring that the practice is a Buddhist practice, whilst generating bodhicitta ensures that the practice is a Mahayana practice.

It seems that every religion has its own form of refuge prayer that is recited at the beginning of every ceremony.

So, based on the motivation we have generated during the recitation of the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, we can now engage in our meditation practice.

[meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teaching, and put it into practice well.

2.2.2.2. WHY A SINGLE SUFFERING IN THE LOWER REALM EXHAUSTS THAT KARMA, BUT DOES NOT EXHAUST THE KARMA OF THE LOWER REALM

Gyaltsab Je begins his commentary on this section of the text with this query:

One may think: It is not difficult to become liberated from the lower realms because after the result is exhausted I will take rebirth in the happy migration.

This query is yet another excuse to procrastinate in one's Dharma practice, where one thinks, 'If I were to be reborn in the lower realms, then when that karma is used up I will be able to take a higher rebirth, and I'll be able to achieve liberation then'. This thinking is based on the fact that the karma to be reborn in the lower realms occurs as a result of previous karma, and that karma exhausts itself. Reasoning that rebirth in the lower realms means using up negative karma, thus leaving it possible to be able to take rebirth in the higher realms sooner rather than later, and then achieve liberation, can lead to laziness and procrastination about practising the Dharma.

The verse relating to this outline reads:

22. *Only through the mere experience
One will not be liberated, because
During the experience
One generates other negativities.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

A person will not be liberated from the lower realms merely through experiencing the result of only one negative action, because while one is experiencing the suffering result of previous karma one adventitiously

creates other negativity that brings forth powerful suffering.

As explained here, merely experiencing the results of previously created negative karma does not mean one will be *liberated from the lower realms*. The commentary further explains that *while one is experiencing the suffering result of previous karma, one adventitiously creates other negativity that brings forth powerful suffering*. In addition to experiencing the sufferings of the lower realms, the conditions there are a cause to repeatedly create even more negative karma, which brings about even more suffering. Here we can use the example of the animal realm, a lower realm with which we are very familiar. We can see that most animals have to constantly engage in negative actions for their very survival. They cannot recognise their actions as negativity, let alone know that they can be purified. Due to their state of ignorance they have no knowledge of the ways to create virtue, or to shun negativity. Even we humans, who do have that intelligence and knowledge, find it difficult to avoid negativity and adopt virtue. Animals have no such choice.

The personal instruction here is that being reborn in the lower realms will be a perpetual cause for creating further negative karma, and thus continuous rebirth in the lower realms over a long period of time. To avoid that situation we need to use the good conditions we have now to avoid the negative causes that will lead to rebirth in a lower realm, and adopt the positive causes or virtue that will ensure that we have a good rebirth. Then we can continuously go from one fortunate rebirth to the next, continuously engaging in creating virtue and merit until we reach the ultimate goal. Just as the result of previous negative karma is to be reborn in the lower realms, rebirth in the fortunate realms is definitely the result of positive, virtuous karma.

Since we have now achieved that fortunate rebirth, we need to ensure that we do not use up our positive karma. Just as the karma of lower realms can be exhausted, our karma in the fortunate realms can also be used up. If we don't seize the opportunity to create further virtuous karma, then there is no other possibility than a lower rebirth. Then the situation of repeatedly creating negative karma will befall us. Therefore, we need to really understand that we are responsible for our own future, and whether we have a fortunate rebirth or an unfortunate rebirth lies entirely within our own hands. So we need to take the initiative if we are to achieve our goal.

On a personal level, the advice here is that we should not relate being reborn in lower realms to external circumstances, i.e. as only happening to others. Rather, we need to personalise this advice and keep in mind the fact that it relates to oneself. So, one needs to be thinking, 'If I were reborn in the lower realms then it will be extremely difficult for me to escape from that'. That will be an impetus to really take this advice to heart for the need to practise the Dharma.

Then Gyaltsab Je concludes his commentary on the verse:

On the basis of the lower realms, virtue is weak and negativity is continuously accumulated. Therefore one should strive to stop the cause of the lower realms.

Here Gyaltsab Je is re-emphasising Shantideva's advice. If one were to be reborn in the lower realms there will be hardly any opportunity to accumulate virtue, because the conditions for accumulating virtue are very minimal. Furthermore, because of the conditions in the lower realms we would be continuously creating negativity. We see the truth of this when we look at the animal realm. What opportunities do they have to accumulate virtue? We might help a pet to create some virtue by taking them around a holy object like a stupa, or say some mantras, but apart from that they don't have any opportunity to willingly create virtue. When we think about the prospect of having to experience those kinds of conditions ourselves, we will see why we need to *strive to stop the cause of the lower realms*. We need to take this as a personal instruction to constantly remind ourselves, 'Be careful, be careful. Now that I have these good conditions I have to use them wisely and not waste them'.

The crux of the advice is in the words *the cause of the lower realms*—we need to reflect on the causes for rebirth in the lower realms. Here we consider the ten non-virtues. Killing, such as taking the life of another being, is a cause for the lower realms; taking what belongs to another is a cause for the lower realms; and engaging in sexual misconduct is a cause for the lower realms. We need to take note here that sexual misconduct applies to lay people, who don't have the vow of celibacy.

We can see here how kind and skilful the Buddha was in his advice on accumulating virtue and abandoning non-virtue. It would be extremely difficult for lay people to completely abstain from sexual activity, so here the advice is to abstain from sexual misconduct. If one wishes to practise on a higher level one can take the self-liberation vows of an ordained monk or nun, which include the vow to completely abstain from sexual activity, i.e. the vow of celibacy. So the Buddha meticulously presented many opportunities for engaging in virtue and abstaining from negativity on various different levels, in accordance with the capacity of his followers.

Further causes for rebirth in the lower realms are lying, slander, harsh words, idle gossip, covetousness, ill will and wrong view. Engaging in these non-virtues is a cause to be reborn in the lower realms, whereas willingly abandoning the ten non-virtues and thus adopting the ten virtues is the cause for a fortunate rebirth. None of these ten virtues are beyond our capacity. We can all abstain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and so forth, while engaging in virtuous deeds such as protecting the life of others, practicing generosity and so forth.

Here we need to engage in a personal dialogue. 'If you have the choice, would you rather go to the lower realms or take a fortunate rebirth in the next lifetime?' The natural answer should be, 'I definitely want to have a fortunate rebirth'. 'So, if you want to have a fortunate rebirth and avoid an unfortunate one, then you need to create the causes for it. If you just lie back and do nothing, then how could you possibly create the causes for a fortunate rebirth?' Reprimanding oneself with a personal dialogue like this is a good method to encourage oneself to accumulate virtue. It is in this way that we gradually develop more faith in the Dharma and an

aspiration to engage in the practice. Adopting a life of accumulating virtue and shunning negativity will gradually become more stable for the sublime Dharma to take root in one's life.

As I mentioned previously, while we acknowledge that we should avoid negativity and adopt virtue, we may still find ourselves uncontrollably engaging in non-virtues. You might find yourself (accidentally or intentionally) taking the life of another sentient being, or taking something without permission, or engaging in sexual misconduct. These things may occur from time to time because we are habituated to them. With a proper understanding of the Dharma that should not become a cause for despondency and feeling that things are hopeless. Rather you should remind yourselves again and again of the teaching that purification is a powerful means to purify negative karma.

When you remember that you can purify negative karma, then the great privilege of understanding the Dharma means that you will be able to apply the antidote to any negativity immediately. When you find you have created some negativity, rather than feeling hopeless and depressed, and thinking, 'Oh, I have created so much negativity I am definitely going to the lower realms. There is no hope for me anymore', one should immediately remember, 'OK, I have created some negativity but negativity can be purified'. That is why the kind Buddha presented us with the means for purification. The first part of purification is feeling regret, and based on regret one applies the appropriate antidotes.

By taking the Dharma to heart in this way, when you do find yourselves unwillingly creating some negativity out of habituation, you can rest assured that you can still purify that negative karma; that will prevent rebirth in the lower realms. We need to also use that as a reminder to ensure that we are creating the causes for a fortunate rebirth.

This is how we need to apply ourselves if we want to take the Dharma practice to heart. If one thinks, 'Oh, I don't care anymore' then one has definitely fallen victim to one's own negativity; one will not purify negativities because one does not care about it. In fact, one may even start to feel joyful about creating negativity and regretful about creating virtue. When we think about it we will see how, even though we have this incredible, fortunate rebirth with the freedoms and endowments intact, somehow there are times when we regret not having been able to create some negativity, and feel hesitant about opportunities to create virtue. Feeling glad that we have had the opportunity to create non-virtue and sad that we have missed an opportunity to create non-virtue or negativity would be a really pitiful situation, to say the least, given the great conditions we have now.

In summary, the main point to consider is that we definitely have the capacity to obtain a fortunate rebirth in the next lifetime. The causes to obtain such a fortunate rebirth, as well as taking another fortunate rebirth from a higher rebirth are not difficult or obscure. What is difficult, is obtaining a higher rebirth from the lower realms. Thus, we must take matters into our own hands. There is no-one who puts us into a lower rebirth but

ourselves. Likewise, no-one else can obstruct us from taking a fortunate rebirth except ourselves. Who creates the causes for a fortunate rebirth? Again, it is none other than ourselves. The causes definitely lie within our hands as we have the capacity and we have the means. The main thing to consider is that this explanation is a way to encourage us to use these good conditions we have now to create the appropriate causes for a good rebirth.

In simple terms, Shantideva is saying, 'You have the full capacity and the appropriate conditions to create the causes for a fortunate rebirth. If you go to the lower realms it will be very difficult freeing yourself from that. Now, when you have those good conditions to create a cause for a fortunate rebirth, is the time to create those causes'. These incredible conditions that we all possess right now are such that we can create extensive merit even in just a second. As you would have heard many times, if an ordinary person generates the mind of bodhicitta, even for just a second, the amount of merit they accumulate would be difficult for all the buddhas to articulate.

2.2.2.3. WHY IT IS APPROPRIATE TO STRIVE IN THE ANTIDOTE TO NEGATIVITY

We can relate this section to Nagarjuna's definitions of negativity and non-virtue, which have been explained in past teachings. Nagarjuna defined negativity as that which is an onset to rebirth into the lower realms, whereas non-virtue is defined as that which is shunned by the noble ones. Here Nagarjuna is making a distinction that is very pertinent to this outline.

This outline is subdivided into four:

2.2.2.3.1. If one does not strive in virtue upon having obtained the freedoms and endowments, then one is deceiving oneself

2.2.2.3.2. One will experience suffering in this life

2.2.2.3.3. Later one will be tormented by the sufferings of the lower realms

2.2.2.3.4. Why it is appropriate to abandon negativity and practise virtue

2.2.2.3.1. If one does not strive in virtue upon having obtained the freedoms and endowments, then one is deceiving oneself

The point here is that no-one is depriving us of this opportunity to create virtue but ourselves.

The relevant verse reads:

23. *If, upon having found this freedom,
I do not meditate on virtue,
Then there is no greater deception,
There is no greater ignorance.*

With respect to this verse Gyaltshab Je's commentary reads:

Having found this freedom which is difficult to find, and when found has great meaning, if I do not strive in and meditate on the cause for higher status and liberation, then there is no better method of self-deception.

There is also no greater ignorance than the ignorance concerning what has to be practised and what has to be abandoned.

The commentary gives a very clear explanation of the verse. *Having found this freedom which is difficult to find*

refers to the freedoms and endowments that we enjoy now. We had to create many virtuous causes in the past to obtain these great conditions, and having found this life *there is great meaning* refers to the great capacity one has to obtain the causes for one's future goals.

This not talking about goals like finding the necessities for survival. Rather, it is referring to the great potential we have to obtain the causes for a fortunate rebirth. Based on the conditions we have now, we have the full capacity and means to avoid the ten non-virtues and to engage in the ten virtues. That then becomes the cause for a fortunate rebirth in the next life. Furthermore, on the basis of the conditions we have now, we have the full capacity and potential to generate renunciation, which becomes a cause to obtain liberation, becoming free from rebirth in cyclic existence. And finally, with these conditions we also have the full capacity to generate bodhicitta and gain the realisation of emptiness, which are the causes to obtain the ultimate goal of enlightenment.

Because we have these freedoms and endowments we can create the causes for these three goals. So, *if I do not strive in, and meditate on, the cause for higher status and liberation, which includes enlightenment, then there is no better method of self-deception.* As I have mentioned previously, if we do not utilise the good conditions we have now, and just focus on our survival and worldly concerns, then that would be a great deception. Indeed, the greatest deception is to waste this incredible opportunity and potential we have to obtain these supreme goals. Furthermore, there is no greater ignorance than to be ignorant of what is to be adopted and practised, and what is to be abandoned. So we are being encouraged to use these great conditions to ensure that we do not fall victim to self-deception, and apply these good conditions to creating the causes to obtain our goals. While it is easy to understand what is being explained here, we need to take it to heart and really try to implement it in our daily life and practice.

2.2.2.3.2. One will experience suffering in this life

The verse relating

24. *Should I, after having understood this,
Still be indolent due to ignorance,
When the time to die comes
Great misery will arise.*

Here Gyaltshab Je's commentary reads,

Should I, after having realised that I have to strive in achieving virtue and abandoning negativity, still be indolent with regard to the mind of enlightenment, the practice of the perfections and so on, then at the time of death, when I know I am going to the lower realms, great misery will arise. Therefore I should strive with great effort.

The meaning of the commentary is quite clear. The significant point is that when, if one has realised that one must adopt virtue and abandon negativity but disregards this and continues to engage in frivolous activities, or if one has not adopted the mind of bodhicitta, not practising the perfections such as generosity and so forth, then at the time of death one will generate great sorrow and misery. Realising at that time, when one reflects upon one's life, that negativity is the cause for rebirth in

the lower realms, and that one has mostly engaged in negativity and not accumulated virtue, one will be tormented and have great regret in one's mind.

It is a fact that when people are in the last stages of death appearances occur to them that are linked to what they have done in their life. Some appearances cause them real joy because they have accumulated virtues. However, for those who recognise they've mostly engaged in negativity, the appearances bring great fear and unease in their minds. This definitely occurs. Here in the west, dying people who are in pain are often sedated with morphine which seems to numb their mind and senses, so even if they have some experience of these appearances they may not be able to express it. However, when body and senses are not numbed there are clear signs of anxiety at the time of death from those with strong regret.

For yourself, the advice here is *to strive with great effort*. By bringing to mind the great misery that will occur at the time of death, and wanting to avoid it, one will create the causes for a fortunate rebirth. One needs to apply great effort to adopt virtues and refrain from negativities. The crucial point is realising that one has to strive to adopt virtue and abstain from negativity. If one does not apply the practice, one becomes complacent. There is a Tibetan term describing this which has the connotation of becoming immune or desensitised to the Dharma. This is a very dangerous situation to be in, and one to avoid, so take it to heart and apply the practice of Dharma sincerely now.

The teachings explain that great practitioners have only joy in going onwards at the time of death. A medium-level practitioner has no hesitation in facing death and the lowest-level practitioner will not have any regrets in their mind. Thus, one needs to ensure that at the very least, one can prevent strong regret arising at the time of death. It would be a good achievement to know one has done one's best to adopt virtues and purify negativities, and that there is no need for regret at the time of death. It is important to ensure that we practise the Dharma wholeheartedly now, when we have the opportunity.

We can see how Nagarjuna's definition of negativity, which is that it is the onset to rebirth in the lower realms, is very relevant here. This means that creating negativity is like being in the state that is one step away from the lower realms. For individuals who have created a lot of negativity, there will be fear, anxiety and sorrow at the time of death, due to the prospect of what will come next. In relation to that, we can see that Nagarjuna's precise definition of negativity is very pertinent. Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti were great masters. His Holiness mentioned recently that Lama Tsong Khapa clearly matched their attributes and their capacity for reasoning and discernment. In both ancient and modern times there are hardly any other masters who equal them. As their explanations and advices are extremely clear and precise, we really need to take heed of them.

The first Dalai Lama said that the real enemies to overcome are the delusions, and these lie within oneself. Take this advice to heart and recognise that the real enemy lies within; as such, the delusions are the main culprit that cause all the turmoil and harm for oneself.

Recognising this means that we need to protect ourselves from the intensity of the negativities. It might be difficult for us to completely prevent negative states of mind such as anger, jealousy or attachment from arising occasionally, but while they are difficult to prevent, we can stop them from escalating. We can stop anger becoming intense anger such as hatred; we can stop intense jealousy that harms our mind and causes harm to others, and we can stop attachment from becoming obsessed with the object.

We have the means to overcome strong emotions, so we can apply antidotes to anger etc. But if one doesn't apply them and holds onto the anger, one is then befriending anger. Again, with attachment, if, rather than applying the antidote, one actually befriends attachment, one makes oneself a slave to attachment, listening to whatever attachment (or anger) says. One might find it hard to listen to the advice of one's gurus, but when it comes to listening to our anger and our attachment we have no hesitation. We become completely submissive to our attachment, anger and ignorance and allow them to be our masters, who we willingly serve. In summary, the delusions, which are the real cause of harm and destruction, lie nowhere else but within oneself, so we need to recognise and overcome this.

Although it will be explained further in the text, I want you to prepare yourself now and to familiarise yourself with identifying the delusions, particularly the six root delusions and the 20 secondary delusions.

2.2.2.3.3. Later one will be tormented by the sufferings of the lower realms

In case one feels that one could enjoy oneself in the lower realms, what is being explained here is that one will be tormented by the sufferings of the lower realms.

The next verse in the outline reads:

25. *When my body is burned by
The difficult to bear fires of hell for a long time,
The fire of terrible regret will light up,
And the mind will be despondent, this is
certain.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains :

Through the faults of degenerating the mind of enlightenment and so forth one will take rebirth in the lower realms. When then the difficult to bear fires of hell burn my body for a long time, the fire of terrible regret will light up and my mind will be tormented. Since this is certain, make an effort to not incur any faults and downfalls.

The commentary explains here that the fault of allowing the mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta to degenerate is one of the heaviest of the downfalls. Previously, this was explained extensively. What is being explained here again is that *through the faults of degenerating the mind of enlightenment, one will take rebirth in the lower realm*. If one were to be born in a hell realm, such as the hot hell realm, one's body and fire become inseparable, and it is as if one's body and the fire is of one entity. So in that kind of situation, how could one even imagine that one's mind will not be tormented; there is no question about how much unceasing torment one would experience in both body and mind. The commentary explains here that this

outcome is certain and that such consequences definitely have to be experienced.

What one needs to take to heart now is to make an effort not to incur any faults and downfalls. The main point is that once one takes those pledges of practising, one should ensure that one does not incur faults and downfalls, and that as one has the ability to apply the antidote to negativity, one should do so, as this serves as the means to overcome negativity.

2.2.2.3.4. Why it is appropriate to abandon negativity and practise virtue

Having contemplated the consequences of negativity, what logically follows is that it is appropriate to abandon negativity and practice virtue. So this is again subdivided into two:

2.2.2.3.4.1. Having wasted the freedoms and endowments, if one goes to the lower realms again, then one resembles something mindless

2.2.2.3.4.2. It is appropriate to contemplate the cause of ignorance

2.2.2.3.4.1. Having wasted the freedoms and endowments, if one goes to the lower realms again, then one resembles something mindless

I have elaborated on the fact that if one does not actually put these incredibly good conditions of the freedom and endowments to use, and seize that opportunity to use them optimally to create virtue and abandon negativities, and if one lays back and engages in frivolous worldly activities, then one has wasted those good conditions. Thus, having wasted the freedoms and endowments one goes to the lower realms. It is as if there is no common sense at all. This is what is being reflected here.

The verses under this heading read:

26. *Having found somehow
This extremely difficult to find basis of benefit
If I return to the lower realms later again
Despite having knowledge,*

27ab. *Then, similarly to one confused by mantra,
This makes me someone without mind.*

Here, Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

This basis of benefit, the precious human rebirth with freedoms and endowments, is extremely difficult to find and, if found, is of great purpose.

Having found it somehow by chance, should I again go to the lower realms despite having knowledge of what is useful and what is harmful, then that makes me someone without a mind achieving just the purpose of the moment for self, similarly to a person confused by mantra.

The commentary explains here that the basis of benefit is *the precious human rebirth with freedoms and endowments*, and that this *is extremely difficult to find*. Reflect back on the explanations given in the Lam Rim teachings about why it is difficult to find the freedoms and endowments, where three reasons are given: the causes are difficult to accumulate; explaining with an analogy why it is difficult; and because of the number of precious human rebirths being minimal in comparison to the numbers of living beings in other realms.

As mentioned in the commentary, having *found this precious human rebirth is of great purpose*. As explained

previously, the great purpose is to achieve one's temporary and ultimate goals, and one can achieve all this having found, as if by chance, this precious human rebirth with freedoms and endowments. So, if one were to go back again to the lower realms, *despite* having known *what is useful and what is harmful, makes me someone without a mind*. This means that it is as if one does not have a rational mind that knows what is good and beneficial and what is harmful to oneself.

Achieving just the purpose on the moment for oneself, refers to being completely immersed in temporary gratification and goals, rather than thinking about virtuous actions, and the necessity for long-term achievements. The analogy for being mindless is that it is similar to a person who is under the spell of a mantra of another person. They would be completely confused, and do things that are completely irrational, because they are completely dominated or influenced by the spell of the mantra. Thus, wasting one's perfect opportunities now with its freedoms and endowments would be similar to one who is mindless (lacking any common sense), like being under the spell of a mantra.

2.2.2.3.4.2. It is appropriate to contemplate the cause of ignorance

In presenting the meaning of the next two lines of verse, Gyaltsab Je opens his commentary with a query:

Query: How did one become confused?

Then as a response to that query the two lines of verse read:

*27cd. I do not know how I got so confused
What is lurking inside of me?*

Then the commentary explains:

Answer: I also do not know due to which cause I got confused and thus deceived. What cause for confusion is lurking inside me? I think there definitely is something.

If one falls into laziness, then one should think in this way.

What is again being reflected upon here is that even though we have all the good conditions such as the eight freedoms and ten endowments, and the knowledge and understanding of what is to be adopted and what is to be shunned, one still finds that one is not taking full opportunity and wastes the opportunities with frivolous worldly activities that focus on oneself. 'What could be causing that? There must definitely be something inside of me that is causing that confusion. What could it be?' This is a means of recognising that it is the delusions within oneself that are causing the confusion.

This introduces the next verse which refers to *my enemies of anger, craving and so forth*.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Adair Bunnett and Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett and Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe*

Edited version
© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་ཀྱི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

8 April 2014

Based on the motivation we have just generated we can engage in the practice of meditation. [meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to become enlightened myself, and so for that purpose I will engage in the teaching, and put it into practice well.

The *tong len* meditation practice that we have just attempted to do is, of course, the basis for developing love and compassion, which is the core practice of Buddhism. We cannot possibly assume that we are engaging in any real practice if we leave this essential element aside.

This is in line with an understanding of what it means to be a practising Buddhist. A practising Buddhist is someone who, based on the teachings on non-violence that the Buddha gave, wholeheartedly entrusts themselves to the Three Jewels (the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha), seeing the Buddha as their protector and teacher, and following his teachings. It is essential that we, who consider ourselves Buddhists, know what Buddhadharma encompasses. It would be quite pitiful if, when we are asked what Buddhadharma is, we hesitate in giving an answer. Several years ago at one of the Easter courses, I recall that when Vanessa's younger sister was present and showing interest, I told her to take the question 'What is Buddhadharma?' to her discussion session. When she posed that question, no-one seemed to be able to give a succinct and good answer to it.

It is particularly important that those who present Buddhism to newer students respond to questions with succinct answers that encompass the essential points. As I regularly share with those who present the classes for beginners, you need to prepare yourself not only for the presentation, but also be prepared to answer any questions that are asked.

When classes are advertised as an introduction to Buddhism, people will inevitably ask such questions as 'What is Buddhadharma?' It would not be sufficient to answer, 'It is the practice of abandoning the ten non-virtues such as killing and so forth' because the morality of abandoning killing is common to other traditions as well, such as Christianity and so forth. So we cannot present the practice of abandoning negativities and adopting virtue as being unique to Buddhism.

2.2.2.3.4. Why it is appropriate to abandon negativity and practise virtue

2.2.2.3.4.2. It is appropriate to contemplate the cause of ignorance (cont.)

Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins with a query:

Query: How did one become confused?

Why is it that one is not taking the freedoms and endowments, which enable us to engage in the practice, to heart? Why are they not being utilised to engage in practice?

Something must be causing this confusion and inability to act. As the verse states:

*27cd. I do not know how I got so confused,
What is lurking inside of me?*

Then Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

Answer: I also do not know due to which cause I got confused and thus deceived. What cause for confusion is lurking inside me? I think there definitely is something.

If one falls into laziness, then one should think in this way.

The hypothetical query at the beginning is presented as a way to really look into the main culprit that is causing one to not adopt the practices. As the commentary states, *I also do not know due to which cause I got confused and thus deceived. What cause for confusion is lurking inside me? I think there definitely is something.* Presenting this point in the form of a personal dialogue brings to light the fact that, although we see the value of observing morality, and engaging in the practices of listening, contemplating and meditating, and have the inclination to practice, there seems to be something that is preventing us from really embracing that practice on a continuous basis. So what is it that is preventing us from practising?

We need to take particular note that this presentation is suggesting that we undertake a personal investigation. The very words *what cause for confusion is lurking inside me* indicates that there is definitely something lurking within that is the cause of our procrastination and hesitation about practising. So, as suggested here, we need to take the measure of checking within to identify the main cause of the confusion that causes the hesitation, laziness and so forth. Then, as emphasised here, lest *one falls into laziness* and becomes complacent, *one should be thinking in this way*, again and again, about how there is something within that is causing such confusion.

Then the text presents the causes of that confusion.

2.2.3. Conscientiously abandoning the afflictions

This heading implies that having identified the afflictions, one needs to apply conscientiousness and joyful effort as a way to abandon the afflictions.

This section of the text has three subdivisions:

2.2.3.1. Contemplating the faults of the afflictions

2.2.3.2. How it is unsuitable to tire of the difficulty of abandoning the afflictions

2.2.3.3. Meditating on joy knowing that if one makes an effort it is possible to abandon the afflictions

2.2.3.1. CONTEMPLATING THE FAULTS OF THE AFFLICTIONS

This has three further subdivisions:

2.2.3.1.1. Contemplating how the afflictions harm oneself

2.2.3.1.2. How it is unsuitable to meditate on patience for the afflictions

2.2.3.1.3. Generating courage to destroy them

2.2.3.1.1. Contemplating how the afflictions harm oneself

This is subdivided into four:

2.2.3.1.1.1. They take away our freedom

2.2.3.1.1.2. They generate boundless suffering

2.2.3.1.1.3. They harm over an infinite amount of time

2.2.3.1.1.4. The reason why it is unsuitable to befriend the afflictions

Following the earlier presentation where the great master Shantideva entreated us to look into ourselves and really contemplate the sources of the confusion that cause all of the aforementioned faults - hesitation about practising, procrastination and so forth - when we genuinely and honestly look within we will be able to identify that it is the afflictions that are the main cause. So, as a way of overcoming them, we need to think about the disadvantages of these afflictions. Shantideva then presents four disadvantages.

2.2.3.1.1.1. They take away our freedom

Once we are dominated by the afflictions, they overpower us and we are completely under their control.

The verse that relates to this heading reads:

28. *The enemies of anger, craving and so forth
Do not have legs, arms and so forth,
They are neither brave nor wise,
How did they make me like their slave?*

We need to see this presentation as being related to our own circumstances, right now, and not just as some dry hypothetical presentation. While we are easily able to acknowledge the very good conditions that we enjoy now, we also need to identify what prevents us from fully utilising our potential, and taking full advantage of these conditions. It is not sufficient to look within once or twice, but rather we need to implement this in our regular daily practice, investigating our minds again and again.

The more we analyse our own state of mind, the clearer it becomes that the afflictions, or delusions, are the real cause of all our faults. It is not immediately apparent to us that anger, for example, is a cause of our faults and our mistakes. When it comes to attachment, it is even more difficult for us to recognise attachment as being a fault. Thus it requires careful analysis again and again, and careful attention to fully identifying and recognising these delusions such as anger, attachment and the like as being the real causes of all our problems. When we take initiative to really personalise this investigation in our contemplations, then that, in itself, becomes a very worthwhile and productive object of meditation.

Gyalsab Je's commentary on the verse reads:

My enemies of anger, craving and so forth, which are contained in the root and associated afflictions, do not have legs, arms or weapons in their hands and they are not very brave with great effort, nor are they wise with skilful means.

How did they take away my freedom and make me their slave?

In order to acknowledge the afflictions as being faults, we need to first identify them. To understand what the afflictions are, the Lam Rim presents them under these headings: identifying the delusions; the stages in which the delusions develop; the causes of delusions and the faults of the delusions. Some Lam Rim texts present the delusions under four headings and some under three, however, the main structure is essentially the same: identifying the delusions, understanding how they are developed, and knowing their causes and their faults.

Here, the identification of the delusions is presented in summary form. In order to abandon the afflictions, they definitely need to be identified. If one doesn't even recognise the afflictions for what they are, then there is no way that one can abandon them. For example, if one doesn't acknowledge anger as an affliction then there is no way one

will take the initiative to abandon anger; it is the same with attachment and so forth. One will be able to recognise anger as a faulty state of mind when it is clearly identified as a delusion that is not based on reality, but on a faulty perception, and thus has no sound basis. Then the initiative to abandon this affliction can be strongly generated and one will make the effort to abandon anger. It is the same with the rest of the afflictions: first we need to clearly recognise and identify what they are, and then, based on the understanding that they are faulty states of mind, we then take the initiative to abandon them.

The text presents the afflictions identifying two of them, *the enemies of anger, craving and so forth*—which includes all other afflictions in summary form. As explained clearly in the text, the real enemies that hinder our wellbeing are the delusions or afflictions.

As indicated here, these delusions such as anger, craving and so forth are the real enemies, *yet they do not have legs, arms or hold weapons in their hands*. The comparison here is with an enemy that has form, such as a well built, muscular person protected by amour and carrying weapons and so forth. It would be difficult to face such a powerful enemy if we are comparatively smaller in size. However, these afflictions are not like that. As they are not form, they don't have legs, arms or weapons and so forth. Again we can take note of how, as explained in the teachings, it is seemingly easier to practise a bit of patience with a powerful figure because of our sheer incapacity to be able to combat or to fight them. So it is no wonder that we show a bit more tolerance toward someone who is more powerful! But practising patience with someone who is weak and meek and thus much easier to defeat, is much harder. So when one is able to practice patience with such weak beings, it is much more admirable.

Unlike a powerful external enemy, the delusions such as anger and craving and so forth are not equipped with any physical protection or intimidating size. Furthermore, it is not as if these delusions are also *very brave with great effort*, meaning that they are not very persistent. We need to also remind ourselves that one reason why the delusions are not very persistent is that they are aided by another delusion, called laziness. Furthermore, it is not as if these delusions are *wise* and have *skilful means*; in fact, they are not based on sound wisdom or intelligence of any sort. That is because they associate with yet another delusion, which is ignorance.

So if the afflictions do not have any of the aforementioned attributes then *how did they take away my freedom and make me their slave?* This is a significant point, implying, by means of a rhetorical question, that one is essentially enslaved by the afflictions. A powerful master can make his slaves do anything he commands, because the slaves are completely under his control. The slaves have to follow every wish or command of their master, who completely dominates them. Likewise, we are enslaved by our own afflictions. Why else would we do things that we know are not really wise or favourable to our wellbeing? Yet still we find ourselves following the commands of afflictions such as anger and craving and engage in actions that ultimately harms us.

This is a very significant point about why we continue to create negative actions, even though we understand that they are faults, and know the consequences are not favourable. There is no other reason than being dominated by the afflictions that overpower us. It is the same with the faults or misdeeds that others commit. When they see others committing murder or stealing and so forth, some people

comment 'Why is there so much violence in the world? Why are people killing each other?' We need to understand that the reason they engage in the negative actions of killing and so forth is because they are completely dominated by the afflictions. When the afflictions compel them to engage in those actions it is as if they don't have any control over their own actions. Analysing things in this way enables us to understand the real motivator behind the negative actions others commit, and thus becoming more tolerant and compassionate towards them, rather than seeing them only as negative and evil. These are important points to keep in mind.

For as long as the delusions have complete control or dominance over us, we don't have much choice. But if we recognise the afflictions for what they are, then we have a chance of not being influenced by them. About two years ago, Maria's daughter, who was sitting in the very place where Maria is sitting right now, commented that having been introduced to the afflictions and their disadvantages, she came to a point in her meditation where she was able to recognise how those afflictions affected her. Even though this recognition did not prevent the afflictions from arising, she felt that recognising them had definitely helped her to become a little more wary, and helped to reduce their intensity. She said that she had been meditating for about a year and found it had been really helpful for her. She was making a really significant point, and had used a lot of intelligence and understanding to come to that conclusion.

In summary, we need to recognise the delusions for what they are. But if we don't do anything once we have recognised them, then the act of recognising afflictions would be quite pointless. As Shantideva has so very precisely presented here, we do have the potential, and we do have the ability to overcome the afflictions. So it is possible not only to identify the delusions, but to apply the antidotes and overcome them as well. Shantideva is giving us really profound advice: we have these great conditions of the freedoms and endowments, so it is definitely possible for us to overcome and abandon the afflictions.

2.2.3.1.1.2. They generate boundless suffering

Having briefly identified the afflictions, the next section presents their disadvantages.

As I have mentioned many, many times, these are very essential points to keep in mind, because this is a profound practice that can really protect your mind. When seeing others engaging in inappropriate deeds or saying inappropriate things, we need to be able to identify that it is the fault of the delusion, rather than a fault of the person *per se*. That will help to generate a sense of compassion for them rather than agitation and feelings of annoyance and anger. This is a really profound practice that we need to keep in mind. That recognition and understanding in relation to others can only come about when we have fully identified and recognised the delusions within ourselves, and understood how they actually dominate us so that we are then compelled to engage in negative deeds and actions, even though we don't want to. Then, based on our understanding of our own difficulties, we can recognise and apply that to others. It is really important to remember this if we want to maintain a good harmonious relationship with those around us. I have spoken about this many times in the past, and the point cannot be stressed enough.

The following points on the faults or disadvantages of the afflictions will encourage us to really try to overcome the afflictions, and apply the appropriate antidotes. Why should

we want to do that? Because delusions generate boundless suffering and so forth.

The verse relating to this heading is:

29. *While they remain in my mind
They harm me joyfully.
Bearing this patiently without anger,
Is unsuitable and this patience is an object of
criticism*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of the verse in this way:

To practise patience with regard to those that joyfully create the sufferings of the lower realms whilst they abide in my mind is unsuitable. This patience is an object of criticism and one should regard the afflictions as enemies and strive to abandon them.

Having identified and recognised the delusions or afflictions for what they are, it would be inappropriate to patiently and willingly allow them to remain within us, because not only do the delusions that lurk within us cause immense suffering, but they lead us to the extreme *sufferings of the lower realms*. Willingly being patient with these causes of immense suffering is not appropriate. As you would recall, not retaliating to the harms and sufferings inflicted by others is one of the classifications of patience. However, willingly enduring the dominance of the afflictions, rather than ensuring that one overcomes them, is inappropriate.

This patience is an object of criticism indicates that the buddhas and bodhisattvas would take a dim view of such patience, and not regard it as an appropriate type of patience. Being patient with anger would mean allowing anger to arise and infest our minds. Even from a worldly perspective we can all see that wrong deeds, such as killing and so forth, come from none other than the influence of delusions such as anger. Such misdeeds arise from being willingly submissive to anger and following its dictates. Just as we recognise this in others, it is exactly the same for ourselves. Being patient here means becoming submissive and allowing anger or attachment to arise and then following every command they give.

As the commentary explains, *one should regard the afflictions as enemies and strive to abandon them*. This means that as soon as an affliction arises, we need to immediately recognise it as harmful and, rather than willingly becoming submissive and patient with it, apply an antidote to overcome whatever affliction it is.

In order to do that, the commentary further explains:

One should work at understanding the definitions, divisions, causes and functions of the afflictions as they are explained in the *Knowledge Treatises* and mainly meditate on their disadvantages.

The author of the commentary, Gyaltsab Rinpoche, is explaining that one should know the afflictions in detail *and mainly meditate on the disadvantages*, which is the key point. For as long as we don't recognise or contemplate the disadvantages of the afflictions, then the need to overcome or abandon them will not arise. Therefore, contemplating the disadvantages of the afflictions again and again is, as explained here, a key point.

This relates back to that very intelligent and wise comment which I related earlier, about the fact that even just recognising the delusions definitely helped that student to become a little more wary, and helped to reduce their intensity. Recognising the afflictions for what they are definitely helps to minimise their intensity.

As presented in the teachings, the definition of an affliction is, that which causes discomfort and unease in our mind as soon as it is developed. We know this from our own experience; we can see that the moment certain kinds of afflictions are generated, we immediately feel weighed down, uncomfortable and unsettled. The fact that there is this discomfort is the sign that it is an affliction.

There are many people who make comments about how they sometimes, without any apparent reason, feel unsettled, unhappy, or disturbed. If we contemplate the real cause of that, it will be understood that is because of the delusions being prevalent in the mind.

As presented earlier in the commentary, there are six root delusions and twenty associate or secondary delusions.

The Lam Rim teachings present six causes of the delusions.

1. **Basis:** This means having the very seed or imprint of the delusions within one's mental continuum.

2. **Object:** It is very easy to understand that one develops attachment to an attractive object, and aversion or anger towards an unattractive object.

3. **Social context:** This refers to the people with whom you associate, where conversations with them can cause delusions such as attachment, anger and so forth to arise.

4. **Faulty narration:** This refers to faulty treatises and so forth that cause delusions to arise. For example, there are treatises that define sexual positions and so forth, which would cause attachment to arise and manifest themselves within one's mind. Likewise, friends might talk about things that can cause various delusions to arise.

5. **Habituation:** The more one is familiar with a particular delusion, the more likely it is that the delusion will be generated—and we can be affiliated with certain delusions from a very young age. We see people who are intolerant with the most insignificant and minute things, such as feeling strong attachment when they see an attractive object, or feeling angry and great disappointment when things don't go their way, or feeling despondent and so forth. These are delusions that manifest easily due to long-time habituation.

So we need to use our situation now to try to minimise our familiarity with the delusions as much as possible by applying the appropriate antidotes. If we continuously allow ourselves to become more and more familiar with delusions, then that will be the cause for the delusions to become more dominant and increase even more. Therefore we need to utilise our conditions to de-familiarise ourselves with the delusions.

6. **Inappropriate attention:** This refers to paying attention to the objects that cause the delusions to arise. We might see something that looks very attractive. If it is a mere glance and we pay no further attention then it may not cause much attachment to arise, however if we pay further attention to the details of that attractive object, then the more attention we pay to the colour, shape and so forth, the more the attachment will increase. If we take the example of a man being attracted to a woman, then the more the man thinks about her attractive figure, the smoothness of her hair, the complexion of her skin and so forth, the more his attachment will increase, to the point where he is obsessed. Likewise with anger, when one thinks about someone who has inflicted harm upon us, the more we pay attention to what they did; and thinking how they have harmed me in the past, 'They used this kind of measure to harm me', 'They harmed me just the other day, and they will harm me again

in the future'. So in this way the more we pay attention, thinking again and again about how they harm us, the more reasons we find to become angry with them, to the point where anger becomes intense like a burning fire in one's heart. Many of you would have had the experience of paying attention to past memories of particular incidents and so forth, resulting in feeling sad or angry, despondent and so forth. These, in brief, are the six causes of delusions.

This explanation here is in accordance to the knowledge treatises, the *Abhidharma* in which three primary causes for delusions to arise are presented. I have explained this to you several times in the past, and they are very significant points to keep in mind. As presented in the *Abhidharma*, when 1) the delusions are not been abandoned, and 2) one is in close proximity with the objects of delusion, and 3) one applies incorrect attention to those objects, then the causes for the delusions to arise are all intact.

As presented here, for an ordinary being whose afflictions have not been abandoned, even if the delusions are always dormant, even though they are not manifest at present. Thus, the delusions manifest immediately as a result of not having abandoned the delusions, when one is in close proximity to an object that causes delusions to arise coupled with the incorrect attention that one applies whilst perceiving that object. The incorrect or improper attention is a faulty state of mind which taints one's perception to exaggerate the qualities or faults of the objects. So, just recognising a delusion as a fault will help to prevent incorrect attention from overpowering one's perceptions when perceiving any object.

The functions of the afflictions will be presented later on in the text. As I have mentioned previously, it is good for you to be able to identify and understand the six root delusions which are attachment, anger, ignorance, pride, and deluded doubt and wrong views. Wrong views can have a fivefold and a ten-fold classification. Basically there are five wrong views and this becomes ten if you include the five non-views.

The reason the term 'wrong views' is used is that there can also be correct views, such as the view of realising emptiness. Likewise, not all doubts are necessarily afflicted or deluded. There can be some virtuous doubts, so to be included as one of the six root delusions, the doubt must be a deluded or an afflicted doubt. The associated afflictions are belligerence, resentment, concealment, spite and so forth.

As presented in some of the texts I have come across—although not many mention it—the distinction between the root delusions and the associated delusions is that root delusions are generated in many different ways with many different objects whereas secondary delusions are more targeted at specific objects. The associated delusions are described as being closely related to either of the six root delusions¹. When we understand that associate delusions are closely related to one of the six root delusions, we can see how they stem from one of the main root delusions.

It would be good to have a list the six root delusions and the secondary delusions along with the six causes, as such a list is good for those who are not familiar with them. The delusions are clearly explained in the Lam Rim texts and it also good to go to other sources and become more familiar with their explanations.

© Tara Institute

¹ Translator's note: Proximate delusions might be an appropriate term.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་ཀྱི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

15 April 2014

Based on the motivation we have generated we can now engage in meditation practice.

[Meditation]

For receiving the teachings, we can generate our motivation along these lines: in order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for this purpose I will listen to this Mahayana teaching, and by studying and understanding it, I will put it into practice well.

2.2.3.1.1.2. They generate boundless suffering (cont.)

The two verses under this heading read as follows:

30. *Even if all the gods and demi gods
Arise against me as enemy,
They are not able to guide me into
The fire without respite.*
31. *This enemy of the powerful afflictions
Throws me in an instant into
Where even the ashes of Mount Meru
Do not remain upon contact.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains these verses.

Even if all the gods and demi gods arise as my enemies, if I do not fall under the control of the mental afflictions, then they are not able to guide and place me into the fire without respite.

But this powerful enemy of the afflictions in my continuum throws me in an instant into the fire without respite, where even the ashes of Mount Meru do not remain upon contact.

Therefore one should strive to destroy the enemy of the afflictions.

The verses explain that the afflictions which are within oneself are extremely powerful, more so than any kind of external enemy or entity. Powerful enemies could include gods, such as Brahma, who is said to be extremely powerful in terms of might and ability; also demigods and their retinues who have extremely powerful means to engage in combat. Even within humans, there are certain individuals known to be very brave and skilled in combat. There are stories of how one human being was capable of killing thousands of people. So there are definitely powerful humans who could be our enemies.

What is being explained here is that even if all of these powerful enemies: gods, demigods and powerful humans, were all combined together and simultaneously rose up as one's enemy, they cannot place one in the hot hell realms, such as the fire without respite. It is, of course a given that if from one's own side one does not allow the afflictions to overpower oneself, then all those powerful external enemies cannot place us in the hell realms from their side.

Note here that if someone were to kill another living being, then just through the act of taking the other's life they are not placing them in the lower realms. Rather through the negative act of killing, they are creating the karma to go to lower realms themselves.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on the next verse begins with, *But this powerful enemy of the afflictions in my continuum.*

The main point one needs to reflect upon here is that the powerful enemy of the afflictions are within one's own mental continuum and it is none other than these internal afflictions that lead one to the lower realms. The main instruction here is that the afflictions are not random categories of phenomena that lie outside of oneself. If one thinks 'Yes there is anger, there is attachment, there are delusions' - relating to them as a mere categorical list, then that doesn't help one to identify the delusions within oneself. Even if one is able to list many afflictions and describe them in detail, if one doesn't recognise the afflictions within oneself, one will not be able to take any initiative to overcome them. The emphasis here is that one must look within one's own mental continuum to identify the delusions within oneself, so that one can take the initiative to overcome them.

As mentioned previously, the first step to overcoming the delusions is to identify them, and then to contemplate the causes and the disadvantages etc. As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains, it is these *afflictions* within one's mental *continuum* that throw me *in an instant into the fire without respite*, which is the hot hell realms. Even Mount Meru, the most grandiose of mountains, will be rendered to ashes upon mere contact with the intensity of the heat in the fire without respite. Thus the consequences of being born in such a place of unimaginable suffering is the result of the afflictions. Here, Gyaltsab Je highlights that one must destroy the enemy of the afflictions.

To take on board what is being explained here, it is by engaging in personal reflection to identify the afflictions or delusions within oneself, recognising their causes and particularly their faults, that one can slowly and gradually take the initiative to overcome them. Even the process of identifying them is a gradual process—the afflictions are not something that we are able to recognise right away.

Of course it is easier to recognise delusions in others! It is easy to identify the faults of someone else's anger, attachment and so forth. However, when it comes to one's own faults of anger and so forth, we always have good excuses thinking, 'I am OK, there is no problem.' If we are not able to identify the anger within oneself, then that is a real problem. Even if one recognises it, but rationalises it, and thinks that there is no problem, then that will prolong the process of taking the initiative to abandon it. So one really needs to take to heart the need to recognise the shortcomings of the afflictions within oneself, and that one's own anger and attachment etc. have been the cause of all of then one's problems.

I am not referring to those of you who don't have any delusions. But for those who are able to identify the delusions within yourself, then you need to take careful consideration in recognising how the delusions affect

your wellbeing. Harboursing the delusions in one's mind causes turmoil and an unsubdued mind.

The very function of a delusion is to make one's mind unsettled and troubled. Therefore if one aspires to achieve a subdued mind, one definitely needs to take the initiative to recognise and really acknowledge the afflictions within oneself, then one can gradually take the initiative to overcome them. We need to take a gradual approach, the afflictions are not something which can be abandoned quickly. Even the study and understanding of them takes time and needs to be a gradual process. We need to ensure that the study and understanding of Dharma becomes integrated with our mind-set, slowly but steadily transforming our minds.

When studying texts which identify the delusions, the main point is not to treat it as a mere list that one goes over, as if they are not related to oneself. Rather we need to use these explanations as way to identify the delusions within oneself. Having identified and clearly seen the faults of the delusions, one can then take the initiative to slowly abandon them. As Dharma practitioners we need to ensure that whatever we do becomes the means to subdue the mind and overcome the delusions. The great Kadampa master Geshe Potawa said that regardless of whether one is engaged in the Dharma or worldly activities, if the activity becomes an antidote for overcoming the delusions, then it has served its purpose well. This is the kind of advice that the great Kadampa masters give; not many words but really to the point.

If one does not ensure that our so-called Dharma practice is an antidote for overcoming delusions, then the very aspect of the Dharma practice can become a worldly concern. This is because one has not protected one's practice to ensure that it overcomes delusions.

The Lam Rim teachings explain that the way to measure one's progress in studying and practising the Dharma is that if one's practices actually help one to gain more and more confidence, and more faith, and one's mind gradually becomes more subdued, then one can feel confident that one's practice is working (whatever form it may take). However if we find that certain practices or study are making one more and more agitated, more and more deluded, and one is losing one's faith in the Dharma, then that is a sign that it is not making a positive effect within oneself.

In relation to developing love and compassion, particularly in the section of how to develop the superior intention, the Great Lam Rim text explains that meditating just once in a while is not sufficient to develop this mind. Rather one must meditate on love and compassion again and again for the superior intention to develop in one's mind. Quoting from another text the Lam Rim uses an analogy to illustrate this point—it would be like attempting to sweeten a big sour tree with just a few drops of a sweetener. If one wishes to transform a sour tree into a sweet one, one needs to put many, many drops of a sweet substance over a long period of time. Then eventually it is possible for a sour tree to actually become sweet. His Holiness the Dalai Lama uses this analogy in his teachings regularly. The delusions within our mind are like a sour taste which is hard to transform into a sweet taste. If one meditates on

love and compassion just once in a while we cannot expect to transform the afflictions in our mind and develop superior intention; we cannot expect a positive outcome from just a few attempts. Rather we need to make a consistent effort in identifying the delusions, seeing their disadvantages, and applying the antidote, whereby we will gradually overcome the delusions within oneself.

It will be good for you to refer to that quotation by reading the section in the Lam Rim that explains how to develop the superior intention. These are important points for us to reflect upon and as way to improve our practice.

We need to consider the fact that we are not deprived of the means—we do know how to engage in Dharma practices. What we need to keep in mind, is that if we leave aside certain practices that we already know how to engage in now, and try to adopt other practices that may well be beyond our reach, then that would be completely missing the mark. It is far more productive to actually implement the practices that we are familiar with now. Lama Tsong Khapa mentions that we do not have the fault of not knowing the practices, but rather we might be incurring the fault of not implementing the practices that we do know. The point is that we need to take the initiative to actually apply the practices with which we are already familiar. Then a gradual but true transformation takes place.

To summarise Shantideva's main points, what he is advising us in simple terms is this:

The trouble maker for all your problems is not something which lies outside, but rather within yourself which are called the afflictions. When you recognise them within yourself, you can then take measures to apply the antidote and abandon them. So, you need to apply effort in doing just that.

If one really uses one's study and practice as a means to combat the real troublemaker within oneself by taking that initiative at the very outset, that motivation can make a tremendous difference in our approach to the study or practice of the Dharma. I am not implying that I have gained great insight or developed realisation from my attempts, but what I can assure you is that I have definitely had a proper motivation from the very outset. Early on when I was studying in the monastery, studying the texts and engaging in the debates, my intention was always, 'When I finish my studies, I definitely want to put what I have learnt into practice by spending time in meditation and doing retreats'. This was definitely my intention. That has not become a reality because I have come to a foreign country to teach instead, so I have not had the opportunities to do long-term retreats. However because the studies were done with that intention, I can definitely say that they have had a positive effect on my mind. What I am sharing here is that if from the very outset one has the proper motivation for doing the studies and practice, then to that extent there will definitely be a positive effect.

2.2.3.1.1.3. They harm over an infinite amount of time

The afflictions are unlike external enemies, which no matter how powerful and mighty they might be, will

eventually disintegrate of their own accord, even without us taking many measures to try to vanquish them. Over time that is what will occur. However with the internal enemy, by leaving delusions as they are they will not just disintegrate by themselves. Even after a long period of time they remain intact. If we don't take any measures to apply the antidotes and just leave them as they are, they can become even more powerful rather than disintegrating.

This point is explained in the following verse:

32. *No other enemy has
Such long term ability
Like the enemy of my afflictions,
With extensive time, without beginning or end.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Another drawback of the afflictions to contemplate:

No other worldly enemy has such an ability to live for a long time like the enemy of my afflictions, who abide for extensive time, without beginning or end.

Since meditating on the antidote to the afflictions only for one session at a time does not do anything, one should strive to have an uninterrupted stream of effort in destroying the afflictions.

As the commentary clearly explains here, *no other worldly enemy has such an ability to live for a long time like the enemy of my afflictions, who abides for extensive time without beginning or end*. Unlike the external enemy which won't live for long, the inner enemy of afflictions abides much longer and harms one to greater extent. The external enemy can give us a certain amount of harm periodically, but because it cannot take us to the lower realms it cannot give us extensive sufferings. However the internal enemy of afflictions is the one that can lead us to the most extreme sort of sufferings.

Following that is, *Since meditating on the antidote to the afflictions only for one session at the time, does not do anything, one should strive to have an uninterrupted stream of effort in destroying the afflictions*. In relation to the earlier analogy, a big sour tree cannot be expected to become sweet by pouring just one drop of sweetener a few times. But if one were to constantly apply sweeteners then there is a possibility to transform it into a sweet tree. Similarly with the afflictions within oneself: we cannot expect to subdue them by meditating on the antidote just once, or periodically, rather we need to constantly apply vigilance over one's state of mind and apply the antidote whenever the afflictions arise. It should not be as if one aims to go out and have a good time outside, and doing one or two meditation sessions when one feels like it. Otherwise one could spend all the time just going around and having a good time. That sort of attitude will not overcome the delusions.

The analogy also shows that *one should strive to have an uninterrupted stream*. The Tibetan word actually refers to a stream of water. In the same way as a small stream of water can be consistent and run for a long period of time, our practice should be like that. Even though we might not be able to apply great measures of practice right away, whatever practice we can apply with uninterrupted effort, continuously will have an effect. Where we have a burst of energy and get excited about a

certain practice, that is something which we need to be a wary of because it may not last too long and might actually cause discouragement afterwards.

2.2.3.1.1.4. The reason why it is unsuitable to befriend the afflictions

This heading explains that one may attempt to befriend external enemies by being kind to them or generous to them, and with this it is possible that they will start to become friendly to us. However with the internal enemy of afflictions, one cannot expect that by befriending the delusions they will not harm us; the more we befriend the delusions, the more powerful they become in harming us. This is explained in the next verse and commentary.

33. *When agreeably and respectfully relied upon
Then everybody acts beneficial and causes
happiness,
But if one relies on the afflictions
They will retaliate and cause harm.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning:

When one relies on the outer enemy after having honoured them agreeably by serving them food, drink and so forth, then they will benefit us and help us to have happiness.

But if we rely on the enemy of the afflictions and act agreeably to them, then they will increase in strength, retaliate and cause us harm. To destroy them is the only method to attain happiness.

I have summarised this earlier, but to reflect again upon the main point. If you relate to an individual external enemy kindly, followed by giving gifts, food and so forth then it is possible that someone who was once disagreeable to one, or who considered you an enemy, can turn around and actually become a friend. With an external enemy, if we keep our distance and show an attitude of antagonism then that will only cause the rift to become bigger and the dislike greater. Then there is no possibility of befriending them. It is a very significant point that if we don't want enemies we should take the initiative ourselves. The great beings will act in ways that show gratitude and repay harm with kindness, whereas ordinary worldly beings will return harm for harm. Returning kindness for harm inflicted upon oneself is an act of a great being who takes the initiative to engage in this way.

Unlike the external enemy, if one acts kindly to the internal enemy of afflictions, as though they are our masters. By saying 'yes' to whatever the delusion wants, bowing down and not doing anything to confront them or combat them from within oneself, they will increase in strength, retaliate and cause us harm. You will notice through your own experience that certain delusions or afflictions act like adding fuel. If we harbour them and keep contemplating on them, the stronger they become. So if you find yourself in a situation now where the delusions are occurring like a stream of water, continuously affecting you one after another, then that is because we have not applied the antidotes previously and we are not making any attempts to apply them now. If we make an attempt to apply the antidote to whatever extent we are able, during the time we apply it, the delusions will actually stop. In this way one can see that it is possible to begin to overcome an otherwise

continuous stream of delusions. If we don't apply the antidotes then the afflictions won't subside naturally by themselves. If destroying the delusions within oneself is the only method to experience genuine happiness and wellbeing, then we have no choice but to apply the antidotes.

2.2.3.1.2. How it is unsuitable to meditate on patience for the afflictions

This has two sub-headings

2.2.3.1.2.1. Contemplating how they harm the mind

2.2.3.1.2.2. Contemplating how they harm the body

2.2.3.1.2.1. Contemplating how they harm the mind

The root text states:

34. *Therefore, if this continual long time enemy,
The singular cause for the increase of the
accumulation of harm,
Takes up permanent residence in my heart,
How can cyclic existence be fearless and joyful*

The commentary on this verse reads as follows:

Therefore, if this continual long time enemy, who is the singular unrivalled cause for the strong increase of the accumulation of all harm, takes up permanent residence in my heart, then how can cyclic existence be fearless and joyful?

Since there is no chance for happiness, strive in destroying the afflictions.

Gyalsab Je's commentary states that *if this continual long-term enemy* (the afflictions), identified here as *the singular unrivalled cause for the strong increase of the accumulation of all harm, takes up permanent residence in my heart* (meaning that if we don't do anything to overcome the afflictions and therefore maintain them in our heart), then while we abide in *cyclic existence, how can we be fearless and how can we be joyful?* We need to take this as real personal advice on how to overcome the causes for our own unhappiness. What is being explained here is that the real cause for one's unhappiness, whatever the situation, are the afflictions within one's own mind. So regardless of the external situation, the actual causes of mental agony lie within oneself. If we fail to identify this and constantly try look outside for external causes and so forth, we are completely missing the point.

Harbouring the enemy within, and looking for solutions outside to overcome them will not bring real joy and fearlessness to one's life. Again, one needs to reflect that if we make a genuine attempt to slowly identify the real enemy (the afflictions within) and make genuine attempt to gradually apply the antidote and overcome them, then it is possible for one to gradually experience a real sense of joy regardless of external situations. Wherever one goes, one will be able to maintain some inner sense of tranquillity within one's mind which can definitely have a positive effect upon one's physical body. There are clear signs that a joyful and happy mind can contribute to good health. Take this into considerations for your own benefit.

Practical measures that assist one to develop the inclination to overcome the delusions really rely upon identifying the negative effects the delusions have within oneself. One can reflect upon one's own state of being and ask oneself, 'Would I want to be in a very angry state,

or would I rather be free of anger? Would I like to be feeling completely attached, and upset with attachment or would I rather be in a state free from the pangs of attachment?' Likewise with jealousy, would you like to harbour jealousy in your mind, or would you rather be appeased and not have jealousy? Likewise with pride and so forth. By having an internal dialogue with oneself, and clearly and honestly answering that one would rather be free of these negative states of mind (the afflictions), then knowing there is a means to overcome them, one needs to apply the antidotes.

Equally and naturally we would all like to have mental and physical happiness. There might be other measures presented by other traditions, or even worldly means to gain some happiness, but these may or may not contribute to genuine happiness.

We are in the category of people who look internally to attempt to resolve afflictions to develop genuine mental and physical happiness. To recap, to do this one must identify the causes for mental agony and physical suffering which are the result of afflictions. As we can consider ourselves as beings who look internally to deal with our internal world, we might as well actually make that attempt now and put this understanding into practice. This is how to take this explanation as personal instruction.

We can assume that you coming here is a rare opportunity and you can take pride in yourself for coming here. In a normal worldly situation, after work people might say, 'I have gone to work. I have been busy all day so I am tired now, and I'd just like to lie down and relax and take it easy'. So while many of you have gone to work during the day, and are busy and tired, you have still taken the initiative to come to a teaching here and listened to it. So having sacrificed relaxation time at home don't feel that it is a waste of time. Making an attempt here will definitely have a positive effect and will help overcome hardships and difficulties. On a practical level, if you were to stay home, you may not really have a full opportunity to relax and have a good time anyway. You might get into an argument with your partner, or be annoyed by the children, and not have a very relaxed time at home. So you might as well come here to have a genuine relaxing time.

Some have confided in me that even before they leave work, they already feel anxious about what they have to face at home. Some lament saying, 'I have a headache when I think of what I have to do when I get back home.' I tell them, not to worry about the next job before finishing the first one. This is giving oneself extra worries and agony. Some seem to see going home to cook, and do the washing up, and take care of the children as an extra burden. If one thinks about these as a chore then it does present itself in that way, so try to have a proper attitude. It often seems that causes for conflict and argument are based on who is trying to do what in the household. Indeed the outside work may seem harder and more difficult in comparison to someone who is staying home, but I would think that the work involved with staying at home and cleaning up, looking after children etc. is not easy work either. It is very important to look after the wellbeing of children. For example someone that I know

has a family of three children, and the mum said 'If I have another child I might go crazy' and she related how difficult it was to care for the young one's. I can relate to that.

Again, I acknowledge you coming here to the teachings. I definitely admire it and am happy about it and appreciate that you take the initiative and sacrifice some time to do the study. While that is incredible and such a fortunate occasion for you, what I am attempting to add on to what you learn here, is to encourage you to try to implement it in your life. Try to put the teachings into practice a bit and that will be really worthwhile and beneficial for you. Even though I am not able to practise extensively, as I mentioned earlier, I do feel there is definitely great benefit to be achieved as a result of practice.

In the material you have already studied, for example the previous text *Precious Garland* by Nagarjuna, recall how precise and practical the advice was; one verse after another on how to engage in practice. We went through the extensive explanations according to that text: first of all what causes us to achieve high status, then how to achieve the definite goodness. Prior to that was Aryadeva's *400 Verses* text which explained the path based on the conventional truth as well the ultimate truth, again these were presented very precisely. We have studied these, we have all heard them and we have created a very, very positive imprint in our mind by going through these texts.

Prior to that we studied Chandrakirti's *Madhyamakavatara*, where again explanations of the five paths and ten grounds were very clearly presented.

Having the opportunity to study these texts and reflect upon them is a great fortune. We need to acknowledge that, then and now, as we can still derive benefit from these teachings every time we rejoice, and dedicate the merits of the attempts we have made, to the study and practice. Rejoicing helps to increase the virtue, then we can dedicate the virtue we derive, and benefit from that.

Before this was the teaching *Liberation on the Palm of your Hand*. You indicated that you didn't care how long it took and we actually spent about six years on it. With all this time spent, we were able to go into great detail on this Lam Rim teaching and actually many of you have been able to use it as a basis for presenting and teaching to others. This again is a significant point to recollect as a way to generate joy in one's mind, and to acknowledge the great fortune one has had to be able to study these texts. However one should also make prayers to be able to continuously meet with the conditions to study and practice these teachings, from life to life, in all one's future lifetimes.

Up until now we may all equally assume that we have not had much opportunity to accumulate much external wealth, however we have definitely spent time and energy acquiring some inner wealth. We have obtained something that is indestructible. No matter how much external wealth we might have accumulated, it is not something that we can take with us—not one single dollar can we take with us to our next life. However with the internal wealth of the studies and the practices, and good positive imprints in our mind is something that we

can all confidently take with us to our future life. In making a choice between external wealth and internal wealth, we have made the choice to spend more time and energy acquiring internal wealth. So we have definitely made the right choice.

However, I have also regularly said that we do need external means. While we are making attempts to acquire internal wealth, we also need access to external wealth as for our survival, for ongoing, good conditions for our life. It is a reality that without adequate external conditions we will not be able to practise the Dharma.

I recall when I escaped from Tibet, on the route there were certain occasions where we passed some really beautiful areas, like beautiful valleys. When you looked up there were mountainous regions and I could even detect that there might be a cave up there. On a few occasions I definitely thought, 'Oh how nice if I could just go up to the cave and stay there to meditate. Wouldn't that be wonderful?' And even though there was a strong intention to want to do that, immediately the next thought was 'Who would feed me?' 'How would I get anything up there?' There were no villages around, and it was doubtful whether there would be any natural plants that I could eat. In the winter especially there is hardly anything growing in that remote area, up so high. So that was the practical aspect which prevented an otherwise noble thought of wanting to go into the little cave.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་པའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

6 May 2014

Based on the motivation that we generated during our recitation of the refuge and bodhicitta prayer, we can now engage in the meditation practice. If we ensure our mind is focused on the object of refuge with strong faith, and then generate bodhicitta in relation to all sentient beings, then these two elements will ensure that our practice, even if it is for only a few minutes, will be really meaningful. We need to keep that in mind while engaging in the practice.

[meditation]

As a motivation for receiving the teaching, we can strengthen the earlier bodhicitta motivation by generating this thought:

In order to benefit all sentient beings, to liberate them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching, and put it into practice well.

2.2.3.1.2. How it is unsuitable to meditate on patience for the afflictions

2.2.3.1.2.1. Contemplating how they harm the mind (cont.)

In the text we are up to the section that explains the faults of afflictions and so forth. Rather than treating it as some intellectual understanding, we need to really pay careful attention to these explanations and relate them to our own mental continuum. In this way we will ensure that what we understand from these teachings serves its purpose, which is to reduce the afflictions in one's own mind. Conversely, if our study of the teachings serves to increase afflictions, then it completely defeats the purpose of our study.

We need to pay careful attention to our state of mind, so that our study does not increase the afflictions in our mind, specifically the delusion of pride. If, having understood some points in the teachings, we start to feel pompous, thinking, 'Oh, now I have much better understanding and knowledge of the Dharma than others' and develop a puffed-up superior attitude, then our study has increased the delusion of pride.

Initially when we didn't have much understanding of the Dharma we might not have had much pride in relation to the teaching. But when we gain some understanding then a newly formed pride may arise. It is not that there was no pride to begin with, as the basis of pride is always there. Here we are referring to the pride in thinking, 'Now I have some understanding of the Dharma, I know it better than others'. That is a newly formed pride which comes about as a result of having studied the Dharma.

Likewise, one may not initially have much jealousy in relation to others who are studying the Dharma. In the beginning one didn't have much knowledge of the Dharma, but as one begins to study and gain some knowledge, then that is when a sense of jealousy may arise in relation to others who are also studying and trying to practise the Dharma. Likewise, a sense of competition may arise. This is the classic example of where the Dharma has been completely misused and turned into a poison. Now, of course that doesn't mean that the Dharma itself turns into poison, because the essence of Dharma can never turn into poison. But if the Dharma is completely misused, then it actually becomes a cause for afflictions to increase. In this case, rather than serving as medicine to subdue the mind the Dharma becomes a means to further escalate the poisons in the mind.

These are really important points we need to take into consideration so that whatever study, understanding and practice one has in the Dharma does not become a further means to strengthen the afflictions. That would defeat the whole purpose of studying and practising the Dharma, which would be a disgrace. In sharing this point with you I am not implying that I'm skilled in Dharma practice myself, however I really do feel that these are important points that we need to keep in mind. I share this with you out of a genuine concern for you and your Dharma practice, so that your attempts to study and understand the Dharma do not go astray, and that the Dharma actually fulfils its intended purpose.

It is when the Dharma nourishes the afflictions in the mind rather than benefiting the mind that followers of a tradition will start to squabble and come into conflict. That is a mark of real degeneration. It is not the fault of the Dharma or the religion, but it is the fault of those who follow the religion or the Dharma having not utilised the teachings to really subdue their minds. When that happens amongst the followers of any particular religion or tradition it becomes a disgrace to the religion itself.

It is really important that we relate the faults of the delusions to our own mind and not use them as a means to judge others. The faults of the delusions that are described in the teachings should relate to one's own state of mind. If one is not careful, situations such as those that have occurred in our very own study group can arise. Several times in the past people have brought to my attention that some students who were quite new to the study group had a sense that they were being looked down upon by those who had a little more understanding, and they felt that they were being put down. This problem has now subsided, but there may be occasions where it can happen again. So we need to be really mindful and careful that this doesn't occur.

The faults of the delusions are described in the teachings very meticulously, and the best way to validate this is by relating the teachings to the delusions that we find within ourselves. Seeing the faults of our own delusions is the best reference point to test the truth of the Dharma.

The great master Shantideva mentioned that we need to really protect ourselves against the attitude of jealousy towards those who are higher than oneself, against pride and contempt towards those who are lower than oneself,

and competitiveness with those who are on the same level as oneself. When we think about it, these three attitudes are the cause of a lot of distress and turmoil in any society. As Shantideva mentioned, it is very hard to please worldly beings who are completely engrossed with these types of attitudes, for as long as they maintain these attitudes in their mind they will not be able to relate to the truth of the Dharma.

It is not sufficient to merely recognise the faults of the delusions, but rather, having recognised the faults, we need to apply the antidotes to overcome the delusions. That is what we really need to take on board. The process of identifying the delusions and seeing the faults of the delusions is something we need to do on a regular basis in our everyday life. Although we don't have the ability to recollect the faults of delusions that we have committed in previous lifetimes, we can, in our everyday life, do a thorough analysis of the delusions that are affecting us now on a daily basis. If our day begins with feeling unsettled and a particular delusion becomes manifest and prevalent, then we can notice how it affects the rest of the day. We might feel unsettled throughout the day and become prone to even more delusions manifesting in our mind. That is what occurs when we have not really paid attention to the delusions that lie within, and made genuine attempts to apply the antidotes. Whereas if we check our state of mind every morning, and ensure that it is not affected by any strong delusions, and if it is, then make genuine attempts to apply an antidote, then we will find the rest of the day will be quite fine, that there will be no big drama or upheaval taking place. Towards evening we can feel quite content and happy that we've had a good day, a day where we have not been completely overpowered and consumed by negative states of mind. That is how we can feel content and happy that we have had a worthwhile day. We can then rejoice and dedicate our good virtues and merits of the day.

As explained earlier, we need to combat the delusions by applying an antidote, making sure that we don't allow them to overpower us. We need to follow the examples of Kadampa masters such as Geshe Bayen Gun-gyal, who used to have dialogues with the delusions saying, 'If you become relaxed then I will be relaxed too, but if you start becoming powerful then I am going to use force to overcome you'. You will find these quotes in the Lam Rim teachings, and it would be good for you to refer to them. This is the sort of measures that earlier practitioners used as a way of combatting the delusions in their mind; applying the antidote the moment the delusions arise.

If we don't take the initiative to recognise the delusions and apply an antidote, then it is most likely that we will become completely overwhelmed and overpowered by the delusions as they arise. As beginners, even just recognising a delusion for what it is when it manifests will reduce its intensity and strong hold on our mind. It is to that extent that we gain the benefit of recognising the delusions within oneself. That is the measure of how we need to apply our practice on a daily basis. It will take some time before we actually get to the point of being able to apply an antidote to overcome the delusions

completely. However we need to begin the process by gradually taking these steps in our everyday life.

The Lam Rim teachings, and indeed all the Buddha's teachings, explain that the purpose of overcoming the delusions and afflictions is to subdue our mind. So we need to ensure that we are taking that onboard, and that we are applying the teachings at a level within our capability. That is where we begin. If we leave that aside and start thinking that there are grander practices that we should be doing, then that is again missing the point. We need to begin with the basis and develop a strong foundation. I am sharing this as a way of reminding you of the essential point of the whole study and practice of the Dharma, so that it benefits you and that you don't miss the point.

There is no way to become a real practitioner without paying attention to death and impermanence. Through logic you will be able to find that this is true, because the focus of all the activities of a person who does not recollect death and impermanence will be merely on the benefits and affairs of this life. Thus they cannot become a true practitioner. Without recollecting death and impermanence, our activities will be those that are focused on staying in this world rather than moving on to the next. We need to be prepared for our inevitable onward journey, rather than thinking that we will remain here for ever.

The last line of verse 34 asks:

How can cyclic existence be fearless and joyful?

There are different interpretations of the meaning of this line. Gyaltsab Je's explanation implies that if one does not combat the afflictions in one's mind, then how could remaining in cyclic existence be fearless and joyful? Other commentaries explain that if one does not have a fear of cyclic existence then one may regard cyclic existence as being joyful. However, regarding cyclic existence as being joyful is completely contrary to how we need to regard cyclic existence. That joy arises because one lacks any fear of cyclic existence. That is a slightly more profound explanation.

2.2.3.1.2.2. Contemplating how they harm the body

The relevant verse is:

35. *If this guardian of the prison of cyclic existence,
Who becomes the executioner and torturer in
hell,
Abides within the net of attachment in my
mind,
Then how can I have happiness?*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

These afflictions do not grant freedom from cyclic existence. Rather they become the guardians of the prison of cyclic existence and the hell realms. They also become the executioners killing in the upper and lower realms.

If these afflictions abide within the net of the mistaken conception, within the net of attachment in my mind, then how can one have a chance for happiness?

There is no chance for mental or physical happiness

These afflictions do not grant freedom from cyclic existence, this identifies the specific cause that imprisons us in cyclic existence, which is none other than the afflictions

themselves. It is afflictions that prevent one from being free from cyclic existence. Further, the afflictions *become the guardians of the prison of cyclic existence*. That which guards us in cyclic existence and keeps us there is none other than the afflictions. Also the torturers in the hell realms that inflict the harms in the hell realms are none other than manifestations of one's own afflictions.

Furthermore *they also become the executioners killing in the upper and lower realms*. In hell realms, as you would have heard, after the body has been torn apart in every direction the body regenerates itself and has to experience the sufferings all over again, and if one faints one is revived and has to experience the sufferings again. The cause of that is none other the afflictions. Even in the upper realms such as the human realm, as we all know, there are many who take their own life, which is caused none other than the afflictions. As Shantideva mentions in another text, the afflictions in the mind, such as anger, can cause someone to take their own life. With this understanding we can understand the point about the afflictions being like executioners.

The main cause for all the sufferings that will be experienced, regardless of whether one is of higher status or lower status, is none other than the afflictions. What is being implied here in simple terms is that for as long as the afflictions are not abandoned no one is spared by them. *The net of mistaken conceptions* can apply, on a broader sense, to any kind of delusion that manifests itself in the mind, but more specifically it is applied to self-grasping. So the root of the delusions, grasping at a truly existent self, is the primary root of all our mistaken conceptions. Thus, held within the net of mistaken conceptions we are trapped in samsara. Here *net* is analogous to the net of a bird cage that prevents the bird from escaping.

How can one have a chance of happiness, implies that for as long as the afflictions abide in one's mind *there is no chance at all for mental or physical happiness*.

Mistaken conceptions also relates to the inappropriate attention that we place on objects when we perceive them. As I have already explained this in detail previously, we need not elaborate on it again here.

2.2.3.1.3. Generating courage to destroy them

Merely acknowledging the afflictions as being harmful, and seeing their faults is not sufficient. Just thinking about these faults could be overwhelming unless one also thinks about the possibility of overcoming them. Therefore this heading is saying that we need to develop the courage to destroy the delusions.

The verse relating to this outline reads:

36. *Thus, as long as I do not destroy this enemy directly
For that long I shall not give up striving here.
The very proud ones that become angry even due to small harm,
Sleep will elude them until they have destroyed it.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Since everything unwished for is generated by the afflictions, for as long as I have not definitely destroyed this terrifying enemy directly, it is

appropriate that I shall not give up even for one moment striving in the antidote to the afflictions while I am here in this migration.

If the very proud worldly people get angry at even small harms such as harsh words, they will be very vengeful, sleep will elude them and they will not rest until they have destroyed their enemy.

Therefore it is appropriate to strive in destroying the enemy of the afflictions.

The commentary begins with *since everything unwished for is generated by the afflictions*, so we need to apply that understanding to any unwanted or unpleasant experience. These experiences don't occur randomly without any reason or without any causes. Rather, as stated here, every unwanted experience is caused by delusions.

For as long as I have not definitely destroyed this terrifying enemy directly implies that having understood that the cause of unwanted or unwished for experiences is generated by the afflictions will not be sufficient to overcome the manifest level of delusions. Rather, one needs to strive to overcome them from their very root. Here, *directly* has the connotation of *from its very root*. Thus what is being explained here is that until and unless one overcomes the afflictions from their very root, *it is appropriate that I should not give up for one moment striving in the antidote to the afflictions while I am in this migration*. What is being implied here is that one will not experience any real happiness until the afflictions have been completely uprooted.

The intent to *not give up even for one moment striving in the antidote* explains that having generated the antidote, one should not give up applying that antidote.

When the commentary mentions *if the very proud worldly people get angry*, it is referring more specifically to the mental factor of spite. Very proud worldly people can become very spiteful. As explained previously, spite is a specific state of anger that escalates to the point where you do not give up on the intention of harming the person who harms you. As stated here, even with *small harms, such as harsh words, sleep will elude them and they will not rest until they have destroyed their enemy*. Some individuals cannot rest until they have taken revenge on someone who has harmed them, either with actual words or by harbouring ill-will and thinking, 'I have to get back at them'. As mentioned here, they may not even be able to go to sleep until they have been able to take revenge. Some individuals are affected by such strong pride that they are not able to endure even small harms.

This example of very proud individuals who constantly think about how to get back at those who have inflicted even trivial harms is used to indicate how it is far more appropriate to strive to destroy the enemy of the afflictions, who harm us on a constant basis. For as long as we harbour the afflictions in our mind, they constantly harm us and affect us in a negative way. It is far more appropriate and worthwhile to apply the antidote for overcoming the delusions at all times, rather than wasting time trying to take revenge on external enemies. Therefore, day and night, we should be concerned with applying the antidotes to overcome the afflictions.

2.2.3.2. HOW IT IS UNSUITABLE TO TIRE OF THE DIFFICULTY OF ABANDONING THE AFFLICTIONS

Having recognised the afflictions and seen the need to abandon them, one might become discouraged and give up striving to overcome them. This section is explaining why one should not tire in this endeavour.

What is implied here is that abandoning the afflictions is not going to be an easy task. The delusions are powerful and they are very persistent in harming us. When we apply some antidote and reach a point where we may have some control over the delusions, they very sneakily arise in another guise. So the delusions find so many different ways to harm us. We are not dealing with an easy enemy here, so abandoning the afflictions will require farsighted endurance from our side. But we should not tire of the difficulty. As outlined in the heading this is exactly what the following verses encourage us to do.

This heading has three sub-divisions:

2.2.3.2.1. Donning the armour that will enable one to destroy the afflictions, it is unsuitable to tire of the difficulties

2.2.3.2.2. The benefits of striving to destroy the afflictions

2.2.3.2.3. It is appropriate to strive in the trainings that destroy the afflictions

2.2.3.2.1. Donning the armour that will enable one to destroy the afflictions, it is unsuitable to tire of the difficulties

There are two verses under this heading.

37 *The afflicted ones, who suffer anyway due to dying naturally,
At the height of battle, deeply wishing to destroy,
They disregard sufferings inflicted by weaponry, arrows and spears,
And will not retreat until their purpose is achieved.*

38 *What need is there to mention that they who strive
In destroying the natural enemy, which is the continual
Cause for all suffering, strive without despondence or laziness,
Despite hundredfold sufferings.*

Gyaltsab Je's explanation explains the meaning of the verse:

The afflicted ones, whose nature it is anyway to transform into the suffering of death, even without being killed, are the object of compassion.

When they are doing battle with the strong will to fight and to overcome the enemy, they will disregard the suffering inflicted by weapons such as arrows, spears and so forth, and will not retreat until their aim is achieved.

What need is there to mention that it is appropriate for me, who has taken up austerity, wishing to destroy the enemy of the afflictions, who has treated me as an enemy from the day of my birth, to not give up striving to destroy this enemy, and to not give in to despondency and laziness despite hundredfold sufferings such as cold, hunger and thirst.

As the commentary explains, *the afflicted ones* refers to the worldly enemies, who are afflicted by the delusions.

Because they are afflicted by the delusions they will naturally experience the consequences of their afflictions in the form of suffering, in particular the suffering of death. In other words, these external enemies, who are afflicted by the delusions, will naturally be vanquished by death, even without someone taking measures to destroy them. So, because they are afflicted by the delusions and will consequently experience the suffering of being completely destroyed by death, they *are* in fact *an object of compassion*.

When these afflicted worldly beings try to destroy others, they go into *battle with a strong will to fight and to overcome the enemy*. With the intention of overcoming their enemy, who will naturally be consumed by death anyway, they will have to experience *the suffering inflicted by the enemy's weapons such as arrows, spears and so forth*. Yet despite all of the harms inflicted on them by their sworn enemy, they are intent on fighting until the end, and *will not retreat until their aim is achieved*.

As the commentary explains, those intent on destroying external enemies generate great willpower and thus endure the harms inflicted on them. Despite all the harm inflicted on them, they still face the enemy with the intent of destroying them. That is the measure that worldly beings take. That being the case, the main point being emphasised here is, *what need is there to mention that it is appropriate for me, who has taken up austerity, (i.e. one has willingly taken up austerity practices) wishing to destroy the enemy of the afflictions who has treated me as an enemy from the day of my birth*. It is not as if the delusions became our enemy later in life, because from the very moment we were born the delusions were there to harm us. That being the case, we should *not give up striving to destroy this enemy, and not give in to despondency and laziness despite hundredfold sufferings such as cold, hunger and thirst*.

As explained here, based on having seen the faults of the delusions, and understanding how they have harmed us since we were born into this life, we need to develop the courage to not give up striving to destroy this enemy and not give in to despondency. This implies that there are some who, having made few attempts to overcome afflictions, resort to thinking, 'Oh, this is hopeless! I can't overcome the delusions'. Once one makes that decision one falls into despondency and laziness, and will no longer strive to apply the antidote. Lest one falls into despondency, we are urged that despite the sufferings of cold, hunger and thirst that will naturally accompany one's practices of austerity, one should not give up the intent to destroy the enemy of the afflictions.

As the outline presents, we need to don the armour of joyous effort to maintain our enthusiasm. Just as those who go into battle put on armour so that they are not harmed by their enemies' weapons, one needs to put on the armour of joyous effort in order to engage in austerity practices, and overcome the delusions. The *Guru Yoga Puja* also refers to donning the armour of joyous effort.

So the main point being emphasised here is that we need to apply joyous effort as a way of combatting the delusions.

2.2.3.2.2. *The benefits of striving to destroy the afflictions*

This is subdivided into three

2.2.3.2.2.1. Being the cause for one's welfare austerities are suitable to bear

2.2.3.2.2.2. Being the cause for other's welfare, austerities are suitable to bear

2.2.3.2.2.3. Why one needs to complete the earlier given promise

2.2.3.2.2.1. **Being the cause for one's welfare austerities are suitable to bear**

The verse from the root text reads:

39. *They sustain scars from the enemy for no purpose
And wear them on their body like ornaments.
If I strive stridently to achieve the great purpose
Why should sufferings be something that harms me?*

Gyalsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

Worldly beings sustain scars for no purpose at all and wear them like ornaments, saying: 'this scar I got at such and such a time'.

As the commentary explains, *worldly beings sustain scars for no purpose at all and wear them like ornaments*. The scars received in a fight become something to show off to others as a mark of bravery. They take great pride in those scars, saying, 'I got these scars in my fight'. That is how some worldly beings view their scars.

That being the case:

Why would one then be harmed by the sufferings endured while striving stridently in the austerities? They are to achieve the great purpose of complete enlightenment!

Since they are only of benefit one should rely on them.

What is being implied here is that it is worthwhile to endure the hardships of austerity practices to overcome the afflictions, since these practices are a cause to achieve the great purpose of complete enlightenment. *Since they are of only benefit* for oneself and they cause no harm, *one should* definitely *rely* on these practices.

The main point being emphasised here is that when ordinary, worldly people take great pride in their scars and so forth for even small meaningless purposes, one, who has committed to overcome the afflictions, which serves the great purpose of achieving enlightenment, need not be overwhelmed by the difficulties and hardships that one may incur. That is because the hardships serve as the means to achieve a great purpose.

The main point is that it is definitely worthwhile to bear those austerities as a way to obtain one's ultimate welfare. The ultimate result is to achieve the excellence of one's own purpose, which is enlightenment. When one achieves enlightenment, then that fulfils the purpose of obtaining the excellence of one's own welfare.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་ཀྱི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

13 May 2014

Based on the motivation we have generated during the recitation of our *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, we can now engage in the meditation practice. [meditation]

You have just meditated on the Giving and Taking practice, and I am sure you have done it to the best of your ability. With the 'taking' you imagine taking in three types of phenomena from all sentient beings: all their sufferings; the causes of their sufferings, which are the afflictions and karma; and the imprints or latencies of those afflictions. In the 'giving' part of the practice, in return you imagine giving three of your most valuable objects: your body, your possessions and all your virtues of the three times. It is important to recollect these main points when you engage in the meditation practice and apply them to the best of your ability. That will make the practice really worthwhile.

2.2.3.2.2. The benefits of striving to destroy the afflictions

We have covered the first subdivision Being the Cause for One's Welfare Austerities Are Suitable to Bear. Now comes the second subdivision.

2.2.3.2.2.2. Being the cause for other's welfare, austerities are suitable to bear

The verse reads as below and is accompanied by examples in the root text:

40. *Fishers, butchers, farmers and the like
Are bearing cold, heat and such
Solely with thoughts for their livelihood.
Why can one not bear this for the happiness of
migrators?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Fishers, butchers, farmers and the like kill fish, do lowly work, work on the fields and so forth, and are bearing difficulties like cold or heat and such, all this solely with the thought of their livelihood.

If that is so, then why can one not bear similar sufferings to accomplish the happiness of all migrators? It would be appropriate to bear them.

The message from the commentary and the verse is quite easy to understand: if one is able to bear hardships to achieve trivial purposes in life, then why shouldn't one strive to bear some hardships to achieve the highest purpose for oneself?

Beings who exert a lot of effort and bear hardships for trivial purposes, like *fishers* and *butchers* who take the life of other beings merely to sustain themselves in this life, or *farmers* who toil year round in the *cold, the rain, and in the heat of the sun*, do this *lowly work* and bear difficulties solely to sustain themselves for this life. These examples show how some people have to put in so much time and effort, and endure so many hardships just to sustain their basic needs. When we see examples of this around us, we should be inspired not to complain about our lives and ready to bear some difficulties ourselves for our own welfare.

Individuals who expend effort and bear hardship to achieve their goals, even if they may be temporary ones, do achieve significant results. Of course, whenever one endeavours to achieve something, one should understand that there are always some necessary conditions that are required, as well as some obstructions that need to be overcome. As such, the method for achieving one's goals should encompass strategies for establishing the conducive conditions and eradicating any obstructions. This requires a significant amount of time and effort, and bearing hardships. So we can learn from others who expend energy and bear hardships to achieve their goals. In order to achieve the great purpose, one needs to make this resolve, *if that is so, then why can one not bear similar sufferings to accomplish the happiness of all migrators? It would be appropriate to bear them. To accomplish the happiness of all migrators one needs to achieve the ultimate goal of enlightenment. That is the highest aspiration and goal for anyone who has taken bodhisattva vows. Since many of you have taken the bodhisattva vows and promised to work for the welfare of all sentient beings until achieving enlightenment, it is important for you to continue your practices and willingly bear whatever difficulties and hardships that may occur. The phrase it would be appropriate to bear them has the connotation in Tibetan of being patient with them; that means to be patient when facing hardships. So, in order to achieve the great purpose one needs to apply the patience of willingly enduring hardships. This is the resolve we need to make when engaging in Dharma practice.*

Of course the advice here is mainly directed at the practices of a bodhisattva. While we aspire to do these practices, in reality we may not be able to apply our practices at a bodhisattva's level right now. However, the personal instruction here is to generate a strong aspiration to be able to practise *like a bodhisattva*. Bodhisattvas bear hardships with farsightedness, engaging in the practices over long periods of time, withstanding many adversities, and continue to practice whilst not giving up their bodhisattva vows or bodhicitta. This should inspire us to generate a strong veneration and genuine respect for them, along with an aspiration that we may also practise in a similar way.

The point here is that it is most fitting to bear sufferings by applying the patience of willingly enduring hardships. The definition of patience is not to allow one's mind to become disturbed in the face of adversities such as harm and sufferings. We should apply this understanding of *willingly bearing hardships*, because if one is not able to bear hardships and difficulties, it will affect one's mind negatively, and one will become distraught and overwhelmed. When there is agony in one's mind because of hardships, those feelings will then cause anger to arise. Anger is always preceded by a feeling of discomfort or agony, which one is not able to bear. The best way for our mind not to feel overwhelmed is by willingly accepting and bearing hardships, and to regard them as being worthwhile.

The ultimate result of having born hardships and difficulties on the path is to become an enlightened being. An enlightened being, such as Buddha Shakyamuni, is an individual being who has willingly born many hardships as a practitioner, and having completely traversed the path, finally achieved the state of enlightenment. If we aspire to become like Buddha Shakyamuni, how can we expect to succeed if we easily become distraught and willing give up our practices when faced with the slightest difficulty or hardship? We may not be able to practise on a bodhisattva's level right now, however we can definitely generate the

aspiration to practise like a bodhisattva. Admiring the bodhisattva's deeds leaves very positive imprints on our mind, which helps to develop our capacity to practise just like a bodhisattva in the future. So, these are significant points to keep in mind.

2.2.3.2.3. Why one needs to complete the earlier given promise

The verse is preceded by a doubt:

Doubt: One has made the promise to destroy the afflictions in the continuum of others and it is unsuitable to strive in destroying the afflictions in one's own continuum, because one would fall into the extreme of peace.

To explain the hypothetical doubt: having *made the promise to destroy the afflictions in the continuum of others*, the doubt is that it would be *unsuitable to strive in destroying the afflictions in one's own continuum because one would fall into the extreme of peace* i.e. the peace of self-liberation or nirvana. The doubt is that if one works towards *destroying the afflictions* or the delusions *in one's own mental continuum* then once destroyed this would imply that one would reach the state of self-liberation, with the risk of abiding in a state of personal peace. This reminds me of a similar doubt raised some time ago by Vanessa. She said that as Mahayana practitioners "if we are striving to overcome our personal sufferings, wouldn't that contradict the Mahayana attitude that we should be developing?" These are significant doubts.

When you really think deeply about the meaning of the teachings, doubts will arise. This is significant because they arise as a result of contemplation and investigation of the topic. In relation to the earlier doubt, for someone merely seeking self-liberation the main object of abandonment is the afflictions, and the main purpose for abandoning them is to attain personal liberation. So when the afflictions have been abandoned they reach the state of self-liberation, a state where one abides in perpetual bliss. An arhat or foe destroyer is an individual who has abandoned the afflictions and has reached that blissful state and remains in a blissful state of meditative equipoise. That is what is being referred to here as *the extreme of peace*.

The corresponding verse and a half read:

41 *When one made the promise to liberate
Migrators equalling the expanse of space
From the afflictions,
Oneself was not free from afflictions.*

42ab *As one did not know one's abilities
How was it not crazy talk?*

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains the meaning:

Answer: At an earlier time when one generated the mind and made the promise to liberate all migrators equalling the expanse of space from their afflictions, if oneself is not free from afflictions, then not to mention the welfare of others, one cannot achieve even one's own welfare. Being under the control of the afflictions one does not know one's own measure. How is it not crazy to say that one will liberate others from their afflictions?

If one is bound by cyclic existence, one cannot complete the welfare of others and therefore one should strive to abandon the afflictions in one's continuum.

What is being explained is that since one has earlier *generated the mind of bodhicitta and made the promise to liberate migrators equalling the expanse of space from their afflictions, then*

in order to fulfil this promise one must abandon one's own afflictions. Otherwise one cannot achieve the welfare of others.

The verse explains that *being under the control of the afflictions one does not know one's own measure*, or state of mind, so how can one *liberate others from the afflictions*. What is being presented here is that to claim that one would free all beings from their afflictions while doing nothing about abandoning one's own afflictions would be similar to a *crazy person's* approach. The commentary goes further: *if one is bound by cyclic existence, one cannot complete the welfare of others and therefore one should strive to abandon the afflictions in one's continuum*. The conclusion is that one definitely needs to strive to abandon afflictions.

This relates to the meaning of the outline Why One Needs to Complete the Earlier Given Promise, which is that in order to complete an earlier promise to work for the welfare of all sentient beings and ultimately free them from all afflictions and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, one needs to abandon the afflictions within one's own mental continuum. That is why the conclusion here states: *one should strive to abandon the afflictions in one's continuum*. This is similar to an analogy presented in the Lam Rim teachings of the father of a starving family who finds a piece of meat. He reasons that if he were to share the piece of meat with his family there will be little benefit for each of them. So he decides to eat it all himself in order to gain enough strength and energy to find sufficient food to feed the whole family.

The analogy illustrates the importance of first freeing oneself from the afflictions; otherwise there is no possibility to help free others from the afflictions. This is why one needs to achieve enlightenment and become a buddha oneself before one can lead others to buddhahood. When one practises developing bodhicitta, one first practises developing the aspiration to benefit others, and then based on that, one generates the aspiration to achieve enlightenment oneself in order to achieve that purpose.

This is how one trains one's mind and how the path is traversed; another key point to keep in mind.

2.2.3.2.3. It is appropriate to strive in the trainings that destroy the afflictions

An earlier verse explained that it is appropriate to abandon the delusions or afflictions. The verses below explain the appropriateness of striving in the trainings which destroy the afflictions.

This is subdivided into two:

2.2.3.2.3.1. Strive in the antidote to the afflictions

2.2.3.2.3.2. Strive to never let the mind fall under the control of the afflictions

These are really significant points to apply to our own practices. **Striving in the antidote to the afflictions** means to work towards developing the antidotes in one's mind to overcome the afflictions. The next point, **striving to never fall under the control of the mental afflictions**, means working towards control over one's mind, so that one does not fall under the dominance of the afflictions.

In our daily practice bring to mind the importance of applying the antidotes. Whatever antidotes one has not yet developed, one should strive to develop as a means to overcome the afflictions within oneself. And whatever antidotes one has already developed, one should ensure that one further strengthens them. Likewise with the afflictions: whatever afflictions one has not yet abandoned, strive to

abandon them. And whatever afflictions one has successfully controlled or has reduced, ensure that one applies continual measures and diligence to keep those delusions at bay so that they don't arise strongly again.

It is similar with virtue: whatever virtues one has not yet developed, strive to develop them, and whatever virtues one has already generated, strengthen and further develop them. Try to bring these to mind as an aspiration: "May I be able to overcome the afflictions which I have not yet overcome and apply the measures to overcome them; and may I be able to develop the virtues that I have not yet developed and maintain the virtues I have already developed".

This becomes a really significant aspiration. When one applies this, the aspiration itself can bring solace and ease to the mind. It is good for us to relate to these seemingly simple practices which we may easily neglect, thinking we should be doing some grander practices. I feel that often our shortcoming is that we neglect practices within our own reach and try to aim for something higher or grander; we need to pay attention to this.

A key point from the outlines is that when an affliction arises in our mind, rather than just leaving it and doing nothing about it, we need to recognise that this only creates a condition for the affliction to increase in intensity. What we are being encouraged to do here is that as soon as an affliction arises, we need to immediately remember to apply an antidote to overcome it. Next, since the afflictions arise at any given moment, when they do arise, we should not allow ourselves to fall under their dominance or control. These are both things that we are able to do. We can take measures to apply antidotes and ensure that we are not under the complete control of the afflictions. These are reasonable practices that we can apply in our daily lives.

2.2.3.2.3.1. Strive in the antidote to the afflictions

The parts of the verse which relate to this are the second two lines of the earlier verse and the first two lines of the next verse.

*42cd Therefore I shall never reverse
From destroying the afflictions.*

*43ab One should hold onto it
And meet them in war with a vengeance.*

The last two lines of verse 43 will be explained later on.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Since they are suitable to be abandoned one should never reverse from the thought and action of abandoning them. One should hold onto the antidote and destroy the afflictions by meeting them in battle with a vengeance.

The commentary highlights that *since they are suitable to be abandoned* (having given reasons earlier) *one should never reverse from the thought and action of abandoning them*. One needs to be committed to never reversing from the thought and action of abandoning the afflictions. Having seen their faults and disadvantages, one needs to develop the determination never to reverse, never to waiver from the thought of abandoning the afflictions. The next line explains the extent to which one makes that commitment: *one should hold onto the antidote and destroy the afflictions by meeting them in battle with a vengeance*. 'Battle' here is used as an example to illustrate the forceful extent to which one needs to engage in the application of an antidote.

A second doubt is raised here:

Doubt: That which is to be abandoned and the antidote are attachment and anger, and revenge for that to be abandoned is an affliction, and therefore to be abandoned too.

The hypothetical doubt raised here is: isn't being attached to the antidote, generating anger and a vengeful attitude towards what has to be abandoned, i.e. the delusions, an affliction in itself? Doesn't that have to be abandoned too? In other words, attachment to the antidote and anger towards that which is to be abandoned would be an affliction in itself, so wouldn't that have to be abandoned as well?

The next two lines of the verse relate to this:

*43cd Afflictions with such an appearance
Are the destroyer of afflictions, nothing else.*

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

Grasping on to the antidote and the vengeance to that which is to be abandoned, appear like afflictions but they actually belong to the side of the antidote that destroys the afflictions. Thus they are not contained in that to be abandoned.

What is being explained here is that grasping at an antidote and generating vengeance towards that which is to be abandoned may appear to be like afflictions, but actually they help to destroy the afflictions. Generating a vengeful attitude towards the afflictions (which are to be abandoned) is having thoughts such as, "I have recognised you, afflictions, to be the one that constantly harms me; I will definitely overcome you now. I will not rest until I have destroyed you". So when one targets the mind at overcoming the afflictions in such a way, that is the type of vengeance needed. As mentioned here, *it belongs to the side of the antidote*.

2.2.3.2.3.2. Strive to never let the mind fall under the control of the afflictions

The next verse is preceded by this query:

Query: Is it not better to follow the afflictions since to abandon the afflictions brings hundreds of sufferings with it?

These are exactly the kinds of doubts we have when being wary of applying the antidotes to the afflictions. We find that "it is so difficult to overcome these afflictions, so maybe it is better to just follow them". It is this kind of attitude which has kept us in samsara for so long, and which prevents us from making any genuine attempts to overcome the afflictions. A very significant doubt has been raised here.

The verse which relates to this reads as follows:

*44 Dying due to being burned,
Or even being decapitated is easy.
But one should never submit
To the enemy of the afflictions.*

The point to examine here is which is better: the difficulties and hardships in overcoming the afflictions, or waiting for the afflictions to completely control our mind so that we must experience their more serious consequences at a later time? This is the choice we need to make.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of the verse as follows:

Regardless of whether one dies by being burnt or whether one is decapitated, it is still easy, because at that time one is only separated from this life's body.

But one should never submit to the enemy of the afflictions that causes us to take birth in the great sufferings of the hell realms, and is an obstacle to

attaining our wishes. We should never fall under their control.

The explanation: *regardless of whether one dies by being burnt or whether one is decapitated, 'it is easy', implies that being burnt or consumed by fire or experiencing death from decapitation is merely a suffering one experiences from being separated from this life's body, and this will not in itself lead one to the lower realms e.g. the hell realms. These are regarded as easy in comparison to the great sufferings one would have to experience being under the influence of the afflictions. The commentary continues: but one should never submit to the afflictions that cause us to take birth in the great sufferings of the hell realms and is an obstacle to attaining our wishes. If one were to give power to the enemy (the afflictions), this is what causes one to take birth in the great sufferings of the hell realms and so forth, as well as being an obstacle to attaining our ultimate goal of enlightenment. The conclusion here is that one should never fall under the control of the afflictions.*

2.2.3.3. MEDITATING ON JOY KNOWING THAT IF ONE MAKES AN EFFORT IT IS POSSIBLE TO ABANDON THE AFFLICTIONS

This heading presents the meaning of the next few verses, which is that one should generate joy in one's mind; one should not feel daunted by the difficulty of overcoming the afflictions but rather generate joy; and that if one makes an effort, it is definitely possible to abandon the afflictions which should cause some joy. This heading is subdivided into three:

2.2.3.3.1. Once the afflictions are expelled from one's continuum they have no other basis in which to abide

2.2.3.3.2. If one makes an effort they can be abandoned because they arise from a mistaken cause

2.2.3.3.3. If they are abandoned from the root, there is no other basis on which they can abide so they are suitable to abandon!

2.2.3.3.1. *Once the afflictions are expelled from one's continuum they have no other basis on which to abide*

This verse is preceded by another query:

Query: Afflictions are like worldly enemies in that, after having been expelled from one's place, they find again strength and harm again. So it is appropriate to follow them likewise.

The doubt here is that one may feel daunted in overcoming the afflictions if one perceives them as external enemies, because with external enemies, even if you overpower them for the time being and expel them from your area, they might congregate in another area, regain power and strength and again come back and cause you more harm. So if one uses an external enemy as an example for one's afflictions, one may have that doubt that "even if I were to overcome the afflictions now, they might reoccur later and affect me and harm me, so what is the point in trying to overcome them; I might as well just follow them".

The verse relating to this reads:

45 *When the ordinary enemy gets expelled from one place
They conquer another place and remain there.
Having regained strength they return.
The way of the enemy of the afflictions is not like that.*

The commentary provides an answer to the query:

Answer: It is not the same. When the ordinary enemy gets expelled from one place they conquer another place, regain their strength there and then return to

take their revenge. The way of the enemy of the afflictions is not like that. Once they have been expelled from the root they cannot remain in another place and they cannot return.

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains, external worldly enemies and the afflictions do not have the same meaning. When an ordinary enemy gets expelled from one place, they conquer or reside in another place and regain their strength and return to take their revenge. That is what an external enemy is capable of doing. As explained further: *the way of the enemy of the afflictions is not like that because once they have been expelled from the very root they cannot remain in another place and they cannot return to harm oneself.*

If one makes an effort, afflictions can be abandoned because they arise from a mistaken cause. If the causes were based on a valid basis then one would not be able to abandon them because they would have a substantial base. But because the very causes of the afflictions are mistaken there is no sound basis for them and therefore one is able to abandon them. Understanding this gives one further encouragement to apply the antidotes to overcome the afflictions.

With the cause, we can again reflect upon the explanations in the *Abhidharma* which outlines three main conditions for afflictions to arise: When the afflictions have not been abandoned; when one is in close proximity to objects; and when concepts based on inappropriate attention is applied then all the conditions for the delusions to arise in one's mind are present. Inappropriate attention is in itself a mistaken consciousness which is one of the causes for afflictions to arise. It is precisely because inappropriate attention arises based on a mistaken consciousness that it can be eradicated, because a mistaken consciousness is not based on a valid basis.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

20 May 2014

The *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer* that we have just recited will suffice as our motivation for engaging in our meditation practice. [meditation]

As mentioned many times in the past, prior to engaging in the Giving and Taking meditation practice one needs to first spend some time trying to cultivate a sense of love and compassion towards all beings who we visualise in front of ourselves. As a result of contemplating how beings lack true happiness, one develops a strong wish that they abide in happiness which is how one generates love for all beings. Then, by contemplating the various sufferings sentient beings are experiencing one generates the very strong wish that they be free from all those sufferings. That is where one generates the sense of compassion for all beings.

When one ensures that one has generated the mind of love and compassion for all beings, then to whatever degree one has developed these positive states of mind, to that extent the practice itself becomes really meaningful and fruitful. As a result of having spent some time focusing on these positive attitudes when we come out of the meditation practice we will be able to detect real transformation taking place in our minds. We will notice that the earlier chaotic and negative state of mind has been now replaced with a kinder and gentler state of mind which is a direct benefit of the practice. Generating love and compassion for other beings definitely has a positive effect on our mind, for when love and compassion is prevalent there is no room for any harmful intentions to arise. So, our mind will naturally be calmer and more peaceful because of the lack of harmful intent. It is important that we check whether our meditation practice is contributing to a positive change in our mind or not. It is not sufficient to merely focus on an object single-pointedly if it doesn't contribute to a positive change to one's mind.

As Lama Tsong Khapa said, one must abandon mere calm abiding and strive towards developing the union of calm abiding and special insight. This is a very significant point to bear in mind.

The main point here is that while we may have studied and have accumulated a great deal of knowledge, if we don't put that knowledge into practice it will not help to transform our mind. This point is emphasised at the end of this chapter.

2.2.3.3.2. If one makes an effort, they can be abandoned because they arise from a mistaken cause

The verse relating to this reads:

46. *The deluded afflictions are abandoned by the eye of wisdom
When cleared from the mind where will they go?
Where will they abide to gain strength and return?
The weak mind does not let me strive.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

Once the afflictions have been abandoned from their root they have no other base. Since the afflictions arise

from a faulty or mistaken root, one should strive to abandon them with the eye of wisdom that realises emptiness.

Once they are cleared, or what is called abandoned, from the mind, where will they go and find new strength to return and retaliate? It is impossible. Although it is like this, the weak mind does not let me strive to uproot them once and for all.

What is being explained here is that once the afflictions have been abandoned from the very root they will not return. When the manifest afflictions are overcome that does not mean that they will not return. So, the emphasis here is on *abandoning* the afflictions from their very *root* so that there is no other base on which they can abide. This also relates to the doubt raised earlier in the text, which says that once afflictions have been overcome wouldn't it be possible for them to return just like an enemy? If you vanquish an enemy temporarily they can regroup and return to harm one again in the future. So, this verse further clarifies the response to the earlier doubt.

When the commentary states, *since the afflictions arise from a faulty or mistaken root*, the *root* refers to the self-grasping ignorance that is a faulty state of mind. Some teachings relate this to the misconceptions that arise from inappropriate attention, as presented in the *Abhidharma*. However, the main root is the grasping at a truly existent self which is the basis for all misconceptions to arise. As explained in other texts as well, it is because of grasping at a truly existent self that all the afflictions manifest themselves.

With this understanding one can see how attachment actually arises from grasping at a truly existent self. It is because of this faulty state of mind which superimposes and causes objects to appear as being truly existent, and further grasps at them as being truly existent, that afflictions such as attachment manifest themselves. Even though self and other phenomena do not exist inherently, it is the misconception that perceives them as being truly existent and inherently existent that makes them appear in that way. So, it is this faulty and mistaken mind that has to be eliminated from its very root.

As mentioned in the commentary, *one should start to abandon them with the eye of wisdom that realises emptiness*. Having identified the root of the afflictions, the way to strive to abandon them is, as mentioned here, with the *eye of wisdom realising emptiness*. Just as eyes see things directly, it is the wisdom that realises emptiness directly that overcomes or abandons the afflictions. The implication here is that just as one sees objects nakedly with one's eye, one uses the wisdom that realises emptiness directly as an antidote to abandon the afflictions.

With respect to *once that has been cleared or what is called, abandoned from the mind*, the Tibetan word *sal* translated here as *cleared* has the connotation of separating them from one's mind. So, once they have been cleared or separated from one's mind, the rhetorical question is: *where will they go and find new strength and return and retaliate?* implies that once abandoned, the afflictions do not and cannot return. What is specifically being explained here is that it is the wisdom realising emptiness directly that serves as the antidote to abandon afflictions from their very root. This wisdom severs the continuum of the afflictions. Thus, because the very continuum of the afflictions has been completely severed, a similar affliction cannot arise in the next moment. Once the afflictions have been completely severed there is no continuity, i.e. they cannot produce the next moment of

afflictions. The very meaning of being uprooted means that it cannot produce any more results. Thus, once the afflictions have been completely uprooted there is no way for them to return, and there is no other place for them to *abide*. To give a contemporary analogy, it is like the Tasmanian tiger which is extinct. It is because there is no continuity of the Tasmanian tiger that it can never return.

However this is not the case with an external enemy. As mentioned previously, when an external enemy is expelled from a place it can regroup and return. When the Communist Chinese took over Tibet many Tibetans left Tibet and relocated in India, and from there into many other countries. At this point Tibetans cannot stand up and fight back because there is no might. However, the fact is that if there was enough might and power then some Tibetans might want to retaliate and try to fight the Communist Chinese and return to Tibet. And it is possible for Tibetans to return to Tibet because even though they have been expelled the continuum of Tibetans has not been severed.

Unlike this example, when the afflictions have been overcome by the wisdom realising emptiness (which is the ultimate method to completely uproot the afflictions) then where would they go and find new strength to return and retaliate? This rhetorical question implies that it is impossible for them to return. Like the earlier analogy with the Tasmanian tiger, they can never return. The wisdom realising emptiness serves as an optimum antidote for overcoming the afflictions at their very root. This point has been explained many times in the past and you have to relate it to those earlier explanations as well. The reason I explain this again and again is so that you can derive the real meaning and gain an unmistakable and clear understanding of emptiness. Though the teachings explain this in many different ways, it all comes down to the same essential point.

When we take this explanation at a personal level then we really need to acknowledge that we have been able to identify the afflictions, i.e. we have a good understanding of what afflictions are. We also have quite a good understanding of what the antidote, the wisdom realising emptiness, implies. So with this understanding we need to try to overcome the afflictions within ourselves to the best of our ability. We have gained some really precious and valuable understandings and it is now up to us to actually apply this by taking measures to overcome the afflictions, in particular the root affliction of grasping at a truly existent self. To the extent that we can recognise and apply some antidote to overcome the grasping at a truly existent self, the strength of the afflictions, such as attachment and anger and so forth, will also be naturally reduced. Conversely, the stronger our grasping at a truly existent self and the more rigidly we hold onto this misconception, the greater the strength of the afflictions will be. So, to the best of our ability we need to apply the antidote for overcoming that grasping at a truly existent self.

When the commentary states although *it is like this*, it is referring to the fact that it is impossible for the delusions to return once they have been uprooted. However, the *weak mind* (a mind that lacks wisdom), *does not allow one to strive to uproot the afflictions once and for all*. Unless and until one has completely uprooted the delusions, they will reoccur. So if we find that we are affected by the continuity of afflictions, it is none other than because we have not applied the antidote—we have not applied a sufficient amount of wisdom to actually uproot the delusions. If we had done that

previously, then we would not be affected by afflictions now.

An arhat or foe destroyer is no longer affected by the delusions because of the fact that they have uprooted the delusions through the wisdom realising emptiness. Furthermore, as explained in the teachings, those on the Great Vehicle path of seeing have reached the state where they have the direct realisation of emptiness. The power of that realisation will not allow the grasping at a self to strengthen and to become a means to create a newly formed throwing karma which would propel them into rebirth in cyclic existence once again. As explained in the teachings, what prevents beings on the path of seeing from creating a newly formed karma to be reborn again in cyclic existence is the wisdom realising emptiness directly. Of course, even though they do not create any new throwing karma due to the strength of their wisdom directly realising emptiness, that doesn't mean they are completely free from being reborn in cyclic existence.

When a being realises emptiness directly then, even though the grasping at a truly existent self has not been completely uprooted yet, it is nevertheless overpowered by the wisdom realising emptiness. Thus they do not create any new throwing karma. Likewise, even though we still have afflictions, they will be weakened with whatever wisdom we accumulate. So the more we increase our understanding of emptiness through study and practice, the more we will reduce grasping at a truly existent self. Conversely, the stronger our grasping at the self, the more likely it is that we will continuously create throwing karmas, which perpetuates our cycle in samsara. The stronger our grasping at a truly and inherently existent self, the stronger the notion of 'I' or 'me' will be. And the stronger that sense of 'I', the more likely it is that one will reject anything that opposes the 'I', and be attached to whatever pleases that 'I'. That is how we continuously create karma through aversion and attachment, and this is what we need to understand.

2.2.3.3.3. *If they are abandoned from the root, there are no other bases to abide. Thus they are suitable to abandon*

The explanation of the meaning of the next two lines of verse is preceded by this doubt:

If you say, the afflictions are also generated from one's own continuum and exist inherently and thus they cannot be abandoned.

In answer to that doubt the next two lines of verse are presented:

47ab. *Afflictions do not abide in the object, not in the faculties nor in-between. Since they are also nowhere else, where do they go to harm all sentient beings?*

In his commentary Gyalsab Je begins his explanation of the meaning of these lines thus:

Answer: The afflictions do not abide in objects such as form, otherwise arhats would also generate afflictions when they see forms and so forth.

The answer to the doubt is that the afflictions do not abide inherently. If they were to abide in an object such as form, then an arhat (who has in fact abandoned the afflictions) *would generate afflictions when they see forms*, because they still perceive forms. This implies that the arhats, as a consequence of having interacted with forms, would also generate afflictions. But that is not the case. Furthermore:

They also do not abide in the collections of the sense powers of the eyes and so forth, because when one

contemplates the actual mode of existence, the eyes exist, but the afflictions do not.

A being on the non-interrupted path of seeing who has the direct realisation of emptiness still has the sense powers of the eyes and so forth, but because they have the direct realisation of emptiness the afflictions are not manifest. If they were to *abide in the collections of the sense powers of the eyes and so forth*, then that would imply that afflictions are still manifest in the being on the uninterrupted path of seeing. The commentary further explains:

They also do not exist in-between or somewhere else.

Since it is like this, once abandoned where can the afflictions that were uprooted in this way, and which exist from their own side, go to inflict harm? They do not abide anywhere.

Then the next two lines of verse are presented.

47cd. Since they are like illusions, abandon fear in the heart and rely on striving for wisdom. Why harm myself meaninglessly with the hells and so forth?

The commentary explains the meaning of these two lines as follows:

These afflictions are like illusions. They are empty of inherent existence and yet appear as if they exist from their own side. Therefore, abandon the fear in your heart that they cannot be abandoned because of existing inherently.

Having generated the wisdom that realises emptiness it is suitable to strive in abandoning the mental afflictions. Since one has this ability, why would one create meaninglessly the harm of the lower realms of the hells and so forth? This is unsuitable.

This explanation is quite clear. It follows the earlier explanation that used this analogy of the afflictions being like illusions.

Summary

48. Strive to achieve the trainings, That were thus explained and contemplated. There is no medicine that can cure If one does not listen to the advice of the physician

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Contemplate in the above way repeatedly. Make an effort to strive with conscientiousness in how the Buddha earlier explained bodhicitta, and to protect the trainings. There are no sicknesses that can be cured only by medicine without listening to the instructions of the physician that contain many truths. Strive in abandoning the afflictions according to the instructions of the great physician.

Contemplate in the above way repeatedly refers to all the instructions that were given earlier as well as the advice given by the Buddha in his teachings. So the emphasis here is to *make an effort to strive with conscientiousness* to protect the trainings which serve as the basis for developing bodhicitta. This is really an exhortation to put into practice the instructions that were given earlier. The analogy which is used here is that *there are no sicknesses that can be cured only by medicine without listening to instructions of the physician*. The analogy is that when a sick patient goes to see a physician, a skilled physician would give the medicine along with specific instructions on how to take the medicine with possible dietary restrictions. If the patient doesn't take the medicine then they cannot be cured, but if they take it

without following the physician's specific instructions then again that will affect the chances of being cured. In this analogy Buddha Shakyamuni is like the skilled doctor, and the holy Dharma, which consists of the practices of hearing, thinking and meditating, is like the medicine. One is like the patient, and the afflictions in one's mind are analogous to sickness.

As mentioned earlier, the Dharma was presented by the Buddha on the basis of the three trainings—training in moral ethics, training in meditation and training in wisdom—and the various different teachings which have been precisely presented along with the unmistakable instruction, is the medicine itself. If we don't put these instructions into practice then there is no way that we can be cured of the sickness of the afflictions. More specifically, without putting these instructions into practice there is no way that we will be able to overcome the root affliction of grasping at the self.

Gyaltsab Je is exhorting us to *strive in abandoning the afflictions according to the instructions of the great physician*, the Buddha. So the emphasis here is to make every effort to apply conscientiousness to our training.

Then Gyaltsab Je concludes his commentary on this chapter with this verse:

Freedom from the quagmire of faults within one's own continuum,
Increasing virtues without degeneration,
These depend with certainty on meditation on conscientiousness.
Therefore those proficient should always rely on conscientiousness.

So with this verse Gyaltsab Je points out that being free from *the quagmire of faults and increasing virtues without degeneration, depends on meditating or maintaining conscientiousness*. Therefore, he exhorts the wise need to always depend on conscientiousness. As mentioned here, in order to increase virtue within ourselves and prevent it from degenerating we need to apply conscientiousness. As presented earlier, the definition of conscientiousness includes being constantly mindful of that which needs to be adopted.

Conscientiousness was explained at the very beginning of this chapter so one needs to relate it to that explanation, otherwise we would have to explain it each time it is mentioned again. I don't blame some geshe who seem to be a bit exasperated. Some have said that they put quite bit of effort into explaining things clearly, and at the time it seems that the students have understood it, but after a while they seem to have completely forgotten the points, and it has to be explained all over again.

The importance of remembering the instructions actually leads us into the next chapter, which covers mindfulness and introspection.

II. THE NAME OF THE CHAPTER

This is the fourth chapter of Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas called Applying Conscientiousness

The commentary reads:

This is the commentary on *the fourth chapter of the Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas*, called *Applying Conscientiousness*, from *The Entrance for the Children of the Conquerors*.

Now we come to the fifth chapter, Introspection.

To explain the context of this chapter we need to return to the subdivisions introduced in chapter 1.¹

2. THE ACTUAL EXPLANATION OF THE STAGES OF THE PATH

2.2. The method for taking the essence

2.2.2. Explaining the individual meanings²

2.2.2.2. THE WAY OF TRAINING IN THE PRACTICES OF GENERATING THE TWO MINDS

2.2.2.2.2. The Way of Training in the Actions, the Perfections

2.2.2.2.2.1. The way of meditating on conscientiousness, the limb preventing the degeneration of the training in the mind of enlightenment³

2.2.2.2.2.2. Explaining the way of training in morality, by relating it to introspection and mindfulness, the methods for keeping virtuous dharmas pure⁴

CHAPTER 5: EXPLAINING THE WAY OF TRAINING IN MORALITY BY RELATING IT TO INTROSPECTION AND MINDFULNESS, THE METHODS FOR KEEPING ALL VIRTUOUS DHARMAS PURE

The point here, as in other teachings, is that morality through pure conduct is the very basis for one to keep virtuous Dharma pure.

The importance of mindfulness and introspection is encapsulated in this verse which will come later in the text.

*Those who wish to guard their mind
Definitely need to adopt mindfulness and
Introspection and keep that,
I implore you to please keep the heart.*

So Shantideva, putting his palms at his heart, respectfully says, 'I implore you to adopt this'. He is pleading with us to guard and protect our mind with the optimum methods of mindfulness and introspection. So he is showing us the great importance of applying these methods in our practice.

The chapter is in two sections:

1. General Presentation
2. Individual presentation

GENERAL PRESENTATION

This has three parts:

1. Having generated the mind, why it is necessary to cultivate the trainings
2. Training in method and wisdom separately will not lead to enlightenment
3. The sequence of cultivating the trainings

1. HAVING GENERATED THE MIND, WHY IT IS NECESSARY TO CULTIVATE THE TRAININGS.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Merely generating the wishing or aspiring mind has, of course, great benefits, but it is impossible to attain enlightenment without making the perfections the essence of one's practice.

Generating the wishing or aspiring mind to achieve enlightenment definitely has great benefits, and one gains an incredible amount of merit from just generating that aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all

sentient beings. However that aspiring mind in itself will not be sufficient to become a cause to achieve enlightenment unless it is accompanied by the commitment to engage in the practice of perfections.

Hence one should engage in the practice of the perfections.

Then Gyaltsab Je provides some quotes:

From the *King of Concentration Sutra* :

Youth, therefore, make practice the essence. I shall explain why: For someone that makes practice the essence, the attainment of highest enlightenment is not difficult.

Furthermore the *Initial or First Stage of Meditation* states:

Thus, bodhisattvas that have generated bodhicitta, after having understood the subdued and the unsubdued, need to strongly engage into the trainings of practicing generosity and so forth. Without practice they will not attain enlightenment.

Practice here refers solely to the training concerning the vows, after one has taken them.

This is a reference to the bodhisattva vows.

2. TRAINING IN METHOD AND WISDOM SEPARATELY WILL NOT LEAD TO ENLIGHTENMENT

Under this heading Gyaltsab Je states:

The method for attaining enlightenment that one engages in must be an unmistakable method. A mistaken method will not bring about the desired result although one engages in effort.

This very meticulous explanation is quite clear. *A mistaken method will not bring about the desired result although one engages in effort* is emphasising that one needs to adopt an unmistakable method from the very beginning.

Then the commentary continues:

One's effort will also not bring about a result if the engaged method is incomplete, even though it is unmistakable. Therefore one needs to train in a complete, unmistakable method.

This is a prelude to what will be presented as the unmistakable and complete method for training.

Next, Gyaltsab Je quotes from the text, *Purification of Vairochana*,

The transcendental wisdom that knows all, the keeper of the secret, arose from the root of compassion, arose from the cause of bodhicitta, is the culmination of method.

Gyaltsab Je then explains the meaning of that quote:

As quoted, one goes beyond through great compassion, conventional and ultimate bodhicitta, and the method of generosity and the other perfections.

In order to go completely beyond to the state of enlightenment, one first needs develop great compassion. Then one realises conventional bodhicitta, followed by the realisation of ultimate bodhicitta, which is the wisdom realising emptiness. So basically method and wisdom are presented here with conventional bodhicitta and ultimate bodhicitta, and the following methods or trainings of generosity and the other perfections.

3. THE SEQUENCE OF CULTIVATING THE TRAININGS

Having explained the trainings in brief, how does one engage in those trainings sequentially?

¹ See the teaching of 26 March 2013.

² Introduced in the teaching of 2 July 2013.

³ Covered in chapter 4.

⁴ Covered in chapter 5.

Gyaltsab Je explains that:

Upon taking the wishing bodhicitta, one trains in the aspiration to engage into the trainings. Following this, one takes the bodhisattva vows, and then practises the trainings accordingly.

One first develops a *wishing* or aspiring *bodhicitta*, and with that one develops the commitment *to engage in the trainings*. Following this, one takes the *bodhisattva* vows and practises the *trainings* accordingly. So having first generated aspirational bodhicitta, one develops the wish to engage in the trainings. That is followed by the development of engaging bodhicitta, where one actually makes a commitment and takes the vows to train in the practices of perfections. That is how the sequence is presented.

Then Gyaltsab Je explains:

If the different types of trainings are summed up in accordance with the *Ornament of Mahayana Sutras*, then they are the six perfections.

The various practices and the many trainings a bodhisattva engages in can be subsumed into the six perfections. As explained here, this is *in accordance with the Ornament of Mahayana Sutra*. There is also an extensive explanation of this in the *Extensive Lam Rim*. It would be good for you to refer to that because having quoted the *Ornament of Mahayana Sutra* the commentary gives only a general presentation of why the practices of bodhisattvas are subsumed into the six perfections.

Gyaltsab Je begins this brief explanation with:

Six perfections are the definite number from the point of view of:

- Higher status.
- The two purposes
- The complete achievement of the welfare of others
- Containing all the Mahayana
- Complete path or method
- The three higher trainings

So the practice of the six perfections suffices for obtaining higher status, the two purposes and so forth. I have presented this in detail many times in the past.

The commentary presents this classification but does not go into much detail. So it would be good to refer to the explanations in the *Extensive Lam Rim* which will help to develop a better understanding of these points. If we can relate these classifications to the explanation in the *Extensive Lam Rim* then they will be quite clear. Otherwise it would take a lot of time to explain them. So it would be beneficial to refer to a more extensive explanation to gain a better understanding of what is being presented here. Those of you who have the *Extensive Lam Rim* can bring your book to class next week.

Indeed, if the *Bodhisattva's Way of Life* were to be explained in conjunction with the explanations in the Lam Rim teachings, the Madhyamika text, the tenets (which will be explained in the ninth chapter) and the Prajnaparamita text we could spend our entire life studying it. The *Bodhisattva's Way of Life* really subsumes all of the other texts, and what is referred to here in passing is explained in greater detail in these other texts. Because it covers all the meaning of all of the other texts, one could spend a very long time going through this text in detail.

It is really good to read and develop a familiarity with the *Extensive Lam Rim*, which many of you have. It was composed with the intent of subduing the mind, and there is

no more supreme text for subduing the mind. If we read it and become familiar with its explanations it will definitely help to settle down and subdue our mind, and we will notice that any sort of upheaval in the mind will naturally subside.

Dr Tony Hammond, who used to come to study group, used to mention that without engaging in studying in this way we might be similar to a long life god. Do you recall why the long life gods are considered to be in a state without leisure? It is because they spend their entire existence absorbed in a worldly meditative concentration and don't have the time to practise Dharma. That is why they are an example of someone who does not have the leisure to practise Dharma.

This indicates that just engaging in some sort of gross or worldly concentration is not sufficient. It will not suffice as engaging in the real practice of holy Dharma as it does not help to subdue the mind. This is an important point.

Shantideva is really exhorting us to engage in the real practice of Dharma. I try to emphasise this essential point again and again, with the intention that you might actually pay heed to this advice and use your understanding and knowledge for the practice of subduing the mind. Otherwise, if we don't make any effort now when we have the opportunity, our mind will remain unruly and unsubdued for an infinite period of time. These are really important points that we need to keep in mind.

If being absorbed in some meditative concentration brings some sort of bliss then we cannot say that it has no benefit at all. It does have some temporary benefit, but it won't help to actually subdue the delusions. So it cannot be a cause for liberation; indeed, it enhances the conditions to remain in cyclic existence for a longer time. I am relating all this to you as a friend who has genuine concern for your wellbeing!

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་པའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

27 May 2014

Based on the motivation that we have already generated during the recitation, we can now engage in the meditation practice. (*pause for meditation*)

We can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

When one generates this motivation, even as an aspiration, we can see how incredible and expansive the thought: "in order to benefit all sentient beings, I, myself, will need to achieve enlightenment" actually is. One individual being thinking of all sentient beings and meditating for their wellbeing is really wonderful, and a powerful means to accumulate extensive merit.

From our last session we are at the point where it states:

If the different types of trainings are summed up in accordance with the *Ornament of Mahayana Sutras*, then there are the six perfections.

All the practices of the bodhisattvas can be subsumed into the six perfections. In other words, there is no practice which does not fit into the category of the six perfections.

The six perfections are the definite number from the point of view of higher status.

The six perfections serve as a means for obtaining higher status. If one were to ask: "why do bodhisattvas need to obtain higher status?", then it is because engaging in the bodhisattva's deeds to perfect their practices can take up to many lifetimes. So, in order to be able to practice continuously with the conducive conditions in all future lifetimes, the excellence of high status is needed. There are four excellences of high status: excellent body; excellent resources; excellent entourage; and excellent activities or actions.

The practices of the six perfections serving as causes to obtain these excellences are also referred to in the early parts of the *Extensive Lam Rim*:

In particular, to obtain complete leisure and opportunity requires many roots of virtue, such as having a foundation of pure ethical discipline, augmenting it with generosity and the like, and when dying making a connection with your next lifetime through stainless aspirational prayers.

For bodhisattvas to continuously train in the practices to achieve enlightenment, they need to have a good basis (sound body) in all successive life times. While we may not yet be able to engage in the practices of the six perfections to the extent of a bodhisattva, we can however practise a similitude of the six perfections. So, as

explained in the teachings the specific cause for obtaining a *good body* is the practice of *morality*.

Just having the excellent base of a sound body is not sufficient, one also needs *good resources* to sustain one's body. So, *generosity* is a specific cause for obtaining good resources such as wealth and so forth.

Furthermore, it is not sufficient just to have good resources, if one lacks good companions. Thus, a good *entourage* (excellent companions) are also required as a necessary condition to engage in the practices. The specific cause for obtaining excellent companions is the practice of *patience*.

Finally, in order to obtain what one wishes to achieve, one needs to have the excellence of *activities*. Because reaping the fruit of any activity is dependent on the completion of that activity, one needs to conduct excellent activities. The cause which for excellence of activities is *joyous effort* or enthusiasm.

Thus, these four are called the four excellences. Having acquired them one needs to ensure they do not become causes for afflictions to arise, so the next two perfections are presented as a means to prevent that. This is an essential point because for us in our situation, we will find that whenever we acquire these excellences they can very readily become a cause for afflictions to manifest. For a practitioner aspiring to achieve enlightenment, if the excellences become a cause for afflictions to arise, then it will defeat the very purpose of one's endeavours to achieve that state. So the next two perfections, concentration and wisdom become the specific causes that prevent the excellences or good conditions from becoming a cause for afflictions to arise. *Concentration* is the means to control or subdue the mind and will prevent manifest afflictions from arising. *Wisdom* (which encompasses analytical wisdom) allows one to recognise and distinguish between what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded and so stops afflictions from developing further; ultimately removing them from their very root.

Each of the six perfections has a specific result. If one were to ask "what is the result of having practiced morality?" the positive result is explained precisely. Likewise this is the case with generosity, patience etc. The specific results to be reaped by engaging in the six perfections are explained in detail in the teachings.

The point here is that we need to be mindful that our practices (e.g. meditation) do not become the means to escalate the afflictions in our mind. A practitioner such as a bodhisattva uses the practice of concentration as the supreme means to overcome the delusions and afflictions in their mind. In our situation, if we are not mindful of our practice of (for example) meditation, it is very easy the delusions, such as pride, competitiveness, jealousy and so forth to escalate. Rather than the practice becoming a means to subdue the mind it becomes the means to further strengthen the delusions, which is a disgrace. This is an important point to bear in mind. Of course if we don't pay heed to this cautionary advice, then it is mere words and we would not get any benefit.

So, if it is possible for practices such as meditation to serve as means to further enhance the eight worldly

concerns, then one needs to be really mindful. From when I was quite young I have paid particular attention to the practice of meditation. When I analyse and look back now, I notice that there were definitely taints of worldly concerns in the early years. However these days I can assure you I am quite free from that. I'm declaring to you openly what I feel is true for myself, which is what His Holiness the Dalai Lama has repeatedly encouraged us to do.

Explanations on the six perfections are clearly and extensively explained in Lama Tsong Khapa's *Extensive Lam Rim*, so please take the initiative to read the text. It specifically covers the way each perfection serves as a specific cause to acquire a specific result, and serves as a good condition to further enhance our practice. It also explains that if one were to be missing any of these good conditions, then that becomes an obstacle for one's practice.

The six perfections are the definite number from the point of view of the two purposes

Bodhisattvas have made the pledge to work for the welfare of all sentient beings, and aspire to achieve enlightenment for that purpose. The bodhisattvas' purpose for engaging in practice is two-fold: to fully actualise one's own ultimate potential and to benefit other sentient beings.

Generosity becomes a most important practice to benefit others. The first means of fulfilling others' purposes is to benefit others by providing material wealth, including food and clothing; then grant them with the wealth of dharma knowledge. Providing material assistance will make them more receptive to receiving the ultimate help of the Dharma. If one is generous to others but harms them at the same time, then while some benefit may remain from the generosity, most of it will be nullified. So while engaging in the practices of generosity, one must refrain from harming the beings to whom one has been generous by using the practice of morality—this is the most essential element for accomplishing pure benefit without harm.

While one may successfully refrain from harming others, they may cause us harm; but if one retaliates, then again, one will be harming them. Even if initially one didn't have any intention to harm them, when one retaliates they will be harmed. So, to prevent oneself from retaliating and bear harms upon oneself, one needs to practise *patience*. As such the practice of patience is most essential in order to willingly accept harms inflicted by others.

The text explains one must acquire *wisdom* to obtain liberation and freedom. For wisdom to assist one achieve liberation, one has to be free from a distracted mind because if one is distracted one will not be able to utilise wisdom. The practice which serves as an aid to free oneself from distractions is *concentration*, which refers here to the concentration of being able to focus on an object for as long as one wishes, i.e. the state of calm abiding. Thus, this level of single-pointed concentration supported by the wisdom realising emptiness becomes the supreme means to achieve liberation.

One cannot possibly develop concentration and cultivate wisdom if one is affected by laziness. So the optimum means to overcome laziness is to practice *joyous effort* or enthusiasm. This is how the practices of the six perfections are meticulously presented as the means to fulfil both purposes.

The six perfections are the definite number from the point of view of complete achievement of the welfare of others.

The *Extensive Lam Rim* presents:

You first relieve others' poverty by giving away material goods. Then you do no harm to any living being and, in addition, are patient with harm done to you. Without becoming dispirited you joyously persevere at helping those who harm you. You depend on meditative stabilisation and inspire them through displaying supernormal powers and so forth. When they become suitable vessels for the teachings, you rely on wisdom and give good explanations, cut through their doubts and thereby bring them to liberation. Because you do all this, the perfections are fixed as six in number.

As explained, to relieve others from the suffering of poverty one first helps others with the practice of *generosity*, by providing them with material goods. To prevent oneself from harming them one needs to practise *morality*. That which serves as the means to protect oneself from other's harm is *patience*. As there is the danger of losing one's patience if one feels daunted or overwhelmed when facing the harm by others, one needs to practise *joyous effort* so that one doesn't give up benefiting others.

When one obtains the ability to perform miraculous feats which is depended on the practice of *concentration*, one can then enchant others and draw them close to you. Thus when others become the perfect recipients for receiving Dharma teachings, by relying on *wisdom*, the bodhisattva can then provide the clear explanations that completely eliminates all doubts and leads them to the state of liberation.

This, then, is how the six perfections serve as a means for the complete achievement of the welfare of others.

The six perfections are the definite number from the point of view of containing all the Mahayana

As further presented in the *Extensive Lam Rim*:

You are indifferent to resources because you are not attached to those you have and do not pursue those you lack. Since you then have the ability to safeguard precepts, you adopt and respect ethical discipline. You are patient with the suffering that comes from living beings and inanimate things, and you are enthusiastic about whatever virtue you set out to cultivate, so you do not get dispirited by either of these. You cultivate a non-discursive yoga of meditative serenity and a non-discursive yoga of insight. These six comprise all the Mahayana practices through which you advance by the six perfections, for you accomplish these practices in stages by means of the six perfections and you do not need any more than these six perfections.

The text explains that when one practices supreme *generosity*, one can become detached from the resources one already has and will not engage in pursuing resources which one lacks. In other words, one is content

with what one has. With that ability one can safeguard one's practices of *morality* so they become purer. Basically, it becomes a supreme practice for having less desire and being content, hence one becomes an object of respect. Based on the achievements of the earlier practices, when one engages in *patience* one is able to endure the suffering caused by other sentient beings or inanimate objects. Because one is able to endure these sufferings, that is be *enthusiastic* or joyous in one's virtues, that is how the practice of patience induces joyous effort.

As explained in the text:

You are enthusiastic about whatever virtue you set out to cultivate so you do not become dispirited by either of these.

Furthermore, you cultivate a non-discursive yoga of meditative *concentration*, which is the state of clam abiding, and the *wisdom* of special insight. These six then comprise all the Mahayana practices, through which you advance by the six perfections.

The six perfections are the definite number from the point of view of the complete path or method

The *Extensive Lam Rim* presents:

The path—i.e., method—for not being attached to the resources that are your possessions is generosity, because you become free from attachment to your things by becoming habituated to giving them away.

The text explains meticulously that the supreme means to overcome attachment to one's own possessions is by actually giving them away. When you are *generous* with your own possessions it becomes the method for overcoming attachment to them.

The text continues:

The method for restraining yourself from the distraction of trying to possess what you do not possess is ethical discipline, for when you maintain a monk's vows, you do not have all the distractions of making a living.

What is being explained here is that ethics or *morality* is the best basis for preventing one from having distractions in one's mind.

As mentioned earlier, within the three trainings the first is morality because by engaging in the practice of morality it will reduce the gross levels of our distractions. Then when one is free from the gross distractions, through the practice of *concentration* one can then further enhance the ability in one's mind, overcoming more subtle distractions.

The text continues:

The method for not abandoning living beings is patience, because you do not despair at the suffering caused by the harm others inflict.

The reason we would feel discouraged and abandon working for the benefit of sentient beings is when we lose our patience. When we are unable to endure hardships, either when others harm us or due to our own sufferings, then that experience may cause us to give up helping beings. So, the practice of *patience* protects one from this.

The text continues:

The method to increase virtues is joyous perseverance, because you increase them when you joyously persevere at what you undertake.

If someone were to state "I really want to practice meditation", or "I really want to study. How can I best do that? What is the best method?", then the text explains that the best method is to develop *joyous effort* or enthusiasm, which becomes the supreme method to increase one's ability to practice and study.

The text continues:

The methods for clearing away obscurations are the final two perfections, because meditative stabilisation clears away the afflictions and wisdom clears away the cognitive obscurations. Thus the perfections are fixed as six in number.

As explained, *meditative stabilisation* clears away the afflictions and *wisdom* clears away the cognitive obscurations or the obscuration to omniscience. Thus as the text states, the perfections are fixed as six in numbers.

The six perfections are the definite number from the point of view of the three higher trainings

The *Extensive Lam Rim* explains:

The nature of the training in ethical discipline [the first of the three trainings] is the practice of ethical discipline.

The precondition of the training in ethical discipline is generosity, because once you have generosity that is indifferent to resources, you can properly adopt an ethical discipline.

This is similar to what was explained earlier: through *generosity*, when one has less attachments and more contentment, it becomes easier for one to actually practice discipline or *morality*.

The Lam Rim text continues:

The aid to the training in ethical discipline is patience, because the patience of not retaliating when scolded, etc. safeguards your properly adopted ethical discipline.

Patience here refers to an aid to training in ethical discipline. The verse explains how they are all interrelated—to practice one needs the base of the others as well.

The Lam Rim text continues:

Meditative stabilisation is the training of mind [the second training, the training of meditative concentration], and *wisdom* is the training in wisdom [the third training]. As for *joyous perseverance*, it is included in all three trainings, so the perfections are fixed at six in number.

This concurs with Gyaltsab Je's commentary of the *Bodhicharyavatara* which lists the six reasons of why the six perfections are definite in number and we have covered all of them.

CAUSE, NATURE, DIVISION, MEANING OF THE NAME AND RESULT OF THE SIX PERFECTIONS

Gyaltsab Je's commentary presents the six perfections under the headings: Cause, Nature, Division, Meaning of the Name, Result of the Six Perfections. Again, the actual practices of the six perfections are those that only a

bodhisattva or true Mahayana practitioners will possess as they are practices which have to be combined with bodhicitta (as explained later). However at our level, even though we have not actually developed bodhicitta, and our practice may not be an actual practice of the perfection of generosity etc., to whatever extent we can engage in the practices, we can say that we have a similitude of the practice of the six perfections within ourselves now.

CAUSE

Under this heading Gyaltsab Je states:

It is bodhicitta that is held by method and wisdom and focuses on the three baskets of the Mahayana teachings and depends on the special Mahayana lineage and the condition of a Mahayana teacher.

Bodhicitta is the cause for the practices of the six perfections. Take the example of generosity, whether our level of generosity becomes a practice of the perfection of generosity or not is dependent on whether we have the conditions in ourselves or not. So if we find that we lack the condition, then of course our practice of generosity will not be an actual perfection of generosity.

NATURE

Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

The nature of generosity is the virtuous mind of giving and all the actions of body and speech that arise from it.

The definition of generosity is the virtuous mind that wishes to give.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

Morality is contained in the thought of abandoning harm to others and abandoning sole personal liberation.

Harm here refers to the ten non-virtuous actions. The first seven of these encompass the three of the body (killing, stealing and sexual misconduct), the fourth is speech (allowing harmful or divisive speech and idle gossip), all of which cause direct harm to others. The basis is in the three non-virtues of the mind (covetousness, harmful intent and wrong views).

Morality contains the actual deeds, and the causes of those negative deeds towards others, as well as abandoning sole personal liberation. While sole liberation is not an abandonment for those following the lower vehicle, for a bodhisattva sole liberation is definitely something which has to be abandoned. If bodhisattvas do not protect themselves from the thought of self-liberation they will degenerate their bodhicitta. Therefore protecting themselves from sole liberation is part of their ethical practice.

In brief, *the definition of morality is the mind that restrains from harming others.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

Patience is a mind that abides in its natural state, unaffected by harm and suffering and also strongly abides in the dharma.

Patience as a mind that abides in its natural state refers to being able to remain in a natural or calm state in the face of harm or suffering. Other texts define patience as a mind which does not become troubled in the face of harm and

sufferings. Patience has three types: not being disturbed in the face of harm; or sufferings; and strongly, i.e. definitely, abiding in the Dharma.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

Enthusiasm is the joy of accumulating virtue and achieving the purpose of sentient beings and the actions of the three doors which arise from it.

Enthusiasm or joyous effort is the state of mind which takes joy in accumulating virtue. Thus when one derives joy from accumulating virtue, then naturally the actions that arise from the three doors (mainly body, speech and mind) are in accordance with benefitting others and overcoming negativities.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

Mental stabilisation is the single pointed abiding on a virtuous object.

To the statement *mental stabilisation is the single-pointed abiding on a virtuous object* some texts add *from its own side*, meaning through its own power. This carries more weight.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

Wisdom is the discerning that occurs upon analysing ultimate and conventional objects.

DIVISIONS

Generosity has [three sub-divisions:] generosity of the Dharma; material generosity; and generosity of fearlessness.

The generosity of fearlessness refers to protecting the lives of other beings.

Morality has [three sub-divisions:] the morality of vows (observing vows); accumulating virtue and achieving the welfare of others.

There are actually eleven ways of achieving the welfare of others as the divisions of morality encompass all the virtuous deeds of a bodhisattva. The *morality of the vows* and the *morality of accumulating virtue* relates to fulfilling one's own ultimate purpose while the morality of achieving the welfare of others is fulfilling the purpose of other beings. As Lama Tsong Khapa mentions in the prayer *Foundation Of All Good Qualities*:

Even if I develop bodhicitta, but don't practice the three types of morality,
I will not achieve enlightenment.
With the clear recognition of this,
Please bless me to practice the bodhisattva vows with great energy.

These are really essential points to keep in mind. The morality of vows is also presented as the morality of restraining from faults.

Patience has [three subdivisions:] the patience of thinking nothing of being harmed by others; tolerating one's suffering; and definitely abiding in the Dharma.

In the first division of patience, what is being emphasised is not allowing one's mind to be disturbed when others harm oneself. This implies willingly enduring or willingly accepting harm from others; when one is able to do this then it does not cause one's mind to become disturbed, and thus harm others by retaliating.

In the second division, tolerating one's suffering, again being able to willingly bear or accept the sufferings becomes a means for one's mind not to become disturbed. These are important points for one's practice. Indeed, for whatever one wishes to achieve because whatever one's endeavours, there are bound to be hardships and difficulties, and if one is not able to endure them or accept them, then it can cause the mind to become daunted and the mind can start to get upset and angry.

Enthusiasm has [three divisions:] armour-like enthusiasm; enthusiasm in accumulating virtue; and enthusiasm in achieving the welfare of sentient beings.

Mental stabilisation has [three divisions:] mental stabilisation to abide in happiness in this life; for achieving qualities; and for accomplishing the welfare of sentient beings.

Wisdom has [three divisions:] the wisdom which realises the ultimate; the conventional; and the actions for the benefit of sentient beings.

THE MEANING OF THE NAME

In Sanskrit the word for generosity is *dhana*. You will notice some temples have *dhana* written on the donation box as a way to encourage generosity when making offerings. Here:

Dhana means to willingly give up that which is to be offered, hence generosity.

Shila means to cool the heat and misery of the afflictions, hence morality.

Patience because of being patient with aggression. In Tibetan the term *sopa* has the connotation of bearing or to tolerate aggression.

Enthusiasm because of training for the highest.

Mental stabilisation because of mentally holding.

Wisdom because of knowing the ultimate.

RESULTS

As explained in *Precious Garland*:

From giving there arises wealth, from ethics happiness,
From patience a good appearance, from joyous effort
[effort in] virtue, brilliance,
From concentration peace, from wisdom liberation,
From compassion all aims are achieved.

The result of *generosity* is that one will obtain wealth, and the result of *morality* is that one will obtain the happiness of the high status.

As a result of *patience*, one will obtain a good complexion,
As a result of practising patience, one obtains lustre and a good appearance.

As a result of joyous effort one obtains virtuous brilliance.

As a result of practising *concentration*, one obtains a subdued mind.

As a result of practising *wisdom*, one obtains liberation or a liberated mind.

With compassion one obtains the two purposes which encompass one's own purpose and the purpose of benefitting others.

Having explained how the six perfections serve as a means for obtaining all these excellences, if we were to ask ourselves, "would I like to have these good

conditions?", our answer would definitely be "Yes! I would like to have these good conditions, all these excellences".

Again, we might not yet be capable of engaging in the actual perfections of these practices, but we do have the capacity to practice a similitude of them to the best of our ability, so to that extent it is most meaningful and most worthwhile for oneself. When it is accompanied by the right (altruistic) motivation then it definitely becomes a really meaningful practice.

As Gyalsab Je's commentary presents:

The nature, division and so forth of the six perfections should be ascertained more extensively from the *Small* and *Great Stages of the Path*. The way of practising them is explained extensively here in this text.

To understand a more extensive presentation of the nature, division and so forth one would need to refer to the *Extensive Lam Rim* teachings. However as the commentary states, the way to practice is presented in this very text in the following verses.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བལྟགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

3 June 2014

Based on the motivation we generated in the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer* that we have just recited we can now engage in the practice of meditation. [meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings, and put them into practice well.

In our last session we covered a general presentation of the way of training in the six perfections. A lot of material was presented then, and it is good to keep it in mind as we cover the individual presentations of each of the perfections.

INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION

CHAPTER 5 EXPLAINING THE WAY OF TRAINING IN MORALITY BY RELATING IT TO INTROSPECTION AND MINDFULNESS, THE METHODS FOR KEEPING VIRTUOUS DHARMAS PURE

There are two parts to the chapter:

- I. Explaining the text of the chapter
- II. Explaining the name of the chapter

I. EXPLAINING THE TEXT OF THE CHAPTER

This has two subdivisions:

1. Explaining extensively how to practice
2. Concluding summary showing that one has to practice the meaning and not just the words

1. EXPLAINING EXTENSIVELY HOW TO PRACTICE

This is subdivided into four sections.

- 1.1. Guarding the mind as a method for guarding the training
- 1.2. Guarding mindfulness and introspection as methods for guarding the mind.
- 1.3. Practice of guarding the mind with mindfulness and introspection
- 1.4. Method for perfecting the trainings

With these outlines, we need to take note of how meticulously the material is being presented. If we pay particular attention to this, we will notice that we are being presented with a supreme technique for meditation practice. We may assume that we are meditating, but if we fail to apply these points, we are not actually meditating properly.

1.1. Guarding the mind as a method for guarding the training

As most of us have taken many vows and agreed to comply with certain commitments, this section presents the trainings on how to protect our vows and commitments.

There are three sub-divisions:

- 1.1.1. By protecting the mind all will be protected
- 1.1.2. The reason for this
- 1.1.3. Striving in guarding the mind

1.1.1. By protecting the mind all will be protected.

This is again subdivided into three:

- 1.1.1.1. Showing in brief the necessity of protecting one's mind
- 1.1.1.2. The fault of degenerating the mind
- 1.1.1.3. The benefits of protecting the mind

1.1.1.1. SHOWING IN BRIEF THE NECESSITY OF PROTECTING ONE'S MIND

This is presented in the first verse of the chapter:

1. *They who wish to protect the trainings
Protect the mind after focusing it strongly.
Without protecting this mind
It is impossible to protect the trainings.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

They who wish to protect the trainings of generosity and the other perfections from degeneration must strongly focus their mind on the trainings, and then protect the mind from wandering off to mistaken objects.

This explanation is in fact a personal instruction. As mentioned here, those *who wish to protect the trainings of generosity and the other perfections from degeneration must strongly focus their mind on the trainings, and protect the mind from wandering off to mistaken objects.*

Basically, those who wish to engage in the trainings such as the six perfections—generosity and so forth—as well as the three higher trainings—the trainings of morality, training of concentration and the training of wisdom, need to protect their minds. For example, those who wish to train in morality must definitely protect their minds, likewise those who wish to train in concentration and wisdom also need to protect their minds.

One needs to understand what protecting the mind means in this context. Here it specifically relates to protecting the mind from being influenced by the delusions that obstruct one's training. With respect to the six perfections, if one's mind is influenced by the delusion of miserliness then there is no way one can practise generosity. If one's mind is influenced by corrupt ethics, then there is no way one can practise pure ethics or morality. If the mind is influenced by anger then one cannot practise patience. If one's mind is influenced by laziness then again there is no way that one can practise joyous effort. If the mind is influenced by distraction and excitement, then it cannot engage in the training of the perfection of concentration, and if the mind is influenced by corrupt wisdom then one is not able to practise wisdom properly.

This is how we need to understand the need to protect the mind from the delusions. You will have noticed that when I introduce the meditation technique I always emphasise that meditation is a method for protecting the mind, and why it is important to do that. Some of you might wonder why I emphasise this point again and again. The reasons that I share it with you are precisely as presented here. I place great importance on these points because, as explained here, it definitely relates to the core practice.

I have said many times that there is a difference between protecting the mind and restraining the mind. You might have taken notes, although if you just left it on the paper as notes then I don't know if you will recall it. Restraining the mind means to make the effort, from the very beginning, not to allow the mind to be influenced by the delusions. Protecting the mind means to take notice when the mind is being influenced by delusions, at which point one

immediately applies antidotes to turn the mind away from them.

As the commentary mentions, *if one does not focus the mind strongly on the trainings and protect the mind from wandering off to mistaken objects*, then it is impossible to engage in the trainings such as generosity and so forth. We should follow the example of the Kadampa masters who, as mentioned previously, practised protecting the mind in the form of a dialogue with the delusions. 'When you are strong, I will apply the antidote to combat you with great force. When you relax then I will also relax'. That is the scope of one's attack on the delusions. If one relaxes when the delusions are strong they will overpower the mind and, as one has not protected the mind, one will be unable to apply the actual training or practice.

This is a really succinct point about meditation as well as the practice of Dharma. As I have mentioned previously, meditation and the practice of Dharma really come down to the same point. Meditation, as I explain regularly, protects the mind from being influenced by the delusions, by keeping it focussed on a virtuous object. Likewise the practice of Dharma protects the mind from the delusions, by withholding the mind from negativities and mistaken conceptions. That measure of withholding the mind from following misconceptions and mistaken views is called the practice of Dharma. As you can see, my regular explanation on these points is similar to the very point that Shantideva is presenting here—if one does not protect the mind from wondering off and from focusing on mistaken objects then it is impossible to engage in the trainings.

This succinct point is an explanation of the meaning of training or practising Dharma, and the meaning of meditation.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

If one does not protect the mind from wandering off, then it becomes impossible to protect the trainings.

Here *wandering off* specifically implies that the mind is being influenced by the deluded distractions. If one does not protect the mind from this then the consequence is that it will be impossible to actually protect one's training, meaning that one will not be able to apply the trainings or the practices of the Dharma.

We should keep these explanations in mind whenever we refer to the text or read it, as a way to be mindful and contemplate the main points. The reason to contemplate these points is so that when the delusions arise we will be able to immediately recall that following these delusions will cause one to lapse from one's training and practice. It is when we notice the delusions arising that we need to apply particular attention and apply the methods for protecting one's mind.

The delusions that we need to protect ourselves from were explained in detail in the earlier chapter which identified the delusions, their faults and so forth.

1.1.1.2. The fault of degenerating the mind

This relates to the faults that arise from allowing the trainings to degenerate as a result of the influence of the delusions on the mind. The verse relating to this reads:

2. *Letting the elephant mind wander
Creates harm beyond pain.
The unsubdued crazed elephant
Does not do as much damage here.*

Gyaltsab Je's explanation of this verse in his commentary reads:

Letting the crazed elephant mind wander off to mistaken objects creates the harm beyond pain of the *naraks* [hell realms]. The normal unsubdued and crazed elephant does not create as much suffering here in this world. Hence one should strive in protecting the mind.

The explanation here is quite clear. However to give some further clarification, the state of our mind is presented here as being analogous to a crazed, untamed elephant. If an untamed elephant is let loose it will cause a lot of havoc. Likewise, if we allow our mind to just wander off towards objects of delusion then that will create a lot of harm. The harm that it causes is, of course, not only the sufferings in this life, but also in our future existence, such as the sufferings in the hell realm. Some may think, 'What's wrong in allowing the mind to just wander off and become distracted? How could a distracted mind possibly harm oneself?' This presentation explains that the consequence of allowing the mind to wander off and be distracted by mistaken objects, or objects of delusions, is that it will cause great sufferings, in this life and future lives.

When the commentary states, *the normal unsubdued crazed elephant does not create as much suffering here in this world*, it is referring to stories about untamed elephants being given intoxicants like alcohol to make them even wilder, and then letting them loose in battle. They cause a lot of damage which can be used to overpower the enemy. In the analogy here, an elephant that is already untamed is given mind-altering substances such as alcohol or drugs. When an elephant in such a crazed state is let loose it can cause lot of damage.

The implication here is that the damage will at worst be physical damage to the environment, the buildings and people, who might be crushed and lose limbs, or even die. However such a crazed elephant cannot bring about the intense sufferings of the hell realm. In comparison, as mentioned previously, the consequences of allowing a mind to become distracted by the delusions are much more severe, not only in this life, but in the immeasurable sufferings of lower realms, such as the hell realm, in future lifetimes.

By reflecting on this illustration, and really thinking about the gravity of the consequences of having an unsubdued distracted mind, the conclusion, as presented here, is that *hence one should strive in protecting the mind*. We could elaborate on how the mind is like an untamed elephant, but this should be sufficient for now.

1.1.1.3. The benefits of protecting the mind

Having first explained the faults of not protecting the mind, one might wonder, 'Well, what is the benefit of protecting the mind? Does protecting the mind have any benefits?' So we can see that this is a very systematic and logical presentation which relates well to our normal state of mind, with its many queries and doubts. These doubts are being systematically addressed one after another. So we can see that this is a really marvellous presentation.

The benefits of protecting the mind is explained in two subdivisions:

- 1.1.1.3.1. In brief
- 1.1.1.3.2. Extensive

1.1.1.3.1. In brief

The relevant verse reads:

3. *If one tightly fastens the elephant of the mind
Comprehensively with the rope of mindfulness,
All dangers become completely non-existent
And all virtues will come into one's hand.*

This explanation is similar to that in the *Essence of the Middle Way*.

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

Through tying the crazed elephant mind to the virtuous object by tying all one's actions of body, speech and mind comprehensively with the rope of mindfulness, all the general dangers of this life and the next become non-existent, and all the virtues of the practices of the three types of beings of the graduated path to enlightenment fall naturally into one's hand.

Therefore, one should never let one's mindfulness of the virtuous object degenerate.

The mind is analogous to the crazed untamed elephant; The virtuous object is analogous to the pillar to which you would tie the elephant so that it does not cause havoc; The rope to tie the crazed elephant is analogous to mindfulness.

What one is binding to the pillar is one's mind as well the three doors of body, speech and mind.

If one were to apply mindfulness as a means to bind our crazed, untamed mind to a virtuous object then *all the general dangers of this life and the next become non-existent, and all the virtues of the practices of the three types of beings of the graduated path to enlightenment fall naturally into one's hand.* This is implying that one will naturally be able to engage in all of the practices of the three scopes.

So we can see how wonderful this text really is, as it presents the essential practices for meditation and Dharma practice.

One needs to take particular notice of the essential meaning of this presentation. The object to which one binds one's mind with mindfulness, is not any random object; as specified here it has to be a virtuous object. If it were possible to subdue our mind by being mindful of any object, there would be no need for the text to specify that it needs to be a virtuous object. So the essential point being presented here is that the meditation object has to be a virtuous object if it is to serve as an antidote to overcome negativities.

In summary, the commentary states, *therefore one should never let one's mindfulness on the virtuous object degenerate.* This is an essential instruction. I regularly emphasise when I introduce meditation that meditation is the optimum means to protect one's mind. The specific emphasis here is that one should never let one's mindfulness of the virtuous object degenerate or lapse. Applying mindfulness means that during the meditation session one will be able to protect one's mind from mistaken conceptions and views, and delusions. Then, through that familiarity with mindfulness during the meditation practice, one will be able to maintain that awareness of the virtuous object, even when one has come out of the formal meditation sessions.

As we familiarise ourselves with the virtuous object throughout the day, and the following days and weeks and months, then due to that familiarity we will naturally be able to recall the virtuous object at the end of our life when we come to our death. As explained in the teachings, if, at the time of death one's mind is in a virtuous state then there is no possibility of taking rebirth in the lower realms. This is how we need to see the way in which our everyday practices are related to the crucial juncture of passing on from this life to the next.

By engaging in practice through being mindful of the virtuous object we are able to take the essence of our precious human life and make it meaningful. Of course the optimum way to make our life meaningful is to create the causes for enlightenment, next best is liberation, and at the very least we take a good rebirth in our next lifetime with all the good conditions.

What we can derive from this explanation is that protecting our mind from delusions lies within our own hands. If we take the initiative to apply mindfulness then we can actually protect our mind from the influence of the negativities, delusions and so forth. Protecting one's mind protects one from immediate external dangers, as well as from future sufferings. That is what is being explained here.

1.1.1.3.2. Extensive

The extensive explanation reads:

4. *Tigers, lions, elephants and evil spirits,
Snakes and all other enemies,
The guard of sentient beings in the hells,
Evil mantras [or sorcerers] and likewise blood
drinkers [or blood thirsty demons],*
5. *Simply by fastening this mind
They all become controlled.
Solely by subduing the mind
They all become subdued.*

The commentary on this verse explains:

It is appropriate to fasten the mind to a virtuous object. By subduing the mind one overcomes all dangers such as tigers, lions, crazy elephants, evil spirits, snakes, and all human enemies. One also overcomes the looming danger of the guards of the sentient beings in hell, those that harm others with evil mantras such as sorcerers, as well as the harm of the different types of spirits called blood thirsty demons and the like. Stopping the cause for any threat in this way, solely by fastening the mind with the rope of mindfulness completely to a virtuous meditation object, equals binding all dangers, and one will not be harmed in the least.

Solely subduing the mind with mindfulness and introspection, and thus stopping engagement in negative actions, equals subduing all dangers. Therefore one should strive in subduing the mind.

While this presentation is quite clear, the point that we can derive here is that *stopping the cause for any threat in this way solely by fastening the mind with the rope of mindfulness completely to a virtuous meditation object, equals binding all dangers.* In other words, fastening our mind to a virtuous object will protect us from all the other dangers mentioned earlier, *and one will not be harmed in the least.*

Other texts explain that harms, like those mentioned earlier, will not befall upon someone who observes ethics purely. The concluding exhortation is that *subduing the mind solely by mindfulness and introspection, and thus stopping engagement in negative actions, equals subduing all dangers. Therefore one should strive in subduing the mind.*

1.1.1.2. THE REASON FOR THIS

This is presented in two subdivisions:

- 1.1.1.2.1. Faults depend on the mind
- 1.1.1.2.2. Qualities depend on the mind

1.1.1.2.1. Faults depend on the mind

This is a presentation showing that both faults and qualities are dependent on the mind itself. The way the faults are

dependent on the mind is presented under three subheadings:

1.1.1.2.1.1 Quotes

These are unmistakable citations from the sutras, from the teacher himself

1.1.1.2.1.2. Reason

1.1.1.2.1.3. Summary

1.1.1.2.1.1. Quotes

The verse that relates to this section is:

6. *That all dangers
And the boundless sufferings
Arise from the mind
Is shown with faultless quotation.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

One's experiences of dangers and sufferings are created by one's own mind. The reason is because all dangers and the boundless suffering of this life and future lives arise from one's own negative mind; this is said by the Able One, who explained faultlessly and perfectly all objects of knowledge.

Gyaltsab Je first states that *one's experiences of dangers and sufferings are created by one's own mind. The reason is that all dangers and the boundless suffering of this life and future lives arise from one's own negative mind. All dangers and sufferings that we experience are created by one's mind, because all the dangers and boundless sufferings of this life and future lives arise from one's own negative mind. This was said by the Able One (Buddha Shakyamuni) who explained faultlessly the objects of knowledge.* Then the commentary gives a number of quotations:

As he said in the *Sutra of Clouds of Jewels*:

If one controls one's mind one controls all phenomena.

He also said:

Whether it is virtue or virtuous karma, it is accumulated by the mind.

He also said:

The mind precedes all phenomena. If one knows the mind well, one knows all phenomena well.

Also from the *Perfect Compendium of Phenomena*:

All phenomena depend on the mind.

The Buddha also said that a subdued mind is a happy mind.

1.1.1.2.1.2. Reason

7. *The weapons of the hell beings,
Who made them with purpose?
Who made the burning iron ground?
From whence did the burning inferno arise?*

8ab *All the likes of these
Arose from negativity, taught the Able One.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning of these lines:

If the sufferings that are experienced by sentient beings in the hells, and elsewhere, do not arise from the person's own preceding negative mind, then who forged purposefully the weapons of the hell guardians, these swords, spears and so on? These were not made purposefully by a creator god, nor were they made purposefully by someone else. Who created the burning iron ground, who created the hosts of females that cause one to climb and fall off the crystal mountain? There is no other cause or creator.

The points at the beginning are quite easy to understand, the emphasis being that these *sufferings of the hell realms and elsewhere were not made purposely by a creator god, and nor were they made purposely by someone else.* If we were to take the example of this very building, it was created by someone else, and then we partake of the good conditions here. However, unlike the physical conditions that we experience in this world, the various types of hell realms are said to be created by none other than one's own mind. It is not as if someone specifically created the hell realms for someone else to take us there. It is actually the creation of our own mind. The point made in answer to the opening rhetorical question is that *there is no such god which created these sufferings realms, nor were they made by someone else.*

Then the commentary asks, *Who created the burning iron ground, who created the hosts of females that cause one to climb and fall off the crystal mountain?* Those of you who are familiar with the explanations presented in the Lam Rim teachings will recall the specific hellish state where, due to one's own negative actions in the past, in particular severe, lustful attachment to women resulting in sexual misconduct, one would have visions of women on top of a mountain calling out to you. As you hear the sirens beckoning, you try to climb up the mountain but there are downward facing swords that cut you. Then, having reached the top, you hear the sirens beckoning you from the ground, but when you try to go down, the swords are facing up at you, and again you are pierced by them.

These suffering experiences arise from a hallucination that there is someone calling you. It is due to familiarity with the object of attachment and, in particular, engaging in sexual misconduct that one really believes the sirens are calling out to you. In the process of listening to that, one experiences immense suffering. When we think about it, this is not too farfetched at all. Even in their dreams, someone who is really affected by strong, lustful desires can have all sorts of unimaginable experiences. This is explained extensively in the Lam Rim teachings, so you can refer to that. As Shantideva emphasises, *there is no other cause or creator* for such things, other than being the consequence of one's own state of mind.

Then Gyaltsab Je continues in his commentary:

Since it is also incorrect to say that they are generated without cause, the Able One taught in the *Close Placement with Mindfulness Sutra* and others that they are generated from one's own negative mind.

From *Close Placement with Mindfulness Sutra*:

The mind is the greatest among all enemies.
There is no enemy like the mind.

We'll just read through the commentary as I have explained the points that are presented here when I taught the *Madhyamakavatara*.

An allegorical opponent: They were generated from the aggregation of fire, but this is a faulty parable.

An opponent without refined reasoning who wishes to deny karmic cause and effect poses this quailm: Where a pure water stream appears to humans, blood and pus appears to hungry ghosts. This is however only an appearance created by the ripening of previous negative karma, and the blood and pus cannot be used by hungry ghosts in the slightest. Because if it existed, then it would have to also appear to humans.

Answer: This is thoroughly mistaken. That something does not appear is possible of course, but if we accept

that it is necessarily non-existent, then also the fires of hell are only mere appearances due to previous negative karmas. If we have to say here also, "Fire does not exist", then it would be the same up to the eons and finally we also say that the hells do not exist. The need to deny karma then arises.

That it is suitable to appear to humans is also not established. According to the view of the nihilists and you, there are no hot or cold sensations when suffering is generated.

As these are points which have been presented earlier you can refer back to those teachings.¹

1.1.1.2.1.3. Summary

*8cd. Thus, in all the three realms
There is nothing as dangerous as the mind*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Since all faults arise from mind, all three realms are created by one's mind. There is no danger apart from this.

What, *since all faults arise from the mind, all three realms are created by one's own mind. There is no danger apart from this*, means that just as all qualities arise from the mind, all faults also rise from the mind. Therefore, in order to increase one's qualities, one needs to apply one's mind appropriately. To minimise and overcome all faults, one has to apply antidotes and so forth, which are generated within one's own mind. That is the main point.

That covers the verses that specifically explain how the faults depend on the mind.

The main point we need to understand as a personal instruction is that since we all have faults and many shortcomings, the best way to address that is to look within. While we might not be able to detect subtle faults or shortcomings, the grosser levels are not too obscure. At a manifest level we can detect some negative states of mind and the faults that arise from them, and it is up to us to take notice of that, and apply appropriate measures to overcome those shortcomings. That is the most practical approach, because if someone else were to point these faults out to us we might become very angry and defensive, rather than accepting what they say.

Geshe-la says in English that a good mind, which is very pleasant and filled with compassion, does good actions, and is liked by everyone. There's also a bad mind that no-one likes. We need to see them as separate, enemies even, and make sure the good mind works to defeat the bad mind. I always say that a good mind is a good friend. My best friend is my mind of loving kindness and compassion—I don't have much bodhicitta though. I encourage the good mind and say 'go away' to the bad mind. I do this all the time and day-by-day my good mind wins.

It is through applying these measures that we will then become accustomed to right ways of thinking. This is a point that is good for us in the western context to understand. It's good to make a distinction between yourself and the negative state of mind. Then it is more acceptable to point the finger at the fault, 'It's not me that's at fault. It's my negative state of mind that is at fault'.

The point here is that we need to make that distinction between oneself as an individual being who has qualities and good potential, and the faulty negative states of mind. When one is able acknowledge and accept that it is the

negative state of mind that is influencing one to engage, seemingly without control, in negative actions that are harmful, and which are not appreciated by others. When we recognise that within ourselves, then when we relate to others it will be easy to accept that it is not the person who is at fault but their negative state of mind that is compelling them to say, or do things that are inappropriate and so forth. Then one will protect oneself against becoming angry at the person. Rather one will feel compassion for them, knowing that they are influenced by their negative states of mind.

In this way we can see for ourselves that one way of looking at things will lead to compassion and love for the other, but a different kind of view of the same object can generate anger and hateful thoughts. Then we can understand how our own state of mind influences our attitudes and perceptions and so forth. When we can detect that for ourselves then we will reach the crucial point of understanding that when we have a wrong perception that causes us angst, and hatred and anger and so forth, then we need to transform and change that perception. These points are the crux of our practices, and are not to be taken lightly.

If two individuals living together are sincerely practising in this way, then there will be no reason to frown at each other—they will always be nice and smile at each other. So even in this life you can see that there are great practical benefits to be had from practising the Dharma.

Based on these mind training practices we can then reach a point where we are capable of feeling love and compassion for the enemy, rather than anger. By using correct ways of perceiving things we can see that there is no real enemy, and that there is no person out there aiming to get us. Rather, the harm that they are inflicting upon us doesn't come from the person themselves but from the influence of their delusions, and negative states of mind. So this is where we can develop real compassion for them, rather than becoming angry with them. When one trains in this way, it is definitely possible to see one's enemy as one's best teacher or best friend.

In fact, this way of training is the subject of the following verses presenting the practices on generosity, morality, patience and so forth.

1.1.1.2.2. Qualities depend on the mind

This relates to the practice of the six perfections, which we will cover in our following sessions.

Basically the presentation is that the six perfections depend on the mind: generosity depends on the mind; morality depends on the mind; patience depends on the mind; joyous effort depends on the mind; and concentration and wisdom depend on the mind.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version © Tara Institute*

¹ See, for example, the teaching of 30 September 2003.

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

10 June 2014

Based on the motivation we generated during the recitation, we can now engage in the practice of meditation.

[meditation]

You can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: for the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. For that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

1.1. Guarding the mind as a method for guarding the trainings

1.1.1.2. The reason for this (cont.)

1.1.1.2.2. Qualities depend on the mind

Here there are six subdivisions:

1.1.1.2.2.1. Generosity depends on the mind

1.1.1.2.2.2. Morality depends on the mind

1.1.1.2.2.3. Patience depends on the mind

1.1.1.2.2.4. Enthusiasm depends on the mind

1.1.1.2.2.5. Mental stabilisation depends on the mind

1.1.1.2.2.6. Wisdom depends on the mind

So, what is being presented here is that the practices of the six perfections are all dependent on the mind. Actually, the giving and taking meditation practice we engaged in earlier also combines all the essential points of the six perfections. When we visualise giving our body, wealth, merits etc. this includes the practice of generosity. With the sincere intention for other beings not to experience any suffering, when we take their suffering upon ourselves one is naturally refraining from harming them, thus it includes the practice of morality. When we generate a sense of compassion for other sentient beings we naturally refrain from feeling anger towards them, thus it encompasses the practice of patience. When we do the practice willingly and joyfully, then that encompasses joyous effort. Having a focused mind while engaging in the practice includes the practice of concentration. Likewise, because the intelligence of differentiating between what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded—the intelligence of knowing what is beneficial and what is harmful—increases through repetition of this practice, it includes wisdom as well.

Thus when we do this practice sincerely with all the conditions intact it definitely becomes a very profound practice. While we may not be able to incorporate the actual practices of the six perfections in our meditation practice yet, we can, however, still adopt an approximation of the six perfections. Our ability to do this depends on our motivation. As explained in the teachings, three conditions need to be intact for the practice to become a perfection. For example, when the practice of generosity is accompanied with actual bodhicitta, the realisation of emptiness, and sealed with the profound dedication of complete enlightenment, then it becomes the perfection of generosity and so forth. So, if we generate the bodhicitta motivation to the best of our ability, recall the view of emptiness during the practice, and seal our virtues with the dedication towards obtaining enlightenment at the end, this will then

ensure that our practice becomes an approximation to the actual perfection of the practices of generosity and so forth.

The *Heart Sutra* clearly indicates the need for the practice to be accompanied by the understanding of emptiness when Shariputra asks Avalokiteshvara, *How should any son or daughter of the lineage train who wishes to practice the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom?* and Avalokiteshvara replies *Any son or daughter of the lineage who wishes to practise in the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom should look upon it like this, correctly and repeatedly beholding those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.*

While each of the six perfections are not explicitly mentioned in the *Heart Sutra* the way the perfection of wisdom is to be practised relates to each of them and this is how we derive an understanding of the teachings. So, if one wonders, 'what is the difference between the individual practices such as generosity and so forth and the perfection of those practices?', then you need to understand it as was explained earlier.

In relation to the three conditions mentioned earlier, we already have the basis of love and compassion, we also have some understanding of emptiness, and we know how to dedicate our virtues. So the reason I emphasise this point again and again is to remind you that you already have a good basis for understanding the teachings. It is now a matter of putting your understanding of the Dharma into practice. Whenever we have any time to engage in a practice it is good to draw upon the understanding we have already gained from the teachings and then actually apply it in our practice. That makes it much more meaningful. For example, with love and compassion the general description is wishing other beings to be happy and to be free from suffering. However, we can make that practice much more profound with the understanding we have gained from the teachings. This is how we can develop the essential practice and make it more meaningful for ourselves. I encourage you in this because you have already received so many teachings and ways of applying these in your practice, and it would be a pity not to utilise that. It is with the intention of benefitting you that I encourage you again and again.

What I am trying to emphasise is that we need to use what we have already received and what we already know. With that serving as a basis we can then endeavour to acquire some new understanding or knowledge. Often we fall short in our practice by not utilising what we already know and keep looking for something new or grander. Often I find that many people fall short in their practice because of this attitude, and don't really advance themselves. I am not saying that gaining more or new knowledge is wrong. I am not implying that and you should not misunderstand me. What I am emphasising here is that we need to utilise what we already have, and if we acquire new understanding or knowledge, based on that, then it can only enhance our practice and will not confuse it.

As I emphasise regularly, love and compassion is the basis, and by maintaining this we can then incorporate other understandings, or knowledge, to enhance that within ourselves. That would be good—otherwise we could completely go astray. If I were to relate something as my personal practice I would say that it is the attempt to adopt love and compassion in my everyday life. This is actually a point I related to the late Khensur Rinpoche when I was in India. I spent about an hour with him, listening and talking, when he asked me, 'What are you meditating on these days?' and I said that I take love and compassion as my

main practice and we had a discussion about that for about an hour.

Rinpoche said, 'Oh, that is a simple practice, even lay people and elderly people, who are not monks and nuns, would practice that'. Perhaps Khensur Rinpoche was expecting me to give a much more profound answer. So when he questioned me further I said that I felt that this practice encompasses a lot of other practices. Of course I was sharing what I truly believe. Indeed, when we train our mind more and more on love and compassion, then every time we generate that mind it brings us closer to enlightenment. So this is why I see it as an essential practice. Sadly, Khensur Rinpoche passed away shortly after this meeting.

The three main conditions that help to subdue the mind are love, compassion and concentration (or mental stabilisation). So if we can take these three as our essential practices then there is no question that we can work towards subduing our mind.

With the first perfection of generosity, what is being explained here is that it actually depends on a state of mind which is generated within oneself. This dispels the doubt that if generosity were to depend on material objects then how could one practise generosity if one lacked material objects to give? So, to clarify this point, what is being explained is that the perfection of generosity does not depend on external material objects but actually on one's state of mind.

The worldly perspective is that if someone were to give \$100 to another person we would say they are very generous, because they gave \$100. We immediately relate to the object they give as a mark of their generosity, as if the giving of that physical money was the actual practice of generosity.

A literal translation of the Tibetan term for the perfections *par-chin* is *gone beyond*, which relates to the practices that have gone beyond the states of samsara and nirvana and reached the state of complete enlightenment. The Svatantrika middle-way school gives a very literal explanation of the term *gone beyond* and says that the perfections of the practices of generosity and so forth are found only in a buddha's mental continuum. However, the Prasangika middle-way school differentiate between that which is actually gone beyond and that which is in the process of going beyond. Thus, the perfected practice of generosity, which has actually gone beyond, is indeed found only in a buddha's mental continuum. However the practice of generosity, which is in the process of going beyond, is in the trainee's (bodhisattva's) mind. According to the Prasangika, it would be a case of applying the name of a result upon the cause: the perfection of generosity is the practice of generosity that is in the process of going beyond in the bodhisattva's mind. It is good to understand the difference in interpretations from the different schools.

1.1.1.2.2.1. Generosity depends on the mind

This heading is subdivided into two:

1.1.1.2.2.1.1. Completing the perfection of generosity does not depend on eliminating the poverty of all migrators.

1.1.1.2.2.1.2. It is perfected through the acquaintance with the mind of giving.

1.1.1.2.2.1.1. *Completing the perfection of generosity does not depend on eliminating the poverty of all migrators*

The verse reads:

9. *If generosity goes beyond
Through eliminating the poverty of migrators,
Since migrators still have poverty,
How could the previous refuge have gone
beyond?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

If it were necessary to eliminate the poverty of all sentient beings to complete the perfection of generosity, then, since impoverished migrators still exist, how could the generosity gone beyond exist?

How could the previous Buddha protectors possibly have completed the perfection of generosity? It would be impossible.

Bringing up this hypothetical query Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains that, *if it were necessary to eliminate the poverty of all sentient beings to complete the perfection of generosity* then, since there are still impoverished beings in need of things that would imply that the Buddha has not perfected the practice of generosity. This doubt is a way to present that the practice of the perfection of generosity does not depend on eliminating the poverty of all living beings.

We need to understand that our practice of generosity should not depend on the other, whether they are rich or poor, in great need or not. From our own side we need to be able to engage in the practice of generosity that is generated in our own mind.

Another practical illustration is that if the practice of the perfection of generosity depended on being generous with material objects that would mean that ordained Sangha would not be able to perfect the practice of generosity, because they don't have many material possessions to give away.

Another more prominent illustration would be Buddha Shakyamuni's own life. In his early days he would not have given up the wealth of his royal kingdom because that would have deprived him of the means of being able to practice generosity. Later, he actually left behind all his princely wealth, and become completely renounced.

Here again, the point is that the practice of generosity is not dependent on actual material wealth or completely satisfying other's needs. Rather it is dependent on the intent of giving, which is generated with one's own mind.

The means to perfect the practice of generosity is explained under the next heading.

1.1.1.2.2.1.2. *It is perfected through the acquaintance with the mind of giving*

The verse reads:

10. *Through the mind offering to all sentient beings
All possessions including their results,
Generosity goes beyond it is taught.
Therefore it is only mind.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

It is taught that the generosity gone beyond is perfected through acquainting one's mind with the wish to give away one's body, possessions, roots of virtue including their results, and one's merits to all sentient beings.

For this reason generosity depends on the mind.

The commentary clearly explains that the resultant or perfected state of generosity, which is completely going beyond, which is the mental continuum of an enlightened being, is reached through acquaintance with the mind that wishes to give away, now, one's body, possessions and roots of virtue including the results.

Again, the actual definition of generosity is the mind of giving or the intention to give. So the way to practise generosity is by generating the state of mind of wishing to give away one's body, possessions, roots of virtue etc. Again, we can relate to the giving and taking practice we did earlier. I need not elaborate too much on the importance of this practice, as it is exactly what is being presented here by Shantideva and further explained in the commentary, as being an essential practice. So we can see that our earlier practice, when done fully, encompasses all of these points.

So the way to engage in the practice, for it to become an authentic practice of generosity, we train our mind, gradually and slowly, to increase the intention of giving. To become an actual practice of generosity try to make it free from miserliness and, to the best of our ability, encompass an understanding of emptiness—that oneself, the giver, what is being given, and the action of giving, is empty of inherent existence. Incorporate that understanding as much as possible and then dedicate at the end. In this way our practice of generosity becomes really profound and we get so much merit from engaging in these practices. Giving away these merits as well makes it a profound practice.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

For this reason generosity depends on the mind.

We gain a better understanding of this point after the explanation.

1.1.1.2.2.2. Morality depends on the mind

This is subdivided into two:

1.1.1.2.2.2.1. Completing the morality gone beyond does not depend on the absence of sentient beings that one could kill

1.1.1.2.2.2.2. It is completed by acquainting the mind of abandoning.

1.1.1.2.2.2.1. Completing the perfection of morality does not depend on the absence of sentient beings that one could kill and so forth.

This does not depend on the absence of beings that one could harm. The point explained in the next the verse is that the perfection of morality is actually completed by acquainting the mind with abandoning the intention to harm.

*11ab. Fish and so forth, where should they flee to
So as not to be killed?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

It follows that the completion of the morality gone beyond does not depend on removing all sentient beings that could possibly be killed, because it is unfeasible to move all the animals such as fish and so forth to a safe place.

The explanation here is that completing the perfection of morality does not depend on removing all sentient beings that could be possibly killed, because it is not feasible to move all animals such as fish to a safe place where no one could harm them. We may be able to move some fish to a safe place where they would not be killed, but to remove all fish to where no one would be able to kill them is something that cannot possibly be done. Also there is no person who could always guard them, so that no-one comes and harms them.

1.1.1.2.2.2.2. It is completed by acquainting the mind of abandoning

The first two lines of the next verse explain this:

*11cd. Through the mind of abandoning,
Morality goes beyond, it is taught.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary highlights:

For this reason the morality gone beyond is achieved by acquainting the mind of abandoning, such as on the mind abandoning the thoughts of killing or stealing.

The practice of morality, relating to the perfection of morality, is dependent on a mind where from the depths of one's heart one makes the commitment that, 'I will not harm others. I will not kill even if my life is at stake. I will not take the life of other sentient beings'. In the commentary, *for this reason*, aligns to the earlier point that it is not even possible to find a safe haven for all of the animals and so forth, so they can never to be harmed. The perfection of morality is not dependent on establishing the situation (or place) where no beings will be harmed. Rather, as explained here, the morality gone beyond is achieved by acquainting the mind with abandoning the thoughts of killing and stealing. When one generates the mind of abandoning negativities such as killing and stealing (and likewise the other ten non-virtues), this clearly illustrates that while refraining from killing and stealing etc. is a good deed, doing so when one makes an actual commitment and intentionally generates the mind to refrain from such misdeeds, one gains much more virtue.

Many of you would already have vows which would include these sorts of commitments, but again even with the vows it is good to refresh them. It is much more meritorious to have vows than not, so one gains much more virtue when one actually intentionally develops the mind of refraining from engaging in misdeeds. Whenever one generates the mind of intentionally refraining from the ten non-virtues, such as making a commitment like, 'Today, at all costs, I will not engage in the act of killing or taking others' lives. Likewise I will not engage in the act of taking others' possessions. I will not engage in the act of sexual misconduct. Likewise I will not engage in lying, stealing, harsh words, divisive speech, idle gossip and so forth', then that is acquaintance with abandoning those negative deeds, and what we call the practice of morality. Each time we generate the intention of refraining from these misdeeds we accumulate great merit, much greater merit than if one were to just naturally refrain from these misdeeds.

The quote from a sutra encompasses the definition.

From a sutra:

If the morality gone beyond is explained: It is the intent to give up harming others.

1.1.1.2.2.3. Patience depends on the mind

Patience is the mind which, in the face of harms and sufferings, does not become disturbed. This has three subdivisions:

1.1.1.2.2.3.1. Meaning

1.1.1.2.2.3.2. The example

1.1.1.2.2.3.3. Relating the meaning and the example

1.1.1.2.2.3.1. Meaning

The verse reads:

*12. Unsubdued sentient beings equal space,
Destroying them is impossible.
Merely destroying this mind of anger,
Equals destroying all enemies.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Patience is completed by destroying one's anger, which equals destroying all external enemies. It is not achieved through the extinction of the objects of one's anger.

This is conclusive because unsubdued sentient beings equal space and it is impossible to destroy them all. Therefore patience also depends on the mind.

I have referred to the explanation *patience is completed by destroying one's anger which equals destroying all external enemies* several times. What is being implied here is that the practice of patience is not trying to overcome all external enemies since that is impossible. The actual practice of patience is dependent on one's own mind.

It is dependent on one's mind as it specifically destroys the anger in one's mind. Completing the perfection of patience is dependent of destroying anger in one's mind, rather than trying to overcome the external enemies. The commentary goes further when it says *this is conclusive because unsubdued sentient beings equal space and it is impossible to destroy them all*. The commentary concludes, *therefore also patience depends on the mind*.

1.1.1.2.2.3.2. The example

The verse reads:

13. *To cover the whole earth with leather,
Where should the leather come from?
To cover one's soles with leather
Equals covering the whole earth.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary proceeds:

Where would one find enough leather to cover the whole earth to prevent one's feet from being harmed by thorns and other sharp objects on the ground?

Covering the soles of one's shoes with leather will do the trick and prevent the feet from being harmed by thorns, sharp stones and the like. It equals covering the whole earth.

The verse poses the rhetorical question *where would one find enough leather to cover the whole earth?*, which implies that it is not possible to find enough leather to cover the whole earth to prevent one being harmed by thorns and other sharp objects. However *covering the soles of one's shoes with leather will do the trick and prevent the feet from being harmed by thorns*. So that is the method that equals covering the whole earth.

1.1.1.2.2.3.3. Relating the meaning and the example

The verse reads:

14. *Similarly, I do not oppose
External phenomena.
I should reverse this mind of mine,
Where is the need to oppose others?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

Similar to the analogy, it is impossible to oppose all harmful external phenomena. Instead one focuses one's mind on these objects and reverses the mind from generating anger. By acquainting the mind in such a way, patience is completed. Why should I oppose the objects of anger, it is impossible and unnecessary.

The commentary explains that, *similar to the analogy* of not being able to find enough leather to cover the earth to prevent sharp objects from harming oneself, *it is impossible to oppose all external phenomena*. The method used to perfect patience is to focus one's own *mind on these objects*, and reverse *the mind from generating anger*. This is a very

profound point—the actual practice of patience implies overcoming anger within oneself. By acquainting the mind in such a way, patience is completed. The point is emphasised again with another rhetorical question, *why should I oppose the other objects of anger since it is impossible to oppose them and actually quite unnecessary*. There is no reason to try to oppose all others and objects when it is possible to overcome the anger in one's own mind.

What is being explained here is that the practice of patience implies overcoming anger within oneself, rather than trying to overcome all external enemies. So if one thinks that, 'I can only be patient if all my enemies are overcome', then that is missing the point. If one wishes to overcome enemies then one needs to overcome anger within oneself. That is equivalent to overcoming all the external enemies and will be the mark of perfecting the practice of patience.

That completes the explanation on patience and how it is dependent on the mind. For the practice of patience to become a perfection of patience, again it would have to encompass the three essential conditions of bodhicitta: the altruistic motivation of bodhicitta; understanding the view on emptiness; and the dedication. This applies to all of the practices of the six perfections in order for them to become the actual perfections.

1.1.1.2.2.4. Enthusiasm depends on the mind

The definition of enthusiasm or joyous effort is the mind which takes joy in virtue.

The verse reads:

15. *The results of generating a clear mind
Is Brahma and so forth.
Results of inferior practice endowed
With body and speech are not like that.*

The first part of Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

The complete acquaintance of enthusiasm also depends upon the mind that has completed meditation. A clear mind of joy for meditating on an absorption of the first concentration brings about results contained within the grounds of absorption, such as rebirth in the place of Brahma.

This part of the commentary explains the reason why *the complete acquaintance of enthusiasm depends on the mind*. A clear mind of joy for meditating on an absorption of the first concentration which is a higher state, brings about results contained within the grounds of absorption, such as rebirth in the place of Brahma. This means that when even a moment of clear mind and joy arises from the absorption in the first concentration, because one applied joyous effort and achieved that state of mind, the result is to be born in the heavens of Brahma. Achieving this state also implies strength of the mind. The emphasis here is that when the mind is clear and strong, accompanied with the joy of practising such a meditation, then it can bring about a great result.

The next part of the commentary reads:

If one's actions are unrelated to such a strong mind, then one's mind is endowed with actions of body and speech, and such actions with lesser enthusiasm do not have the ability to produce a mind of the first concentration and so forth. Such a result depends on a strong mind.

When the mind lacks that strength and there is no joy in practices such as meditation, then one's physical and verbal actions will also carry less potency. So even if one were to attempt to meditate it will not bring about the results of

obtaining the first concentration and so forth. Thus, such results depend on joyous effort, which actually depends on the strength of one's mind.

1.1.1.2.2.5. Mental stabilisation depends on the mind

Mental stabilisation is the mind which in its own power has the ability to focus on an object for as long as one wishes.

16. *All recitations and austerities,
Even if practiced for a long time,
Done with a wandering mind
They are meaningless, the Knowledge teaches.*

This is indeed a direct reprimand for ourselves.

Gyalsab Je's commentary reads:

The completion of mental stabilisation gone beyond depends on a clear mind free from mental excitement and mental sinking and held by the mental application of renunciation.

Although one practices the recitation of mantras and austerities such as Nyung Nye for a long time, the mind is distracted to other objects.

We need to understand that in order for mental stabilisation to be an authentic mental stabilisation it has to be a clear mind that is free from mental excitement and mental sinking, or stupor. This can be helped by the mental application of renunciation.

From the Buddha's sutras,

Bhikhus, austerities, prayers and so forth that distract the mind to the desire realm do not have a result.

They are shown to be meaningless because of not giving the desired result.

We need to understand this quote in relation to recitation of mantras, austerities such as Nyung Nye, practices, retreats etc. which have been shown to be meaningless, because of not getting the desired result.

This explanation does not mean that there is no benefit at all in these practices; there is definitely a benefit even if one's mind is a little distracted. For example, there is still benefit in reciting mantras as you stop any other verbal negativities such as idle gossip etc. So to that extent there is definitely some benefit. However if one's mind is distracted, one will not reap the full benefit of the practice. This applies to any practice including the Nyung Nye practice. If one does a Nyung Nye of course one derives some benefit from merely engaging in the practice, but if the mind is distracted one will not reap the full benefit, just a minimal benefit.

The personal instruction here is that when we are doing any practice it is highly advisable to try and do it without a distracted mind. If one were to do one's practices in this way one will reap the actual intended benefit. Thus, it is good for us to prevent ourselves from being distracted.

1.1.1.2.2.6. Wisdom depends on the mind

- 17 *They who do not know the main supreme
Dharma,
This secret of the mind, although wishing
To attain happiness and destroy suffering,
They will wander meaninglessly in the hells
without respite.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary reads:

Wisdom also depends on the mind. A person that is not a vessel for the main dharma or the supreme meaning, and is thus not shown these, does not know the secret of mind, the ultimate truth.

Although they wish to attain highest happiness and destroy the sufferings of cyclic existence, they naturally wander to the realm without respite, where there is nothing of these things they wish for.

Therefore wisdom depends on the mind.

Again, the definition of wisdom is the mind which is able to clearly differentiate and discriminate between the subtleties of the objects to be examined.

The commentary clearly explains that wisdom depends on the mind, and that a person is not a vessel for the supreme meaning if they do not know the secret of the mind, the ultimate truth. This refers to the nature of the mind which is its non-inherent existence (or emptiness). To perfect wisdom, when the mind realises emptiness of all phenomena it also needs to realise the emptiness of one's own mind. For someone who does not know the ultimate truth of their mind, then although they wish to attain higher status and destroy the suffering of cyclic existence, they can actually wander in the samsaric realm without respite where there are none of the things they wish for. In other words, we could wander in the cycle of samsara, the nature of suffering for limitless time. However, by understanding the ultimate reality of all phenomena in relation to one's mind, one would free oneself from this, and attain liberation, or enlightenment.

Wisdom is perfected to the state of going beyond, to the state of enlightenment, when one understands the ultimate reality of one's mind. The commentary concludes *therefore wisdom depends on the mind.*

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

17 June 2014

Based on the motivation we have just generated we can now engage in our meditation practice. [meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment and so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

Generating this motivation to the best of our ability is really worthwhile.

1.1.3. Striving in guarding the mind

This section of the text is divided into two:

1.1.3.1. Showing, or the presentation

1.1.3.1. Explaining

1.1.3.1. SHOWING

18. *This mind of mine, therefore
I shall hold it well, I shall guard it well.
Apart from the discipline of guarding the mind
What shall one do with many disciplines?*

In his commentary Gyaltzab Je presents the meaning of this verse with the following:

Abandoning faults and achieving qualities depends on the mind. Therefore I shall hold this mind of mine well with mindfulness and introspection, and guard it well, so as to not let it degenerate.

Apart from the discipline of guarding the mind, what shall one do with the many other disciplines of prayers and so forth that don't guard the mind? They are unnecessary.

I have explained the meaning of the line, *abandoning faults and achieving qualities depends on the mind* many times over in the past. It's a point that I regularly emphasise in my teachings. Abandoning every fault and achieving all qualities depends on none other than one's own mind. Here, faults includes all non-virtues as well as all the delusions, and qualities can range from the simplest qualities up to the greatest qualities that can be achieved. That all of these faults and qualities are dependent on one's own mind is an incisive point, showing that the responsibility for overcoming faults lies with ourselves and that we cannot rely upon others to overcome them for us. Likewise, we cannot rely on someone else to develop qualities for us because they depend solely on our own mind, and thus we need to develop good qualities for ourselves.

Having presented that abandoning faults and achieving good qualities depends on the mind, the commentary goes on to say, *I shall hold this mind of mine well, with mindfulness and introspection*. This point indicates that the way to abandon faults and achieve qualities is to apply mindfulness and introspection. As mentioned previously, mindfulness in this context relates to constantly keeping in mind what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded. Introspection refers to keeping constant vigilance over the three doors of our body, speech and mind, checking whether one is adequately

adopting things that need to be adopted, and discarding what has to be discarded.

Guarding the mind *so that it does not degenerate* relates to not allowing the virtuous mind to degenerate. In order to protect the qualities of kindness, love and compassion and so forth, so that they don't degenerate, we need to always guard the mind with mindfulness and introspection. This also relates to whatever vows and commitments we have undertaken—we have to guard them so that they don't degenerate. To take that further, when the commentary asks, *apart from the discipline of guarding the mind what shall one do with other disciplines and prayers and so forth that don't guard the mind?*, it is saying that if one does not apply the discipline of guarding the mind, then practices such as doing prayers and so forth will have minimal effect. That is the main point.

What we need to derive as a personal instruction here is that the main discipline that one needs to apply is to guard the mind from non-virtue and negativities. If our practices such as reciting prayers and mantras are done with mindfulness as a way to create virtue, then they will have a positive effect. But if we don't apply mindfulness then they won't really have much positive effect. This explanation should encourage us to remember this crucial advice and to try to apply mindfulness whenever we engage in our regular commitments and practices. In this way our practice will be intact and we will gradually gain positive effects from it.

What we really need to understand from this presentation is that if we do our prayers and normal commitments with a mind that is distracted by the objects of delusions, then our practices will not have much effect. If we wonder why we are not obtaining any significant result from our practices, then we need to check whether we are applying mindfulness during those practices. We all know from experience that when we engage in practices with a distracted mind we don't derive many results from our practice.

So, as much as we can, we need to apply mindfulness while doing our practice. As I regularly emphasise, it is important to try to ensure that our practices are intact and that we fully utilise our time in practice. It is only by engaging in practices fully with mindfulness that they will bring about significant positive effects. This is exactly the point that is being emphasised here. It is a really significant point and it is appropriate to pay heed to it.

1.1.3.2. EXPLAINING

The previous verse showed that one needs to apply mindfulness. This section explains how to do that in four subdivisions.

1.1.3.2.1. The way of guarding the mind

1.1.3.2.2. The reason why it is necessary to guard the mind

1.1.3.2.3. The benefits of guarding it

1.1.3.2.4. Generating mindfulness to guard the mind wholeheartedly

¹The outline shows us how meticulously the text is presented. The logical and systematic presentation addresses the topic in a way that is suitable for those who wish to follow this practise. Gyaltzab Je's outlines highlight the

¹ Here there was a pause as the heating was adjusted. Geshe Doga then explained in English that the underfloor heating was installed over the concrete floor for health reasons, and that it was funded by a donation from a student called Radim, who had offered Geshe Doga two gold bars. Geshe Doga said that he could not accept them, so Radim gave them to Tara Institute. They were sold for around \$12,000, which paid for the underfloor heating. Later, when Radim became ill, the Centre paid for his trip back home.

systematic manner in which Shantideva composed his text. First it shows that it is necessary to guard the mind. We then naturally wonder how we do that, which he explains under these four headings. The way to guard the mind is presented first. That is followed by the reasons why it is necessary to guard the mind. Then, if one wonders what the benefits would be, the benefits are presented. Finally, there is a presentation of how to actually generate mindfulness to guard the mind wholeheartedly. So Gyaltsab Je's commentary shows us how Shantideva very meticulously, and very logically and systematically, presents advice for us to incorporate into our practice.

You can see the significance of this presentation by relating it to taking an interest in meditation. Do we really consider why we need to apply mindfulness? Do we know the manner of actually applying it and the benefits of applying it? Do we really contemplate these points? Probably not. These initiatives don't come about easily. We can see how Shantideva presents his material here in a very systematic way so that we can really understand the significance and take the practice to heart.

1.1.3.2.1. *The way of guarding the mind*

19. *If one is in the midst of a restless crowd,
One will focus and be conscientious of one's
wound.
Similarly, in the midst of unruly people,
One guards continuously the wound of the
mind.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

A person with a wound on his body who is in the midst of a restless crowd will apply himself very strongly to protect the wound. Similarly, if one is in the midst of unruly people, who could serve as a condition for afflictions to arise in one's mind, then one needs to continuously guard the wound of one's mind.

If one does not guard one's mind, then it will be the condition that cuts off the life of one's higher status and liberation.

This presentation is quite clear. The essential point is made with an analogy: when a person with a wound goes into a hustling, bustling crowd they would be very vigilant about protecting their wound, so that it isn't further damaged, thus causing more pain. *If one is in the midst of unruly people who could serve as a condition for afflictions to arise in one's mind*, refers to the way in which others can easily influence us in such a way that we generate delusions in our minds. In such an environment, one needs to continuously guard one's mind, just like the earlier analogy of protecting a wound in a crowd. One needs to pay particular attention to guarding the mind at such times.

Furthermore, *if one does not guard one's mind then that would be the condition that cuts off the life of one's higher status and liberation*. This means that not guarding the mind will prevent one from achieving one's higher goals. This is a very clear explanation that we really need to take to heart and carefully contemplate in our practice.

It is when one meets with the conditions for afflictions to arise that one needs to pay particular attention to guarding the mind. This is the essential point that is being presented here. Our minds are so easily influenced by the delusions, so we need to always be on guard. We need to guard our wound-like mind against any conditions that will cause delusions to be generated. If we find that delusions such as

anger and attachment arise from even the slightest conditions, then that is a sign that we need to pay particular attention to guarding the mind. These are significant points.

If we are easily influenced by objects of delusion, then even minor conditions will cause the delusions to arise. That is a clear sign of a mind that needs to be guarded well. Some people actually get very upset when they can't find an object of delusion, such as an object of attachment. They actively seek out objects of attachment and experience misery and suffering when they can't find them. Craving objects of delusion shows how habituated the mind actually is with the delusions.

On a further note, paying particular attention to guarding the mind applies in all forms of practice. Many of you would have heard the story of the person who was meditating and when asked what they were meditating on they responded, 'I am meditating on patience'. But when some critical remarks were made, they immediately became upset. That is a sign of not guarding the mind. While generally assuming that they were meditating on patience, they failed to guard their mind, lost their temper and were not able to practise patience in that moment. These are examples in the teachings that show how we need to be constantly vigilant. I also remember an instance where someone came up to me and said that he wanted to become a monk. I questioned whether he should consider it more deeply and he said, 'Oh no! I am really adamant about this! I am very sure that I really want to become a monk'. Then two weeks later he found a partner, and moved in with them!

The main point here is to be extremely careful about guarding one's mind when the conditions for the delusions to arise are present. The teachings tell us that when there are no apparent conditions for delusions to arise someone may look like a real Dharma practitioner, but as soon as particular conditions arise they may act as a very ordinary person.

1.1.3.2.2. *The reason why it is necessary to guard the mind*

This is again a very important point that we need to keep in mind. The reason is presented in the next verse along with an example.

20. *If one is afraid of even the small suffering
Of a wound and guards it,
Then why does one not guard, frightened by the
catcher
And crusher mountains, the wound of the mind?*

Again, this is explained quite clearly in the commentary, but the main point here is the need to take it to heart.

If it is suitable to guard a wound due to fearing slight physical pain, then why does one not guard the wound of the mind from negativity and downfalls due to fearing the sufferings of being crushed by the mountains of the Catcher Mountain Hell and the Crusher Mountain Hell? Both of these would be the result of mental degeneration.

One should guard one's mind with the thought: 'It would be a great mistake not to guard it'.

As presented in the commentary, because of the fear of *physical pain* from further injuring a wound, *it is* considered reasonable or *suitable to guard any wound* one may have so that it does not come into contact with anything that would cause physical pain. We pay so much attention to guarding a wound, because of fear about experiencing physical pain, so why do we not guard the wound of the mind from

negativity and downfalls out of fear of the suffering of the hells of mass destruction, where, some of you might recall from the teachings, beings are crushed between two giant masses of mountains? These hellish experiences and great suffering are none other than the result of not guarding the mind from negativities and downfalls. So they are the ultimate result of allowing the mind to degenerate. The conclusion, as explained in the commentary, is that *one should guard one's mind with the thought that it would be a great mistake not to guard it.*

Here it is good to relate this to our understanding of karma, knowing that when one creates negativity the result will be the undesirable result of experiencing suffering. Therefore, if one does not wish to experience suffering it is appropriate that we prevent the cause of suffering, which is guarding the mind from negativity and downfalls.

When we really contemplate the reasons why we need to guard the mind we will be encouraged to actually apply the methods to do so. So contemplating these reasons is a very significant point.

1.1.3.2.3. *The benefits of guarding it*

This is similar to the very reason why we practise Dharma—simply put, we want happiness and we don't want to experience suffering.

The verse relating to this heading is:

21. *If one lives by such a conduct
One is suitable to abide amongst unruly people
Or amongst women.
The stability of striving in the vows will not degenerate.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

If one continually practises stopping the afflictions, the stability of the mind striving in the vows will not degenerate, regardless of whether one abides in the midst of unruly people with much anger, or whether one abides in the vicinity of women with much attachment.

The point, *if one continually practises preventing the afflictions from arising*, is something that we can apply to ourselves. If we find that the afflictions are arising quite readily, then perhaps we are not applying the antidotes on a continuous basis. If we apply them sometimes, and relax at other times, then, of course, that will have little effect on the delusions. The point here is that we need to continuously practise preventing the afflictions from arising, and then *the stability of the mind striving in the vows will not degenerate.*

This is how we protect self-liberation vows, bodhisattva vows, tantric vows, and whatever other vows or commitments we may have made. The way to protect vows is, as mentioned previously, to apply the antidotes to the afflictions on a continuous basis. Then, regardless of whether one abides in the midst of unruly, angry people, or whether one abides in the vicinity of beautiful goddesses, it will not affect one's mind.

Here we need to recall that Shantideva was giving this advice to fully ordained monks, so we need to understand his examples and illustrations in this context. Nevertheless Shantideva's advice applies to all who are striving to guard their mind and practise the Dharma.

The point here concerns guarding the vows and commitments one has taken. Of course, if those who have taken ordination do not guard their minds against the afflictions, then the vows will be given up at a later stage—in

some cases very quickly. However, in a broader sense, the point relates to any vows; the layperson's vows, the self-ordination vows, the bodhisattva vows and the tantric vows many of you have taken. The best method to guard and protect these vows from degenerating is to continually practise mindfulness to stop the afflictions, and to apply antidotes to the afflictions when they arise. That will help to stabilise the mind so that the vows do not degenerate.

1.1.3.2.4. *Generating mindfulness to guard the mind wholeheartedly*

Having mentioned its benefits, we need to use mindfulness to guard the mind wholeheartedly. Therefore mindfulness is specifically presented as a very important element of our practice. The verse relating to that is:

22. *It is easy not to have gain, or praise,
A body, or livelihood.
It is also alright for other virtues to degenerate,
But do not let the mind degenerate at all.*

Here, Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Although one gains no food, clothing and the like, receives no praise such as veneration, and has no livelihood to support body and life, that is easy.

To lose virtue unprotected by the mind is easy as well, but the mind of the Great Vehicle should not be allowed to degenerate under any circumstances.

Again, this is not too difficult to understand. *Although one gains no food, clothing and the like, receives no praise such as veneration, and has no livelihood to support body and life, that is easy*, refers to the fact that these conditions are not really all that important.

When the commentary states that *to lose virtue unprotected by the mind is easy as well*, it is referring to virtues that are stained by worldly concerns. While on one hand they are classified as virtues, on the other hand they are stained because they are not protected from the stains of the worldly concerns, or self-interest. So if these virtues were to decline or degenerate, then that is not so important. This relative unimportance is measured in comparison to losing *the mind of the Great Vehicle*, which is bodhicitta, which *should not be allowed to degenerate under any circumstances.*

Compared with bodhicitta, virtues that are stained by worldly concerns or self-interest and other basic needs in relation to our immediate needs are quite insignificant. But the bodhicitta mind must be protected under all circumstances, and one should never allow it to degenerate.

While we may not yet have developed bodhicitta, any level of kindness, particularly the mind wishing to benefit others, is, as I regularly emphasise, a really precious mind. When that is further developed, we develop love and compassion, which serves as a cause to develop bodhicitta. The greater the wish to benefit others, the greater the conditions for bodhicitta will be. Once developed, of course, the bodhicitta attitude will be sustained by the continuing wish to benefit others. Therefore, one should not under any circumstances underestimate this state of mind of kindness and wishing to benefit others.

We can develop that wish to benefit others to a certain extent, and the instruction here is to always protect that mind and never lose that wish to benefit others, because that is the most valuable asset that we can ever have. It should be the centrepiece of our practice, like a fortress, and then all of the remaining practices will enhance that bodhicitta. That is the significance of this instruction.

As I have shared before, at our level a substitute for the actual bodhicitta attitude would be generating the attitude, 'I will not harm any living being, even slightly, and I will endeavour to benefit others to the best of my ability'. We can definitely manage to generate such a highly beneficial state of mind on a regular basis. As it is a substitute for bodhicitta for us, it is a highly significant state of mind.

1.2. Guarding mindfulness and introspection, which are the methods for guarding the mind

This section is explained in two subdivisions:

1.2.1. Showing, or the presentation

1.2.2. Explaining

1.2.1. Showing

The relevant verse is:

23. *You who wish to protect your mind,
Guard with wholehearted effort
Mindfulness and introspection,
I request with hands folded.*

The commentary explaining this verse reads.

You, who wish to guard your mind, since one cannot guard one's mind if one is separated from mindfulness and introspection, do not let the mindfulness that does not forget the virtuous object, and the introspection that analyses the situation of the three doors, degenerate, I, called Shantideva, request this with my hands folded.

What is being presented here very clearly is an exhortation. Shantideva is pleading with us, saying, 'You want to *guard your mind*, but it cannot be guarded without *mindfulness* or *introspection*. Therefore you must definitely *not let mindfulness*, which *does not forget the virtuous object*, and *introspection*, which *analyses the three doors, degenerate*. Having *folded hands* is a gesture showing that Shantideva is imploring us to adopt mindfulness and introspection. We can see this in everyday life. When we make a specific request to someone there are gestures like putting one's palms together and saying, 'Please do this'. Referring to this gesture is a way of showing the importance of mindfulness and introspection as a method of guarding the mind.

I have already explained the significance of mindfulness, and the actual explanations of what mindfulness is in detail, so we can leave the explanation of this verse at that.

1.2.2. Explaining

This is subdivided into two:

1.2.2.1. The faults of lacking introspection

1.2.2.2. Guarding mindfulness as the method for guarding introspection

1.2.2.1. THE FAULTS OF LACKING INTROSPECTION

This heading is further sub-divided into five:

1.2.2.1.1. Any action devoid of introspection lacks power

1.2.2.1.2. One does not generate pure wisdom

1.2.2.1.3. One does not generate pure morality

1.2.2.1.4. Earlier accumulated virtue is destroyed

1.2.2.1.5. It obstructs the achievement of virtue not accumulated earlier

1.2.2.1.1. Any action devoid of introspection lacks power

Here, *action* refers specifically to virtuous actions. What is explained under this heading is that when introspection is not applied to any virtuous action then the power of that virtuous action is reduced.

The verse that relates to this is:

24. *A person that is wracked by illness
Does not have energy for any work.
Similarly, a mind disturbed by ignorance
Does not have energy for any work.*

As clearly explained clearly in the commentary:

A person who is wracked by strong illness does not have the ability to work in the fields. Similarly, a mind that is wracked by the ignorance of not knowing what needs to be practised and what needs to be abandoned does not have strength for any type of virtuous action.

The analogy used here is that someone who is weighed down with heavy illness won't have the physical energy to be *able to work in the fields* of the farm, and so forth. *Similarly, a mind that is riddled or wracked with the ignorance of not knowing what needs to be practised and what is to be abandoned, will not have the strength for any virtuous actions.*

While wisdom is specifically emphasised in the next verse, this verse refers to the fact that a mind that is dominated by the ignorance of not knowing what is to be practised and what is to be abandoned will not have sufficient strength for any type of virtuous action. If, through ignorance, you don't know what is to be abandoned and what is to be adopted, you won't understand the significance of any virtuous action you may create. So your virtuous activities won't carry as much weight as they would if you understood their significance.

Basically, when the introspection that is particularly vigilant about one's actions of body, speech and mind, is not applied, then whatever virtuous actions one engages in, such as listening, will not have much effect. This even applies to listening to the Dharma. Further, the proper means to contemplate will be affected by the lack of introspection, and thus not carry much weight. As well as this, meditation will not carry much weight if introspection is lacking. That is the point being made in this verse.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett or Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

24 June 2014

Based on the motivation we have just generated, we can now engage in our meditation practice. [*meditation*]

To generate the motivation for receiving the teaching think, “For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well”.

1.2.2.1 THE FAULTS OF LACKING INTROSPECTION

1.2.2.1.2. One does not generate pure wisdom

If we lack mindfulness and introspection our ability to generate pure or perfect wisdom will be hindered. The following presentation will be relatively easy to comprehend as the meaning is not too difficult to grasp, but what we need to keep in mind is that it is advice we need to *apply* to ourselves, in relation to our own practice. All of us have already spent significant time listening to the Dharma, thinking about it and even trying to meditate. What is being presented here is that even though one has spent significant time engaging in this, if one does not continuously apply mindfulness and introspection then it is still possible for one's practice to degenerate. This is a really key point to keep in mind. As I emphasise regularly, we see cases where certain individuals may have spent quite a bit of time and energy studying and so forth, but then after some time they give up the Dharma. What causes them to give up their Dharma practice is not having applied mindfulness and introspection in their regular life.

The verse relating to this heading reads:

25. *Even the listening, contemplation and meditation
Of someone having a mind devoid of introspection,
Like water in a leaking vase,
Will not be kept in mind by memory.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the verse:

If one is separated from introspection, then one will not generate perfect wisdom. A person may even have the wisdoms of listening, contemplating and meditating from before, but if they lack introspection then, like water that does not remain in a broken vase, they do not abide in mindfulness and thus their wisdom degenerates. This is due to degenerated introspection.

The advice here is really succinct, but for us to incorporate its meaning into our life, we need to take this advice as a personal instruction. When we consider the fact that this advice is given by Shantideva—a bodhisattva himself—from his own insight and profound wisdom, illustrating that the most crucial point on the path to enlightenment is to maintain mindfulness and introspection. That should then encourage one to actually take this advice to heart.

The commentary starts with, *If one is separated from introspection*. Introspection here refers to the mind that is constantly vigilant of the way we conduct ourselves through our mind, through our physical actions, and through our speech. What is being presented here is the result of not applying introspection, which is something we need to recall

again and again, for example, ‘What are the thoughts occurring in my mind?’, ‘How am I conducting my physical actions?’, ‘What kind of speech am I uttering?’ One must check on the basis of distinguishing between what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded, then analyse how one is conducting oneself through one's body, speech and mind. In a meditation session, having applied mindfulness and identified the object and focused on it, after a while that which checks whether we are still keeping our focus on the chosen object is done by introspection. So if our mind has wandered off and we've become distracted, then it is through introspection that we will notice that, and then we need to reapply mindfulness. This approach is being explained here in terms of mindfulness with our body, speech and mind in our daily lives.

Thus, as the commentary explains, if one is separated from introspection then the consequence is that *one will not generate perfect wisdom*. The Tibetan term *te* implies that a reason is to follow, which is presented here with the example of a broken or cracked vase. In the regular offering prayer that we do here before tea and meals there is also the word *te*; however some teachers have said the meaning would be more profound if the word *nyi* (or sole) is used instead, which would reflect that the lama is the sole creator of all.

So, what is being explained is that even if a person has previously gained a certain amount of wisdom through *listening, contemplating and meditating, if they lack introspection*, then that would affect their mindfulness as well. A lack of mindfulness arises because of not applying introspection, they are mutually supportive of each other—to have good mindfulness one needs to have adequate introspection.

The example of a cracked vase presented here is similar to that given in Lam Rim teachings, in which the analogy extends to three types of vases describing the conditions from which one needs to be free in order to listen to the teachings: the upside down vase; the dirty vase and the leaky vase. As the Lam Rim explains, it is really important to be free from these conditions in order to be a good recipient for the teachings, so they can benefit one's mind. I have emphasised this point previously.

Using the first example, if one were like an upside down vase when listening to teachings, then, just as one cannot pour water into the vase, likewise when one listens one cannot pay attention, and no matter how many teachings are presented they will not go into one's mind. With a dirty vase, if clean food and drink are put into it, then it will spoil the food. In relation to listening to teachings, this analogy shows that one needs to be free from a negative motivation as this will spoil the teachings. Even if the teachings themselves are pure, one will completely misinterpret them and get the wrong meaning. Thirdly, a vase may be upright and clean, but if it has a leak then no matter what is put into it, it will all come out. Common sayings support this, e.g. ‘what goes in one ear comes out the other’. So whatever the teaching one has listened to, one needs to be able to retain it. The point is that we need mindfulness to retain whatever instructions or teachings we receive.

We need to understand the proper manner of listening to the teachings. The Lam Rim states one needs to be free from the three adverse conditions (the analogy of the three vases) and apply the six recognitions. These are important points. Just as water does not remain in a broken vase, someone who lacks introspection will not be able to abide in mindfulness. This again shows how mindfulness is supported by

introspection. If one lacks introspection that affects one's mindfulness, and also the wisdom of listening, contemplating and meditating, then whatever wisdom one has gained will degenerate. This is all due to the degeneration of introspection.

1.2.2.1.3. *One does not generate pure morality*

This indicates that someone who lacks introspection will not be able to generate pure morality.

The verse reads:

26. *A person listening, having faith
And striving strongly in many ways,
Because of having the fault of lacking
introspection,
Becomes sullied by the dirt of downfalls.*

Gyaltsab Je explains this verse as follows:

A person with faith who has listened to many teachings and strives strongly in many different ways to practise virtue, but who has the fault of not having introspection that knows what is right and what is wrong, will be sullied by the pollution of the dirt of the downfalls. Therefore one should strive in guarding introspection.

This explanation is very relevant at this time. If *a person* already has *faith, has listened to many teachings* and has striven *strongly in many ways to practise virtue* but has not maintained the introspection of knowing what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded, then their practice is *sullied by the pollution of the stains of the downfalls*.

We can see so many examples of this within the Tibetan community itself, with geshe and even lamas giving up their vows. Some have practised significantly for many years and later gave up their vows. We can also see many westerners who were once ordained Sangha, monks and nuns, who have now given up their vows. On a personal note, when I was in India many years ago I met a monk who was from Amdo. I recall I was really taken by his good composure, and apparently he had spent 12 years in retreat. He seemed like a very subdued monk, a very unique and genuine sort of monk at that time. However, at a later stage apparently he gave up being a monk and started living a lay life. This is quite astonishing to see.

I have heard many accounts of otherwise quite learned and good monks who have later disrobed. I recall another instance in the year 2000 at a Kalachakra initiation teaching in Bodhgaya. I was sitting up in front with Geshe Sonam and just in front was another youngish monk. As His Holiness passed by to the throne he would stop and pat me on the back and talk to me. The young monk in front recognised me and called me by name. I asked Geshe Sonam who he was and he told me he was quite a learned monk, actually a geshe from Sera Je who teaches the young monks in Namgyal Monastery, His Holiness' personal monastery in Dharamsala. Apparently His Holiness was fond of him because of his good knowledge and ability to teach other monks. This young geshe was fond of me and started to ask me questions on debate topics. The answers I gave him seemed to satisfy him. He said that if I needed any text books or anything from Dharamsala he could send them to me. He would even help me during the tea breaks to go to the private toilets inside, so I didn't have to go outside. So anyway, we had a good rapport. Then about a year later I heard that he had travelled to Canada, is no longer a monk and is now living a regular life as a lay person. This brought

to my awareness how pitiful it is to lose such great teachers to an ordinary life.

At the conclusion of this verse Gyaltsab Je mentions *Therefore one should strive in guarding introspection*. The implication here is that even if one is quite learned and has gained quite a lot of wisdom from listening to the teachings over many years, contemplating the meanings and even meditated to a certain degree, then, if all of this is not supported with continuous mindfulness and introspection there is still the chance for one to be sullied by stains of the downfall. Thus, introspection is presented as being essential to maintain one's practice.

A commitment that many of you are already doing regularly, called the *Six Session Guru Yoga*, is structured as a means to maintain mindfulness and introspection continuously. One meditates and reviews the vows and commitments three times in the morning and three times in the afternoon/evening which helps one maintain one's mindfulness and introspection throughout the day.

The *Six Session Guru Yoga* practice requires not just reciting the words, but recalling the meaning to the best of our ability. Again, we have all spent significant time hearing a lot of teachings, thinking and contemplating so it would be a great pity if we lost whatever wisdom we have gained now, or if it degenerated. So, in order to maintain the understanding we have gained we definitely need to apply mindfulness and introspection. I regularly encourage you by saying 'always protect your mind with mindfulness and introspection'. This includes myself too; I also need to be mindful and careful of my practice. There is a Tibetan expression which says that the teacher shouldn't be like a trumpet. This analogy is used as the opening of the trumpet is faced outward and the sound goes out loudly. So it is for mutual benefit that we need to be reminded of this point.

I acknowledge that you already spend a lot of time studying and paying attention to the teachings, which is great. Now the only thing is to remind you to maintain that by practising with mindfulness and introspection. The main point is to maintain a continuity of practice.

1.2.2.1.4. *Earlier accumulated virtue is destroyed*

This indicates that earlier accumulated virtue can be destroyed with the lack of introspection.

The verse reads:

27. *The thief of a lack of introspection
Follows degenerated mindfulness.
Although having accumulated merits
The thief steals them and one goes to the lower
realms.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning, along with an analogy:

A person without introspection will be robbed by the thief of the afflictions of their earlier accumulated wealth of merits due to degenerated introspection, which forgets the virtuous object.

When earlier accumulated wealth is stolen the person becomes a beggar. Similarly, when earlier accumulated merits are stolen the person becomes destitute of merits and goes to the lower realms.

When a person lacks introspection *the afflictions will rob them like a thief*. What they are being robbed of is their *accumulated merit*. Usually a thief would rob someone of their wealth and the analogy here relates to our accumulated merits. This explains that merits accumulated earlier can be taken away

due to a degenerated introspection which forgets the virtuous object. The connection here is that if one is not mindful of the virtuous object then one will forget it. Furthermore, with a lack of introspection one does not bring one's mind back to the virtuous object. Thus, because one does not bring one's focus back to the virtuous object, one's earlier accumulated merits will degenerate. Referring to the analogy, *when accumulated wealth is stolen a person becomes a beggar*, even when a wealthy person is robbed, because their wealth is gone they will be left with nothing and become a beggar. Using this same analogy, *when earlier accumulated merit is stolen, the person becomes destitute and goes to the lower realms*. The significant point here is that if one forgets the virtuous object, which is all the accumulated virtues that one has accumulated, (and the causes for one to obtain a fortunate rebirth) then, with a lack of introspection, all of those virtues can degenerate, which is the cause for one to go to the lower realms.

So we need to be really careful not to lose the virtues that we have put so much effort into accumulating earlier. In relation to ourselves, we have definitely listened to the teachings, accumulated knowledge and understanding and engaged in practices for accumulating merits. When all that we have acquired does not degenerate then they would be significant causes for a fortunate rebirth. However, if they were to degenerate through forgetting the virtuous object due to lack of mindfulness and introspection, then we actually lose the causes we have already accumulated. That is why we need to take this instruction to heart.

1.2.2.1.5. *It obstructs the achievement of virtue not accumulated earlier*

This means that lacking introspection will prevent one from accumulating further virtue which one may not have accumulated already.

If one maintains introspection then one's earlier accumulated virtue will not be destroyed, and one will not be obstructed from achieving virtue one has not yet accumulated. In contrast to that, if we were to lack introspection, then earlier accumulated virtue is destroyed and we are further obstructed from achieving virtues that we have not yet accumulated. This is how we need to incorporate the need to apply and always maintain introspection, as opposed to lacking it, and the consequences of that.

The verse relating to this heading reads:

28. *This gang of affliction robbers
Looks for an opportunity.
If they get a chance they steal virtue
And kill off the life of a happy rebirth.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning:

This gang of affliction robbers looks for an opportunity to steal the wealth of virtue. If one does not protect oneself with introspection, and they get a chance, they will steal one's virtue and also destroy the result, happy migrations and the life of liberation, in the progress.

Having contemplated the faults of not having introspection one should strive in introspection that checks the situation of the three doors

The commentary is quite clear and the analogy highlights the main point. Just as a gang of robbers look for an opportunity to steal others' wealth, as soon as there is an opportunity, they will not hesitate—they will rob immediately. Likewise the afflictions we have in our mind are like the gang of robbers who are waiting for an

opportunity to steal away our virtues. If one does not protect oneself with introspection and the afflictions get a chance, *they will steal one's virtue and also destroy the results of one's virtue, which is a happy migration and the life of liberation* which we are *in the process* of building. In conclusion, having contemplated the faults of not having introspection, one should strive in the introspection that investigates how we conduct ourselves through our three doors. Periodically we should check how we are conducting ourselves through our three doors of body, speech and mind. As mentioned earlier, the explanation here is quite clear: the main point is for one to actually take the advice to heart and put it into practice.

1.2.2.2. GUARDING MINDFULNESS AS THE METHOD FOR GUARDING INTROSPECTION

Mindfulness and introspection are presented as supportive of each other: in order to guard mindfulness one needs to apply introspection and vice versa. To have introspection we need to also apply mindfulness. This heading is divided into two:

1.2.2.2.1. Showing

1.2.2.2.2. Explaining

1.2.2.2.1. Showing

The verse reads:

29. *Therefore, do not send mindfulness
Away from the door of the mind.
Should it happen, place it closely
By recalling the sufferings of the lower realms.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning thus:

Because there are many faults if one does not have introspection, do not send the mindfulness of not forgetting the virtuous object away from the door of the house of the mind. In case mindfulness weakens and does leave, remind yourself of the sufferings of the lower realms, and immediately protect the house of the mind again.

Because of the many faults associated with losing introspection, using the analogy of mind as a house, one should not allow mindfulness (particularly forgetting the virtuous object), to leave from the door.

The commentary further explains '*in case mindfulness weakens*' and it does go (because a beginner's mindfulness is hard to maintain all the time), one needs to remind oneself again of the sufferings and the pitiful situation of the lower realms, and that this is the consequence of a lack of mindfulness. Then one will immediately protect the house of the mind again.

1.2.2.2.2. Explaining

Having thus presented how to guard mindfulness, next follows the various conditions for guarding mindfulness as a method of guarding introspection. These are subdivided into three.

1.2.2.2.2.1. Relying on the outer condition of a virtuous friend

1.2.2.2.2.2. How to generate the inner condition of correct mental application

1.2.2.2.2.3. How to generate the inner conditions of mindfulness and introspection

1.2.2.2.2.1. Relying on the outer condition of a virtuous friend

What are the various conditions for guarding mindfulness as a method of guarding introspection? The first is relying on the outer condition of a virtuous friend, or what we call a teacher or guru. The teacher is a virtuous friend, thus relying

on the lama is relying on a virtuous friend. This then becomes an external condition for one to be able to maintain one's introspection.

The verse reads:

30. *From following the lama,
Through to advice by the abbot,
Out of fear, the fortunate ones are respectful,
And generate mindfulness easily.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

The fortunate ones respect the trainings and will follow the advice of their abbot, preceptor, friends in pure training and the like out of a feeling of shame and consideration and fear of being degraded by others. These are methods for protecting mindfulness.

Since they generate easily the mindfulness that does not forget the virtuous object, regardless of whether they listen, contemplate or meditate, they base their practice on mastering mindfulness.

The method for protecting mindfulness presented here is that those who are *the fortunate ones* will respect the trainings and follow the advice of the abbot and the like out of a feeling of shame and consideration. For those in the ordained community the abbot is the one from whom vows are received. A preceptor gives precepts to the lay community who take lay precepts. Friends in pure training would be in the larger sangha community—those who help one accumulate virtue - friends in pure training. As one has taken vows and precepts from a prominent being and made promises to such a prominent being, it would be improper to breach them. It is said that the significance of receiving the vows and commitments from highly accomplished masters is that the mere recollection of them will help one to be more mindful of not breaching the vows. The hesitation to break those vows will be stronger because of the great respect one has for the lama (qualified virtuous friends—teacher, abbot etc.) *With the fear of being degraded by others*, means that when one has fear of being looked down upon, or where others may say something to put one in a bad light, then through consideration of this one will be able to apply mindfulness. These are the methods for protecting mindfulness since they generate easily the mindfulness that does not forget the virtuous object. The key point here is that since the mindfulness of not forgetting the virtuous object can easily lapse, regardless of whether one has listened, contemplated or meditated, you must base your practice on mastering mindfulness in order to protect your earlier merit and vows etc.

Shame and consideration are two very important virtues we need to maintain. The difference between shame and embarrassment is that the focus of shame is one's commitment to others, such as one's lamas and Buddha etc. If one avoids engaging in faults that would cause disgrace to those others, this is shame. Embarrassment arises because an action is not good for one's own reason i.e. it is not good for me to break these vows. This uses oneself as a reason to avoid faults in consideration of others.

In summary, take *relying on outer conditions* as a personal instruction to recall the importance of relying on qualified spiritual masters and virtuous friends who encourage us and to help us accumulate virtue. On a wider scale, one can rely on Dharma brothers and sisters in our life, like-minded people who help remind us of the Dharma. Having respect for them and relying upon them is meaningful for oneself as a method to protect one's mindfulness, and as a way to guard introspection.

1.2.2.2.2. How to generate the inner condition of correct mental application

Having explained the outer conditions next the method to generate the inner conditions of correct mental application is presented. This next verse serves as a proclamation, or what we should recall.

The verse reads:

31. *Buddhas and bodhisattvas
Are endowed with unobstructed sight of everything.
Say, 'I am always in the field of vision
Of their five eyes.'*
32ab. *By contemplating this, shame,
And likewise respect and fear are attained.*

As explained by Gyaltsab Je in the commentary:

Further, the buddhas and bodhisattvas can see all phenomena without obstruction, regardless of place or time. So one remains at all times clearly in the sight of their five eyes. Considering this generates shame, which takes oneself as the reason, and because one has respect for the teacher and the Dharma and fear of the fruition, one should take care and practise mindfulness.

The first line presents the extent of the buddhas' omniscient mind, and it is because the buddhas have five wisdom eyes that one is always in their presence. Bringing this to mind, along with the qualities of the buddhas' omniscience and the qualities of the bodhisattvas, one should always feel their presence, because they are in constant awareness of our being.

The way to envision shame is that if one recalls that one is always in the presence of the buddhas and bodhisattvas then one does not want to show disrespect, so one refrains from engaging in misdeeds. This is how one applies mindfulness and introspection in relation to shame.

As the commentary continues, *because one has respect for the teacher and the Dharma and fear of the fruition, one should take care and practise mindfulness.*

The next point, which is the consideration for others, comes because of the respect one has for the teacher and the Dharma and fear of the results of one's negative consequences (one's misdeeds). By recalling the reason of others, one again applies mindfulness, and it is in this way that one practises mindfulness on a continuous basis. Again, what is being explained is not obscure, it is quite clear. The main thing for one to take to heart as personal instruction is to apply this in our practice.

To summarise the main point: recall that the Buddhas are omniscient. This means that they know all existence completely and entirely; past, present and future. Think, 'I am always in their presence and so I dare not engage in misdeeds, lapse from my commitments etc.' This recollection is how our mindfulness is supported with introspection.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version © Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

1 July 2014

As usual we can spend some time in meditation practice.
[Meditation]

We can generate a positive motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the benefit of all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. Therefore I will listen to the teachings, and put them into practice well.

I regularly emphasise the importance of the motivation and this is exactly the point which is presented in the next verses. These verses are very poignant explanations about the significance of our state of mind and so forth, so we really need to pay attention to them.

1.2.2.2.3. How to generate the inner conditions of mindfulness and introspection

This has two subdivisions:

1.2.2.2.3.1. How to generate mindfulness

1.2.2.2.3.2. How to generate introspection from mindfulness

1.2.2.2.3.1. How to generate mindfulness

Here, there are two lines:

*32cd. They also repeatedly generate
Recollection of the Buddha.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on these lines reads

A person who thinks in this way will also recollect the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Because this happens repeatedly, they will easily generate mindfulness of the Three Jewels.

This explanation follows last week's presentation in that *a person who thinks in this way* refers to using shame and embarrassment to apply mindfulness. An individual who conducts themselves with shame and embarrassment in mind will recollect the qualities of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, which are three of the six recollections. In addition to the recollection of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, the six recollections also include recollection of the downfalls, recollection of morality and recollection of the deities.

As presented here, the qualities of the Three Jewels are interrelated in the sense that the more one reflects on the enlightened activities of the Buddha, the greater the admiration and faith in the Buddha's words, i.e. the Dharma. Generating strong faith in the Dharma will then naturally bring about a keen admiration and faith in those who actually practise the Dharma, i.e. the Sangha. So in this way one recollects the qualities of the Three Jewels, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

Furthermore the more one recollects the qualities of the Three Jewels, the more mindful one will be about not

creating the downfalls, and the recollection of morality and so forth will come about as well. Constantly bringing to mind an awareness that one is in the presence of the buddhas and the deities at all times will help one to generate a sense of shame about breaching any vows one has taken, and then through that shame there is a hesitation about incurring the negativities or the downfalls. The same applies to embarrassment with respect to others. So the recollection of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha helps to generate a sense of shame and embarrassment about incurring the downfalls and so forth.

1.2.2.2.3.2. How to generate introspection from mindfulness

Here again, we take note of the way mindfulness and introspection are interconnected. If one applies mindfulness well, then that will help to generate introspection as well. The verse relating to this is:

*33. When mindfulness remains at the door
Of the mind for the purpose of protection,
At that time introspection is born
And the one that left returns.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of this verse thus:

At the time when one, through mindfulness, remains alert to protect oneself from the afflictions, then introspection, which analyses which action is suitable and which is unsuitable, comes into existence, and that which has degenerated at a time will return.

Since the skill in practice depends on mindfulness and introspection, one should become adept in this.

As the commentary explains, by applying *mindfulness one remains alert to protect oneself from the afflictions*. Here mindfulness relates to being either mindful of a virtuous object, or mindful of what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded. So mindfulness means being alert to the possibility of afflictions arising and thus protecting oneself from them. This is really the most significant point about applying mindfulness.

Here we can recall one of the great Kadampa masters Geshe Byel Kunkyen who said, 'I always guard my three doors, lest I fall victim to the afflictions'. One really needs to apply mindfulness in this manner, as a means to guard the mind against the afflictions, and thus ensure that they do not take root. That is the positive outcome of applying mindfulness.

As the commentary further explains, the consequence of following the practice of maintaining mindfulness to protect oneself from the afflictions, is that introspection, which analyses *what actions are suitable and what are unsuitable*, comes into existence. This presentation is systematically showing us how introspection arises by virtue of applying mindfulness. When one applies mindfulness appropriately, and maintains it, then introspection will naturally arise, which in this context is a mind that vigilantly analyses and checks what actions are to be adopted and what actions need to be discarded.

I regularly stress the importance of maintaining mindfulness of one's virtuous object while in meditation. When we have mindfulness of the object, then the introspection that checks whether the mind has become distracted or not will arise naturally. The same applies to

mindfulness and introspection about what actions are to be adopted and what are to be abandoned. This is a very systematic explanation that clearly shows how mindfulness and introspection support each other.

When the commentary says, *that which is unsuitable comes into existence and that which has degenerated at a time will return*, it is referring to the fact that if mindfulness or introspection start to weaken, they can easily be restored. The more one maintains mindfulness about one's activities and actions, the more it will help the development of introspection. In the event that mindfulness or introspection start to degenerate or lapse, then, because of the earlier application, they will easily be able to return. So that is the point being explained here.

Furthermore, as the commentary explains, *since the skill in meditation and practice depends on mindfulness and introspection, one should become adept in this*. The point here is that becoming skilled in meditation and practice depends on how much mindfulness and introspection is being applied, and held without degeneration.

1.3. The practice of guarding the mind with mindfulness and introspection

Having explained the necessity of applying mindfulness and introspection, the next part of the text deals with the actual practice of guarding the mind with mindfulness.

This is subdivided into three:

- 1.3.1. Training in the morality of restraint
- 1.3.2. The way of training in the morality of accumulating virtuous dharmas
- 1.3.3. Training in the morality that accomplishes the welfare of sentient beings

1.3.1. Training in the morality of restraint

This has two subdivisions:

- 1.3.1.1. Striving to purify the actions of the three doors
- 1.3.1.2. Protecting the three doors from degeneration

1.3.1.1. STRIVING TO PURIFY THE ACTIONS OF THE THREE DOORS

Here there are three sub-headings

- 1.3.1.1.1. Investigating the actions of body and speech
- 1.3.1.1.2. Investigating the actions of the mind
- 1.3.1.1.3. Explaining the permitted and forbidden actions

1.3.1.1.1. Investigating the actions of body and speech

This is subdivided into four:

- 1.3.1.1.1.1. Investigating the motivation before a physical action
- 1.3.1.1.1.2. Advice related to looking and so forth
- 1.3.1.1.1.3. Relating it to other actions
- 1.3.1.1.1.4. Investigating the action of abiding

These are important points that I regularly emphasise. This part of the presentation is also very suitable for beginners, as they will find it systematic and very logical. They are able to relate to this explanation very well, because it relates to normal, everyday activities.

Investigating the motivation before a physical action relates to the fact that the mind is paramount in all our actions. The mind is the forerunner of all physical and verbal activities. Whether we conduct a positive physical activity, or whether it is harmful depends on our

motivation prior to engaging in that action. Likewise whatever speech we utter, whether it is positive and beneficial, or harmful or negative, is also dependent on the motivation that precedes the speech. This presentation shows how the mind is the forerunner of all activities.

1.3.1.1.1. Investigating the motivation before a physical action

The verse that relates to this heading is:

34. *Initially investigate
Whether this mind is flawed.
At the time I shall remain
Steady like wood.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains:

Before engaging in any physical action, such as walking, investigate this mind of yours to see whether the motivation for the action is flawed or not.

In case a flawed motivation has arisen, then, while remembering the antidote against the afflictions, remain steady like wood, and not be moved by the motivation.

As the commentary explains, *before engaging in any action such as walking*, first check or *investigate this mind of yours to see whether the motivation for the action is flawed or not*. As explained here, prior to engaging in any action such as walking or going about, one checks one's state of mind to see what is motivating this action. 'Is the motivation a positive one? Is it an appropriate motivation for the action I am about to engage in? Or is it tainted with some negativity?' This is how to check one's motivation prior to engaging in the action itself.

As the commentary further explains, if one finds that a *flawed motivation has arisen* or taken root, then, the moment one notices that the motivation is stained, by *remembering the antidote to the affliction*, one *remains steady like wood*.

To understand this analogy it is necessary to know that the Tibetan term *shing* applies to wood in general, and it is also the term for trees. In this case, as some other commentaries indicate, the example relates to a massive tree that remains steady during a storm and is not moved by gusts of wind. This example is used to illustrate how one needs to apply the antidote to remain steady and not be moved by the afflictions.

When one notices that one's motivation is tainted and applies the antidote to the afflictions, then one will be able to remain steady and not be moved by that tainted motivation or superstitious thoughts and so forth. So the mind itself remains steady and not moved by a faulty motivation or the afflictions.

As I regularly emphasise, whatever the practice we do, particularly with meditation, we need to be mindful that the practice serves its purpose of overcoming the afflictions in one's mind. As I have related to you in the past, I spent a significant amount of time in my youth attempting to meditate. As I have confided in you in the past, despite my earnest efforts to apply the meditation practice, trying to lead a modest life, being content with whatever I had and not concerned about nice clothing and food, these efforts could, at times, have been tainted with some worldly concern, wondering how others

would view me and so forth. Nevertheless the attempts I made at that time have definitely had a positive effect on my wellbeing now that I am older. Judging by the positive effects that I experience now, the earlier attempts to meditate and so forth have not been in vain, and may have been focused in the right direction. At this stage in my life I can confidently say that my meditation practice is pure, without the stains of worldly concerns.

Geshe-la in English: When I was 20 years old, 21 years old, 22 years old, 23 years old, at that time when there is good food and bad one, I chose bad one! If there is good cloth and not good one, I choose not good one. At time very, very good learning—now I no attach food, no attach cloth, no attach reputation! That time I learning, now beneficial for me! Normally I say I need small food, easy food, not need many different food; stomach full and good for health that is enough! Some people two hours cooking, eat ten minutes, finished! Important healthy food need, delicious or not delicious not really important, healthy need. Delicious only here [pointing to tongue]—afterwards gone! Some people eat rotten egg, rotten meat, not knowing, say 'yes, yes', then stomach pain and some dead. Most important health!

Coming back to the main point, our motivation is of paramount importance. Whatever activity we engage in we need to first check our motivation. Those of you who live with a partner know from experience how, if you do not check your state of mind and allow negative states of mind such as anger to become prevalent, you can easily engage in inappropriate gestures and behaviours that can upset your partner. Behaving in this way will not be received well, even by someone who is close to you. We see so many examples of the complications, harm and hostility that arise as a result of not having paid attention to one's state of mind, prior to engaging in the activities that affect your companion.

If you take this advice to heart, and really pay attention to your state of mind, then, having contemplated the faults of anger, when you notice anger arising you will know that it is not a really suitable state of mind with which to interact with others. By virtue of recognising that, you will be able to prevent yourselves from mishaps and harming others. This is the practical approach to protecting yourselves.

1.3.1.1.2. Advice related to looking and so forth

Here again we can notice the very practical advice Shantideva is giving to those listening to his teachings. His practical advice on how to conduct oneself and behave properly, just the same as the advice and care that a parent would give to their children.

Having mentioned the importance of checking the mind before engaging in physical actions, now comes advice about how to look with one's eyes.

This has four subdivisions:

- 1.3.1.1.2.1. The general conduct of looking with the eyes
- 1.3.1.1.2.2. How to look when tired
- 1.3.1.1.2.3. How to act when another person comes close
- 1.3.1.1.2.4. How to act after one has rested

1.3.1.1.2.1. The general conduct of looking with the eyes

The verse that relates to this is:

35. *I never allow myself to be distracted
And do not look around meaninglessly.
Rather, with a firm mind,
I always look with my eyes downcast.*

These are quite easy points to understand and the commentary is also quite clear.

I shall never allow myself to be distracted and look around meaninglessly, because this causes the mind to degenerate. With the virtuous object firmly in mind I shall always look with my eyes cast down the length of one yoke in front of me.

As the commentary explains one *should never allow oneself to be distracted and look around meaninglessly*. This means not looking around without any purpose. One should guard against that sort of conduct. If one were to look around meaninglessly then that would *cause the mind to degenerate*, through losing its focus on the virtuous object.

Then the commentary further explains that while maintaining *the virtuous object firmly in mind I shall always look with my eyes cast down the length of one yoke in front of me*. In some texts such as the *Vinaya Sutra*, the distance is described as the span of one arm's length.

The main point is that one maintains one's focus on the virtuous object, and that when one walks, one looks just at the space in front of oneself. That covers the general conduct of looking with the eyes.

1.3.1.1.2.2. How to look when tired

Next comes how to look when one is tired. This is covered in these two lines:

- 36ab. *To rest one's sight
One should occasionally look around.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

To refresh one's constitution, and if tired, one occasionally lifts one's gaze and looks around.

When one is tired or looking for a resting place, *one can occasionally lift one's gaze and look around*.

Holding one's gaze at a certain distance for too long might lead to physical discomfort, and mentally one may start to feel a bit tired. So, in order to refresh one's physical constitution, and to revive the mind, we are advised to occasionally lift up our gaze a bit and look around in order to refresh ourselves.

We know that whenever we are engaged in some sort of task, after a while we get a bit tired and we need to look up and stretch out our arms. This is how we normally refresh ourselves. However, this does not imply that we should forget the virtuous object and just look around meaninglessly. The purpose of looking up is just to refresh ourselves, and it should not be a means to become distracted again.

1.3.1.1.2.3. How to act when another person comes close

At this point we can again reflect upon the heart-warming nature of Shantideva's advice. I have heard people say, 'My parents never taught me how to receive guests and how to care for them!' Shantideva is showing us here how to relate to others in appropriate ways.

Some people become very shy when guests arrive, and are not really able to say much. This indicates that they are not really able to interact with and relate to people at a social level.

36cd. When someone appears in the field of your vision

Look up and say, "It is good you came".

37ab. To check whether there are dangers on the road

Look repeatedly in the four directions.

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning as follows:

If someone comes into one's field of vision, while we have our eyes downcast, once they are in front of us we smile at them and say 'How good you came'.

Also, while walking along a path one needs to repeatedly look around in the four directions to check whether there are any dangers or not.

As explained here in the commentary, if, while you are engaged in gazing downward, someone comes near you, then you look up and greet them with a smile. Even just a smile can make others feel at ease and comfortable. Following this pleasant facial gesture, one utters welcoming pleasant words. That is how to conduct oneself.

Furthermore *while walking along the path*, the conduct one needs to adopt *is to repeatedly look in the four directions*, to check whether there are any dangers or not. This is very practical advice. One should always be vigilant as one walks about, otherwise accidents will happen. We can see the very practical nature of this advice. It is also applicable to driving, isn't it? Basically, Shantideva is presenting, with reason and logic, the most suitable way to conduct ourselves virtuously in all our activities, much as parents give advice to their children.

1.3.1.1.1.2.4. How to act after one has rested

This of course is quite easy to understand. Having given advice on how to rest when one is tired, how does one conduct oneself after a rest?

The following four lines explain this:

37cd. Having directed your sight outwards during the break

Look behind your back.

38ab. Having checked in front and behind

Go or come.

The commentary explains the meaning as follows.

Further, after one has rested and set out again, direct your attention outwards and look also behind your back for your possessions. Having checked whether in front or behind are any cliffs and so forth, one either continues along one's path or goes back, as is appropriate.

Having applied the advice on resting, as one sets out again, we are next advised to *direct your attention outward, and also behind your back for your possessions*. This refers to making sure that there are no obstructions, or dangers, either behind or in front.

Having checked in front and behind that there aren't *any cliffs or so forth* refers to the fact that some routes can be treacherous, and very dangerous. So one needs to look carefully in front, to see if there are any cliffs or not, and

then, ensuring that there is no danger, one proceeds along the path.

Looking backward ensures that it is possible to turn back if needed, as well as ensuring one does not leave one's possessions behind. Again, this is very practical advice.

1.3.1.1.1.3. Relating it to other actions

The relevant two lines are:

38cd. Act in this way at all time

Upon understanding the purpose.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

Having understood the need for the benefit of self and others, act like this with all your physical and verbal actions.

In summary, whatever one's actions, whether verbal or physical, one needs to first check their purpose, whether they benefit oneself or others, and then, if there is a benefit, engage in those actions.

We will recite the *King of Prayers* for Kim Foon's father who has just passed away in Malaysia. Kim, her sister Kim Yoke, and William are three of our more dedicated students, and it is good for us to do prayers for them at this time.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Judy Mayne

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© *Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

8 July 2014

As usual we can spend some time in meditation practice.
[meditation]

Aim to receive the teachings with a bodhicitta motivation such as:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, in order to free them from all sufferings and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. For that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

Such a motivation is crucial for ensuring that your approach is a proper practice.

We have explained the headings How To Act When One Rests and Relating It To Other Actions. Recall how those explanations gave very practical advice about how to conduct oneself in such situations. In relation to protecting oneself from dangers after resting, when one starts to move about, the advice was about how to be cautious: look behind to make sure no possessions have been left behind; ensure you are not in danger; look in front and make sure there is no precipice or danger points around and then move with caution. This was very practical advice.

This line from Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains what is meant by *relating it to other actions* and serves as a summary that relates to all of our actions.

Having understood the need for the benefit of self and others, act like this with all your physical and verbal actions.

Whatever actions we engage in, physical or verbal, in all instances first check whether there is a benefit for oneself or a benefit for others. Having thoroughly checked, if one finds there is a benefit for oneself and/or others then engage in the actions. Again, this is immaculate advice as it encourages us to use our own wisdom to assess our actions.

1.3.1.1.4. Investigating the action of abiding

The verse reads:

39. *Initiate your actions thinking:
'I shall abide with my body like this.'
From time to time check
How your body is abiding.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

After having had the thought, 'I shall remain in this position', stop the actions of the body and place it for the time being in the planned position.

Look in the explained way, from time to time to check how the body is abiding, and strive to act without fault.

When engaging in a virtuous deed on a physical level (it can relate to body, speech and mind but here it relates to the physical), and *after having the thought 'I shall remain in this position,'* an example of an action may be if you decided to engage in a focused meditation. You would think 'Now I will position myself in the seven-point posture of Buddha

Vairochana, and having taken this initiative you would adopt the appropriate posture. Then, having adopted the posture you would strive to maintain it for the duration. You would periodically check how your body is abiding, and whether you have adopted the correct posture or not. This applies to any physical action; sitting, standing or moving about—adopt the physical posture and strive to act without fault. The succinct advice here is to constantly be aware of one's actions, whether physical, verbal or mental state, and be vigilant in checking 'how am I conducting myself?' This ensures that you are conducting yourself without fault and in line with creating virtue. If you find yourself at fault, immediately try to overcome it. This is the main advice. Having given detailed advice on how to conduct oneself physically, next is investigating the state, or conduct, of the mind.

1.3.1.1.2. Investigating the mind

This is subdivided into two

1.3.1.1.2.1. Fastening the mind to the virtuous object

1.3.1.1.2.2. Analyse whether it is single-pointedly focused on virtue or not

1.3.1.1.2.1. Fastening the mind to the virtuous object

The verse reads:

40. *Check with all your effort
That the crazy elephant mind
Does not lose the great Dharma pillar
The way it was fastened to it.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Check with all your effort that the unsubdued and crazy elephant mind does not lose the great pillar of the Dharma object that one accepted to contemplate single-pointedly, the way one fastened the mind to it.

The main point of the explanation here is how to ensure that one's mind is fastened to a virtuous object. The mind here is likened to an unsubdued and crazy elephant which would cause havoc due to its completely wild nature. Firstly, it is untamed, and on top of that it is crazed, so an elephant like that would go on a rampage and cause huge destruction, unless it was secured tightly to a strong pillar.

This analogy illustrates our state of mind, which is untamed from the three poisons of attachment, anger and ignorance, and crazed with different delusions. Such an untamed and crazed mind, if it is not fastened to a pillar like a Dharma object, can cause so much damage and destruction. Therefore the advice here is, in order to prevent one's mind from causing so much damage and destruction, *check with all your effort that the unsubdued and crazy elephant mind does not lose the great pillar of the Dharma object.* For us, the pillar or object must be a virtuous object, and just as one would tie an elephant to a pillar, one ties the focus of one's mind to the virtuous object, or what the commentary calls *the Dharma object that one accepted to contemplate single-pointedly the way one fastened the mind to it.* This line indicates that as one has previously determined to contemplate on a chosen object, one needs to constantly ensure one does not lose focus on that virtuous object.

1.3.1.1.2.2. Analyse whether it is single-pointedly focused on virtue or not

After one has fastened one's mind to a virtuous Dharma object (pillar), next one needs to analyse whether it is single-pointedly focused on it or not. This is very succinct advice on how to conduct oneself on a mental level. One can derive

so much meaning from just going over the outline and relate to the significance of the meaning of the verse.

The verse reads:

41. *However I strive in concentration
I shall not let loose for even one moment.
'What does this mind of mine do?' I ask.
Analyse the mind in detail in this regard.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of this verse:

I shall not even for one moment lose my concentration on the virtuous object and be distracted to something else. Analyse your mind repeatedly, saying: 'This mind of mine does suitable and unsuitable actions.'

The significant point here is that while the advice is to focus one's mind single-pointedly on the virtuous object to develop concentration, at the same time, internally in one's mind, one should also analyse one's state of mind checking what kind of thoughts are occurring, what kind of actions are being initiated. The mind has the ability to constantly initiate either suitable or unsuitable actions. So there is a need to check what kinds of thoughts are being manifested in one's mind. Note that from the very onset it is extremely crucial to train oneself in meditation, to develop not only calm abiding, but also special insight, because calm abiding, a state of single-pointed concentration on an object for as long as one wishes, in itself is not sufficient to further enhance one's progress along the path to enlightenment. The teachings constantly emphasise this point. So in addition to calm abiding, one needs to develop special insight, and it is with this combination of concentration and special insight that one can start to really engage in an actual meditation practice capable of removing the subtle afflictions and delusions in the mind. This is a crucial point: while engaging in meditation we should not allow ourselves to feel comfortable just focusing single-pointedly on a chosen object, and maintaining just that. Rather we must also constantly investigate our state of mind, which serves as the basis to develop special insight.

The analysis one employs to check one's state of mind is one which is done while maintaining one's focus on the object, not wavering away from it. So while maintaining this single-pointed focus on the object, one must also employ an analysis that investigates one's state of mind, i.e. what thoughts are occurring and whether they are virtuous states of mind or negative states of mind. Employing this sort of analysis enhances one's intelligence and wisdom, and further develops that wisdom, which can later become special insight.

Lama Tsong Khapa advocates abandoning mere single-pointed concentration, and striving to develop the union of calm abiding and special insight. This is a significant and unique point which we really need to understand. We need to make attempts to develop this training now in our meditation so it will leave a positive imprint in our mind. When we apply this technique it becomes a means to sharpen the mind and further enhance wisdom. Otherwise if one only develops single-pointed concentration, and it is not done in an appropriate manner, then there is a danger of the mind becoming duller and duller rather than sharper, clearer and more intelligent. It is crucial that we apply the proper technique.

1.3.1.1.3. Explaining the permitted and forbidden actions

First, to give an idea about what this heading means in relation to explaining the meaning of the verse: the Buddha

presented certain actions as being permitted and certain actions which are forbidden. Within those which were forbidden there are certain actions which may be temporarily relaxed a bit, as a way of adopting another practice. This is the meaning of practicing equanimity in this context. Thus here, equanimity means that with certain forbidden actions one may temporarily relax the rules a bit, as the means to adopt another virtuous practice.

The verse reads:

42. *If, in the context of dangers or prayer
You are unable, be as comfortable as you can.
In the same vein, at the time of generosity
Morality is treated with equanimity, it is taught.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the verse:

If one is unable to perform certain extremely subtle actions of body and mind at the time of:

- Danger to one's life,
- Making offering to the Triple Gem with prayers,
- Actions for the superior purpose of others,

At such times it is permissible to relax one's state or being, even if one is not able to engage those subtle forbidden actions.

From the *Sutra Requested by Inexhaustible Wisdom*:

Thus, at the time of generosity, contain morality and practise equanimity.

The commentary explains that at a time when there is either danger to one's life, or when one is making extensive offerings to the Triple Gem, or particularly when one is engaging in superior actions of benefiting or helping other beings, if one is unable to perform certain extremely subtle actions of body and mind at that time, then '*one should practice equanimity and put one's mind at ease.*'

The citation to qualify this presentation is from the *Sutra Requested by Inexhaustible Wisdom*.

Thus, at the time of generosity, contain morality and practice equanimity.

This is saying that at a time when one is not able to practise both simultaneously, and it is the time for mainly practising generosity, then one should practice equanimity, and leave one's subtle practice of morality. The purpose is to be skilful in accomplishing the path sequentially.

Further down, the commentary explains:

This is to achieve the proper sequence of the path, because if one mistakes the sequence then one will not achieve the former or the latter.

The points of the path should be practised sequentially. In order to practise the points sequentially, first adopt those which are initially presented and relatively easy to practise before engaging in a more difficult practice. The quote from the sutra indicates this point.

The commentary presents a hypothetical doubt which may occur:

Query: How can one regard it with equanimity since morality is greater than generosity?

This is a reasonable doubt, for it is indeed a greater virtue to practise morality than generosity, because morality is harder to practise. Generosity can be practiced by lay as well as ordained practitioners, while certain practices of morality, like observing the self-liberation vows, can only be practised by ordained Sangha. Therefore morality is said to be harder to practise than generosity.

Thus, if we had to identify the main focus of the practice and who is appropriate to do those practices, lay people would focus mainly on generosity, and ordained Sangha would need to practise primarily on morality as their main practice.

So, as the query states, if morality is more virtuous, how can one leave that in equanimity, meaning how can one relax the practice of morality?

The next two verses serve as an answer to the query and read:

43. *After initiating the intended action
Do not think about anything else.
For the time being accomplish that very action
With your thoughts focused on it.*
44. *In this way all is accomplished well.
Otherwise neither will be accomplished.
The secondary afflictions, which are non-
introspection,
Will not increase in this way.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains exactly why:

One does not divert mentally from the first practice in a series that have to be practised sequentially. Generosity, which has to be practised first, is practised alone with a firm mind for the time being. This is to achieve the proper sequence of the path, because if one mistakes the sequence, then one will not achieve the former or the latter.

In relation to the first part - *One does not divert mentally from the first practice in a series that have to be practised sequentially* - this highlights that some practices are presented in sequential order. When practices are presented in a sequential manner it is important to primarily focus on the first practice as a way to establish a firm basis to engage in the next practice of the sequence. As explained here, *This is to achieve the proper sequence of the path, because if one mistakes the sequence, then one will not achieve the former or the latter.*

Take the analogy of constructing a wall: the foundation must be firm and stable. If it is not stable, when you start building the wall and putting the next layer on top it can very easily topple over. The consequence is that you neither have a good foundation nor a wall which comes on top of it. With this analogy it is very clear that when a practice is presented sequentially one needs to focus on the first practice to serve as a basis to practise the rest.

Hence the commentary continues:

By knowing and following the stages of the path the secondary afflictions, which are not introspection and which do not know the sequence, will not increase. Hence, one should strive to become proficient in the sequence of the path.

So this is all very clear.

1.3.1.2. PROTECTING THE THREE DOORS FROM DEGENERATION

This is divided into two subdivisions:

1.3.1.2.1. Protecting the training of the body from degeneration

1.3.1.2.2. Protecting the training of the mind from degeneration

1.3.1.2.1. Protecting the training of the body from degeneration

This is further divided into three meticulously presented subdivisions:

1.3.1.2.1.1. Not letting the body fall under the control of distractions

1.3.1.2.1.2. Abandon meaningless activities

1.3.1.2.1.3. Analysing the motivation at the time of the action

1.3.1.2.1.1. Not letting the body fall under the control of distractions

45. *Various types of idle gossip
And many great plays,
If one becomes involved in any of these,
Abandon attachment to them.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the verse:

Do not engage in meaningless talk, such as gossip about kings or robbers, and also do not engage in dance or one of the many other kinds of spectacular performances. If there is a purpose or if it is to harmonise with someone, then one should abandon attachment for the action.

This succinct and practical advice is good for us, as it explains how to conduct ourselves in our daily life. The advice is that, whenever possible, one should not engage in meaningless talk such as idle gossip. The text cites gossip about kings or robbers, however for us it would be like gossiping about politics etc. There are sayings that express sentiments like, 'when one engages in gossip the whole day can just pass by', and one has just squandered a whole day gossiping. Engaging in gossip can increase delusions such as anger or attachment. According to the ten non-virtuous actions, by nature gossip is said to pose the least heavy negative karma. But if one is not mindful, it can end up being the worst as it wastes one's time. Because one may not perceive it to be very severe, one thinks it is OK to gossip. But if in fact one spends most of one's time just gossiping, then this will deprive you of your precious time to engage in other practices. So, while by nature gossiping is said to be the least heavy in negative karma, by doing it habitually we can actually waste our whole life. Furthermore, the advice extends to not engaging in dance or one of the many other kinds of spectacular performances, which would include watching movies etc. Again, such performances can cause delusions to arise in one's mind.

An exception is presented: *If there is a purpose or if it is to harmonise with someone one may engage in an action.* Here *harmonise* means 'if it is in accordance with someone else's wishes'. For example if someone said 'Please come to the movies with me. You definitely have to come with me', if you had a choice you would not go because you wouldn't want to waste your time. However, in order to please the other, and not to go against their wishes, you may find yourself sometimes having to comply and say, 'OK, I will go with you'. In situations like this, the advice is to do so without strong attachment—one should abandon attachment to the action.

There are certain categories within the Vinaya vows which are forbidden actions, but which are, under certain circumstances, permitted. For example, singing is actually a forbidden action for ordained Sangha because it can create attachment and distraction. However, if it seems necessary to sing to benefit others, then under those circumstances it is permitted. There are also other categories of actions which a Sangha member maybe permitted to engage in, if it is for the sole purpose of benefiting others. This shows the great kindness of the Buddha in presenting the vows in a way where, under certain circumstances, if it is beneficial to sentient beings, the actions are allowed. In summary, we can see how meticulously the Buddha presented vows which

say: 'avoid such actions normally but if there is a benefit for others then you can engage in it'.

1.3.1.2.1.2. Abandon meaningless activities

The next verse provides advice on how to conduct appropriate physical actions.

The verse reads:

46. *Meaningless digging, cutting of grass,
And drawing in dirt: if one does these,
Upon remembering the trainings of the
Tathagata,
Out of fear, abandon them immediately.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Even if one is not a bhikhu, when one is engaged in meaningless activities such as digging, cutting grass, drawing in the dirt etc., then one should remember the trainings of the Tathagata and, being afraid of the shortcomings of one's actions, stop them right there.

The definitions of meaningless activities are contained within the vows of a fully ordained monk, and they are not to engage in them. For example, digging, cutting grass and drawing in the dirt. However, the commentary indicates that even if you are not a bhikhu or a fully ordained monk—not all bodhisattva trainees are ordained—you should also avoid engaging in meaningless activities such as digging, cutting grass or drawing in the dirt. By remembering why the Buddha actually presented these activities as needing to be avoided, and being afraid of the shortcomings of one's actions, one needs to refrain from such activities. Activities are meaningless not just because they don't have any specific purpose. Some can harm other beings, such as cutting grass. At certain times of the year there are lots of bugs on the grass so by cutting grass, you would actually harm the lives of many insects.

1.3.1.2.1.3. Analysing the motivation at the time of the action

Similar advice was presented earlier. Basically, whatever action one engages in, really check and investigate one's motivation for engaging in the activity first.

This point has three subdivisions:

- 1.3.1.2.1.3.1. Showing
- 1.3.1.2.1.3.2. Explaining
- 1.3.1.2.1.3.4. Summary

1.3.1.2.1.3.1. Showing

The verse reads:

47 *If you wish to move
Or wish to speak
First analyse your mind
And then be smart through steadfastness.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

At the time when one wishes to move one's body or wishes to speak, one should first investigate one's mind to make sure it has not fallen under the control of the afflictions or self-cherishing, and then engage accordingly in what has to be practiced and what has to be abandoned.

While the explanation is quite clear, the commentary further explains that at all times *when one wishes to move one's body, or wishes to speak* (i.e. any physical or verbal actions), one should first check one's state of mind to ensure that it is not influenced by delusions, particularly the self-cherishing mind. Then when one is sure that it is not influenced by any of these negative states of mind, one can engage in the action

according to what is to be practised, and what is to be abandoned.

1.3.1.2.1.3.2. Explaining

This is subdivided into five categories:

- 1.3.1.2.1.3.2.1. What to do when one wishes to generate afflictions
- 1.3.1.2.1.3.2.2. What to do at the time of mental excitement
- 1.3.1.2.1.3.2.3. What to do at the time of praise and so forth
- 1.3.1.2.1.3.2.4. What to do when one thinks about the welfare of others
- 1.3.1.2.1.3.2.5. What to do when one wishes to generate anger or sadness

If there is a wish for anger to be generated, or if sadness occurs, then what can we do at that time? We can notice the manner of how to conduct oneself in such circumstances will be presented very meticulously and succinctly. So we can leave the explanations for our next session.

I would like to thank those who organised the lunch for His Holiness' birthday last Sunday again. Everyone really enjoyed and appreciated the lunch, and I feel that our requesting prayers for His Holiness' long life was fruitful. So, our efforts have been really worthwhile. On a personal note, that night I had a very auspicious dream with His Holiness. His Holiness was present at an offering ceremony, so after some conversations I took the initiative to go up to him to offer a *khatag*, but he indicated that it was not necessary. He then proceeded to consecrate a big jug full of inner-offering nectar, and afterwards indicated that I could have some. When I presented a small container in which I normally keep my inner-offering, he commented 'Oh, that is such a small container, while my jug is really big'. However, when he poured some nectar into my small container, miraculously a really tiny flow of nectar came down to fill my container just to the brim.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱུང་རྒྱུ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

15 July 2014

As usual we can spend some time in meditation.

[meditation]

Generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

1.3.1.2.1. Protecting the training of the body from degeneration

1.3.1.2.1.3. Analysing the motivation at the time of the action (cont.)

1.3.1.2.1.3.2. Explaining

This has five sub-divisions which we listed last week.

1.3.1.2.1.3.2.1. What to do when one wishes to generate afflictions

This heading refers to the actions to take when afflictions are about to be generated. The relevant verse reads:

48. *When one's mind wants to be attached
Or when it wants to be angry
Do not move and do not speak,
Abide like a tree.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary on the verse is quite clear:

When the mind wishes to get attached or wishes to become angry, do not engage in a physical action and do not speak. Rather, abide like a tree and be able to hold the antidote.

As the commentary explains, the moment the mind generates that thought of attachment or anger, one should avoid engaging in any physical or verbal actions. Rather, as the analogy explains, one should *abide like a tree*. The analogy is referring to a big tree, which cannot be moved by gusts of wind. Thus, one needs to remain unshakeable like a tree, being able to hold the antidote in the face of afflictions arising in the mind, not engaging in anything but remaining firm and stable.

The analogy of remaining unshakeable like a tree refers particularly to the times when afflictions such as attachment and anger are prevalent. One knows from one's own experience that when strong attachment or anger are prevalent any physical actions will be inappropriate actions. So at those times one's actions could not be virtuous actions. This is obviously the case with anger. We all know that any physical actions during a moment of anger cannot be a constructive or virtuous one. Likewise, we all know through experience that when our mind is influenced by strong anger our speech will not be appropriate. Likewise, any words uttered when strong attachment is arising will be flawed and inappropriate, and not virtuous speech. So, as presented here, the moment one notices the afflictions arising one should remain firm and steady, and temporarily not engage in any activity.

This is really very practical and personal advice that we need to take on board. From our own experiences, we know that whenever we have acted out of moments of intense anger our physical actions have not been appropriate; likewise, our speech has been hurtful and inappropriate. The consequence of acting either physically or verbally in moments of intense anger is clearly undesirable, and we can all easily relate to that. It may be a little bit harder for you to accept and understand that physical actions and verbal speech in moments of intense attachment are also inappropriate. Nevertheless the fact remains that when one acts out of strong attachment those actions also become tainted and faulty.

However, as indicated previously, some of the advice about avoiding some inappropriate actions out of attachment is intended for those who have ordination vows. So you also need to understand this advice in its proper context.

1.3.1.2.1.3.2.2. What to do at the time of mental excitement

The verses relating to this heading read:

49. *Having mental excitement or mocking,
Having pride or conceit,
Or thinking about criticising,
Being cunning or thinking about deceit,*
50. *When being ready to praise oneself
And belittle others,
Telling others off or being argumentative,
Then one should remain like a tree.*

[The English commentary we have presents the following explanation in point form, although it reads as straight text in the Tibetan version.]

- When there is mental excitement with an object;
- When mocking others in jest;
- When full of pride due to qualities;
- When being conceited due to youth and other reasons;
- When thinking about criticising others;
- When one is cunning, and wants profit out of discontentment;
- When one thinks about deceiving others with pretension and dishonesty;
- When one praises oneself wholeheartedly by expressing one's qualities, and puts others down by mentioning their faults;
- When scolding others and being argumentative and quarrelling.

At these times one should remain unshakeable like a tree while being self-supporting with the antidote.

First is *mental excitement with an object*. You will recall that one of the main obstacles during meditation is excitement, which is when the mind waivers away from the meditation object and starts to focus on another object. Thus, diverting one's focus from the object of meditation to another object is called excitement.

Next is *mocking others in jest*. This refers to ridiculing someone for the amusement of others. Putting down someone else in this form is a fault. Again we are being given practical advice about what to avoid.

Third is how to counteract *pride due to* being puffed up about certain *qualities* one may have. Such pride manifests itself in the form of feeling pompous, thinking 'I know better than others. I have more knowledge than they do'. With an attitude like that, one is putting down others while making

oneself seem more important. We have discussed this delusion in detail in the past.

As mentioned previously, we should be really careful that whatever knowledge we gain from the Dharma, or from the teachings we study, does not become a cause to further strengthen one's pride. One needs to remember that all of the Buddha's teachings were intended to overcome pride, and not strengthen it. Bearing that in mind, if one is feeling a bit pompous about knowing more than others, and has the tendency to look down upon others, one should immediately remember that the purpose of having knowledge of the Dharma is to overcome one's own pride.

We need to take these verses as personal advice, remembering that Shantideva is giving this kind of advice for our benefit. When excitement occurs we can remember his advice to apply an antidote for overcoming excitement. If one finds oneself mocking or making fun of others, one should again remember, 'Shantideva has cautioned me against this negative tendency, so I need to counteract it'. And it is the same with pride and so forth.

Fourth is *when being conceited due to youth and other reasons*. [Some translations use the word, *haughtiness*, for the translation of the Tibetan word *gyakpa*.]

There are five conditions that can lead to conceit or haughtiness. These are youth, having a good form or physique, wealth, status or a good lineage, and an abundance of hearing.

There is a distinction between haughtiness and pride. When we studied Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*¹, we went into detail about the different kinds of pride, so we won't go over that again. In relation to the earlier mentioned five conditions i.e. being youthful, having a good physique, having sufficient wealth, being from a good family and having good knowledge, pride is a state of mind that has the tendency to look down upon others because one has these conditions and they don't. Whereas conceit or haughtiness² entails a sense of satisfaction about having these good conditions. So conceit or haughtiness has an element of attachment to one's good conditions and feeling a sense of joy or satisfaction about that.

Nagarjuna also highlighted the significant point that haughtiness is the root of a lack of conscientiousness. Feeling conceit about having these good conditions can lead to a lack of conscientiousness about one's Dharma practice. Nagarjuna supported this significant point with a quote from the sutras.

The sense of conceit in relation to an abundance of hearing refers to the knowledge one may have gained from hearing, which can lead to thinking 'I have a significant amount of knowledge now'. In relation to wealth, there is both material wealth and the wealth of knowledge. So here it refers to being conceited about the wealth of knowledge one has. One must be wary about that.

So we can clearly see how being conceited over having these five conditions is related to attachment. It is because of strong attachment to these favourable conditions that one generates that sense of conceit about having obtained them. Hence the teachings say that conceit fits into the realm of attachment.

Fifth is *thinking about criticising others*. This may easily come about when we are dealing with others, so we need to be very mindful about that.

Next is *when one is cunning and wants profit out of discontentment*. This refers to being discontented and because of that discontentment seeking to profit from others. The advice here is to apply an antidote to overcome and counteract that discontentment, which basically means practising less desire and more contentment. As I mention regularly, I can personally vouch for the fact that anyone who practises less desire and has more contentment will not have any real worries. The person who practises having less desire and contentment is the person who has no worries!

This is really the prime practice for ordained Sangha. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama has indicated, monks from other traditions such as Christianity definitely adopt this practice, and show clear signs of their success with it.

If there is no contentment with whatever wealth one has, then that will naturally give rise to worry, being constantly anxious and wanting to acquire more profit and more gain. When one practises contentment with whatever one has, the mind will naturally be more subdued, and definitely less anxious. However, practising contentment needs to be understood in the proper way. It doesn't necessarily mean to avoid having possessions and wealth entirely, and that one should give away everything. Practising poverty and having nothing is not necessarily practising contentment.

The real meaning of practising contentment is to have less attachment to one's wealth and so forth. The main thing one needs to understand here is that being content, or not, is a mental state related to attachment to one's wealth.

Indeed, without strong attachment one can actually utilise one's wealth to better one's conditions, and really enjoy them. With strong attachment, on the other hand, there's always that thought of, 'oh I am spending too much!' so there is always that sense of unease. Despite using one's wealth in trying to improve one's conditions, there is always a little bit of unease. However, although such miserliness has many faults, one of its qualities could be that it does contribute to saving money.

Geshe-la speaks in English: People save money but not happy. Same job, same money, but always 'I no get money ... I no get money, I no get job... Money is hidden away.

There are similar stories among the Tibetans about people having hidden money somewhere!

Seventh is *when one thinks about deceiving others with pretention and dishonesty*. As the teachings explain, the two ways to deceive others are pretence and dishonesty. Pretence refers to pretending that one actually has certain qualities in order to impress others, when in fact one lacks those qualities. Dishonesty is trying to hide one's faults, so that one is not seen in a bad light by others. As I regularly emphasise, one needs to be really mindful of the danger that one's own Dharma practices, such as meditation and so forth, don't become a means for pretence and dishonesty.

Next is *praising oneself wholeheartedly by expressing one's qualities, and putting others down by mentioning their faults*. This immoral practice is a breach of one of the bodhisattvas' commitments, and counted as one of the downfalls. We need to really take this to heart and see how easily our actions can become tainted with our views about our qualities. Whenever one talks about one's practice, one needs to be constantly mindful that one is not boasting about it. We must also be just as mindful about not putting others down.

¹ See teaching of 26 June 2012.

² See teaching of 19 June 2012

There's a particular word in Tibetan *kurdep*, which has the connotation of uttering things that are not true, such as proclaiming that one has qualities when one does not have them. Another example of an untrue proclamation is to hide the qualities of others, ridiculing and finding fault in them.

Lastly, *scolding others and being argumentative and quarrelling*.

Gyaltsab Je concludes his commentary on this section of the text with:

At these times one should remain unshakeable like a tree, while being self-supporting with the antidotes

With respect to *at these times*, it is said that whenever one finds oneself engaging in one of these eight activities, then, in order to counteract them, one should remain firm and stable like a tree, *while applying the self-supporting antidotes*. Then one will not be influenced by these negative tendencies, and one will be able to remain steadfast.

1.3.1.2.1.3.2.3. What to do at the time of praise and so forth

The verse relating to this heading is:

51. *When wishing for gain, honour and fame
Wishing for servants and entourage,
If one's mind wishes for service,
At these times remain like a tree.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

- When wishing for gain of wealth and so forth.
- When seeking the honour for others to put down one's mat and so forth.
- Wishing for a good reputation.
- Wishing to acquire servants and entourage.
- If one's mind wishes for service such as treatments for the body and so forth.

Also at these times one should remain like a tree, while having the power of the antidote.

This is a clear presentation of what to do about wishes such as wanting material *gain* such as *wealth and so forth*. The Tibetan word *kurte* can read as either honour or service, indicated here with the example of *others putting down one's mat and so forth*. One might also wish *for a good reputation* so that others talk well about one and so forth, or *to acquire servants and entourage*.

Wishing for service such as treatments for the body and so forth includes massages and so forth. The advice here is to avoid seeking such treatments merely out of attachment. The *Vinaya* text indicates that with some physical ailments it is necessary to apply oil to the body and to massage it in order to restore one's vitality, in which case it is permissible and accepted. This advice also needs to be understood in its proper context.

We need to take this as practical advice. If one completely immerses oneself in wishing for gain or wealth, seeking honour and a good reputation and so forth, then one's whole life can be preoccupied with trying to achieve this. We can spend a whole lifetime being completely immersed just thinking about how to gain these things. We may not actually put much effort into really doing anything practical to achieve our wishes, but we just go around thinking about it over and over again. That sort of daydreaming can be a distraction that wastes your life. So the advice here is to *remain like a tree*, referring back to the earlier analogy of an unshakeable tree, *while having the power of the antidote*.

1.3.1.2.1.3.2.4. What to do when one thinks about the welfare of others

The verse relating to this is:

52. *When casting aside the welfare of others,
And desiring one's selfish aims,
And having a mind wishing to speak,
At these times remain like a tree.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

When one considers the welfare of self and others, ...

This refers to the bodhisattva training, the aspiration to benefit others. Having made that aspiration,

... if one casts aside the welfare of others, wishes to work only for one's own welfare, and has a mind wishing to speak, such a person should remain like a tree.

If one casts aside the welfare of others, and wishes to work only for one's own welfare, at that time if one has a mind wishing to speak, then it is better not to speak or act. Such a person should remain like a tree.

When someone who is committed to working for the welfare of others actually casts aside the welfare of others then that is, without doubt, a grave fault. While that aspiration to benefit others remains in one's mind, if the wish to work only for one's own welfare occurs, then whatever one says will be tainted with a desire to gain something for oneself. Thus, whatever words one utters will not have the effect of benefitting others. Therefore the advice here is that when one has selfish motives, or is thinking about only one's own welfare, then it is better not to speak and remain like a tree.

From the perspective of an ordinary person, the normal way of thinking is to cast aside the welfare of others and think only about one's own welfare. So this is what one needs to avoid. If we really think about how we normally conduct ourselves, and do a thorough self-evaluation of how we normally think, it will become quite apparent that we neglect others by default, because we think only about our own achievements and accomplishments. This is only apparent when we actually stop to think about it. This is how we begin to transform ourselves, noticing how our normal habituated mind thinks. Understanding that leaves room for real transformation, and then we can actually change.

1.3.1.2.1.3.2.5. What to do when one wishes to generate belligerence or despondency

The verse relating to that is as follows:

53. *When being impatient, lazy and afraid,
Likewise, when stubbornness, incoherence
And a partisan attitude arise,
At these times remain like a tree.*

This section relates counteracting belligerence and despondency when they occur.

The commentary reads:

- When being impatient due to belligerence or suffering;
- When being afraid of practising virtue and so forth, due to laziness that is not joyful about virtue;
- When one is stubborn because of being unrestrained or incoherent;
- When the mind favours one's own side, friends and so forth.

At these times one should remain like a tree while practising the antidote.

In Tibetan the words for anger and belligerence are similar. As presented previously, belligerence is one of the secondary mental factors. As you will recall, there is a difference between anger and belligerence. Anger is one of the root afflictions, while belligerence is listed as a proximate or secondary affliction. When anger targeted towards a living being becomes more intense, it then turns into belligerence. So belligerence is a more intense form of anger.

The object of belligerence, as presented previously, is an animate object, not inanimate objects, whereas anger can be focussed on any object. There are the three types of objects of anger: suffering, sentient beings and inanimate objects. You can generate anger towards all three objects, whereas belligerence is targeted only towards living beings.

Thus the first situation is *being impatient due to belligerence or suffering*.

Next is *being afraid of practising virtue and so forth due to laziness that is not joyful about virtue*. When the mind is in a heightened state, one is more prone to feeling belligerent. When the mind is feeling despondent then that is when laziness occurs. Therefore, as presented here in the commentary, *being impatient due to belligerence or suffering*, and *being afraid of practising virtue and so forth due to laziness that is not joyful about virtue* are at the opposite ends of the spectrum. At one end, if one's mind is feeling very heightened, then it is more likely that belligerence will arise, and at the other, laziness can occur when the mind is feeling despondent.

In relation to feeling despondent with a sense of, 'I can't do it, I can't manage', on a recent visit to the Drolkar centre, Carol came up to me and conveyed, 'I don't really have a strong inclination to go to the Kalachakra. I feel hesitant to taking a lot of commitments. If I am not able to observe them, then that will be a cause for me to go to the lower realms and I wouldn't wish that for myself. I would rather stay here with you Geshe Doga and be on a safer plain'. She was teary when she relayed that to me.

However she had already organised to travel with Geshe Sonam, who was encouraging her to go. Of course I wouldn't stop Carol from going—after all, she had decided to go anyway. Therefore I encouraged her to go and receive the blessing 'and take on as much as you can do'. However, her intention of taking the commitments seriously was a good sign.

Carol was expressing her hesitation even in taking the lay-person's vows, saying that 'I might not be able to keep them'. Of course, the way to take vows is to first establish the basis by taking the self-liberation vows. Then based on that, one can take the bodhisattva vows and later the tantric vows. That is the sequence of how one takes these vows.

The next situation is *when one is stubborn because of being unrestrained or incoherent*. The Tibetan term *chetol* has the connotation of someone who is not able to really think things out clearly, and just does things randomly. It is used to refer to someone who doesn't really have many values, and who does anything they want. Even in the everyday world such a person would not be considered as reliable or trustworthy, because they just do whatever they want. Incoherence refers to the lack of a relationship between what is said earlier and what is said later.

The final example is *when the mind favours one's own side, friends and so forth*, which means to favour taking the side of one's friends and colleagues and so forth, and abandoning all others.

In summary, the commentary states:

At these times one should remain like a tree, while practising the antidote.

1.3.1.2.1.2.4. Summary

The verse relating to the summary reads as follows:

54. *Having thus analysed the strong afflictions
And the mind striving in meaninglessness,
The brave person will then guard
The mind steadfastly with antidotes.*

Here Gyaltsab Je explains:

Thus, having investigated the mind that strives in the afflictions and meaninglessness, one should not allow this mind to engage in negative actions with the antidote that is like a powerful hero, but keep it steady.

Having presented all of the conditions where one needs to practice applying the antidotes appropriately, and having investigated the mind that wishes to engage in the afflictions and meaningless activities, *one should not allow this mind to engage in negative actions with the antidote that is like a powerful hero*. Here, the antidote is likened to a very powerful person, who is not easily overcome by foes and so forth. One applies powerful antidotes against the delusions or afflictions and thus *keeps it steady*.

This summary verse encapsulates all of the earlier points about afflictions, and summarises how to actually apply the antidotes.

At the conclusion of our regular prayers, we can do the *Eight Verses of Mind Training* which we also did last week. Mary-Lou's father passed away yesterday, so we can dedicate the practice for her late dad.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བལྟགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

22 July 2014

Based on the refuge and bodhicitta we have generated as a motivation for the practice we can now engage in the meditation.

[meditation]

We can set the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: for the purpose of benefiting all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will engage in this teaching and put it into practice well.

At this point please remember the verses we covered in our last session. Recall how meticulously that advice was presented and how really applicable it is to our daily situation. It is very important to keep that essential meaning in mind.

1.3.1.2.2. Protecting the training of the mind from degeneration

This is subdivided into three:

1.3.1.2.2.1. Protecting with the individual antidotes

1.3.1.2.2.2. The common antidote

1.3.1.2.2.3. The way of training in meditating on the antidote

1.3.1.2.2.1. Protecting with the individual antidotes

The verse reads as follows:

55. *Strong ascertainment and strong faith
Stability, respect and politeness,
Knowing shame and having fear,
Peaceful and striving to please others.*

There are two verses under this heading. Gyaltsab Je's commentary addresses verse 55 first. It reads:

If one were to ask 'how does one protect the mind'? Strongly ascertain the points of advice by abandoning doubt and wrong consciousnesses with regards to them; generate strong faith through belief in the Three Jewels and the points of advice, faith and aspiration; stable intent and practice; being polite by being respectful and humble with everybody; shame that is fearful of negativity by reason of oneself; being afraid of the ripened result by contemplating the shortcomings; having pacified senses and striving for the purpose of making others happy.

The five senses are normally engaged in objects of distraction, so to protect the mind is to protect it from being completely drawn into the objects of distraction through the five senses. Take note of the distinction between protection and restraint. The very term 'protection' infers that in the likelihood of the mind becoming distracted, it should withdraw from the object of distraction (withdrawal implying protection of the mind). However 'restraint', suggests not allowing the mind to become distracted with the objects of distraction from the very beginning.

The emphasis here is to protect the training of the mind from degeneration. If one does not protect the mind it is likely that degeneration from one's training or practices would occur. The heading of the verse is explicit here: 'Protecting with individual antidotes'. In relation to the degeneration

that occurs in the mind, the cause is distraction through the five senses. Primarily we need to be cautious of our eye sense, mental sense, the mind itself which generates thoughts, and the ear sense. As you can notice, these cause most distractions.

Our thoughts present distraction on a more continuous basis as the object of our mental faculty. One must be cautious and protect the mental faculty from engaging in distracting, discursive thoughts, because they can occur randomly at any time. The next main distraction comes through our eye sense, and because there are so many external objects, we naturally become influenced by them. Likewise we hear a lot of things through our ear sense, and are very easily influenced by them, and thus become distracted.

Indeed when the eye sense comes into contact with beautiful objects it causes the mind of attachment to arise. Conversely, when it comes into contact with unappealing visual objects, anger arises. Likewise jealousy can arise when we see with our eyes the prosperity and good things others have. It is similar with objects of the ear sense; when we hear praise etc. this easily provides the means for attachment and ego to arise. However when we hear unpleasant things, these can immediately cause distress, agitation and anger to arise in our mind. So we do know from experience that a lot of our emotions, particularly the delusions in our mind, are very much influenced by the objects we encounter through our senses.

Again, protection here means being able to withdraw our mind from our engagement with objects as soon as we notice distraction occurs. Protection is really important for us because we are easily influenced by our senses. Our eye sense sees a beautiful object and then grasping starts to develop. It is this grasping at beautiful objects that causes attachment to increase in our mind. That in turn can cause the sense of wanting to own or to possess the object, and if one is not able to possess it, distress arises in the mind due to strong grasping. As the term itself suggests, grasping is holding onto, and not being able to let go of certain objects, whether they be objects of attachment or objects of anger. When we come into contact with certain objects we immediately grasp onto them and don't let go, which causes the delusions in our mind to become intense and strong.

Whether it is our eye sense or other senses that come into contact with objects of distraction, if we protect our mind by not interacting with them, then the delusion and its consequences will not arise strongly and affect us in a negative way. So, we must sever the connection with that object. While this specifically applies in our meditation session, it also relates to our everyday life.

In explaining how to protect the mind the commentary says: *Strongly ascertain the points of advice.* Advice here means upholding the commitments or vows one may have taken. In relation to the practices, we need to apply the measures explained forcefully. If we do not protect our mind we will degenerate or lapse from the commitments and pledges we have taken and thus fail to engage in the advice or the practice. The commentary continues: *by abandoning doubt and wrong consciousnesses with regards to them.* This very clearly states that one needs to abandon doubt and the wrong consciousnesses which come to wrong conclusions about this advice. The way to do this is to engage in thorough investigation, gain a thorough understanding of the practices in the beginning, during the actual practice and at the end. You need to investigate and understand at all three times to remove doubts and wrong consciousnesses (leading

to mistaken understanding or conclusions) in relation to this advice.

Abandoning doubt refers to abandoning the mind that wavers in two directions. In this state one cannot confirm anything and one is unable to gain the necessary conviction.

In relation to the advice and instructions to be followed, if we have qualms about it, if we start to hesitate or become influenced by other possibilities that are maybe not valid and so forth, then as soon as this doubt arises in the mind, we are very vulnerable to giving up the practices or allowing them to degenerate. As mentioned earlier, thorough investigation needs to be employed to completely remove any doubt. This first requires hearing about the advice extensively, then we use the wisdom and understanding gained from hearing to contemplate or investigate what we have heard. Having thoroughly investigated and thought about it, we can apply the meditation, and once experience is gained from this, a firm conviction develops in the validity of the practices such that it will not degenerate.

This is how an intelligent trainee engages in the study of the practices: thorough investigation and analysis, again and again, then conviction is established. Engaging in one's practice then becomes very firm and stable. This is why the method employed by intelligent trainees is said to be the most suitable.

The commentary then explains: *generate strong faith through belief in the Three Jewels and the points of advice*. Generating strong faith in the Three Jewels indicates gaining an understanding that the Three Jewels are infallible in protecting you, thus they are suitable as your refuge and will not deceive you. The method of gaining conviction in the Three Jewels arises first from investigating the Dharma Jewel and understanding its qualities. When you develop a good understanding and see the qualities of the Dharma Jewel, you can then naturally generate admiration, faith and conviction in the one who taught it, which is the Buddha Jewel. Then having developed faith in the Buddha and Dharma Jewel, since the ones who follow these are the Sangha Jewels you naturally develop faith in them as well. This is how one generates conviction in the Three Jewels.

One needs to have *strong faith* and *aspiration* in the Three Jewels and the points of advice, and *stable intent*, which means developing a firm and stable intention toward the practices and advice. Furthermore, one needs to adopt a conduct where one is *polite by being respectful and humble with everybody*. These are all methods to protect one's training and adopt the advice.

Continuing with the commentary's explanation, the next part expands upon engaging in the practice by maintaining *shame that is fearful* (afraid of committing) *negativity by reason of oneself*. Shame was explained earlier. The commentary continues with: *being afraid of the ripened result by contemplating the shortcomings*, which refers to being afraid of the ripened results of the negativities by contemplating their shortcomings. It continues: *having pacified senses and striving for the purpose of making others happy*. A bodhisattva has intention only to benefit others, so for the purpose of benefitting others needs to engage in conduct which will inspire them, not cause them to lose faith or be critical etc. If a bodhisattva were to cause others to lose faith in the Dharma, or feel critical towards them that would cause the others to create huge negative karma. So, as a means to protect others from the negative mind of losing faith or criticising a bodhisattva, a bodhisattva needs to ensure that

they are engaging in the means and conduct of making others happy.

When others are made happy with your good conduct then there is no reason for them to criticise you, because they are happy and inspired with what you are doing, your behaviour etc. This is a very important point to take as personal instruction: when we have the means to make others happy, which we all do, why would we intentionally engage in behaviours and conduct that would make them unhappy? It would be totally inappropriate to intentionally engage in the means to make others unhappy or cause unnecessary discomfort and sorrow in their minds. This behaviour will make others unhappy with you, criticise you etc. Therefore, taking this on a personal level, we need to try to employ means for making others happy in all situations.

The next verse under this same heading:

56. *Do not be put off by the desires
Of the childish that strive with each other
And think with affection, "They have these
minds
Due to their generation of afflictions."*

Gyalsab Je's commentary reads:

Do not be put off by the contradicting desires of childish people where, having benefitted one, the other one gets angry. Have compassion for them thinking, 'this mind is generated within them due to afflictions and without them having any control over themselves. I will liberate them from their afflictions.'

In such a way do not fall under the control of the afflictions.

Again this is relevant advice for us in our daily lives as these sorts of occasions occur quite regularly. When in the commentary it explains, *do not be put off by contradicting desires of childish people where, having benefitted one, the other one gets angry*, relate it to when you take the measure of being kind to someone, then even without an intention to hurt them, the others get upset. We can see this happening readily in a circle of relatives: if you are nice to one relative then another might start feeling jealous about that and may start to complain.

In relation to beings who act childishly towards you, the advice says not to be put off by their behaviour. 'Put off' here means you should not be put off the intent of benefiting them nor generate a negative mind towards them. Instead you should have compassion towards them, thinking that *this mind is generated within them due to afflictions and without them having any control over themselves*. You can see the advice here is very true; that when certain beings are under the influence of the delusions e.g. intense anger, even one individual can create so much destruction and kill so many others out of an angry mind. We have examples right here. In Tasmania an individual killed 32 people, and in another coastal place again some other killings occurred, and many people were killed. This was done by one individual—out of his mind, the cause was being obsessed, or completely dominated by delusions such as anger. When we witness this sort of account our natural response might be to become appalled, condemn the person and become angry with them. But in fact when one thinks about what compelled them to engage in such grave negative acts, it is none other than the delusion in their own mind, mainly anger. And when one contemplates that, one sees reason to feel great compassion for them rather than condemning them, seeing how under the influence of the delusion they have no control over their own actions.

We can see too that there are certain individuals who, if they are at a trial say, 'I was given the order to kill so I had no control'. These are examples of how when one engages in negative actions such as the act of killing etc., one does not have control over oneself. Normally we would think that someone is independent and has control over whatever they want to do. If they had control they would not commit the act, but the implication of having no control over their actions is that they are compelled to do that act. Normally we would feel reason to condemn them if we thought they had control, like they had a choice and did it anyway, but the implication here is to feel compassion for them because they have no choice and control over their own actions. That is the main point.

With this understanding one should find oneself resolving to liberate them from their afflictions, rather than condemning them and becoming agitated with them. In understanding such situations, the next piece of advice says: '*In such a way do not fall under the control of the afflictions*' oneself. So when relating to others who have engaged in great misdeeds, one needs to protect oneself from the influence of the afflictions. If one doesn't protect oneself then we fall short and become agitated and angry towards the other. So therefore this is a direct instruction for oneself to be responsible for one's own state of mind.

In order to back up this explanation of how one needs to practice in such a way, the commentary presents a citation:

From the *Ornament of Mahayana Sutras*,

By thinking how they are without power due to constant faults,
Possessing the mind, do not hold it against beings.

As clearly presented in this quote, when someone is afflicted by the faults or the delusions, they don't have the power to control what they do. Thus, one should not hold their negative actions against them. It is really important to understand how every action one engages in, be it positive or negative, there is always a state of mind that compels one to engage in those actions.

The commentary then cites another text.

From the *Four Hundred Verses*:

Just as a physician is not upset with,
Someone who rages while possessed by a demon,
Subduers see disturbing emotions as the enemy,
Not the person who has them.

The verse from the *Four Hundred Verses* clearly explains with the analogy of a physician. A physician will not be upset with someone who is possessed by, for example, a demon, because when someone is possessed they might do things which a normal, rational person would not do, such as fighting back, doing wild things like hitting etc. However the physician knows they are affected by their ailments and will not be upset, rather they will be intent on treating them. Likewise the buddhas see disturbing emotions as the enemy. They do not consider the person who has anger as negative, rather it is the afflictions within them that need to be overcome. That is because it is the afflictions in the mind that cause them to engage in actions which are harmful.

As I regularly advise, when someone is really angry you should be cautious around them; they might do anything, they might hit you or hurt you because in intense moments of anger they are not able to act rationally. With the recent unfortunate circumstances of the Malaysian Airlines plane being shot down, my comment was, when the plane is in an area where rebels are carrying their weapons with an

agitated mind and angry, and just want to kill, then an accident on such a scale can occur. They would not analyse well and would see no reason to not to use their weapons to shoot anything down. This is an example of how we need to be very wary and cautions around people who are really agitated because we might get hurt ourselves. So if your partner is really upset and angry, you must be careful and cautious.

With this unfortunate event of the plane being shot down, why would the aeroplane go in that direction? Why would they take that route when it is so dangerous? Damien was looking at a map and said that it is actually the normal flight path. Even though I wasn't looking at any map, and I didn't exactly know the location, it was my assumption that the plane pathway shouldn't go that far off in the north of Europe. Apparently they are still investigating how it actually might have gone off route. The routes should be the same for Singapore Airlines and Malaysian Airlines.

Anyhow the main point is that when people are agitated and angry they will have no qualms, they will not hold back in using their weapons, and that is when disasters can occur.

1.3.1.2.2.2. The common antidote

What is being referred to here are common antidotes which could be applicable to all afflictions.

The verse reads:

57. *Objects free from the unutterable
Are for self and sentient beings.
Without ego, always protect this mind,
Like an emanation.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

The engagement in virtuous actions, which are free from forbidden and natural misdeeds, is for the purpose of oneself not degenerating and for the benefit of sentient beings. Engage in actions as if they are illusions or magical apparitions by holding them with the wisdom realising emptiness.

Thus always protect your mind without pride or exaggeration.

In *The engagement in virtuous actions which are free from forbidden and natural misdeeds*, the term used to reflect misdeeds is also translated as 'unutterable' and 'unmentionable'. We'll use 'unmentionable' as it refers to misdeeds of a certain kind where the consequences are so grave that they cannot even be mentioned by the supreme beings, let alone engaged in. We have discussed the forbidden and natural misdeeds earlier. Forbidden misdeeds specifically relates to the misdeeds laid down by decree, and natural misdeeds are negative regardless of context. So engaging in virtuous actions which are free from such misdeeds is done for the purpose of oneself, not to degenerate from that advice etc. and for the benefit of sentient beings. That being the case, the advice here is that one needs to engage in actions while remembering that they are like illusions or like magical apparitions, as a means to prevent the delusions from arising. That is how we need to view things, seeing them as not truly existent, by holding them with the realisation of emptiness, realising that they are empty of inherent existence, then that understanding will prevent strong negative minds of delusions such as anger and attachment etc. from arising. When one has an understanding of how things are not truly existent this serves as an antidote to overcome all afflictions and thus all misdeeds. In this way always protect your mind without pride or arrogance.

As explained in other texts, a being who has a realisation of emptiness during meditative equipoise will view all existence like the sky, empty like space, and when they are in a post-meditative state they will be able to see all phenomena as being like mere illusions. This is how one needs to maintain one's view of phenomena as a way of not being affected by the afflictions in the mind.

1.3.1.2.2.3. The way of training in meditating on the antidote

The verse reads:

*58. Having repeatedly contemplated one's attainment
Of supreme freedom after a long time,
Hold on to that mind
As immovable as Mount Meru.*

Think: After a great accumulation, which lasted for a long time, I have attained the precious human rebirth with freedoms and endowments. By contemplating repeatedly the great purpose and rarity of the precious human rebirth, generate the intent to definitely achieve the great purpose. Then firmly hold that mind, as immovable as Mount Meru.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary clearly explains here that having engaged in a great accumulation, incurred over a long period of time, as a result one attains a precious human rebirth with freedoms and endowments. Contemplating on the difficulty of obtaining a precious human rebirth, obtaining something which has been so difficult to obtain, repeatedly contemplating the great purpose and rarity of the precious human rebirth, one generates the intent to definitely achieve the great purpose. One needs to hold this intent firmly in the mind, as immovable as Mount Meru.

The main point of the advice is that one needs to repeatedly contemplate the precious human rebirth one has obtained. One aspect of this advice can be how we should not feel discouraged, even if it takes a long time to accumulate certain merits, the results are definitely achieved. So by relating to the good consequences we have obtained now, it can encourage us to further develop and engage in the practices to gain further good results in the future. This is how we need to maintain a mind which is free from despondency and have a courageous mind to continue with the practices and hold our mind firm and stable.

1.3.2. The way of training in the morality of accumulating virtuous dharmas

This is subdivided into two:

1.3.2.1. Abandoning attachment for the body which is the cause not to train in morality

1.3.2.2. To be skilful in practising virtue

1.3.2.1. ABANDONING ATTACHMENT FOR THE BODY WHICH IS THE CAUSE NOT TO TRAIN IN MORALITY

The meaning of morality here specifically refers to accumulating virtuous Dharma. Generally the definition of morality is the mind which employs restraint; restraint is presented as the definition of morality. However this refers mainly to restraint from a particular misdeed. In relating to this morality, accumulating virtuous Dharma, it is explained specifically in Lam Rim teachings how all virtues of a bodhisattva's conduct encompasses morality. In other words, all virtuous Dharma can be an aid to further enhancing a bodhisattva's morality. In a broader sense, all virtues engaged in by bodhisattvas are said to be morality.

The general definition of morality as the mind of restraint may be more suitable for that: for the morality of restraining from misdeeds.

Under the first subheading there are five subheadings.

We can leave this explanation for the next teaching session.

As you are aware the next session will be the discussion followed by the exam. So as usual it will be good to engage in the discussion with a proper motivation and proper conduct and also the exam as well.

And then also for the seminar which is coming up at the end of next month, you need to have a good discussion amongst yourselves as how to conduct that.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

12 August 2014

As usual we can spend some time in meditation.
[meditation]

Generate the positive motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings, and put them into practice well.

1.3.2. The way of training in the morality of accumulating virtuous dharmas

In our last session we identified what the morality of accumulating virtuous dharmas means.

This section of the text has two sub-headings:

1.3.2.1. Abandoning attachment to the body, which is the cause not to train in morality

1.3.2.2. To be skilful in practising virtue

1.3.2.1. ABANDONING ATTACHMENT TO THE BODY, WHICH IS THE CAUSE NOT TO TRAIN IN MORALITY

Here we need to understand that this refers to abandoning attachment to the body, and that it is not suggesting in any way that one should abandon caring for and looking after the body. This distinction will be explained in more detail later on.

What we need to understand here is that attachment to the body needs to be abandoned because it is a cause to prevent one from training in morality. In order to practise morality we need to overcome the obstacles that prevent us from training in morality. Here, the obstacle that needs to be overcome is attachment to the body. This text, as well as other teachings, tells us that the method for abandoning attachment to the body is to contemplate and meditate on the imperfections of the body.

First of all we need to understand how attachment to the body arises. One perceives the body as attractive or appealing, and when that perception is overlaid with attachment, it sees qualities superimposed on the body, which make it more appealing than it actually is.

We have presented this distinction many times in the past. If the question is whether there are some appealing features of the body, then of course the body does have attractive and appealing features. However the mind of attachment exaggerates those qualities and then superimposes those exaggerated qualities on the perception of the body. So the perception goes beyond the limits of the reality, and one becomes attached to the body. Hence we need to overcome the wrong perception that exaggerates the qualities of the body by focussing on its natural imperfections.

We need to reflect on the shortcomings of being attached to the body, because it can lead to a lot of unethical behaviour. Thus, being overly attached to the body

causes one to not practise morality. While this section presents the impurities of the body and how to overcome attachment, more detailed explanations will be given in the eighth chapter on concentration.

We have a very strong sense of cherishing our body due to our attachment to it, and the stronger the sense of cherishing and clinging to the body, the more likely it is that we will experience the shortcomings of this attachment. So training our mind in overcoming strong attachment to the body will reduce our clinging to and cherishing of the body, which will definitely have a significant impact on our practice, particularly at the time of death.

It is possible to experience great agony and suffering at the time of death—not so much on the physical level but mental suffering. Therefore, if we train our mind now so that we don't have strong attachment to the body, then that will really help at the time of death. Even though there might be some physical discomfort, there will definitely be less mental agony, because of our mental training and practice of reducing attachment to the body. Then one will not experience the intense sufferings of being separated from one's body.

As mentioned in the teachings, by training now to reduce strong attachment and cherishing of the body, at best one will experience great joy in discarding this body and moving on to the next existence. That of course occurs at the highest levels of this practice. But even at our level, if we can secure a mind where at least we have no regrets at the time of death, then that would be a significant achievement. These are really important points for us to consider—if we practise now we will definitely reap great results later on.

To the extent that we have trained our mind to reduce attachment to our body, then, at the time of death, fear and anxiety about having to leave the body will not be experienced. Otherwise there can be great suffering at the prospect of having to be separated from one's physical body. Through understanding the Dharma one develops the understanding that naturally the body will be discarded at the time of death, and that what continues on is the individual self, and the mind that accompanies that self or 'I'. Thus, whatever merits and virtues we have accumulated will accompany the mind and self.

Thus, as I emphasise regularly, our real protector is the positive state of mind of virtue, and it is this positive state of mind that will protect us at the time of death. So if at that time we recollect the Three Jewels, thinking about the essence of the Buddha's qualities of love, compassion, and wisdom, then there is no doubt that one will be saved from an unfortunate rebirth in the next lifetime.

We really need to contemplate and understand these essential points. The benefits of doing the *tong len* (giving and taking) practice now will also be reaped at that most crucial time. If, at the last stages of our life we experience any physical ailment or difficulties, or mental suffering at the prospect of having to discard our body, and we apply the *tong len* practice, taking in the sufferings of all beings, and giving our virtues and merits to them, then what a wonderful state of mind to be in at that time! That would be the best preparation for our transition to the next life.

As the teachings explain, at that time we leave behind everything that we are familiar with in this life. Our physical body will not protect us at that crucial time; whatever possessions we have will not be able to protect us at that time; even our relatives, close and dear ones will not be able to protect us at that time. The only thing that can help us at that time is, as explained in the teachings, Dharma practice. Therefore we need to identify the essence of the practice that will help us at that time.

This is important not just as preparation for the time of death, but the practice we engage in now will also be a great solace as we age. The best preparation for old age, as well as for the time of death, is to familiarise ourselves with these practices now.

As I regularly emphasise, if we were to boil all the teachings down to their essence, then it is love and compassion. That practice of generating love and compassion and trying to implement it in our daily lives is, as I regularly mention, our unfailing friend and companion, and our real protector. It helps to protect us in this life, it helps and protects us at the time of death, and it will help and protect us in our future lives. In all aspects of our existence—now, at the time of death, and in future lifetimes—kindness, love and compassion are our unfailing friend and protector.

We need to understand that, as the teachings mention, death can occur at any time. We have just heard the news that Robin Williams was found dead this morning. He was someone who brought a lot of laughter and joy to others by being humorous, and was really appreciated by many people. Apparently he was also a nice person too. He was not even very old, just sixty-three, but his life ended suddenly and abruptly. However he definitely had a worthwhile life because he made many people happy. He made people laugh and feel joyful, so he made a really significant contribution to the happiness of others. Even the American president seemed shocked and was struggling with words when he was giving his condolence speech. So, it would be appropriate that we repay Robin William's kindness by doing some prayers for him.

This is a reminder that age does not determine the time of death. The point here is that one cannot hold on to the body forever. Inevitably, we have to discard it. What we need to derive from the advice given here is that while we need to abandon attachment to the body, we still need to protect it and put it to good use by practicing the Dharma. This of course will be explained in more detail later on.

The presentation here is about how to contemplate the natural imperfections of the body. By following these methods of reason and logic one is able to overcome the mind of being overly attached to the body by seeing it as an overly appealing or attractive object.

There are five sub-divisions under this heading:

1.3.2.1.1. An example of why it is unsuitable to be attached to the body

1.3.2.1.2. Meditating on the impurity of the body

1.3.2.1.3. Contemplating the lack of essence of the body

1.3.2.1.4. The reason why it is unsuitable to be attached to the body

1.3.2.1.5. Because the body disintegrates quickly it is suitable to practise virtue

1.3.2.1.1. An example of why it is unsuitable to be attached to the body

*59. Vultures, out of their attachment for flesh,
Push and pull it back and forth amongst them.
If you do not have any dislike then,
Why do you cherish it now?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

When one is dead, although the vultures push and pull the body back and forth amongst them out of attachment to it, if you mind do not generate dislike at that time, then why are you attached to your body and cherish it now? It is unsuitable to be attached.

This explanation is, of course, quite clear. However, to reflect on some of the main points, what is being explained here is that when one is dead, the body becomes food for vultures, who tear it open and pull it around. It becomes quite repulsive, so nothing remains of the body that the mind could be attached to. If that is the case, then 'why do you have strong attachment and cherish your body now?' The conclusion is that it is not suitable to be strongly attached, because the nature of the body is the same as that of a corpse. The impermanence of our body is a really significant point to contemplate.

When we really think about it, the body that we seem so attached to now will, in the end, become a repulsive corpse. Contemplating that now will help to reduce attachment to our body.

Next comes the reason for that attachment, which is presented in these two lines:

*60ab. Having claimed the body as mine
Why mind do you guard it?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Hence, why mind do you guard it, having claimed the body as mine and cherishing it, since much that is unwanted arises from attachment to the body?

As presented here, it is through our strong familiarity with the body as being 'mine' that we have a strong sense of our body as being our prized possession. Amongst all our possessions we consider our body as being the most intimate and cherished possession. We have an instinctive notion of the body as being 'mine', and with that strong attachment the strong sense of clinging to the body arises.

This point is presented in the commentary as a dialogue with one's own mind:

Why mind are you so attached to this body when so many unwanted things arise out of that attachment?

The hypothetical response as presented in the commentary is:

Because I definitely require it.

Of course this response is not unreasonable, because we are attached to our body, and when that is challenged then we might instinctively feel 'but I really do need my body'. The rejoinder to that is contained in the next two lines of verse:

*60cd. Since both of you are distinct
What is it doing for you?*

The commentary presents a very logical point in its explanation of these two lines:

Answer: Since both you and this body are distinct from each other, you will leave this body behind very quickly, and the body will also abandon you. Hence, what is it doing for you? It is unsuitable to hold it as 'mine'.

Here, further reasons as to why it is not suitable to be attached to the body are presented. The fact is that the body and oneself are not the same; at death your mind leaves the body, and when you leave the body behind, it will disintegrate.

Since you will be abandoning the body, and the body will in effect be abandoning you, then what is it doing for you? As one has to eventually discard it, the body gives no real lasting benefit. So it is unsuitable to hold the body with a very strong mind of possession, viewing it as 'mine'. So the point of impermanence is being presented once again. It is inevitable that one will have to be separated from one's body, so reduce strong attachment to the body from now on.

We need to familiarise our mind with these significant points, and incorporate them into our practice.

1.3.1.1.2. *Meditating on the impurity of the body*

A further means to overcome attachment to the body is to contemplate the natural defects of the body. This particularly relates to attachment to the bodies of others, such as when men are attached to a woman's body or a woman to a man's body. This attachment seems to arise purely by focusing on attractiveness of the body itself. One needs to bear in mind however that it is possible to see the qualities and perfections of the person while also contemplating the natural imperfections of their body, as a way to overcome attachment to that body. In most cases the attachment to a member of the opposite sex seems mostly related to the appearance of their body. Some even make comments such as 'they don't really love me, they just like my body'. This can be very true! In this case there is no real concern about the individual, just attraction to the appearance of their body.

In this context one needs to understand that while one overcomes attachment to the body by seeing its natural defects and impurities, that does not in any way undermine seeing the person themselves as being warm-hearted and appealing, and feeling love and compassion for them. So here the training is to reduce attachment to the body, whilst still cherishing the person. This is important to understand.

As I regularly relate, when two people come together and wish to live together, their initial reason may well be out of attachment. In fact, it is attachment that causes the initial attraction to one another and then a feeling of fondness for each other develops. Having decided to live together in a committed relationship, if they start to practise genuine love and compassion for each other, then this is the key to a genuine relationship.

Even in the event that attachment for each other ceases or differences in opinions arise, and a couple consider to live separately, if genuine love and compassion was practised mutually, then a good relationship can still be maintained. While the intimate physical relationship

ceases, they can still have a mutual fondness for each other. In fact, some have confided in me that their relationship had improved after separation took place and they were better friends.

As lay Dharma practitioners, you really need to take this important point into consideration. When you have a relationship with another you really need to go beyond mutual attraction and attachment, and develop a genuine sense of love and compassion for each other. That will then be a significant relationship.

These are really important points that you need to take into consideration. As many of you are in committed relationships it is really important to have a genuine harmonious relationship with your partners. If, as mentioned previously, one takes initiative to really base the relationship on genuine concern, love and compassion for each other, then that will definitely contribute to less arguments, and fewer reasons to become angry and upset with one another. The fewer the occasions of anger, the more it helps to protect the virtue in one's mind. A relationship maintained with a virtuous frame of mind, where one does not have to become angry, argue, bicker and so forth, will be a worthwhile relationship.

[Geshe Doga says in English, 'If I'm happy, with love and kindness, then angry less and argue less. Together less angry, then more happy! More angry, more arguments, then lose all happiness'.]

Gyaltsab Je begins his commentary on this section with a hypothetical argument:

Argument: It is unsuitable to give it up because I have held it to me as 'mine' for a long time.

The argument is that it is unsuitable to give the body up because it has been 'mine' for a long time. This is another significant point. Because we have had this body for as long as we remember, it is our prized possession. So giving up our body seems to be quite unthinkable. It's hard to even contemplate that one can give up attachment to the body.

61. *Deluded mind, why do you
Not grasp at the clean form of wood?
This machine that is an accumulation of filth,
These bones, to guard this now, how is it
appropriate?*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

Answer: If you, the deluded mind that holds that which lacks a self as having a self, holds the impure as 'mine' then why do you not hold a clean piece of wood as 'I' as well?

Instead you guard this machine, which is an accumulation of filth and bones. How can this be suitable?

It is unsuitable to be attached.

The point here is that it is a *deluded mind that holds something that lacks a self as having a self*. Similarly, it is also a deluded mind that holds something as pure when in fact it is impure. So if the mind were to hold something that is impure by nature as pure or clean, *then why do you not hold a clean piece of wood as 'I' as well?* This is the significant point being made here.

Then as further explained, *instead you guard this machine of the body, which is an accumulation of filth and bones. How can this be suitable?* This implies that it is not suitable.

Our bodies are, in effect, like a machine that produces filth. We can understand this when we think about the clean substances going in, and how what comes out is foul, putrid, and rotten. As this is the natural condition of the body, how can we consider it as being pure? Therefore it is not suitable to be attached to it.

1.3.1.1.3. *Contemplating the lack of essence of the body*

This has two sub-headings

1.3.1.1.3.1. If one separates the different parts of the body and analyses them one will not find any essence

1.3.1.1.3.2. It is unsuitable to be attached to that without essence.

What we need to derive from this explanation is that it is a logical presentation of the way to contemplate the natural defects and imperfections of the body. Rather than giving a general instruction to meditate on the impurities of the body, the instruction is to analyse the natural circumstances of the body. Then through that analysis one comes to understand and accept that the body is indeed impure. By meditating on the natural defects and imperfections of the body in this way one will be able to implement it into one's practice.

1.3.1.1.3.1. *If one separates the different parts of the body and analyses them one will not find any essence*

Here essence refers to the essence of purity. The relevant verse is:

62. *First peel off this sheath of skin
With your awareness.
Then also separate the flesh from the grid of
bones
And place it apart with the scalpel of wisdom.*

Gyaltsab Je's explanation of the meaning of this verse is:

First of all, if you mentally peel off this sheath of skin from the rest of the body, then it does not have any essence. Then remove the flesh from the grid of bones with the scalpel of wisdom, and analyse whether there is any essence.

This is another very logical and systematic presentation of the way of looking into the body. Where is its essence?

What is being suggested is that the analysis begins with first peeling off the skin that covers the body and then looking at what is beneath that. In most cases attachment arises through being attracted to a beautiful face, in which case you would start the analysis by removing the skin from the face, and then look beyond that.

The way to investigate the essence of an appealing nature is to begin with the attraction to the skin, which is indeed what you are looking at when you are attracted to the body. However the skin is of course not the body. So when one goes beyond the skin one looks at the flesh. If one feels there might be some essence beyond that, one goes further and takes the flesh away, leaving the grid of the bones. Then, when one goes further into the bones, there is marrow.

This analysis is done with the scalpel of wisdom. Just as a scalpel is able to dissect these layers of the body, one uses the wisdom of analysis like a scalpel to look through

these layers to find whether there is any essence. Then one will find that there is no essence at all.

The next verse shows how to further analyse with the scalpel of wisdom. It reads:

63. *Then divide the bones as well
And scan all the way down to your feet.
Analyse and ask yourself,
'Where is the essence in this?'*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Then divide up the bones as well, scan all the parts down to your feet and ask yourself, 'Where is there the essence that could bear analysis?'

Analyse like this with your own wisdom. There is not the slightest essence that can be relied upon.

This second verse is also quite clear. Even when the bones have been divided and one looks into the inner parts of the body from the feet upwards then one asks *where is the essence that could bear the analysis?*, which implies that there is no real essence to be found. So as the commentary says *analyse like this with your own wisdom. There is not the slightest essence that can be found and relied upon.*

This meditation is a means to contemplate the natural impurities and defects of the body. The fundamentally unclean nature of the body will help one to reduce attachment to one's own body. And, when one applies this to others who appear attractive and thus an object of attachment, this is a way to reduce attachment to the bodies of others as well. So it is more practical to train our mind by first looking into our own body and accept its natural defects, and then we will understand that it's the same with the bodies of others. If one trains the mind in this way, it will definitely help to reduce strong attachment.

These verses present an analysis that can be used to look for the essence of the body, leading to the conclusion that there is no essence to be found.

1.3.1.1.3.2. *It is unsuitable to be attached to that without essence*

The verse relating to this reads:

64. *If, even when looking with effort
You cannot find any essence in this,
Then why do you persist
In guarding this body with attachment?*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

If, even when looking for any essence with effort, you mind, do not see any essence, then for what reason do you mind, continue to guard this body due to being attached to it and grasping at it?

This excessive grasping is unsuitable.

This reflects on the fact that if one has not given up the object of attachment from the depth of one's heart, then attachment will continue to exist despite employing these methods of analysis. Having a theoretical understanding that, 'Yes, it is obvious that the nature of the body is impure', is not enough if one does not actually give up attachment to the body. Even with that analysis and understanding, one could still be holding on to the object of attachment. That is because deep inside, one still holds the object of attachment and sees it as appealing and having essence.

These points are quite clear.

1.3.2.1.4. The reason why it is unsuitable to be attached to the body

Again, this heading begins with a hypothetical argument.

Argument: However, if you say that it is suitable to be slightly attached to this body?

One may question, 'Is it OK to have a little bit of attachment to the body?' So as a way to overcome this doubt the next one and a half verses say:

*65. You are unable to eat filth
As well as unable to drink blood,
And unable to suck the innards.
What is the body doing for you?*

*66ab. At second best, it is suitable to be guarded
As food for foxes and vultures.*

The commentary to these lines reads:

Answer: It is unsuitable to be attached to the body because the body is an impure aggregate. You cannot eat the impure substances of the body and you can also not drink the blood. Likewise you cannot suck the innards, so what action is the body doing for you that is of use? If you were to protect it then at second best the body is only suitable to be guarded as food for foxes and vultures.

As the commentary explains, *it is unsuitable to be attached to the body because it is an impure aggregate*. Further reasons for the body's impurity are that we do not have any use of this body for ourselves: we cannot consume our own body to nourish ourselves; we cannot drink our blood; and we cannot suck our innards. So what real benefit does the body give us?

As one would not consider consuming one's own body, the only other good reason to protect it would be that the body is suitable as food for foxes and vultures. This means that if our body can help other beings such as foxes, vultures and so forth, then it might be worthwhile to protect it. Otherwise it has no personal benefit.

A significant point being made here is, while it is inappropriate to protect one's body merely out of attachment to it, if it can be used for the benefit of others then it is worthwhile to protect the body.

We conclude here for the evening. Let us recite the *Eight Verses of Mind Training*, and dedicate it to the late Robin Williams. I have seen some of his shows which were very funny; they made me laugh and laugh. Some people have that natural gift of being amusing and funny just by the virtue of being seen. Whatever the circumstances of his death, it is sad to lose a person who has benefited others. So it is appropriate that we dedicate some prayers for him.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

19 August 2014

If, prior to taking refuge, you generate the following motivation, 'in order to liberate all beings from all sufferings and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness I need to achieve enlightenment myself, so for this purpose I take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha', this then becomes what is called 'special refuge'.

When we add to this special refuge the intention to achieve enlightenment quickly, very quickly, then it becomes what is called a 'special bodhicitta' intention.

I convey this to you now so that when you come across practices where it indicates taking special refuge and generating special bodhicitta, you will know what it means.

So, based on the refuge and bodhicitta motivation we generated earlier, along with this profound understanding, we can now engage in the practice of meditation.

[meditation]

We can now generate the following motivation for receiving the teachings: In order to free all sentient beings from all sufferings and lead to them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So, for this purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

The very meditation practice that we engaged in earlier is a practice to further enhance and develop the love and compassion within ourselves. If we were to really take the initiative to put this into practice rather than leave it as a mere wish, and really develop practising love and compassion within ourselves, the benefit would be unimaginable. It is incredible benefit for oneself as well as for others. There is only a positive result to be gained from developing love and compassion in one's heart.

You might find it hard to detect how extending love and compassion to all living beings actually directly benefits them or yourself. The positive effects take place over a long period of time, so the benefits are experienced more in an indirect way. However we can relate to the more direct experiences with our immediate relations, who we deal with on a daily basis. If one has really taken the initiative to cultivate genuine love and compassion, then due to familiarity with the practice, and the positive impact it has on one's mind, it will definitely contribute to less agitation and less anger—particularly with our close relationships.

In relation to close relationships we have now, or from the past, we are easily affected by what they say and what they do. As such, anger can arise if we have not taken the initiative to develop a genuine sense of love and compassion towards them. The way to develop love and compassion towards them is to really understand that

when they express inappropriate gestures or words etc. it is because they are influenced by the delusions, and thus affected by a troubled state of mind. When one understands that they don't have control over what they are saying and doing, and that their mind is completely confused (which is why they are expressing inappropriate gestures and so forth), one doesn't take it too personally. Instead one can feel a sense of love and compassion towards them.

We can notice that when inappropriate gestures are laid upon oneself, or *vice versa*, it is because of the fact that we have a close relationship with the other, now or from the past. It would be quite unlikely that we would express our feelings openly, especially feelings of agitation etc., to strangers. If we were to approach strangers and start relating what we have on our mind, we might even get punched and start a fight. So we usually express what's on our mind to those with whom we are closest, which at times may be agitation and unease, and this can create discomfort between oneself and the other.

Knowing that it is because we have a close relationship with the other, it is most appropriate that one generates genuine understanding based on a sense of love and compassion. If one practises in this way then it becomes a supreme method to transform agitation and anger into love and compassion. If one takes the initiative to practise love and compassion then, if the other was to utter inappropriate words or make inappropriate gestures, one would not take it personally and it would be able to express even more understanding and concern for them. This is how their negative attitudes or gestures can be transformed into something more positive due to the love and compassion in our heart.

As we know from the Buddha's life story, when the Buddha was in the indestructible concentrated state of meditation, and evil forces such as demons attempted to harm the Buddha out of jealousy, their arrows and spears transformed into flowers. The deep concentration and love and compassion in the Buddha's heart overpowered the destructive weapons, and transformed them into something beautiful. We need to understand the significance of the Buddha's great feats, and be encouraged to practise similarly oneself.

When we really take the initiative to practise in this way, with the understanding that inappropriate gestures and words are due to the negative emotions or delusions in the other's mind, one should not take it personally but rather think of the other as an object of compassion, because of the afflictions in their mind. When we practise in this way, what would otherwise be a very uncomfortable situation can be transformed into something more meaningful, and becomes a means to enhance our love and compassion towards them. So turning unwanted things, such as difficulties and problems into the path means precisely this practice. Otherwise what other practice would there be? Beginning with the hardships and unwanted things we experience now, we can learn to transform anger into love and compassion. This is the practice: in a situation where one would have otherwise reacted out of anger, one feels love and compassion instead. Doing that shows how our mind has been transformed.

We need to understand that this is the very foundation of the mind training teachings. The main emphasis here is turning unwanted situations, difficulties and problems into the path. So we need to understand that.

It is as presented in this verse from the *Guru Puja* practice:

Should even the environment and the beings therein
Be filled with the fruits of their negative actions
And unwished-for sufferings pour down on me like
rain,
I seek your blessings to take these miserable
conditions as a path
By seeing them as causes to exhaust the results of my
negative karma.

So when one next recites these lines from *the Guru Puja*, it is good to reflect on the meaning.

1.3.2.1.5. Because the body disintegrates quickly it is suitable to practise virtue

From the heading itself we can derive a sense of the profound advice being presented here. Since death is inevitable, and our body disintegrates and nothing is left behind, then while we have this body, it is suitable to employ it in order to accumulate virtue as much as possible.

The practice here is to contemplate the certainty of death. The time of death is uncertain, and that time our body can't help us, as it will be destroyed. The Lam Rim teachings explain in detail that when death occurs none of the things we cherish now can protect us, e.g. our body, our possessions and relatives. None of that can help us at that time. So if we can really contemplate on death and impermanence, and take it to heart, then the practical benefit will be that our attachment to our body, possessions and relatives will reduce to the point of having no attachment to them at all. If one has not even the slightest attachment to these cherished objects, then this will be a cause for so much relief and ease in our mind—not only at the time of death but even in our daily lives now. If we don't take the initiative to let go of the attachment to our body, possessions and relatives, then this can cause a lot of mental agony. When one has strong attachment to close and dear ones in particular, and if they let go of us first, prior to us having trained our own mind to let go of the attachment to them, then that will cause so much agony in one's mind. So to prevent a painful situation like this from happening, you need to take the initiative to train your mind to let go of attachment to these objects. Then you will have great solace.

Most of you would have the experience of being abandoned at one time or another by someone who is close and dear to you. If you can recall the pain and hurt you felt at that time this will be a good impetus to practice the Dharma.

Apparently psychologists have stated that one of the greatest sufferings someone can undergo is the suffering of being abandoned by loved ones. This suffering can be so great that someone who is experiencing that kind of hurt would even consider taking their own life, because they are not able to bear it. Many of you might already be familiar with psychology, and may have heard those explanations. I would say that it is definitely true. The

suffering of being abandoned and unloved is a great suffering. So if situations like this were to occur, then the best way to avoid experiencing the sufferings is to train our mind now to let go of the attachment to others. It is in this way that we can see how we can derive practical benefit from these practices: letting go of the attachment to these objects and possessions (particularly other beings) will be of benefit even in this very life.

The point of this subheading is that the body disintegrates quickly and death occurs quickly. Reflecting on the inevitability of death is something which really becomes a strong impetus for one's practice of Dharma. As the teachings and some of the great masters have mentioned, we need to practise to the extent that we generate fear of death now as a way to prevent fear of death at the actual time of death. In other words, cultivating a fear of death now can become the impetus for us to practise the Dharma in a way that actively prepares us for the actual time of death. When there is no fear at that time then there is no hesitation in our mind, and we will be able to joyfully or peacefully go on to the next existence. The fact and reality is that none of us will survive forever—death will definitely occur. The longest one could possibly hope to live for would be 120. Apparently in the past some have lived up to 140. I am not sure of this, but no-one could live much longer than that.

We might aspire to live up to 100, but even that is not a very long time. In terms of the number of years we live, no matter whatever significant older age we might hope to live for, the reality is that the years go by very quickly. In relation to my own experience, it doesn't seem long since I arrived in Australia. When I look back, the time seems to have gone quite quickly, but it is over 30 years. As a reminder of that, someone came to a Geelong teaching last month and showed me pictures saying 'Remember this picture?' It was a picture of this individual taken with me 30 years ago. He told me that the photo was taken in his kitchen, and he has it with him all the time. When he showed the picture, I actually couldn't even recognise the person right away, and that was a reminder of how much time has passed since then.

He had lived in Japan for many years and that is why he was not around here. Apparently he had come to His Holiness' event last year at the Quang Minh temple and he said that he noticed me from a distance, and immediately remembered 'Oh, that is Geshe Doga'. He said he could recognize me right away from a distance.

Referring back to the point about generating fear of death as an impetus to practise the Dharma, if we can really improve our Dharma practice so that we are prepared for the time of death, then this will be of great benefit at the inevitable time of death. In the number of years that I have associated with others here, there have been a few examples of individuals who have faced death with great ease and peace of mind. So there is real significance in this point that we need to pay attention to.

Under this heading *Because the body disintegrates quickly it is suitable to practise virtue* there are four subheadings.

1.3.2.1.5.1. A body that will soon be destroyed by death is suitable to be ordered to practise virtue

1.3.2.1.5.2. An example of how it is inappropriate to do nothing and procrastinate due to grasping

1.3.2.1.5.3. Having given a wage one should get what one wants

1.3.2.1.5.4. It is appropriate to work for sentient beings by adapting the recognition of a boat

1.3.2.1.5.1. A body that will soon be destroyed by death is suitable to be ordered to practise virtue

The verse reads:

*66cd. This human body
Is only to be used.*

*67. Even if you protect it,
The lord of death, without any mercy,
Will take it away and give it to the birds and
dogs.
At that time what can you do?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of the verse.

There is no real purpose of the body from the point of view of its nature. This human body that is intact with its freedoms and endowments is only suitable to be put to work to accumulate virtuous karma.

Although you protect it without achieving this purpose, the merciless lord of death will take it from you and, having separated it from life, will offer it to the birds and dogs. Mind, at such a time what will you do, as you do not have the slightest power to prevent that separation.

The main point the commentary expresses is that there is no real purpose for the body from the point of view of its nature. Its actual composition is a contaminated aggregate so there is no real, substantial pure nature. However the human bodies that we have obtained are intact with the freedoms and endowments, enabling one to pursue the Dharma. Only this kind of body is suitable to put to work to accumulate virtuous karma. This is the only purpose of having obtained a precious human body.

Verse 67 explains that if we were to try to protect our body, without trying to achieve a virtuous purpose, the reality is that the Lord of Death, (which is a mythological being used as a euphemism for death) is merciless and will separate our consciousness from our body. One has to experience death, and once our bodies are separated from this life, it will be offered to the birds and dogs. The point is that our bodies will naturally decompose and be of no use for oneself. So, if we don't reflect on this now, then at the time of death we won't have the power to do anything.

We put great measures into protecting our body by feeding and clothing it etc. If the body didn't age, decay and eventually disintegrate, then perhaps there would be some point to protect it in such a way. However the reality is that our body naturally starts to decay no matter how much we protect it. It will gradually fail us and eventually completely disintegrate, and we will have to separate from it. Taking this natural decay of our body into account, putting in all that time and energy just to protect it, without using it for any great purpose, would be meaningless.

The personal instruction to derive here is to contemplate the inevitability of death and really take the initiative to engage in a greater purpose. The mind, or the individual

self will go on, while the body will be left behind at the time of death. This is something that will definitely occur and trying to ignore it will not prevent it. It is better to acknowledge it and actually prepare for the time when it occurs by practising to the best of our ability. Then, when the actual event takes place, it will definitely lessen unnecessary anxiety and fears and benefit us at that time.

1.3.2.1.5.2. An example of how it is inappropriate to do nothing and procrastinate due to grasping

It is natural that we experience birth, aging, sickness and death. This is part and parcel of our existence. Ignoring this and not acknowledging it will not prevent it from happening. The very fact that we are born means that we have to experience death. This is part of our natural existence of suffering.

We can derive the meaning from the heading itself: *An example of how it is inappropriate to do nothing and to procrastinate due to grasping.* Doing nothing here refers to doing nothing to practice the Dharma, not doing nothing in general. This can be misunderstood if people think 'I am not just doing nothing and sitting around, I am actually very busy, I have a job and so forth, so I am really busy – this advice does not apply to me'. So to clarify, here, doing nothing means doing nothing to generate the causes for one's liberation and enlightenment, or more immediately, doing nothing to prepare for our future life. At the very least, Dharma practice involves practices to prepare oneself for one's next life. If we don't engage in any practice towards achieving the goals of our future lives, ultimately liberation and full enlightenment, then this would be referred to as doing nothing from the Dharma point of view, and this is inappropriate.

The verse reads:

*68. You would not give cloth and so forth
To servants that cannot be ordered around.
Hence, if this body leaves you despite your care,
Why do you build up your flesh to make it firm?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary quite clearly explains the meaning of this verse.

If in the world, for example, slaves and entourage are not able to do the work or if they do not serve food, clothing and so forth to their master, then they are punished.

As this body will leave you, without your control, despite having nourished and cared for it with effort, then why do you build up its flesh to make it firm?

It is unsuitable.

The example presented here refers back to ancient times when great kings or masters had slaves and an entourage of people (for example a king would have an entourage of ministers and so forth). If slaves who worked for the lords were not actually able to do the work, such as serving food or making clothing etc., then they would be punished or even expelled. Similarly if the ministers didn't do the work required of them, they could be punished or even expelled from their position. Even these days we can see people fired from their jobs if they don't work properly, so we can relate to this example.

The commentary further explains that: *as this body will leave you, without your control, despite having nourished and*

cared for it with effort, then why do you build up its flesh to make it firm?, implying this is unsuitable. What is being explained here again reflects the reality that we have to discard this body. No matter how much we nourish it and care for it, it will have to be discarded and left behind. With no intention to achieve a greater purpose with this body, merely eating and consuming as a way of protecting its flesh is futile and of no real benefit. The personal instruction here is that while we do need to protect our body by consuming, eating, clothing it, drinking and finding shelter for it etc., we should do it with the intention that the very purpose of feeding and clothing our bodies etc. is so that we can engage in the practice of the Dharma to benefit other sentient beings. With a sense of love and compassion in one's heart, one can perform the numerous normal daily activities as a practice of Dharma, by remembering to make appropriate offerings each time one eats or drinks. After that one should generate the mind that thinks, 'May consuming this now become a means to nourish my body so that I can use it to engage in Dharma practices to benefit other sentient beings'.

With this intention in our mind, our normal activities of drinking and eating become a great means to accumulate merit to further enhance love and compassion. In this way you can see that by just changing one's attitude towards normal activities, it can turn them into a great practice. These are the instructions for those who really want to take the initiative to try and engage in the practice of Dharma. Make it part of your life: turn whatever you do into a Dharma practice. This instruction is very, very valuable. I personally definitely try to remind myself of this point each time I drink and eat. I don't eat mindlessly, I try and use it for this purpose.

If we can remind ourselves of these points, then whatever activity we engage in to sustain ourselves will become an activity that acquires the conditions for the practice of Dharma. When we talk about the conditions for Dharma practice, we might think of something grand, or something which is beyond our normal activities, but if we can understand that the appropriate conditions for practising Dharma begins with a sound body, then whatever helps to nourish a healthy body definitely becomes the conditions for practising Dharma.

1.3.2.1.5.3. Having given a wage one should get what one wants

Again, using the example of work and wages, if you give a wage to someone to work for you then you expect them to do their service.

The verse reads:

*69. After giving the body its wage,
Put it to work for your purpose.
Without any return
Do not offer everything to it.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary clarifies the meaning.

Having given the body its wage of food, clothing and so forth one should put it to work now for one's purpose of creating virtuous karma. Without the slightest benefit one should not offer the body all this food, clothing and so forth, without getting any benefit in return.

The commentary explains that when we feed and clothe our body it is as if we are giving it its wage. For example, when you pay workers a wage you expect the work to be completed. Similarly, feeding one's body with food and clothing it, the body should then work for one's intended purpose—to create virtuous karma. Creating virtuous karma is in direct contrast to creating non-virtuous karma. Non-virtues of the physical body include killing, stealing and sexual misconduct, and if one used one's body to create non-virtue, then that would definitely have defeated the purpose of having such a body.

However, if one can refrain from these negative deeds and employ the body to create virtuous karma as a means to obtain a good rebirth next life, or better still, to become a cause to obtain liberation and ultimately enlightenment for the purpose of all living beings, then the benefit ranges from a temporary benefit to the ultimate benefit that one can use one's body to achieve. *Without the slightest benefit one should not offer the body all this food and clothing without getting any benefit in return* means if we were not to get anything in return, then it is meaningless to serve this body. There is another connotation here too. If, instead of benefit, one generates harm with one's body then there is no point supporting it. In this case it would be better not to feed it and give it care. A contemporary example of this may be individuals who have fed their body to the point where it becomes so obese that they can't even stand up or walk around. What benefit is the body in this situation? This is an implication that one needs to also understand.

1.3.2.1.5.4. It is appropriate to work for sentient beings by adapting the recognition of a boat

This heading presents the example of a boat as a means of ferrying passengers from one side of a river to the other. Similarly, we need to use our perfect conditions to bring ourselves from the shore of samsara across to the other shore, which is the state of liberation and ultimately enlightenment—just like the boat.

The verse reads:

*70. Regard the body as a boat
Merely for coming and going.
Transform it into a wish fulfilling body
To accomplish the welfare of sentient beings.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the concept further.

This body is here, in this life, merely as a basis for striving in virtue as it is the basis for coming and going. In such a way, view it with the recognition of it being a like boat for crossing the ocean of cyclic existence, and transform it into the precious wish-fulfilling jewel of a Buddha's body, so as to achieve the welfare of all sentient beings.

The point explained here is to regard our body as the basis for striving in virtue. We use our body to come and go, but it should be the basis for actually striving in virtue. The analogy presented here: *In such a way, view it with the recognition of it being like a boat for crossing the ocean of cyclic existence*, which uses the boat as an example. Just as a boat is used to ferry passengers from one side of a river to the other, so we should use our body to cross the ocean of samsara, from cyclic existence to the shore of enlightenment.

As the commentary highlights, by using our body like a boat to cross the ocean of cyclic existence, having crossed to the other shore of enlightenment, we need to transform our body into the precious wish-fulfilling body of a buddha's body. By engaging in the practice and having generated the altruistic mind of bodhicitta, then the practice one engages in is the six perfections. So, through the combination of the altruistic mind of bodhicitta and the actions of the six perfections, we engage in the practices on the path to reach enlightenment. Thus we need to use our body now as a means to achieve a complete transformed state, where one achieves the two bodies of a buddha: the wisdom truth body and the form body of a buddha. This becomes the means to fulfil one's aspiration to benefit all sentient beings.

1.3.2.2. TO BE SKILFUL IN PRACTISING VIRTUE

The presentations under this heading are very practical and applicable advice for our everyday life, which we really need to take on board. There are three subheadings:

1.3.2.2.1. Making ordinary actions beautiful

1.3.2.2.2. Skilfully interacting with others in a virtuous way. The literal explanation is being skilled about engaging with others as a way to be free from misdeeds.

1.3.2.2.3. Being skilful in the actions of the three doors

1.3.2.2.1. Making ordinary actions beautiful

This is subdivided into three:

1.3.2.2.1.1. How to act when meeting others

1.3.2.2.1.2. How to handle one's possessions

1.3.2.2.1.3. Always perform actions in a courteous manner

1.3.2.2.1.1. How to act when meeting others

This addresses how to act when you encounter others. It reflects on what kind of gestures to express and so forth.

The verse reads:

71. *Thus those possessing control
Should always wear a smile,
Clear away wrathful grimaces and frowns,
Be migrators' friend and be honest.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary expands upon this:

Thus one should take control of one's body and mind and always smile at others. Clear away wrathful grimaces and frowns and be a good friend to migrators. When talking be gentle and truthful.

The line from the verse which says: *Thus those possessing control*, means having control over one's body and mind, particularly one's own mind. When one encounters others one should always have a smiling face and a pleasant gesture, and refrain from wrathful grimaces, like a dark face or frowns. By taking the initiative to be a good friend to migrators, one will always be close to others and have affection towards others. Further, the advice when talking is to be gentle and truthful. The Tibetan word translated here as *gentle* has the connotation of using words which are likeable and suitable for the others to hear. How to act when meeting others is something we need to take on board and try to put into practice.

1.3.2.2.1.2. How to handle one's possessions

This relates to handling things in our area, in our room, in our surroundings. It is very practical advice about how to

take things out from somewhere and how to put them back in an appropriate way. This affects immediate neighbours or people that live next to you. The main point is that we need to be considerate and not to disturb them in any way.

The verse reads:

- 72ab. *Do not throw beds and so forth
Around noisily without consideration.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary adds:

Do not throw possessions like beds and so forth noisily around because this harms others.

While the explanation here is quite clear, the verse relates to being considerate to others who are living with you, next to you, or close by, such as neighbours,. When the commentary says *do not throw* it means do not handle possessions roughly. For example, when you are opening doors, or when you are taking things out, be considerate. One might unintentionally have no consideration, but apparently there are those who actually do things noisily, like banging the doors or taking things noisily, as a way to annoy their neighbours or roommates. If you see them also showing a dark or sullen face, these are inappropriate gestures in relation to the handling of things.

1.3.2.2.1.3. Always perform actions in a courteous manner

The third subdivision refers to always being mindful not to disturb others when engaging in any activity. This means to be considerate of others' needs and acting appropriately in any given situation.

The verse reads:

- 72cd. *Also, do not open the door roughly
And always delight in being quiet.*
73. *Water fowl, cats and thieves
Go quietly and are inconspicuous
Thus achieving their goals.
The able ones always act in such a way.*

While this is quite clear we can go into a little bit more detail in our next session. Here we need to reflect on how Shantideva is presenting really practical ways of being considerate, and how to behave appropriately in accordance with others' needs and space and time. This is very appropriate practical advice that we need to apply in our daily life.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke.

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

26 August 2014

Based on the motivation that has been generated during the recitation of the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, let us now engage in the practice of meditation.

[meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings, and put them into practice well.

1.3.2.2. BEING SKILFUL IN PRACTISING VIRTUE

1.3.2.2.1. Making ordinary actions beautiful

1.3.2.2.1.3. Always perform actions in a courteous manner (cont.)¹

73cd. *Also, do not open the door roughly
And always delight in being quiet.*

74. *Water fowl, cats and thieves
Go quietly and are inconspicuous
Thus achieving their goals.*

The able ones always act in such a way.

These lines give us examples showing how, when we engage in any kind of activities we need to be courteous and mindful of the needs and space of others. Basically, the advice comes down to how to be polite with others.

In this and the following verses, Shantideva exhorts us to practise in a manner that is courteous and pleasing to others, and which will bring them joy. I regularly emphasise the importance of being considerate to others and the need to relate to others in a proper way. We can see here that Shantideva is presenting the very points that I regularly emphasise, so I have very good support from him.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the last two lines of verse 72 in this way:

Because it harms those that are also at home, do not open doors roughly. Always delight in being quiet and in actions that make others happy.

As presented here, when you come in or leave a room be mindful about not shutting the door loudly, as it will disturb the person inside. This is particularly important when there are lamas, such as our own teachers and so forth, meditating and doing their practices. And, of course, shutting the door noisily will definitely upset ordinary people who are easily irritated. Therefore we need to be mindful about not disturbing others in this way.

When Gyaltsab Je states *Always delight in being quiet and in actions that make others happy*, he is exhorting us to have a

quiet demeanour, and to engage in actions that always make others happy.

Thus far the presentation has been on how to engage in actions out of consideration for others. Next comes a presentation of how acting in a gentle manner becomes a means to achieve one's own purpose. Gyaltsab Je gives us these examples:

Examples for achieving one's purpose with gentle actions: water fowl, cats and thieves go quietly and inconspicuously and in such a way achieve what they desire. The Able One, or otherwise the disciplined bodhisattvas always conduct themselves in this manner.

The literal translation uses the term 'water birds', referring to birds that rely on rivers and lakes to catch fish, such as storks. When they are hunting for fish they stand in the water very quietly and still so that they don't disturb the surroundings and frighten the fish. In this way they are able to catch any fish that come close to them.

Likewise when cats go about catching mice they are quietly inconspicuous and move in a very, very gentle and quiet manner. And, of course, in order to be successful, thieves have to move about quietly if they are to achieve their purpose.

Furthermore, the commentary explains, the Able One or bodhisattvas following the discipline always act in this way. When bodhisattvas engage in actions to benefit others they always do it in a very quiet, dignified manner. They are always gentle with their speech and actions, engaging with others in a very gentle and pleasing way.

This is how bodhisattvas, with their intention to benefit sentient beings, act in ways that are completely in accordance with the wishes of others, in order to please them and give them joy. By reflecting upon this, we need to be inspired to always act in the same manner. Even as an aspiration we need to generate thoughts such as, 'May I also be able to practise just like the bodhisattvas'. Thus, by appreciating the gentle ways and manners of bodhisattvas, we should aspire to be like them.

On a personal level we need to reflect upon the great significance of engaging in our everyday actions so that they don't affect others in a negative way. Of course there are times when we have a bad day, where we might act or speak in a less than courteous manner. While we might not have immediate control over our behaviour, in hindsight we can think, 'Oh, that was not proper'. Then, in order to prevent them from escalating further, we can remind ourselves, 'I have listened to Shantideva's advice from this precious text, so acting in this way is not at all appropriate for me now. As there is no benefit for me and it definitely harms others, I shall definitely overcome such behaviour'. When you remind yourself in this way, it will help to prevent negative behaviour from escalating

¹ Last week 'Achieve all in a quiet way' was used as the heading.
Chapter 5

1.3.2.2.2. *Be skilled in interacting with others, free of misdeeds*²

This refers to ensuring that, when we interact with others, we are not engaging in negative deeds. There are five sub-divisions:

1.3.2.2.2.1. How to act in relation to well-meant advice

1.3.2.2.2.2. How to act in relation to speaking the truth

1.3.2.2.2.3. How to act in relation to creating merit

1.3.2.2.2.4. How to act when the qualities of others are praised

1.3.2.2.2.5. The benefit of making others happy

Here we can see how Shantideva is presenting very practical advice relating to our normal, everyday actions. We often encounter others who offer well-meant advice with the best intentions, and we need to know how to respond to that. Likewise, when others speak the truth, we also need to know how to act in that situation. Another situation is how to react when one sees others creating merit. Then there is the situation of knowing how to act when the qualities of others are praised. This section of the text concludes with a discussion of the actual benefit of making others happy. These are very practical points of advice that we really need to take on-board and implement in our lives.

1.3.2.2.2.1 How to act in relation to well-meant advice

74. *Skilful in inducing others and,
Through placing unsought beneficial
Words respectfully on your crown
Become the student of all.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

Be skilful in inducing others to practising virtue.

Although one didn't ask for it, if someone gives well-meant unsolicited advice, one should place that advice joyfully and respectfully on one's crown. Without pride one should always become the student of all that have provided good advice.

The first point is to *be skilful in inducing others to practise virtue*. This has two elements.

- When one intends to present advice to others about accumulating virtue one should be skilled in knowing what is right and wrong. Then, based on that clear understanding, one should encourage others to practise virtue.
- The second element relates to receiving advice from others about engaging in virtue. One should have the discriminating wisdom to analyse what is correct and right, and then apply the advice according to that understanding. As the commentary clearly presents, when well-meant unsought advice is presented by others, one should take that *advice* joyfully and *respectfully place it on one's crown*. This means that when the advice is presented in accordance to the Dharma then, *without pride one should always become the student of all who have provided good advice*.

There might be situations where some may feel, 'I have much more knowledge than you. Who are you to give me that kind of advice?' Rather than accepting that advice one may be offended, thinking, with a sense of pride, 'I

know better than you'. That would be an inappropriate response to well-meant advice.

Here we are being presented with some very, very practical advice. As a matter of fact, advice may come from any of these three sources: someone who has greater knowledge than oneself, someone who one considers one's equal, or from someone normally considered to have less knowledge than oneself, such as a youngster. In any of these situations, the bodhisattva's practice is to really welcome well-meant advice, receiving it very graciously and without a sense of pride, generating the attitude of seeing all as one's teachers. Although these are specific instructions relating to receiving Dharma advice, we can also apply this to worldly affairs as well.

Normally the instruction is to really check and investigate whether the advice one receives is appropriate and whether one should accept it. This section, however, refers to well-meant advice, where the practice is to take and appreciate such advice. The implication is that one should willingly appreciate advice that is meaningful and useful and place it on top of one's crown with respect, and thus regard oneself as a student of all.

1.3.2.2.2.2. How to act in relation to speaking the truth

The first two lines from the next verse are presented here:

*75ab. Everything that is said well
Should be commented on as virtue.*

Here the commentary states:

Everything well said as the truth should be commented on as virtuous speech.

Of course the meaning of these lines and the following verses is quite clear. *Everything well said as the truth should be commented on as virtuous speech* refers particularly to all speech on the Dharma, which is of course based on truth and reality. Whenever others speak about the Dharma one should comment on that as being really wonderful and virtuous speech. So one should praise the well-spoken truth of Dharma words, and, in that way show appreciation, rather than scorn or ridicule. This also prevents jealousy from arising.

When others are presenting the Dharma, or sharing advice with others, we should rejoice, and praise them, saying, 'That is really wonderful virtuous speech'. Such comments are the opposite of comments one might make out of jealousy. If one's mind is affected by jealousy then one could not make such nice comments. So we need to take this advice on-board, and when others are presenting the words of truth of the Dharma, comment on that as being virtuous. It is said that when we praise others without any sense of jealousy, it is a really meritorious deed. So conducting ourselves in this manner is a way to accumulate virtue or merit.

We need to relate this point about speaking the truth without jealousy to the earlier heading which is to Being Skilled in Interacting With Others, Free Of Misdeeds.

² This subdivision was first mentioned on 22 July 2014, as Skillfully Acting with Others in a Virtuous Way.

1.3.2.2.3. How to act in relation to creating merit

This relates to witnessing others creating merit. The next two lines read:

*75cd. When seeing somebody being meritorious
Inspire joy through praise.*

Here Gyaltsab Je explains:

When seeing somebody being meritorious, making offerings and so forth to the Triple Gem, inspire joy and happiness in their minds by directly praising them.

Of course these points were explained extensively in the third chapter on the virtue that is accumulated from rejoicing in the deeds of others.

These lines of verse make the same point. When one sees others engaging in meritorious deeds, such as making offerings and so forth to the Three Jewels, then, if appropriate, one comments on what great deeds they are doing. And if it is not possible to do that, the main thing is to rejoice, and mentally praise them. That will prevent negative minds such as jealousy, pride and so forth from arising.

As presented earlier, when one rejoices in the good deeds of someone who has greater realisations than oneself, then one gets nearly half of that merit oneself. If the one who is generating that virtue and merit is of lower status than oneself, then one gains even more merit. This is how the teachings present the great benefits of rejoicing.

1.3.2.2.4. How to act when the qualities of others are praised

The verse from the text reads:

*76. Comment on qualities secretly,
When qualities are mentioned, agree.
If one's qualities are mentioned,
Check whether there are qualities.*

Here Gyaltsab Je explains:

As it may cause doubts of flattery if one expresses them directly, secretly praise the qualities of others. When others praise the qualities of a third then agree by saying, 'It is like that'.

If your qualities are praised, then without conceit analyse whether the mind really has these qualities or not. If you have, then simply recognise that you have that quality without becoming proud.

The first part of the explanation in the commentary is that if there is a doubt that one's praise might be perceived as flattery, then in order to prevent that possibility, one should practise praising others in secret. If one were to praise others just to flatter them, then that wouldn't be genuine praise, because one is expecting something in return.

If you are not mindful when you praise someone, it may cause them to feel, 'Oh, I wonder why they are praising me. Maybe they want something from me and are just saying that to make me think well of them'. Because of this danger the safest practice is to praise others in secret.

The next point presented in the commentary is also very, very significant and relevant to our normal dealings with others. When others praise the qualities of another person, then we should agree with that praise by saying, 'Yes, it is like that, just as you say'.

The reason why this practice is emphasised here is that if the person being praised is someone who is likeable, then, even if it is not fitting praise, we might say, 'Yes, that is true. They have a lot of qualities'. Whereas if it is someone one doesn't like, then even though they are being rightly praised, we might say, 'Oh, I'm not sure about them'. The main point here is that whether the person to whom the praises are offered is agreeable to oneself or not, the best practice is to acknowledge that praise and say, 'It is like that'. Adopting such conduct not only prevents one from engaging in misdeeds, but we also accumulate great merit by acknowledging the qualities of others.

Furthermore, agreeing in that way also makes the one who is offering the praise joyful too.

The next point in the commentary is also very relevant and significant advice. It relates to when others praise your qualities: *If your qualities are praised, then without conceit analyse whether the mind really has these qualities or not.*

If someone were to talk about qualities they may see in you and so forth, then reacting with a sense of, 'Oh, I might be great. Oh, they have mentioned my qualities so I might be someone special', would be only increasing one's pride. To assess whether what they say is true, one should first check as to whether one does actually have those qualities, and that the praise is fitting. If one does have those qualities, accept that praise but without any conceit or pride.

1.3.2.2.5. The benefit of making others happy

What are the benefits of making others happy?

*77. Because all efforts are to bring joy,
It is so precious that it is priceless.
Thus, enjoy the blissful happiness
That comes from the virtue of working for
others.*

*78. In this life one will be peerless
And also on the other side will be great
happiness.
Faults cause unhappiness and suffering
And also on the other side will be great
suffering.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

All the actions of the three doors of bodhisattvas are to make others happy. Because this happiness of others is so precious, it is priceless, like a rare object that cannot be bought even with great wealth.

As presented in the commentary, *all the actions of the bodhisattvas through their three doors—physical, speech and mental intentions—are performed as a means to make others happy and bring them joy.* Bodhisattvas are always engaged in actions that make others happy, because they are aware that the *happiness others experience is priceless, like a rare object that cannot be bought.* No matter how much money or wealth you may have, you cannot use it to purchase the happiness of others.

Thus, bodhisattvas always use the most appropriate ways and means to make others joyful. As mentioned here, that is because the joy and happiness of others is priceless. I regularly emphasise that we need to engage in actions that will make others joyful and happy. We all have that

potential, so it is worthwhile to actually utilise it to bring about joy and happiness to others.

As much as possible, we need to minimise, and try to rid ourselves of any gestures, mannerisms, and behaviours that cause misery to others. If we notice our actions are bringing about misery and agony, then we need to definitely refrain from those actions. Conversely, we need to engage in actions that bring joy to others.

The second paragraph of the commentary reads:

Therefore, with the quality of making others happy, others will not be jealous of one in this life. By practising making others happy, joy in this life will not decline, and one will without doubt also receive possessions and so forth, and in the life beyond one will also attain great happiness.

There are unintentional benefits from making others happy.

- The commentary explains that *with the quality of making others happy, others will not be jealous of one in this life*. When, from one's own side, one sincerely engages in making others joyful and happy, then that will prevent others from being jealous. That is because one is actively engaged in making them happy.
- One also creates the causes for *possessions* and wealth to increase.
- *The happiness and so forth of this life will not decline*, rather it will be restored and established well.
- As a positive consequence of making others happy, one will also attain *great happiness in the life beyond*, meaning the next life. Here, happiness can range from attaining the happiness of the humans or gods, to obtaining the happiness of liberation and the ultimate happiness of full enlightenment.

So these are the great benefits of making others happy.

Next, Gyalsab Je explains a very significant point:

Otherwise, [meaning if we practise contrary to the aforementioned conduct] as the shortcomings of being angry at the qualities of others, one will experience in this life mental unhappiness and physical suffering, and also in the next life one will experience great suffering.

Having mentioned the benefits of making others happy, if one were to practise the opposite, which is being angry at others' qualities, then, rather than rejoicing in them then, *one will immediately experience mental unhappiness and physical suffering in this life*.

Generally, being unhappy is the basis on which one generates anger. Anger and mental unhappiness usually support each other. If you check, you will notice that anger usually arises when the mind is unhappy. So when one is not happy with someone else's qualities, then that is the basis for starting to become upset and angry. The main point here is if we generate anger about qualities of others, then that will cause further mental agony, as well as physical suffering. So, here again we find some very pertinent advice, which is that being angry affects our mental health, as well as causing us physical harm.

Through their investigations, scientists have come to the conclusion that those with a very temperamental nature, who are always irritated and angry, are more likely to

have physical ailments such as strokes. Apparently anger can induce the blood clots that cause strokes. I have also heard that a perpetually angry attitude suppresses the immune system, making the person much more prone to illness and disease.

The main point mentioned in the text is that if we adopt a mind of joy, make others happy, and praise the qualities of others and so forth, we will receive benefits both in this life and the lives to come.

Conversely, if we practise being angry and upset with the qualities of others, then it will cause mental agony as well as physical suffering in this life and future lives.

That is really the main point. We are being encouraged to practise in accordance with the benefits for oneself.

1.3.2.2.3. *Being skilful in the actions of the three doors*

The three subdivisions under this heading are:

- 1.3.2.2.3.1. How to act while one speaks
- 1.3.2.2.3.2. How to act while one looks
- 1.3.2.2.3.3. Relating oneself only to virtuous actions

1.3.2.2.3.1. How to act while one speaks

79. *When speaking it should be agreeable and coherent,
Clear and pleasant.
Without attachment or anger,
One should speak gently and appropriately.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains:

As it is explained in the *Sutra of the Ten Grounds*, when speaking with others it should be agreeable from the heart, coherent, easily understandable, clear and pleasant, in order to be acceptable to their mind.

Having abandoned the motivations of attachment and anger, one should speak gently and appropriately in regard to time and amount.

As explained in the commentary, *when speaking with others*, one should speak *from the heart*. One should use only truthful words and say them in an *agreeable* way.

In the Tibetan version the word translated in the commentary as *coherent* has the meaning of there being a consistent connection between the first and second parts, making it easily understandable. The point about being clear and consistent in what you are saying is so that others can trust your words.

Next, speech should be *clear and pleasant*, and *acceptable* to the minds of others. Here *clear* has the significance of serving to clear away doubts that others might have. If one is not clear, then even after explanation people will still have doubts about what you said. If you are clear in your speech then that will remove any potential doubts from their mind.

Furthermore, the *motivation* of one's words or speech to others should be one that is removed from attachment and anger, thus ensuring that whatever words one relays to others are not based on attachment or anger.

One should speak gently as opposed to speaking harshly. Speaking *appropriately in regard to time and amount* refers to making the length of the presentation in accordance to what is acceptable to others.

As the commentary states, *this is as explained in 'The Sutra of the Ten Grounds'*.

1.3.2.2.3.2. How to act while one looks

This explains how to look at others and how to act in such a way.

80. *When looking at sentient beings say,
"In dependence on this very sentient being
I will become a buddha",
And look at them honestly and lovingly.*

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Here, Gyaltsab Je explains:

When we look at sentient beings then, similar to the happiness we receive from drinking a refreshing drink after having been thirsty, we think, 'In dependence on this very sentient being I will attain enlightenment', and look at them with a clear mind in a loving manner.

*Transcript prepared by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

As explained in the commentary, the analogy is that if one is really thirsty any drink that quenches our thirst will be really refreshing and rejuvenating.

The point of the illustration is that being thirsty is an unpleasant experience and that the suffering of thirst is removed when one quenches one's thirst with water. Similarly, that which relieves the overall suffering in our life is, of course, reaching the state of enlightenment. So when we encounter sentient beings, we can remind ourselves, 'Through this very sentient being I will achieve enlightenment'.

From the accounts in the Buddha's life stories and so forth, the very first stage in the generation of bodhicitta is in relation to developing love and compassion for sentient beings. And of course all the practices in which the bodhisattvas engage in the middle are also in relation to sentient beings. Finally, the ultimate state of enlightenment is attained in relation to sentient beings. Therefore, all the stages, from the beginning to the end result of enlightenment, relate to sentient beings.

The thought to generate in our mind as soon as we encounter any sentient being is, *in dependence on this very sentient being I will attain enlightenment*. With that thought in mind we look at others with a clear mind and a loving attitude, thus generating love and compassion toward the sentient being. If, when we encounter sentient beings we can adopt this advice then we will only have a positive state of mind, free from judgement and prejudice and so forth. Having such a clear state of mind recognises this person in front of us as the very sentient being who will help us to become enlightened.

1.3.2.2.3.3. Relating oneself only to virtuous actions

This is subdivided into three. The three subdivisions under this heading are:

- 1.3.2.2.3.3.1. Practising generosity to the special field of offering
- 1.3.2.2.3.3.2. Creating virtue out of one's own power
- 1.3.2.2.3.3.3. Increasing one's virtue evermore and thinking about the purpose.

We can go through the explanations of these subheadings in the next session.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་པོ་འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷོ་ལྷན་པ་ལ་འཇམ་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

2 September 2014

As usual we can spend some time in meditation.

(pause for meditation)

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines—in order to benefit all sentient beings I will strive to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

1.3.2.2.3.3. Relating oneself only to virtuous actions (cont.)

This has three subheadings:

1.3.2.2.3.3.1. Practising generosity to the special field of offering

1.3.2.2.3.3.2. Creating virtue out of one's own power

1.3.2.2.3.3.3. Virtues are progressively superior, therefore think about the purpose before the action

1.3.2.2.3.3.1. Practising generosity to the special field of offering

This is similar to the explanation we covered in *Precious Garland* by Nagarjuna.

The verse reads:

81. *Whether arising continually through a clear wish
Or through the antidote itself, in dependence
On the fields of qualities, benefit and suffering,
Great virtue is generated.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of the verse as follows:

Engaging in virtue on a continual basis motivated by a clear wish, i.e. a strong aspiration; and an antidote against the opposing side—such as attachment and so forth; in relation to the three supreme fields:

- Field of qualities: The Triple Gem and so forth.
- Field of benefit: One's parents and so forth.
- Field of misery: The destitute, sick, disenfranchised and so forth.

Making offerings to these objects in this manner creates great virtue, thus one should strive in it.

As the commentary explains, accumulating virtue is not to be done sporadically, but rather on a continual basis. There shouldn't be times when one accumulates virtue and other times where one leaves it out. If one wonders when the appropriate time to engage in virtue is, the answer presented here is, at all times, on a continual basis.

Furthermore, engaging in virtue must be accompanied with a clear wish, which is a strong aspiration, and serve as an antidote against the opposing side i.e. the delusions such as attachment and so forth. Thus, the accumulation of virtue has to be accompanied with a strong aspiration,

and ensure that it serves as an antidote to overcome the opposing side. For example, when one engages in practising the virtue of generosity, one needs to ensure that it becomes an antidote for overcoming miserliness, and when practising morality ensure that it serves as an antidote to overcome corrupt ethics and so forth. The emphasis here is that when one accumulates virtue, one needs to ensure that it actually becomes an antidote to overcome an opposing non-virtuous state of mind, specifically the delusions. If you do not apply the practice in this way, you will find that there is not much transformation taking place in your mind. As the great Kadampa master advised: one needs to engage continuously in practising virtue and ensure that it serves as a means to subdue one's mind, by overcoming the delusions in one's mind. So that should be the main purpose of accumulating virtue.

In this explanation three particulars are being pointed out:

- The particular of time or duration for accumulating virtue—which is on a continual basis;
- The particular of an antidote—which is to overcome delusions in one's mind; and
- The particular of relying on the three supreme fields—which are the fields of qualities i.e. the objects of refuge; the fields of benefit i.e. one's parents; and the fields of misery i.e. the destitute, sick, disenfranchised.

One should strive to make offerings to these objects in the manner described, thus accumulating great virtue. You need to also understand that in relation to the three supreme fields the opposite is also true; that if you create negativity in relation to any of these objects then it will be a grave negativity. You need to be mindful when relating to the three supreme fields, so that you protect yourself from creating heavy negativities.

As you have noticed, I regularly emphasise the need to be kind to one's parents, particularly one's aging parents. So, you can see that this presentation is supporting me.

1.3.2.2.3.3.2. Creating virtue out of one's own power

This indicates that engaging in virtue should occur from one's own side. In other words, one needs to take the initiative to create virtue oneself and not rely on others to create virtue for you.

The root text and commentary both present the meaning for this heading, which is quite clear and easy to understand. However the emphasis is that we need to take the initiative—to try and put this into practice by being mindful in our daily life.

The verse reads:

82. *Having become proficient and faithful
I will continuously engage in the actions.
In all my actions I will not
Depend on anyone.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Having become proficient in what has to be adopted and what has to be abandoned, and in what one should engage in and what one should not, as well as having generated faith in virtue, I shall now continuously practise virtue.

I shall not depend on anybody in my actions of virtue in the sense that I will not order others to do them.

In relation to *having to become proficient in what has to be adopted and what has to be abandoned*, one needs to know the clear distinction between what is to be adopted and what is to be abandoned. Without a clear understanding, one will not be able to adopt certain necessary qualities and abandon certain detrimental faults. This would be a drawback to our spiritual progress. Although on the one hand one may be putting some effort into adopting virtues, on the other hand one could be failing to discard certain faults detrimental to our progress (e.g. negative behaviours and so forth). If one fails to recognise what the faults are from the very beginning, then it will be hard to take the initiative to overcome them. While adopting positive qualities ensures progress in one's Dharma practice, this can only happen when the opposing faults and negativities within oneself begin to decrease. When, by adopting qualities the faults naturally decrease, then that is a true mark of one's Dharma progress, and a sign that a real transformation is taking place.

Again, a clear distinction between what one should engage in (virtues), and the negativities one should avoid should be clearly understood. This, along with generating faith in virtue, becomes a proper way to engage in the practice of accumulating virtue. Generating faith in virtue specifically means having faith in the infallibility of virtue; that by engaging in virtue positive consequences are definitely experienced. In contrast, if one were to engage in non-virtue, then the infallibility of the consequences of an unwanted result, such as various types of sufferings, also occur. Basically the infallibility of karma is applied here. So, when one has faith and a strong conviction in the infallibility of virtue, then one will develop a natural, keen wish to generate virtue. One will actually be motivated to create virtue, because one has a strong conviction in the positive consequences, so one is inspired to continuously engage in virtue.

The essential points here are twofold: to become proficient, that is to gain a good, clear understanding of what is to be adopted and what is to be abandoned; and on top of that, generating strong faith in the very virtue that one wishes to engage in. When sound faith and conviction are developed, one will develop a strong, keen initiative to continuously practise virtue. The commentary states the resolve one needs to develop: *I shall now continuously practise virtue*. Again this is not a casual approach, but rather taking the personal responsibility and resolving to accumulate virtue at all times. These points are really pertinent guides for our practice. I find these verses very helpful for my mind. When you read these verses and pay attention to their meaning, not just to gain an intellectual understanding, but with the intention to implement them in one's practice, then they will be very helpful for your mind.

The commentary emphasises: *I shall not depend on anybody in my actions of virtue*. This implies that one will not order others to accumulate the virtue for oneself; rather, accumulating virtue is dependent on one's own resolve. This is similar to other sutra teachings where Buddha says that liberation is dependent entirely upon oneself.

That means attaining liberation is not dependent on someone else but entirely dependent on oneself.

1.3.2.2.3.3.3. *Virtues are progressively superior, therefore think about the purpose before the action*

In relation to the six perfections, the later practices are progressively superior than the earlier, which means the later practices are of greater virtue than the earlier ones. However when engaging in the practices, one needs to be mindful to adopt practices of greater purpose in accordance to the time and need to benefit other sentient beings. The verse reads:

83. *The perfections of giving and so forth
Increase them one after the other.
Do not abandon the big for the small,
Mainly think towards the purpose of others.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

The perfections of generosity and so forth up to the perfection of wisdom, are progressively developed and increased.

Do not give up the practices of generosity, morality and so forth that are smaller from the point of view of purpose and virtue, to the generosity and so forth that are bigger. Strive in the bigger.

This shows implicitly that if we cannot practice both together and have to choose, then we should abandon the smaller for the bigger.

Query: How does one posit small and big?

Answer: For example, if in this life, out of the purpose of self and the purpose of other, practising one affects the other to decline, then one should make the purpose of other the main practice.

In relation to the six perfections, Gyaltsab Je states that the practice of morality for example, would be of higher virtue than the practice of generosity. With this explanation, one would create far more virtue practising morality for one day, than practising generosity for many days or weeks.

Those who have done the *nyung nye* practice would have noticed the description of the merit for keeping the eight Mahayana precepts even for one day or 24 hours, is incredibly high.

The commentary explains: *Do not give up the practices of generosity, morality and so forth that are smaller from the point of view of purpose and virtue to the generosity and so forth that are bigger. Strive in the bigger.*

Practising morality in the sequence of the six perfections would generally be considered a greater virtue than generosity. However, when there is a greater purpose for practising generosity to benefit others, then one should not pass up this opportunity in favour of the practice of morality. To understand it in its proper context, if one were to practise morality with a strong self-interest, then if an opportunity arose to practice generosity with total dedication to the benefit for others, then the practice of generosity would be greater than the practice of morality which is contrived or stained with mere personal interest.

The commentary explains that *if we cannot practise both together and have to choose, then we should abandon the smaller for the bigger*. The emphasis is that one should abandon the smaller practice and adopt a bigger practice. The hypothetical query is *How does one posit small and big?*

The answer asks you to consider two choices: engaging in the practice merely for one's own purpose and concern for this life, and engaging in the practice for the purpose of others. If by practising one the other declines because they oppose each other, then one should make the purpose of others the main practice. The emphasis here is that if one engages in practices with the intention to benefit just oneself, such as benefit for this life, compared to a practice where the main focus is for the purpose of other beings, then the practice focusing on other beings is the greater practice. One needs to make the distinction between the two, and adopt the practice which is for the purpose of others. As other teachings have emphasised, when one fully dedicates a practice for the purpose of others, then one's own purpose will be fulfilled naturally.

What is being emphasised here is that one needs to ensure that the practice one does is really for the purpose of others. Otherwise, if it is done merely for one's own interest or short-term goal, it will not ultimately fulfil even one's own purpose. One needs to have a clear understanding to derive the main point here. We can see how skilful the advice is here in making the clear distinction between what is a great practice and what is a small practice. And of course, when there is a choice, we would naturally want to choose something which is of greater benefit.

We need to think about our own practice; we might be in the category of those who are choosing small practices instead of bigger ones. Practices that involve mere self-interest for this life's benefit, and practices where the sole intention is to benefit others, are mutually exclusive, and cannot be practised at the same time. If these two practices were presented to you, which one would you choose? As they cannot be practised together, which one would you choose? If one has a bodhisattva motivation one needs to choose the practice which is for the purpose of others. This is also in the motivation for tantric practices.

1.3.3. Training in the morality that accomplishes the welfare of sentient beings

This subdivision has three subcategories:

1.3.3.1. Diligence in the welfare of others

1.3.3.2. The action of gathering others without incurring a fault

1.3.3.3. Protecting sentient beings' minds and training in the action of not incurring fault

1.3.3.1. DILIGENCE IN THE WELFARE OF OTHERS

The two first lines of the next verse relate to this heading.

The verse reads:

*84ab. Having understood this, they abide always
Striving for the welfare of others.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary presents the meaning by beginning with a query:

Query: Bodhisattvas strive to always abide in working for others, on the basis of having understood what needs to be practised and what needs to be abandoned. But since they need to engage into a variety of actions to achieve the welfare of others, do they not receive faults?

This reflects a question raised previously in a Wednesday night teaching which asked whether bodhisattvas incur faults or not. This is exactly the same point.

The query is a reasonable doubt which comes when one witnesses a bodhisattva engage in various different kinds of actions. The question raised a few weeks ago by Vanessa was about the example of when a bodhisattva had to kill someone in order to save the other four hundred and ninety-nine people.

An answer is presented in the next two lines of the verse:

*84cd. Those with compassion have the long view
and allow them the forbidden*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Answer: The compassionate buddhas also see directly the phenomena hidden very far in the future. Out of this knowledge they permit the seven non-virtuous actions of body and speech, which they prohibited for hearers and self-liberators who work primarily for their own purpose, for bodhisattvas when necessary. As a result, bodhisattvas do not only not incur a fault, but for them it becomes a great accumulation when they engage in these actions.

Within the ten non-virtues, the first seven, i.e. the three of the physical and four of the speech, were completely forbidden for hearers and solitary realisers. Under no circumstances were practitioners of the Lower Vehicle permitted to do these actions. However, bodhisattvas are permitted to do these actions when it is deemed necessary for the benefit of other sentient beings. What will be presented next is a story where, if it were necessary to benefit a greater number of sentient beings, even engaging in an action of killing does not incur negativity, but in fact becomes a means to accumulate large amounts of merit.

As an example the commentary quotes from the *Sutra of Being Proficient in the Great Secret*, which reads:

From the *Sutra of Being Proficient in the Great Secret* it is taught that because the captain killed the evildoer, his time in cyclic existence was reduced by many eons. It is also like it was taught to the Brahmin's son Karma'i Jungwa.

This refers to the bodhisattvas who were permitted the seven of body and speech by those with great compassion, who see far ahead.

This story is from ancient times when merchants had to travel on ships for long distances. The earlier part of the story tells that a ship was carrying 500 traders and merchants with an evil person amongst them, referred to here as an evildoer who had the intention of taking the lives of the rest of the merchants as a way to gain the profits for himself. The captain of the ship, who happened to be a practising bodhisattva, understood the evildoer's intention. So out of great compassion, as a way to protect the evildoer, and out of great compassion for the rest of the merchants whose lives would be taken, the captain of the boat took upon himself the action of taking the life of the evildoer. This protected the evildoer himself from committing a negative act, which would result in him being reborn in the hell realms, as well as saving the lives of the rest of the merchants. It was said that instead of creating negative karma, the Captain's act became a means for him to accumulate a great amount of merit, to

lessen his time in samsara by many aeons. The benefit was to protect the four hundred and ninety-nine merchants from imminent death and protect the evildoer person from incurring negative karma.

One should note that while this is one example of where the seven non-virtues forbidden for practitioners of the Lesser Vehicle whose main practice is for self-liberation are permitted for practitioners of the Great Vehicle, who only have the intention to benefit other sentient beings. So whatever activity they engage in is solely for the benefit of other sentient beings; even acts such as killing—otherwise a great misdeed—are permitted and become a means to accumulate great virtue. However, bodhisattvas with the ability to engage in such negativity only with the intention to benefit other beings with understanding and clairvoyance, would only be high-level bodhisattvas, not lower-level bodhisattvas.

Another example is an account of the Brahmin's son Karma'i Jungwa. In this story the Brahmin's son had adopted the practice of abstaining completely from sexual intercourse. For 12 years he had practised chastity, but there was a young maiden whose life was endangered because of a condition which could be cured only by sexual intercourse. Apparently, with this condition if sexual intercourse was not done the lady would have died. So out of great compassion for this young maiden, he broke his vow of chastity to save her life.

So the example of misdeeds such as killing, forbidden for practitioners of lower vehicles, becomes a means for accumulating great merit when done with the sole intention to benefit other sentient beings. For a lower-vehicle practitioner, sexual activity would be a misdeed, but when engaged in by a bodhisattva with the intention to protect someone from imminent death, it becomes a means to accumulate great merit. These are particular examples from accounts in the past and there are likely other accounts of stealing and lying etc. done solely for the benefit of others, out of compassion.

These accounts are presented in answer to the query as examples of acts actually becoming a means for them to accumulate great amounts of merit, rather than incur negativity.

Gyalsab Je's commentary highlights that:

This refers to the bodhisattvas who were permitted the seven of body and speech by those with great compassion, who see far ahead.

It explains that permission to act on *the seven of body and speech* are only to bodhisattvas who are practising great compassion and who have farsightedness.

One needs to understand committing these acts in the proper context. Non-virtues are permitted to bodhisattvas with the ability to practice extensive benefit for other sentient beings, but beginner bodhisattvas who do not yet have the ability to engage in such extensive benefits for others would not be permitted to do them.

1.3.3.2. THE ACTION OF GATHERING OTHERS WITHOUT INCURRING A FAULT

This is divided into two subcategories.

1.3.3.2.1. Gathering with the mundane

1.3.3.2.2. Gathering with the Dharma

1.3.3.2.1. Gathering with the mundane

This in turn is subdivided into three:

1.3.3.2.1.1. The difference between offering food and not offering food

1.3.3.2.1.2. Do not harm the body for small actions

1.3.3.2.1.3. Explaining the time and necessity for offering the body

1.3.3.2.1.1. The difference between offering food and not offering food

The verse reads:

*85. Share with those fallen into the wrong direction,
With the protectorless and those abiding within austerities.
Eat only in a measured fashion and
Offer everything apart from the three robes.*

In response, Gyalsab Je's commentary reads:

Whilst using food, share with those fallen into the wrong direction, i.e. animals and hungry ghosts, with the protectorless sick, and with those that practice pure action and abide in austerities, if they are there as well.

As it is said, *It is appropriate for oneself to measure everything*, oneself should eat just enough according to the correct portion, without incurring faults in relation to food, and with the motivation for eating that is explained in the *Letter to a Friend*.

An ordained bodhisattva should offer everything apart from the three robes or *nam-jar, la-go* and *tang-go*. If one has more of the three robes then one should also offer these, but if one has only one set, then one should not offer one's robes. It becomes an obstacle to the practice of pure action.

The literal translation of *the distinction between when to offer food and not to offer* might relate more to sharing food with those falling into the wrong directions i.e. animals and hungry ghosts etc. In the normal practice of eating, a fully ordained monk separates some of their food, offers it to the objects of refuge, then a portion to the hungry ghost, and a portion to the animals, and dedicates it. In this way one actually divides the food to be consumed with the intention to offer it to others as well.

Having presented how to divide one's food with others such as animals and those who abide in austerities, in relation to oneself, the text quotes *Precious Garland*:

It is appropriate for oneself to measure everything,

The right measure of what one can consume should be likened to prescription medicine: if one takes too much, then rather than curing one's disease it could actually aggravate it and create harm. But if one does not take enough of the medicine, it will not help to cure the disease. Likewise, when consuming food, if one eats too much one can make one's body feel heavy and bring about a feeling of slothfulness and the onset of sleep, thus not being productive for one's practice. Whereas if one eats too little, and the body is not well nourished, it can become weak and one will not be able to engage in it properly.

Gyalsab Je's commentary further explains that:

...oneself should eat just enough according to the correct portion without incurring faults in relation to food,

Without incurring faults means ensuring that one does not incur misdeeds in relation to food, e.g. eating food just for the sake of vanity, of beautifying oneself (e.g. I might look beautiful if I eat this kind of food), or just for the sake of filling oneself up for the pleasure of feeling full with food etc. In accordance with the explanation from the *Letter to a Friend*, one should avoid such motivations when eating and consuming food, and eat the correct portion: not too much, not too little and for the purpose of sustaining one's body to practise the Dharma.

Gyaltshab Je's commentary provides more explanation in relation to knowing the distinction between what is to be given and what is not to be given:

An ordained bodhisattva should offer everything apart from the three robes or *nam-jar*, *da-go* and *tang-go*. [which are particular robes for the fully ordained] If one has more of the three robes then one should also offer these, but if one has only one set, [that means if one has like two or three sets then one could offer the extra set to others] however if one has only one set then one should not offer one's robes. It becomes an obstacle to the practice of pure action.

It becomes an obstacle to practice pure action or pure conduct would be in relation to e.g. an ordained monk who has these robes intact. If one gave away everything there would be a fault from a fully ordained monk's perspective, as they should not be separated from one particular robe, even for a day, as being separated from it incurs a fault. But in terms of maintaining oneself e.g. if one is too cold etc. then it would harm one's practice as one would not be able to continue to practise. So it is important to know the distinction between what to give and what portion, how much to give and when not to give. Of course, how to offer the food was also explained clearly in the *Letter to the King* or *Precious Garland* as well by Nagarjuna. So it would be good for you to familiarise yourselves with this explanation, and read other commentaries as well. It is not too obscure and hard to understand, but to get a better understanding it is good to refer to other commentaries as well.

As presented earlier, there were particular ways of offering the food, and the intention held when offering it. These you can also revise. You also need to be mindful of ensuring that you are free from misdeeds in relation to consuming food, because if one is not mindful, the very process of consuming and acquiring food to sustain oneself, one may incur misdeeds. One needs to be mindful of that as well.

We can see how the advice presented here is very practical. In terms of consuming food, how to consume it when sharing with others. When consuming by oneself: how to consume it; knowing the right portion; not having too much or too little as it can harm oneself. This advice is given like a parent would give their child; very detailed advice on how to conduct oneself properly. Here, this advice is given to us by Shantideva.

In summary, the presentation is about how to engage in normal daily activities such as eating and drinking, and use them to serve as a means to accumulate virtue, and not become a cause for non-virtue, and incurring misdeeds. This is the value of the advice that we need to take in.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེད་མཁའ་འགྲུབ་ཀྱི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

9 September 2014

As usual, we can spend some time in meditation.

(pause for meditation)

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings I will strive to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings, and put them into practice well.

1.3.3.2.1. Gathering with the mundane (cont.)

1.3.3.2.1.2. Do not harm the body for small actions

The verse relating to this heading is:

86. *Do not harm for insignificant actions
This body that practises the supreme Dharma.
If one acts in this way, the wishes of sentient beings
Will be accomplished swiftly.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

One's body, which is the basis for practice of the holy Dharma that accomplishes extensive benefit for self and others, if it is guarded well, should not be harmed for a small benefit of others. Rather it should be guarded like a wound.

If one does this, then by way of completing the three higher trainings on the basis of the precious human rebirth, one will be able to quickly accomplish the wish of sentient beings.

From the *Four Hundred Stanzas*,

Although one of course views the body as enemy
One still protects it.
If one lives for a long time with discipline
Great merit will arise from it.

In this context, the precious human *body, which is the basis for the practice of the holy Dharma that accomplishes extensive benefit for self and others*, refers to a bodhisattva's body with all those conditions intact. However we can also relate this to the good conditions that we have now, such as having access to the Dharma teachings and so forth.

Here we are being advised that guarding the body means that we should not harm this precious human body, which accomplishes the ultimate wish of sentient beings, for the sake of small gains or benefits for others. The commentary uses the analogy of guarding a wound to illustrate how the body should be protected; just as one would *guard a wound* from further damage and harm, likewise we need to protect and guard our body at all times. This analogy was presented in earlier teachings and I also explained the meaning at that time.

As the commentary explains, if one protects one's body well, then because of having all the right conditions for one's practice *by way of completing the three higher trainings*

on the basis of this precious human rebirth, one will be able to quickly accomplish the wishes of sentient beings. When one fulfils one's ultimate goal of the practice of the three higher trainings, which is to achieve enlightenment, then one will naturally be able to fulfil the wish of other sentient beings as well.

In the first two lines of the *Four Hundred Stanzas* verse, *Although one of course views the body as enemy, One still protects it*, one refers to the one who sees reality, such as the noble bodhisattvas who understand ultimate truth. They see this contaminated body, which is the basis for external and internal harms and so much suffering, as an enemy. Even so, one still needs to protect this body.

The next two lines of the quote from the *Four Hundred Stanzas*, *If one lives for a long time with discipline Great merit will arise from it*, indicate that if one lives for a long time by protecting one's body with the discipline of observing morality, then one will accumulate great merit. Here, *great merit* refers to both the accumulation of wisdom as well as the accumulation of merit.

If I recall correctly, this verse is presented as a response to this doubt: if the body is to be seen as an enemy, then why would one want to protect it? You can also check the commentary on the explanation of this verse.

While the earlier explanations are quite clear it is good for us to reflect on their meaning and try to implement it in our practice.

1.3.3.2.1.3. Explaining the time and necessity for offering the body

When practising generosity with one's body one needs to know the appropriate time and necessity or purpose. This explanation follows the earlier indication that one shouldn't harm one's body, such as giving one's arms or legs to others, for a very minor purpose. Now the text explains the right time and purpose for offering one's body.

87. *Do not offer this body with
Impure thoughts of compassion.
Offer it in any way to accomplish
Great purpose here and yonder.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Although from the very beginning bodhisattvas have offered everything including their body, to sentient beings from the depth of their mind.

However, if one feels despondent with the prospect of being asked for the flesh of one's body and the like, and generates feelings of regret afterwards and so forth, then until the pure mind of compassion that cherishes others more than oneself has been developed, one should not give this body.

Although from the very beginning refers to the time when a trainee first becomes a bodhisattva by entering the path of accumulation. Although bodhisattvas on the preliminary stages of the path of accumulation and preparation have developed the courageous mind of offering everything for the sake of sentient beings, which would include their body and so forth, they are nevertheless still on the preliminary stages of the practices. Because there is a probability that bodhisattvas at the initial levels of practice could feel *despondent* at the prospect of having others ask for their flesh or body parts

and so forth, the practice of offering one's body parts is not advised. Furthermore, it is possible that one will later feel regret, rather than rejoice in giving one's body.

Until the pure mind of compassion which cherishes others more than oneself has been fully developed refers to the development of ultimate bodhicitta, which is within the mental continuum of those who have reached the first of the ten grounds and above. Thus, what is being explained here is that until bodhicitta has been fully developed *one should not give this body*.

The text backs this up with reference to the *Compendium of Trainings*.

This is extensively explained in the *Compendium of Trainings*, where the untimely offering of one's body is described as an action of *mara*.

As explained here, giving one's body before one has fully developed bodhicitta is considered an action influenced by *mara* or demons, which indicates that it is not a completely pure practice.

Next the commentary explains the appropriate time, which is:

One should offer it when one is really free from the obstacles to generosity, such as miserliness and so forth, and the offering becomes a faultless completion of great accumulation, and most certainly when it becomes a cause to achieve a great purpose in this life and beyond.

Thus, the appropriate time to offer this body is when the bodhisattva develops ultimate bodhicitta from the first ground onwards, when they are completely *free from the obstacles to generosity* and so forth. The necessity or purpose of offering one's body is *when it becomes a cause to achieve a great purpose in this and future lives*.

This encompasses the two main points of the appropriate time, and the necessity or purpose.

1.3.3.2.2. *Gathering with the Dharma*

The previous section referred to gathering others as disciples and so forth, through being generous with material aid and so forth. Now comes the explanation on gathering others through offering the Dharma.

This section is subdivided into three:

1.3.3.2.2.1. The physical behaviour of an audience that one should not teach

1.3.3.2.2.2. Analysing the distinction of the motivation of a vessel

1.3.3.2.2.3. Do not lead those with the wish for the great to the small

1.3.3.2.2.1. **The physical behaviour of an audience that one should not teach**

The physical behaviour of an audience that one should not teach refers to the inappropriate physical gestures of those who are not suitable to receive the Dharma teachings.

So as the verse reflects here:

88. *Do not teach the Dharma to the disrespectful.
Not to those who, while healthy, wear
headbands,
Umbrellas, sticks, carry weapons,
Or cover their heads.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

One should not explain the Dharma to those that do not have respect for the Dharma and the teacher, or to those whose behaviour is unsuitable, such as wearing headbands when not sick, carrying umbrellas, sticks, weapons or covering their heads with cloth and so forth.

The first part of the commentary is that *one should not explain the Dharma to those who don't show respect for the Dharma and the teacher*. This refers to not respecting the qualities of the Dharma. Because the Dharma has such highly esteemed qualities, it would be inappropriate to present the profound and sacred Dharma to someone who does not respect it. Those who do not have respect for the Dharma are by default not suitable vessels to receive the Dharma. Furthermore, teaching the Dharma to those who do not respect the teacher or the Dharma would cause them to incur the negativity of disrespecting the Dharma. In this way, rather than bestowing benefit it becomes the cause for them to experience harm from the negative consequences. So, the first part of the explanation, *one should not explain the Dharma to those that do not have respect for the Dharma and the teacher*, refers to those whose minds are not pure enough to receive the Dharma.

The second part of the explanation refers to those whose physical behaviours are unsuitable. They might have a pure intention to receive the Dharma, respecting both the Dharma and the teacher, but it would be inappropriate to present the Dharma to them because of their inappropriate behaviour. The text lists some examples.

Unsuitable behaviours include *wearing headbands when not sick*. This implies that while it is permitted to wear a headband because one is not well, wearing a headband for no particular reason would be a sign of disrespect. Likewise, *carrying umbrellas*, or *sticks*, or *weapons*, or *covering their heads with cloth and so forth* are examples of disrespectful conduct when listening to a Dharma teaching.

For example, as monks we are not allowed to put our *zen* (upper robe) over our heads while listening to the teachings. During His Holiness' teachings, when there is no roof and it is quite hot and sunny, he gives the Sangha permission by saying, 'Put your *zens* on top of your head to protect yourself from the hot sun'. The usual practice however is not to cover the head, out of respect for the teachings.

1.3.3.2.2.2. **Analysing the distinction of the motivation of a vessel**

This refers to further checking the intention or motivation of those who are coming to listen to a teaching. The relevant verse is:

89. *To those holding the lesser to be great and
profound,
To women without their spouse,
Hold equal respect for the lesser and supreme
Dharma
And practise it all.*

Here, Gyaltsab Je explains:

One does not teach the profound and extensive Dharma to those who are not a vessel due to a lesser

motivation and also not to women alone, without their spouse.

It is taught that if one discriminates between the superior Mahayana and the lesser Hinayana on the basis of being wholesome or bad, suitable or unsuitable, becoming the method for enlightenment or not and so forth, is abandoning the Dharma.

One should therefore have equal respect for all paths and practice them all.

This explanation mentions that one should not *teach the profound and extensive Dharma to those who are not a suitable vessel, due to a lesser motivation*. Another way of explaining this is that it would not be suitable to teach the profound and extensive Dharma to those who have the motivation of the Lesser Vehicle. Because of their intention or motivation they are not ready to hear the profound and extensive Dharma, so one should not teach it to them.

With respect to *women alone without their spouse* we need to understand the specific context of the advice, which applies to those who are presenting the Dharma. For example, it is said to be very dangerous for their vows for a fully ordained monk to teach a woman while they are alone; others might also form negative views about the propriety of that. Likewise, if the teacher is a nun then it would be inappropriate if they were to teach a man alone, without their spouse being present. We need to understand that while one gender is mentioned here it refers equally to the other gender. It is important to understand these points in their proper context.

Furthermore, as mentioned here, one will incur the fault of abandoning the Dharma if one discriminates between the superior Mahayana and the Lesser Vehicle, on the basis that one is wholesome and the other is not wholesome; that one is suitable and the other is not; that one has the method to become enlightened and the other does not. It is said that the karma of abandoning the Dharma is a heavy negative karma.

Therefore, as Gyaltsab Je emphasises, one should have equal respect for all paths and practise them all. So Gyaltsab Rinpoche is definitely sharing some really profound advice with us.

1.3.3.2.3. Do not lead those with the wish for the great to the small

This heading indicates that it would be totally inappropriate to suggest to those who have a genuine, keen interest in practising the Great Mahayana Vehicle, would be better practising the Lesser Vehicle.

The verse that relates this is:

90. *Do not bring those that are a vessel
For the extensive Dharma to the lesser Dharma.
Do not cause them to give up the training,
Do not mislead with sutra and mantra.*

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

Do not lead someone with Mahayana lineage that is a suitable vessel for the extensive Dharma to a lesser Dharma, such as the hearer's path. It is taught that this becomes a downfall.

One should *not lead someone with a Mahayana lineage*, meaning someone who has the actual capacity of mind to practise the Mahayana, and who is *a suitable vessel*, from

the extensive Dharma to the lesser Dharma, such as the *hearer's path*. As such that would be a *downfall*.

The next part of the commentary reads:

Also do not cause someone that is a suitable vessel for the morality of restraint to give up their practice of morality while they are suitable vessels, through misleading them with sutra and mantra, saying that they will become pure merely by reading sutras and mantras.

In this way do not mislead others with sutra and mantra.

The point being emphasised here is that while someone may be a suitable vessel to study and practice morality, telling them that to become liberated it will be sufficient for them to purify their mind by merely reading sutras and mantras would be very misleading advice.

This reminds me of the comments made by someone I met from Singapore who was one of the co-founders of an institute in the Kagyu tradition. He commented to me that while the advice to recite, for example, 100,000 Vajrasattva mantras, or do 100,000 prostrations without any further explanation and saying that it will lead one to reach enlightenment, may have some significant purpose, he was not really sure about the actual benefit. I felt that his comments on how doing extensive practices without the basis of a proper understanding could be misleading were valid.

The emphasis here is that misleading suitable vessels who are capable of understanding the teachings by saying that they will become pure just by reading sutras and reciting mantras, is inappropriate. If they are not suitable vessels and lack the capacity and intelligence to understand the teachings and fully grasp their meaning, then it would be skilful to present practices for them to do at their level. However, if trainees who have the intelligence and capacity and are thus suitable vessels were to be given tasks of merely reciting mantras or reading sutras, then that would be misleading them.

Those who have that approach may be presenting it in that way because they don't have much knowledge of the teachings themselves, and cannot present them thoroughly. Saying, 'You don't need to study much; you don't need to understand much. That's OK, just do these mantras and recite these practices and everything will be fine' would be the act of misleading others.

1.3.3.3. PROTECTING SENTIENT BEING'S MINDS BY TRAINING IN THE ACTION OF NOT INCURRING FAULTS

This is definitely a very important point for bodhisattvas. Because they are such noble beings, engaging in inappropriate actions could cause others to generate a negative mind, and if they were to cause others to be critical of the bodhisattva, then that would be a cause for them to create really heavy negative karma. Therefore bodhisattvas have a great responsibility to engage in appropriate conduct and behaviour to protect the minds of other beings from the faults of criticism and so forth. This is an important point for us also to keep in mind.

This heading has two sections

1.3.3.3.1. Extensive explanation

1.3.3.3.2. Summary

1.3.3.3.1. Extensive explanation

The extensive explanation is subdivided into three:

1.3.3.3.1.1. Abandoning faulty behaviour that causes others to lose faith

1.3.3.3.1.2. How to act when showing the path

1.3.3.3.1.3. How to do the action of sleeping

1.3.3.3.1.1. Abandoning faulty behaviour that causes others to lose faith

Gyaltsab Je begins his commentary on this section of the text with these words:

Ordained bodhisattvas must apply restraint, which is explained in the general basket of teachings on morality, unless there is an exemption that permits them otherwise. As it will cause a loss of faith in the minds of others, even lay bodhisattvas must apply this restraint.

As mentioned here, there are certain forms of conduct that are specifically prescribed for the ordained. There are some circumstances where there are exemptions, but otherwise ordained bodhisattvas have to abide by all of those vows, because not doing so can cause others to lose faith. For the same reason, even lay bodhisattvas have to abide by certain forms of conduct. This was also explained in *Precious Garland*, which we have previously studied.

Then comes the verse relating to this:

91. *If one leaves behind tooth woods and spittle
Then they should be covered.
To urinate and the like, on water and ground
Used by all is inferior.*

92ab. *Do not eat with a full mouth noisily,
Or with an open mouth*

Then the commentary continues:

If one leaves behind the wood used to clean the teeth and leaves one's spittle on the ground, then these should be covered up with earth and the like. One should also not pollute commonly used water or land with faeces, urine, and mucus as this is frowned upon by the gods and others.

Traditionally in India they use wood from a nim tree as a substitute for toothbrushes. They chew on a piece of the wood to make it like a bristle, which they use to clean their teeth. Having cleaned the teeth in such a way, the advice is that one should not just throw the piece of wood down on the ground for it to be seen by others; likewise one should not just spit onto the ground. Both should be covered up. This of course doesn't really apply in Australia where there is a good tradition of putting the garbage into the garbage can, and you don't see people spitting on the street at all. This is an excellent system.

In general however, one needs to be careful not to cause others to feel disgust, or a bit uncomfortable, when they see behaviour such as spitting out food after one has eaten it. That would be considered as very disgusting. At the moment someone sees that, and thinks it is disgusting, then they become critical of the person who has done that. So if a bodhisattva were to engage in such behaviour, it would cause disgust in others, and if, out of that disgust, they are critical of the bodhisattva, then that will be the cause to create the negative karma of being critical of bodhisattvas. Therefore the advice is that the

bodhisattva always needs to engage in conduct and behaviour that protects the minds of others.

Likewise, *one should also not pollute commonly used water or land with faeces, urine and mucus as this is frowned upon by the gods and others*. This is not only a cause of disgust, but is also a cause of harm for others.

Furthermore:

Do not eat with a full mouth, making noises like chag-chag and so forth while eating, or eat with an open mouth.

Again, these explanations are for monks with vows. When eating one should not eat with one's mouth open, or make sounds such as indicated here, or have too much food in one's mouth, or eat noisily, or with an open mouth. This sort of behaviour will disgust others and is inappropriate.

The next six lines of verse are:

92cd. *Do not sit with the legs stretched out,
Do not rub your hands together.*

93. *When riding or sitting on a mattress or place,
Do not be together with another woman.
Abandon anything that causes worldly beings
to lose faith,
That observed and that to enquire about.*

The explanation in the commentary is quite clear.

While sitting on a bed or the like, do not sit with both legs stretched out on the ground. One does not rub both hands together at the same time, but there is no fault if one rubs them sequentially.

One does not ride together with someone else's women on a horse and so forth, or sit together with them on the same seat or place. Lay bodhisattvas also should not sit together with another woman who is not a relative.

In short, one should abandon any inappropriate behaviour that causes the worldly to lose faith, either by observing directly what is done or not done, or through informing oneself by enquiring what is appropriate and inappropriate according to that place and time.

In some cultures and traditions it is considered disrespectful to point your feet out towards others. It is also seemingly disrespectful to rub your hands in front of others, although *there is no fault if one rubs them sequentially*.

One does not ride together with someone else's women on a horse and so forth, or sit together with them on the same seat or place. Lay bodhisattvas also should not sit together with another woman who is not a relative. These are quite clear instructions.

In summary, as explained by Gyaltsab Je, *one should abandon inappropriate behaviour that causes worldly beings to lose faith*. One does this *either by observing directly what is done or not done, or through informing oneself by enquiring what is appropriate and inappropriate according to that place and time*. This means that if you are in a place where you don't know the traditions, and you don't know what is appropriate and what is inappropriate, you should ask about the proper ways to act.

This reminds me that prior to coming to Australia Pam, one of the teachers who taught English to the young

monks at Kopan, gave me some instructions on things such as how to use cutlery and so forth. She said that in the West if you are invited to a place, there are different types of cutlery for different parts of the meal. Indeed, whenever we go to a new place, it is appropriate to know the traditions and customs of that place so that we act appropriately.

1.3.3.3.1.2. How to act while showing the path

This refers to acting in the appropriate way when you are showing the path to others. This is very pertinent and practical advice for our daily lives. The relevant verses read:

94. *Do not point with a finger,
But respectfully, with your
Full right hand,
Show the way.*
95. *Do not move your hand excessively
But only just enough, with some words.
Snap your fingers and so forth,
Otherwise it becomes unrestrained.*

The explanation in Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

When indicating the way for somebody, do not do so with individual fingers from the left hand because this is regarded as insulting. One respectfully points in the right direction with the full right hand outstretched.

One does not wave unnecessarily with one's hand, as this would become excitement and be unconscientious. Instead wave with your hand a little bit, say something and snap your fingers. Otherwise, if one is too loud, then it becomes unrestrained.

This explanation is also quite relevant to our tradition here, where raising your fingers inappropriately is a very bad, even dangerous thing!

When pointing out the path to others in India, it is considered rude and disrespectful to the other when you point with one finger, or just a few fingers. The proper way is to stretch out your full palm and show the way with your right hand. That is the gesture to adopt.

The next part of the explanation is that *one does not wave unnecessarily with one's hand, as this would become excitement and be unconscientious*. Instead wave your hand slightly. If one has to call someone, instead of shouting out loud or waving one's hand wildly, one should slightly snap one's finger, which will gain their attention. *Otherwise one is too loud and becomes unrestrained*.

1.3.3.3.1.3. How to do the action of sleeping

This explanation is precisely in accordance with the presentation in the Lam Rim teachings, but we can leave this for the next session. When done in a proper way sleeping is referred to as the yoga of sleeping, so even the act of sleeping can become a practice.

*Transcript prepared by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

16 September 2014

As usual we can spend some time in the regular meditation practice.

[Meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teaching, and put it into practice well.

1.3.3.3. PROTECTING SENTIENT BEING'S MINDS BY TRAINING IN THE ACTION OF NOT INCURRING FAULTS

1.3.3.3.1. Extensive explanation (cont.)

1.3.3.3.1.3. How to engage in the action of sleeping

The verse relating to this heading is:

96. *Sleep like the Protector, when he passed
Into parinirvana, in the desired direction.
Make sure from the start, with introspection
about
The thought of getting up quickly.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je gives this explanation of the meaning of the verse:

For sleeping, assume the position of the protector when he passed into parinirvana. Lie down on your right side, with your head in the desired direction, putting your left leg on your right leg, and your head into your right hand, and then sleep well covered with the *cho-go*.

At the time of sleep put your mind onto a virtuous object with mindfulness and introspection and adopt the recognition of brightness. Adopt from the start the mind that thinks, 'I shall rise quickly', and sleep with the thought, 'Tomorrow I shall practise the Dharma with the newly regenerated body'."

As the commentary explains, when we sleep our body should be in a position that is similar to that of protector, Lord Buddha Shakyamuni, in the aspect of passing into nirvana.

Depending on the direction that you wish to face (such as holy images on your altar), you lie down on your right side with your head in that direction and placed on top of your right hand. This lying position is also referred to as the sleeping lion position. The Lam Rim teachings give detailed explanations on the significance of adopting this sleeping posture, which emulates the fearlessness of a sleeping lion.

The commentary continues with the description, *putting your left leg on your right leg*, which is quite clear. Then, having positioned oneself in this manner, one sleeps covered with the *cho-go*, which is the upper yellow robe of the Sangha.

The main significance of placing oneself in this position, which is the position the Buddha adopted when he showed the aspect of passing into nirvana, is to remember death and impermanence. Of course, in actuality the Buddha is

immortal, however he showed the aspect of passing into nirvana for the purpose of teaching death and impermanence to his disciples. So sleeping in this position is a reminder for us of death and impermanence. That is what we need to understand here. As *Praise to Buddha Shakyamuni by Way of the Twelve Deeds*, states:

To exhort the lazy to be quicker,
At the pure site of Kushinagar
You destroyed your deathless, vajra-like body
Entering nirvana—Homage to this deed.

This shows that entering this aspect of passing into nirvana was a way to exhort his disciples to enter into the Dharma. That is why the Buddha's sleeping position is described in this text.

When the commentary states *At the time of sleep put your mind onto a virtuous object with mindfulness and introspection*, it is advising us to recall the practice we have done during the day, as a way of not forgetting the virtuous object.

Next the commentary states that before going to sleep one makes that determination, '*I shall rise quickly*'. Due to that determination one will be able to wake up at whatever time one has set. Indeed, when we develop the strong determination to wake up at a certain time in the morning, then we really don't require any alarm and will naturally wake up at that time. Following that determination to wake up early, one sets the motivation for the next day: 'After I wake up I will continue to engage in the practice of Dharma as a way to benefit sentient beings'. So in this way, prior to going to sleep one sets one's motivation for the next day.

If one goes to sleep with a virtuous mind and love and compassion in one's heart, and determines to wake up with an attitude of love and compassion, then it is most likely that one will wake up in that state of mind. Waking in a virtuous frame of mind would really be a wonderful way to start the next day. So sleeping, in itself, can be a virtuous activity. That is why, among the fifty-two mental factors, sleep is specifically included in the category of the changeable mental factors. If one has a virtuous mind prior to going to sleep then the whole period of sleep will be virtuous. Whereas if one has a negative mind prior going to sleep then that period will be a non-virtuous or negative state, and if the mind is neutral then sleep will be in a neutral state. Thus it is possible to turn sleep into a virtuous deed.

This is very practical advice. By remembering love and compassion before going to bed, if one sleeps for six hours for example, then during those six hours one will have gained the benefit of leaving the imprint of love and compassion on one's mind. It is quite unlikely that we will find the time during the day to spend six hours meditating just on love and compassion, so if we go to sleep with love and compassion on our mind, then that will ensure that our sleep becomes a really virtuous deed.

We can see how this advice ensures that even normal activities become a means to accumulate merit and virtue, and further develop our mind of love and compassion. As Shantideva advised earlier in the text, with the proper motivation we can turn normal activities such as eating and drinking into virtuous deeds. We can see that this advice is very pertinent for our practice in daily life. Other teachings give further explanations on the different states of sleep.

As indicated in the commentary, prior to going to sleep one should develop the intention: *Tomorrow I shall practise the Dharma with a newly regenerated body*. This indicates that one engages in the act of sleeping as a way to rejuvenate the

body. When one goes to sleep with that intention it ensures that the sleep itself will be free from attachment. As indicated earlier, one of the offering prayers with the practice of eating is, 'I consume this food not merely for myself, but in order to sustain my body for the practice of Dharma'. Here sleep is being presented in the same way—with the proper motivation it actually becomes an aid to the practice of Dharma.

Thus we can see how, as indicated in the teachings, whatever actions the bodhisattva engages in are only a means to accumulate virtue. From the preliminary motivation, every aspect of normal activity is turned into the practice of Dharma as a means to accumulate virtue. This can inspire us to try to follow this example with our own motivations and intentions in daily life.

1.3.3.3.2. Summary

The verse relating to this is:

97. *Out of the immeasurable actions
Of bodhisattvas, that are taught,
Until you can definitely practise them,
Take up the trainings of the mind.*

Here Shantideva sums up the practices that have been presented under the heading, Protecting Sentient Being's Minds by Training in the Action of Not Incurring Faults.

Gyalsab Je's commentary reads:

If one is not able to practise all the immeasurable divisions of the bodhisattva actions of generosity and so forth that are taught in the sutras and their commentaries, then one should first only engage in the practices of training one's mind that were explained earlier, until one is definitely able to carry out all the infinite bodhisattva actions.

As explained here, the practices of generosity and the rest of the perfections as well as the practices of the four means of gathering disciples have *immeasurable divisions*, meaning that there are incredibly extensive ways of engaging in these practices. Thus they have immeasurable divisions, and these immeasurable divisions are extensively explained in the sutras and the commentaries.

The Tibetan word *jong* can either refer to training in virtue or purification. As I have explained previously, when the word *jong* is used in context of virtue then it means to train one's mind to increase virtue. When it is used in the context of negativity then it means training one's mind to purify negativities by applying the antidotes so as not to experience the negative results of negativity. In this context it refers to training one's mind to generate bodhicitta. The earlier chapters presented very detailed and particular advice on how to train one's mind to generate bodhicitta. Therefore as the commentary explains, *one should first only engage in the practices of training one's mind, until one is definitely able to carry out all the infinite bodhisattva's actions*. Once one has trained one's mind well and generated bodhicitta, and that has been developed thoroughly and firmly, then one will be able to carry out all the extensive bodhisattva practices prescribed in the teachings.

Again, this is very pertinent advice about how to first train one's mind to generate bodhicitta, and then gradually engage in the practices. If one were to attempt to engage in all the extensive practices explained in the teachings, before having established a thorough basis, then one would not be able to follow any particular practice through. This is very relevant to our state of mind now as well.

So this summarising verse is very significant. If the teachings explain the many different aspects of the practices and so forth, they may not seem personally relevant if they are not subsumed into succinct practical advice that one can apply now. The most practical approach is to distil it down to something that is manageable for beginners so that they can use it as a basis to further develop their mind, and then later be able to engage in further practices.

1.4. The method for perfecting the trainings

The actual training of how to actually perfect the practices that were described earlier has two subdivisions:

1.4.1. The extended explanation

1.4.2. Concluding summary

1.4.1. The extended explanation

This is subdivided into four

1.4.1.1. The methods for purifying the training

1.4.1.2. The basis for training

1.4.1.3. The purpose of the trainings

1.4.1.4. The basis for engaging into listening and contemplating

1.4.1.1. THE METHODS FOR PURIFYING THE TRAINING

If one were to transgress some of the commitments, then this section provides advice on the method for purifying these downfalls.

In explaining the meaning of the verse Gyalsab Je raises this doubt:

Query: What should one do if one incurs faults despite practising the trainings?

To explain the meaning of the verse, he first says:

If one has received a root downfall, then, as it is explained in the *Compendium of Trainings*,

Recall the bodhisattva Akasgarbha in front and engage in purification.

If one receives the small or medium contaminations, the forty-six faults and other faults explained in the *Compendium of Trainings* then,

98. *Recite the Sutra of the Three Heaps,
Three times in the morning and in the evening.
Pacify the remainders of downfalls
In dependence on conquerors and bodhisattvas.*

So this verse is explaining how to purify the faults of the small and medium contaminations in one's training.

Those of you who recite the *Six Session Yoga* will recall after listing the eighteen root downfalls of the bodhisattva vows, there is a list of the four conditions that are necessary to incur a breach of those vows. What are they?

Student: Not regarding these as detrimental; not forsaking the wish to repeat such behaviour; delighting and taking pleasure in them; having no shame or consideration.

What are the two that do not need any of these conditions in order to breach that commitment?

Student: Giving up bodhicitta and holding distorted views

So, if all four conditions are intact then any breach of the vows will be a **great contamination**. Here, the small or medium contaminations refers to breaches of the vows that do not have all four conditions intact. Thus *if one receives the small or medium contamination* refers to breaching any of the bodhisattva vows, but without all four conditions intact. If one has the mind of not regarding the transgression as detrimental, then, regardless of whether some of the other

conditions are intact or not, it becomes a **medium contamination**, which is, in fact, quite a severe contamination. A **small contamination** is when either of the other three conditions are present, except for not regarding them as detrimental.

As I have mentioned previously the *forty-six faults* refers to breaches or downfalls of the bodhisattva vows. If there are either small or medium contaminations of those forty-six faults, or other faults as explained in the *Compendium of Trainings*, then one needs to engage in the purification as presented in the verse.

Gyaltsab Je presents the meaning of the verse:

...then one should confess three times in the day and three times at night, accumulate merits and recite the method to increase virtue and prevent it from being exhausted, i.e. the *Sutra of the Three Heaps*.

By taking refuge and in dependence on bodhicitta one pacifies the remaining downfalls with the four powers.

As the commentary explains, the way to purify these faults is by confessing them *three times in the day and three times at night*, and also engage in the means *to accumulate merit*. So this practice encompasses both confession and the means of accumulating merit. The way *to increase virtue and prevent it from being exhausted* is by engaging in the practice such as *The Sutra of the Three Heaps*, which is basically the *Thirty-Five Buddhas' Confession Prayer*.

As explained previously, the three heaps encompasses the heap of negativities, the heap of dedication and heap of rejoicing. By engaging in these practices one purifies both small and medium contaminations. This means that if one has not breached a commitment to the degree that it is a root downfall, then one can purify it through this practice. So this is a practice to purify minor breaches of the vows.

If one has actually broken the vows and incurred a root downfall, then one will have to apply the method of actually taking the vows again. Here, the text explains that *by taking refuge and in dependence on bodhicitta, one pacifies the remaining downfalls with the four powers*.

The first power, the power of reliance, is explicitly indicated here with taking refuge and generating bodhicitta. Then one applies the remaining three powers of the practice. This is the supreme method for purifying negativities. The four opponent powers were mentioned in detail in chapter two, so you can refer back to that. The main point presented here is that one needs to rely on these methods to purify the faults one has incurred through the breaches of one's commitments

1.4.1.2. BASIS FOR TRAINING

Here there are two verses, the first of which is:

99. *Whether from the point of view of self or other.
Whatever you do, on whatever occasion,
As taught, make it with effort
An occasion for the trainings.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

Regardless of whether it is for the purpose of self or others, whatever action of body, speech and mind one engages in, and during whatever occasion, the Conqueror taught all of these as opportunities for practice.

One should always make an effort not to receive a fault of the trainings while using these different occasions for one's practice.

As the commentary explains, the Buddha taught that whatever the occasion may be, regardless of whether it is to accomplish one's own purpose or the purpose of others, and whatever actions one engages in through one's three doors of body, speech and mind, they are to be treated as an opportunity for practice. Using these different occasions for practice is really the basis of all the trainings one engages in.

In stating *one should always make effort to not to incur a fault of the trainings*, the commentary is saying that in order to make the training pure, one should ensure that one does not incur any faults when engaging in that training. Thus one should always make an effort not to incur any fault while engaging in the trainings. More specifically, the time when one engages in practice is the time when one needs to ensure that one does not incur a fault.

The second verse in relation to this heading reads:

100. *There is nothing the children of
The conquerors do not practise.
For those proficient who abide in this manner
There is nothing that does not become
meritorious.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

There is no object of knowledge the bodhisattva children of the conquerors do not use for practice. For those that are proficient in training in all objects, there is no action that does not become meritorious. Therefore, one should never allow the generation of faithlessness.

As explained here, *there is no object of knowledge the bodhisattva children of the conquerors do not use for practice*, which is a point that was emphasised earlier. For the purpose of benefiting others, bodhisattvas may engage in various forms of practice, or acquire skills such as the five major sciences of arts and crafts, medicine, grammar, logic, and philosophy as a means to benefit other sentient beings. To some, these may appear as mundane practices, making it very easy to be critical of a bodhisattva who is engaged in these. As you will recall, Nagarjuna presented all of these five sciences, emphasising that they are needed for the purpose of helping others. The point being raised here is that for those *that are proficient in training in all objects, there is no action that does not become meritorious. Therefore, one should never allow the generation of faithlessness*, which causes one to lose faith in a bodhisattva.

Gyaltsab Je is emphasising the need to protect one's mind from losing faith in a bodhisattva's deeds, in the belief that they are engaging in some sort of mundane activity. We need to take this as a personal instruction. As it is hard for us to know who is actually a bodhisattva it is possible that we might generate a critical mind if we see someone engaging in some mundane activity, and thus incur the heavy negativity of criticising a bodhisattva. The author of the commentary, Gyaltsab Je, emphasises this point in many of his other teachings. We need to be very careful about being critical of others, particularly of those who are engaging in various activities to benefit other beings.

1.4.1.3. THE PURPOSE OF THE TRAININGS

Here there are two sub-headings

1.4.1.3.1. Dedicating the virtue for the welfare of all sentient beings

1.4.1.3.2. Never give up the Mahayana spiritual friend and the training

1.4.1.3.1. *Dedicating the virtue for the welfare of all sentient beings*

The verse relating to this reads:

101. *Regardless of whether it is directly or indirectly
Do nothing but work for the purpose of sentient
beings.
Solely for the purpose of sentient beings
I dedicate all to enlightenment.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

Whether it is directly or indirectly for the welfare of sentient beings, always act for their welfare, and in no other way. Dedicate all virtues towards enlightenment, solely for the purpose of sentient beings.

As explained in the commentary, whether engaged directly or indirectly, bodhisattvas are always engaged in acts of benefiting other sentient beings. Whatever activities they engage in are for the benefit of other sentient beings, and they do not engage in any activity other than that. That summarises the activities of bodhisattvas—they are always for the benefit of other sentient beings. They then dedicate the virtues of those deeds towards enlightenment, solely for the purpose of sentient beings.

The very beginning of generating the altruistic mind of bodhicitta itself is for the benefit of sentient beings; the middle of engaging in the practices such as the six perfections is for the benefit of sentient beings; and then the ultimate goal of achieving enlightenment is also for the benefit of sentient beings. Therefore whatever activities bodhisattvas engage in are dedicated towards achieving ultimate enlightenment for the purpose of benefiting sentient beings.

Reflecting upon the bodhisattvas' deeds as being solely for the benefit of sentient beings—at the beginning, in the middle and at the end, the very achievement of enlightenment—inspires us to practise similarly. Setting the right motivation at the very beginning of the practice, engaging in the practice itself, and dedicating it at the end, making sure that it is intact, is a fruitful and purposeful practice. It is good to recall the example of the bodhisattvas' deeds to ensure that our actions are meaningful and purposeful.

1.4.1.3.2. *Never give up the Mahayana spiritual friend and the training*

The first section encompasses the qualities of a virtuous spiritual friend. The verse relating to this is:

102. *The constant virtuous friend is one who
Is proficient in the meaning of the Mahayana,
And never gives up even at the cost of their life,
The supreme bodhisattva disciplines.*

Here the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* is presenting the qualities of the Mahayana guru or spiritual friend.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

The constant Mahayana virtuous friend is one who is an expert in all of the great Mahayana teachings as well as those who abide in the Mahayana vows, and the supreme Mahayana austerities and do not give them up even at the cost of their life.

The main point is that the qualities of the Mahayana virtuous friend are that they are skilled in all of the Mahayana treatises, as well as abiding in the Mahayana vows, the supreme Mahayana austerities, and do not give

them up at the cost of their life. Such are the qualities of the Mahayana spiritual friend, presented here in brief.

1.4.1.4. THE BASIS FOR ENGAGING IN LISTENING AND CONTEMPLATING

There are two subdivisions:

1.4.1.4.1. Training in dependence on sutras

1.4.1.4.2. Training in dependence on the commentaries

1.4.1.4.1. *Training in dependence on sutras*

Here there are two lines of verse

103ab. *Emulate the biography of Shrisambava
In the training of relying on the guru.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

From the life story of Shrisambava in the *Array of Stalks Sutra*,

The way of relying on the teacher: Child of good family, the bodhisattvas who are perfectly guided by virtuous friends will not fall into the lower realms.

One should train according to how it is explained extensively in this sutra.

This explains that the sutras confirm that *bodhisattvas who are perfectly guided by virtuous friends will not fall into the lower realms*.

This indicates that those who rely on a virtuous friend without breaking their commitments will not fall into the lower realms. So the advice here is one should train as explained extensively in the sutras.

Of course, there are more extensive explanations on the ten different ways of relying on a spiritual friend in the Lam Rim teachings.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་པའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

23 September 2014

As usual we can spend some time in our meditation practice. [meditation]

You can generate the motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching, and put it into practise well.

1.4.1.4. THE BASIS FOR ENGAGING IN LISTENING AND CONTEMPLATING

Having presented the qualities of a Mahayana spiritual friend, the text then presents the basis on which to engage in perfecting the trainings in two subdivisions:

1.4.1.4.1. Training in dependence on sutras

1.4.1.4.2. Training in dependence on the commentaries

1.4.1.4.1. Training in dependence on sutras

This section is covered two verses:

103. *Emulate the biography of Shrisambava
In the training of relying on the guru
Understanding this and other advice by the
buddhas,
Through reading the sutras.*

104. *The sutras generate understanding of the
trainings
Therefore read the sutras.
First, read the
Sutra of the Essence of Space.*

We covered the meaning of the first two lines last week. In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning of the remaining six lines thus:

Furthermore, the points of advice from this treatise and other advice taught by the Buddha should be understood by reading the Mahayana sutras.

One should read the sutras because in them the trainings are explained extensively. Specifically, those that have generated the engaging vows should read first of all the *Sutra of the Superior Essence of Space*.

When the commentary states *the points of advice from this treatise*, it is referring to the *biography of Shrisambava*, which gives advice on how to rely on a spiritual friend. We covered that last week. Relying on *other advices taught by the Buddha*, refers to the advice given in the sutras on the bodhisattva trainings, which *should be understood by reading the Mahayana sutras*. So one needs to read and familiarise oneself with the Mahayana sutras in order to understand the advice on how to train in the bodhisattva practices.

The commentary then explains, *one should read the sutras because in them the trainings are explained extensively*. This is also very clear so I don't think it needs any further clarification.

As further explained, *specifically, those that have generated the engaging vows should read first of all the Sutra of the Superior Essence of Space*, which has extensive explanations of the bodhisattva vows. This sutra identifies the eighteen root downfalls of the bodhisattva vows, and how transgressions of those vows are incurred. It also explains very extensively how to purify each of those transgressions. As indicated in the commentary, one should refer to these explanations from the very beginning so as to avoid transgressing these vows, and also to learn how to purify any transgressions of those vows if they were to incur.

Those of us who have taken the bodhisattva vows need to take this as personal advice. It is not sufficient to take the vows and then just sit back and relax. Rather, one needs to endeavour to really understand the eighteen root downfalls, and how to purify them if one were to transgress them. It is very important that we really familiarise ourselves with the bodhisattva vows and the advice on how to avoid any transgressions. While you may not have access to a translation of the *Sutra of the Superior Essence of Space*, you do have access to the many texts and commentaries that explain the bodhisattva vows, what the transgressions are and so forth. So it is important to become familiar with them. Also, as presented earlier, if the transgression is a small or medium contamination, then one purifies it by reciting the *Thirty-five Buddhas Confession Prayer* with the four powers intact.

1.4.1.4.2. Training in dependence on the commentaries

There are two verses relating to this heading, the first of which reads:

105. *Since that which one practises continuously
Is shown even more extensively
In the Compendium of Trainings, one must
Read it repeatedly as well.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

Those that train and practise should also study repeatedly the *Compendium of Trainings*, where it explains extensively in thirty-two aspects how to give, protect, purify and increase one's body, possessions, and roots of virtue.

When the commentary explains *those that train and practice should also study repeatedly the Compendium of Trainings* it is referring to another text by Shantideva, in which he explains very extensively the ways and means of engaging in the bodhisattva trainings. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has presented teachings on the *Compendium of Trainings* on a number of occasions. If you have access to any translations of it in English, it would be good to read them.

The *Compendium of Trainings* has an extensive explanation of the *thirty-two aspects of how to give, protect, purify and increase one's body, possessions and roots of virtue*.

One engages in the practice of *giving* one's **body** at the appropriate time, and as well as engaging in mental training on giving one's body for the benefit of others. One also has to engage in the practice of *protecting* it, as we need our body for achieving higher purposes. Thus we need to understand the proper contexts for both giving and protecting one's body. We need to *purify* our

body to ensure our generosity is not soiled with negativities, or by any physical defects that would hinder our practice. Then we need to *increase* our virtue, by accumulating the appropriate causes to continuously obtain a body that is endowed with the eight ripened qualities in future lifetimes.

Just as there are the four practices of giving, protecting, purifying and increasing with respect to one's body, the same practices are applied to giving one's **possessions**.

The practice of being *generous* with one's **virtue** refers, for example, to dedicating one's virtue to the welfare of others. *Protecting* virtue refers to protecting whatever virtue one has accumulated from being destroyed by anger. *Purifying* means ensuring that the virtue is not soiled or stained with self-interest for the sake of this life, or even a future life. If one were to accumulate virtue just for the mere intention of protecting oneself from the lower realms, then that would be accumulating virtue out of self-interest. Rejoicing in one's virtues is the way to *increase* one's virtue.

With reference to the thirty-two aspects of giving, protecting, purifying, and increasing, there are four aspects of giving the body, four aspects of giving possessions and four aspects of giving virtue, making up twelve aspects of the perfection of generosity. We can also apply these four aspects to the remaining perfections of morality, patience, joyous effort and so forth. That makes twenty aspects, making thirty-two aspects in all.

The four aspects of giving are specifically explained in *Liberation in the Palm of your Hand*, and you can relate that to all the perfections. As you have easy access to the English translation it would be good for you to take the initiative to read it for yourselves. Next time I might quiz you on whether you've checked it out or not.

This also applies to any explanations in texts that have been translated in English; you need to take the initiative to actually refer to those texts and read their presentation. That is how you will benefit from my reference to them. If I mention a text and you think "OK, it must have been mentioned there" and just leave it at that, then you will not derive the benefit of understanding the topic in greater detail.

As a personal instruction, it is good to try to recall these four aspects of giving, protecting, purifying and increasing whenever we engage in any practice. For example, whenever we accumulate virtue or purify negative karma, it is good to relate that practice to these four aspects.

The next verse in this section of the text reads:

*106. Or, read at least the Compendium of Sutras
Which summarises, and
Put also effort into reading the second one
Composed by Nagarjuna.*

As Gyalsab Je explains in his commentary:

If one is not able to do this, then one should read at least the *Compendium of Sutras*, composed by the master himself, and the second one composed by Nagarjuna, which summarise the sutras.

If one is not able to do this, refers to not being able to relate to the extensive explanations presented in the *Compendium of Trainings*. That being the case, *one should at*

least read the Compendium of Sutras, which is also composed by the master himself, indicating Shantideva. *And the second one composed by Nagarjuna*, refers to another commentary of same name, *Compendium of Sutras*, which was composed by Nagarjuna, in which the meaning of the sutras is summarised.

Basically the advice is to refer to these texts on the bodhisattva vows: the *Compendium of Trainings*, or if that is too extensive, the *Compendium of Sutras*, or the text with the same name that was composed by Nagarjuna.

1.4.2. Concluding summary

The verse relating to this reads:

*107. That which has not been prohibited
Should be practised.
To protect the minds of worldly beings,
Practise correctly upon seeing the trainings.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary reads:

One should abandon that which has been prohibited in the sutras and commentaries and one should practise that which has not been prohibited. The purpose is to protect the minds of the worldly beings and prevent the generation of faithlessness. To this end one should, upon recognising the trainings of a bodhisattva, practise them and train in them.

This is a very clear presentation of the distinction between what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded. Put succinctly, one should abandon that which is prohibited or forbidden in the sutras and commentaries.

If one is uncertain as to what one should abandon, then refer to the sutras and the commentaries that explain what is forbidden, and which therefore should be abandoned. If the text states 'This act is forbidden', then the practice is to avoid engaging in that forbidden action. The teachings also present the practices that one should engage in, or adopt. This is how, by relying on the sutras and the commentaries, one makes the distinction between what is to be abandoned, and what is to be adopted.

Yet all too often we seem to adopt what has been forbidden in the sutras, and abandon what has not been forbidden! Out of confusion we ordinary beings actually adopt the opposite of what the sutras and commentaries advise. Here we are being advised to change our approach, and to gain a clear understanding of what is to be abandoned and what is to be adopted.

Furthermore, as explained here in the commentary, *the purpose of engaging in this practice is to protect the minds of the worldly beings as a way to prevent the generation of faithlessness* in ordinary or worldly beings, which means to protect their mind from losing faith in the Dharma.

2. CONCLUDING SUMMARY SHOWING THAT ONE HAS TO PRACTISE THE MEANING AND NOT JUST THE WORDS

This is subdivided into two:

- 2.1. Guard always with mindfulness and introspection
- 2.2. The actual meaning

2.1. Guard always with mindfulness and introspection

The relevant verse reads:

*108. Investigate repeatedly during
Actions of body and mind.*

*Merely this, in brief,
Is the definition of introspection.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Investigate repeatedly, while engaging in the actions of body, speech and mind, with the wisdom that can distinguish between having transgressed the training or not and neutral actions, and whether or not one has fallen under the control of the afflictions.

This alone is in brief the definition of not degenerating introspection.

This is very pertinent advice, which, of course, I also emphasise regularly in my teachings. Its relevance for our daily life and practice cannot be underestimated. As presented here very clearly, we need to *investigate our actions of body, speech and mind repeatedly* at the time of those actions. In other words, we need to maintain constant mindfulness throughout all our actions.

Check whether any physical action is virtuous, non-virtuous or neutral, and whether it is in line with the trainings or not. Likewise, check whether your speech is virtuous, non-virtuous or neutral and whether one is transgressing the trainings. Do the same with the mind. We need to conduct a constant dialogue with our mind, always being vigilant of our actions of body, speech and mind.

This, in brief, is the definition of not degenerating introspection, which means maintaining our introspection, and not allowing it to degenerate. This act of investigating our body, speech and mind throughout all activities is called introspection, and we should not allow it to degenerate.

In summary, the main point being presented here is that we need to be constantly vigilant about our state of mind in all our actions and activities. As presented earlier, one way to check whether one's physical, verbal or mental actions are virtuous or not is by acquainting oneself with the explanations in the teachings. If we are engaging in something that is forbidden then it is a non-virtuous action; if we are engaging in something that is not forbidden, or something that is encouraged, then that is a virtuous action; if actions are not specified in the teachings as needing to be adopted or to be discarded, then they are considered to be neutral.

2.2. The actual meaning

The relevant verse is:

109. *They all have to be practised with the body.
What is accomplished by only talking about it?
Is the sick person cured
Merely by studying medicine?*

The first part of the explanation in the commentary reads:

Having understood these points and the need for them to be practised, one needs to put them into practise accordingly with this body. Without practice, merely by reciting many lists, what purpose will one achieve? None whatsoever! For example, is a person cured merely by studying the instructions on the medicine? No, they are not.

As explained in the commentary, *they all have to be practised with the body*, means that these points actually have to be put into practice. It is not enough to merely

know about them—one should actually engage in practising them.

As further explained in the commentary, if *one merely recites many lists* or quotes from many texts and so forth, but without practising what they advise, then *what purpose will one achieve?* This is a rhetorical question, and the answer '*none whatsoever*' indicates that there is no purpose at all.

In response to the lines from the root verse, *What is accomplished by only talking about it? Is the sick person cured merely by studying medicine?* the commentary explains that when a patient is prescribed a medication, they have to actually take the medication in order to be cured. It is not sufficient for them to merely read the instructions on how to take the medicine—that won't help to cure them.

Gyaltsab Rinpoche goes on to say:

In brief, although there are the three types of morality, it is important to initially train in the morality of restraint, either by actually adopting the rules of individual liberation or those which are in common with them ...

As presented here, *there are the three types of morality*, and *it is important to initially train in the morality of restraint*, which means not committing misdeeds. One practises the morality of restraint *by adopting the rules of individual liberation*, or those which are *in common with those vows*. As I have indicated many times in previous teachings, morality serves as the basis of all other practices. Without sound morality, one will not be able to accomplish any other more advanced practices. So the self-liberation vows are the very foundation on which to take and observe the bodhisattva vows, as well as the tantric vows. Refraining from the ten non-virtuous deeds is common to all three sets of vows. As I have indicated previously, protecting oneself from the seven misdeeds of body and speech is the basis for refraining from many other misdeeds. In other words, when you apply the practice of refraining from the seven non-virtuous deeds of body and speech, you will naturally refrain from many other misdeeds. Thus the morality of restraint serves as the basis for other practices.

Next the commentary presents the reason why it is essential to practise the morality of restraint:

...for if one protects them, then the others will also be protected, if one does not protect them then the others will also not be protected. If the morality of restraint degenerates, then all vows degenerate, as explained in the *Compendium*.

This directly relates to our own practice, and so it is a personal instruction.

As Gyaltsab Je further mentions:

If one thinks that the vows of individual liberation belong to the hearers and practises the trainings of bodhisattvas apart from them, then that is a great fault. One should train in the morality of restraint that abandons the natural non-virtues and is the basis for the morality of accumulating virtue and benefiting sentient beings. One should rely repeatedly on restraint to the opposing conditions of morality, and practise it in conjunction with the six perfections.

This is all quite clear. The morality of restraint should be practised in conjunction with the six perfections.

Moreover, each of the perfections can be practised in conjunction with the rest of the six perfections. Thus there is the generosity of generosity, the generosity of ethics, the generosity which is practised in conjunction with patience, joyous effort and so forth. Of course I have presented this many, many times previously but I'm not sure if you have retained it. I'm not implying that you don't have the understanding, rather I say this as a way to refresh your memory, to remind you that you do have the knowledge of these topics presented in earlier teachings.

Summarising Verse

Gyalsab Je ends his commentary on this particular chapter with this summarising verse, in which he very succinctly mentions the essence of this whole practice.

The person taking the essence
Of practising the sequence of the path of the three
kinds of beings,
Depends on protecting mindfulness and
introspection.
Hence they should always endeavour to be proficient
in these.

As mentioned very clearly, taking *the essence of practising the sequence of the path of the three kinds of beings*—which are the practices in conjunction with the small scope; practices in conjunction with the medium scope and the great scope—*depends upon protecting mindfulness and introspection* at all times. Therefore one should endeavour to completely understand, be proficient, and have full knowledge of introspection and mindfulness.

II THE NAME OF THE CHAPTER

The final outline that concludes the chapter is a presentation of the name of the chapter. The root text reads:

This is the fifth chapter of Introduction to the Action of Bodhisattvas called Protecting Introspection.

Gyalsab Je's commentary concludes:

This is the commentary on the fifth chapter called Protecting Introspection from the commentary on the *Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas*, called *The Entrance for the Children of the Conquerors*.

That concludes the fifth chapter.

To explain the context of the next chapter we need to return to the subdivisions introduced in chapter 1.¹

2. The actual explanation of the stages of the path

2.2. The method for taking the essence

2.2.2. Explaining the individual meanings²

2.2.2.2. THE WAY OF TRAINING IN THE PRACTICES OF GENERATING THE TWO MINDS

2.2.2.2.2. The Way of Training in the Actions, the Perfections

2.2.2.2.2.1. The way of meditating on conscientiousness, the limb preventing the degeneration of the training in the mind of enlightenment³

2.2.2.2.2.2. Explaining the way of training in morality, by relating it to introspection and mindfulness, the methods for keeping virtuous dharmas pure⁴

2.2.2.2.2.3. Explaining the way of training in the remaining four perfections:

This is subdivided into four:

2.2.2.2.2.3.1. The way of training in patience

2.2.2.2.2.3.2. The way of training in enthusiasm

2.2.2.2.2.3.3. The way of training in the common and uncommon mental stabilisations that are contained in calm abiding

2.2.2.2.2.3.4. Training in the nature of superior insight—wisdom

CHAPTER 6: THE WAY OF TRAINING IN PATIENCE⁵

There are two parts to the chapter.

I. Explaining the text of the chapter

II. The name of the chapter

I. EXPLAINING THE TEXT OF THE CHAPTER

There are two main subdivisions of the explanation:

1. Meditating on patience earnestly by eliminating the obstacles to establishment and abiding

2. Applying to the mind the methods to establish patience

1. Meditating on patience earnestly by eliminating the obstacles to establishment and abiding

This has two subdivisions:

1.1. The faults of anger

1.2. The benefits of patience

1.1. The faults of anger

This is subdivided into three:

1.1.1. The unobservable faults

1.1.2. The observable faults

1.1.3. A summary of the faults

1.1.1. The unobservable faults

Here there are two subdivisions:

1.1.1.1. Anger destroys one's roots of virtue

1.1.1.2. Discerning the faults of anger and the benefits of patience and making an effort to meditate on patience.

1.1.1.1. ANGER DESTROYS ONE'S ROOTS OF VIRTUE.

In our next sessions we can go through the first verse under this heading.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© Tara Institute

¹ See the teaching of 26 March 2013.

² Introduced in the teaching of 2 July 2013.

³ Covered in chapter 4, introduced on 25 February 2014.

⁴ Covered in chapter 5, introduced on 20 May 2014.

⁵ The numbering recommences with the new chapter.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་པའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

30 September 2014

As usual we can spend some time in meditation

[meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings, and put them into practice well.

The sixth chapter, which we are about to start, explains the antidote to anger, beginning with:

1.1. The faults of anger

1.1.1. The unobservable faults

1.1.1.1. ANGER DESTROYS ONE'S ROOTS OF VIRTUE

Generally, understanding the relevance of practising patience is said to be developed when one contemplates the disadvantages of anger. So the more we contemplate the disadvantages of anger, the more we will see the need to practise patience. I have presented the definition of anger previously, so I need not go into it again as you can refer to that earlier explanation.¹ It may also be presented later in the chapter.

Anger destroys the roots of virtue is to be understood as explaining that basically, anger obstructs that which brings about a pleasant result, which is virtue.

The first verse of the chapter reads:

1. *All the wholesome actions
Of generosity and offerings to the tathagatas,
Built up over a thousand eons,
Are destroyed by anger.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads as follows:

Since anger is the ultimate obstacle to the generation and abiding of virtuous dharmas in one's continuum, one should initially meditate on the faults of anger, and then consequently strive to abandon anger.

One instance of anger at a bodhisattva destroys from the root all the virtues arising from generosity accumulated over one hundred and one thousand eons, as well as all the wholesome actions of having made offerings to the Three Jewels such as the tathagatas, wholesome actions of meditating and morality.

As presented here, *anger is the ultimate obstacle to the generation and abiding of virtuous dharmas in one's continuum*. This is a significant point. The ultimate obstacle for the initial generation of virtue is anger, which means that when anger arises it obstructs the ability to actually generate virtue. Moreover, if one has already accumulated some virtue, then anger will prevent that virtue from abiding and remaining in our mental continuum. So anger is really the main obstacle to both accumulating and retaining virtue. We need to regard these significant points as a personal instruction.

Indeed, no-one is happy when they are angry. The more anger someone has in their mind, the less peace they will experience. So the more we reflect on the disadvantages of anger, the more likely it is that we will be able to prevent anger from taking root in our mind. In the event that we do become angry, then reflecting on the disadvantages of anger will help to reduce the intensity of that anger. So the advice presented here is really great personal advice for us.

The commentary then explains that *one should initially meditate on the faults of anger, and strive to abandon anger*. This means contemplating again and again the faults of anger. From our own experience we know that from the moment anger arises in our mind we feel unhappy and unsettled. We really need to reflect on these experiences and understand how anger actually affects us.

As further explained in the commentary, *one instance of anger at a bodhisattva destroys all virtues*. It is explained in other teachings that this relates mainly to an intense form of anger. Thus, even an instant of such intense anger *will destroy all the virtues arising from generosity accumulated over one hundred and one thousand eons, as well as the wholesome actions of having made offerings to the Three Jewels, such as tathagatas*. This means that whatever virtues one has accumulated from wholesome actions of offerings to the Three Jewels, or from taking refuge in the Three Jewels and so forth, as well as the *wholesome actions of meditating and practising morality*, is destroyed in a moment of intense anger. Thus the virtues that arise from these three main actions of positive deeds such as making offerings, meditating and morality, will be destroyed in an instant of intense anger. When the commentary refers to destroying virtue from its *root*, it is to be understood that this does not mean that anger completely destroys the actual root of virtue itself. Rather, it significantly postpones the pleasant results of virtue, which will be experienced much later in the future. This is explained in other teachings.

Then Gyaltsab Je goes on to say:

Not only this, but in a quote used by the Sarvastivadin², and which is cited in the *Compendium of Trainings*, it says that if a fully ordained monk humiliates a companion in the pure trainings, then he has destroyed the merit equalling the merit of being reborn as a thousandfold wheel-turning king for as many times as the particles one covers, down to the golden wheel, with one's body when prostrating. This merit is accumulated when one makes a prostration to a stupa that contains the hair or nails of the Buddha.

As explained in the commentary, the merits that one accumulates from prostrations is *to be reborn as a thousandfold wheel-turning king for as many times as the particles one covers, down to the golden wheel, with one's body when prostrating*. This is a description of the depth and breadth, from the surface down, of the particles that are covered when one prostrates. As explained in the treatises, the golden wheel marks the end of the earth. Of course, that is something that cannot be seen or proven scientifically.

But then again, have there not been cases in recent times showing that not being seen, even with scientific means, doesn't necessarily mean that there is nothing there? We can take the recent example of the disappearance of the Malaysian Airlines plane. Despite all the searching by so many countries they were not able to find the plane or debris anywhere. But not being able to find it doesn't mean that it

¹ See, for example the teaching of 27 February 2007.

² Those That Assert That All Exists—a school of Buddhism.

doesn't exist. Despite all the modern instruments it has not yet been found, so it seems that scientists are not able to find everything that exists.

In any case, the main point here is that the merit one obtains from doing prostrations is that one will create the cause to be reborn as a thousandfold wheel-turning king—a universal monarch—as many times as the particles that one's body covers when prostrating. However this merit can be destroyed when one humiliates, criticises or becomes angry with *a companion in the pure training*. A companion in pure training doesn't necessarily have to be a bodhisattva, so becoming angry with pure practitioners can also destroy one's accumulated virtues.

What we can derive here as a personal instruction is that even though we put an effort into accumulating virtues with practices such as prostrations and meditating, that merit can be destroyed in a moment of anger. There are those who have commented that while they can adopt a seemingly calm and composed mind during meditation, the moment they go out into the world again they soon become upset and angry once more. That is the point being addressed here: we need to be very mindful and careful to ensure that we don't destroy the merit from our positive deeds by becoming angry.

At this point we can also recall the great benefits of dedication. As explained in the teachings, if, after we have accumulated a certain amount of virtue, we immediately dedicate it to the ultimate goal of enlightenment, then that will protect one's virtues from being destroyed by anger. The analogy that is presented to illustrate this is that when a drop of water falls into an ocean it merges with that ocean, and we cannot say that it has evaporated until the whole ocean has evaporated. Similarly, when one dedicates one's virtues to the ultimate goal of enlightenment for the benefit of other sentient beings, then that merit will not be exhausted. It is also explained that one can partake of the benefits of that virtue. The more we experience the positive virtues, the more we will continue to experience their positive benefits. I have explained this in detail previously. So dedicating one's virtues is also another means of protection.

Also, as presented previously, one of the most powerful antidotes for anger is, of course, meditating on emptiness. The realisation of emptiness is the ultimate antidote that protects one from anger.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

It is taught that the anger that destroys the virtue of one hundred or one thousand eons has to be directed at a bodhisattva, which is also taught in the *Introduction to the Middle Way*. The statement in the beginning of the chapter on the four resting places in the *Great Commentary on the Vinaya*, says that anger destroys one's vows, clearly refers to the fact that strong anger destroys one's roots of virtue.

This is quite clear. The commentary then states:

Further, since it is also stated in the *Blaze of Reasoning* that wrong views and harmful intent destroy one's roots of virtue, one should strive, among other things, to contain one's anger.

Blaze of Reasoning, composed by Bhavaviveka, states that it is not only anger that destroys one's root of virtue, but wrong views can do the same. Holding onto wrong views can also destroy one's roots of virtue. This is explained very clearly in that treatise.

The main point here is that one should strive to contain or control one's anger for these reasons. Of course more detailed explanations about the faults of anger and benefits of patience and so forth can be found in the Lam Rim teachings. So you can also refer to those explanations.

1.1.1.2. DISCERNING THE FAULTS OF ANGER AND THE BENEFITS OF PATIENCE, MAKE AN EFFORT TO MEDITATE ON PATIENCE

As presented here, the supreme means to overcome anger is to discern the faults of anger and contemplate the benefits of patience.

The sequence of this presentation is really very practical because without seeing its faults there will be no initiative to overcome anger. Furthermore, if one does not see the benefit of practising patience, then there will be no impetus to develop patience. So discerning the faults of anger and meditating on patience are crucial.

The verse relating to this outline is:

2. *There is no negativity like hatred,
There is no austerity like patience,
Therefore meditate on patience
In earnest in various ways!*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

There is no negativity like anger for obstructing the generation of the path and destroying virtue, and there is no austerity like patience for destroying the painful heat of the afflictions. Therefore meditate on patience in earnest in a variety of ways and methods!

This presentation is similar to that in the Lam Rim. In saying, *There is no negativity like anger for obstructing the generation of the path and destroying virtue*, the commentary is indicating that anger has two fundamental disadvantages.

The first is that it will hinder the ripening of the positive consequences of virtue. We all want to experience the positive consequences of the virtue that we have accumulated, and anger prevents the actualisation of those positive consequence.

The second is that the moment anger arises, it generates the causes to experience negative ripened consequences, such as being reborn in the hell realm, or one of the other unfortunate realms. Just as we want to experience happiness, we don't want to experience any kind of negative consequences. However, the moment anger arises it establishes the causes for unwanted experiences.

When we contemplate these two disadvantages then we can begin to get a sense of the gravity of the consequences of anger. Of course, there are many different kinds of negativities, but there is no greater negativity than hatred or anger.

Further, as explained in the commentary, *there is no austerity like patience for destroying the painful heat of the afflictions*. Here the misery of the afflictions is likened to the physical pain of experiencing extreme heat. This analogy illustrates the extent of the mental misery and anguish that one experiences from the afflictions.

This misery is overcome by the practice of patience, and as the commentary states, there is no austerity like patience. This is a very significant point. As you will recall, patience is classified into the patience of willingly enduring difficulties and hardships, and the patience of not retaliating when harm is inflicted by others. Hardships can arise from external problems and difficulties, and more particularly

from one's practices. So willingly enduring and accepting hardships and harm is indeed a great practice of austerity.

Therefore, as the commentary states, *meditate on patience* as a prelude to all the different methods of applying patience that will be presented later on in this chapter using logical reasons and so forth. So having contemplated these points one must strive to meditate in earnest to practise patience. *Earnest in a variety of ways and methods* includes the different classifications of patience mentioned earlier, as well as the various techniques and reasons and so forth.

1.1.2. The observable faults

Having considered the unobservable faults of anger, we now turn to the observable faults of anger. These are faults which we can immediately relate to, as we can see them in our life right now.

Observable faults are subdivided into two:

1.1.2.1. Anger takes away the opportunity for physical and mental wellbeing

1.1.2.2. It turns away friends and so forth

We have all experienced the effects of intense anger on our physical health and mental wellbeing, and we also know how anger turns away friends and so forth.

1.1.2.1. ANGER TAKES AWAY THE OPPORTUNITY FOR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING

Basically this heading is stating that anger robs us of opportunity for either physical or mental wellbeing. The verse relating to this outline reads:

3. *If one holds the painful mind of hatred
Then one's mind will not experience peace.
One will not attain joy or bliss,
Sleep will be elusive and there will be no stability.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

Since it generates intense suffering, if one holds the pain-like mind of anger, one cannot experience the joy of having pacified mental suffering. One will also not attain mental joy or physical bliss, sleep will be elusive and the stability of a mind abiding in its natural state will be non-existent.

Pain-like mind of anger indicates that while anger does not produce actual physical suffering, the mental anguish generated by anger is equated to intense physical suffering. So, *if one holds the pain-like mind of anger one cannot experience the joy of having pacified mental suffering*. Because of the anguish of anger, one cannot experience the joy of having overcome mental suffering.

As indicated earlier, anger robs us of any sense of joy or happiness, meaning that we will not have the opportunity to have a mind that has pacified mental suffering. This means that when we experience mental anguish and suffering there is a lack of joy and happiness in our mind. As a consequence, *one will also not attain mental joy or physical bliss*. The point here is that because of the lack of mental happiness, one will not experience any physical wellbeing as well, and thus *sleep* and so forth *will be elusive*.

Furthermore, *the stability of the mind abiding in its natural state will be non-existent*.

1.1.2.2. IT TURNS AWAY FRIENDS AND SO FORTH

This heading refers to the fact that intense anger turns away friends and so forth, and is covered in the next one and a half verses.

4. *Even those who became dependent on
The offerings of wealth and honour
Will rise up and kill
The malevolent lord.*
- 5ab. *Friends will get disgusted,
Even those gathered with generosity will leave.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of these verses thus:

Even those that have become dependent on the extended offerings of wealth and honour will rise up and kill the malevolent lord. Anger will also exasperate friends and cause them to be disgusted. It will also disrupt the affection of those who were gathered with generosity. Therefore one should abandon anger.

The commentary explains that even *those dependent on the extended offerings of wealth and honour will rise up and kill a lord* who is infested with hatred or anger. Those who are dependent on a lord or master who provides them with all their basic needs will, in the event that the master or lord harbours ill-will and anger, rise up and kill him. The kindness of the lord towards his subjects in some cases could be similar to that of parents who meet all the needs of their children, who are completely dependent on their parents to feed and clothe them. Even though the subjects have similarly depended on and received benefits from their lord, it is possible that they will rise up and kill him if he treats them with a negative mind of anger.

Even these days we see so much destruction caused through anger, even between very close relations. There are those who kill their employer, and in the worst case, we even see children killing their own parents and parents taking the life of their own child, or a wife killing her husband, or a husband killing his wife and so forth. We can see so many destructive behaviours that are all initiated out of anger.

As explained in the commentary, *anger will also exasperate friends and cause them to be disgusted*. If a subject can kill their own lord or master out of anger, there is no need to mention that friends and so forth will be exasperated and disgusted by anger. This point is definitely relevant. We can see so many situations where it only takes a frown, or some unpleasant remark to separate good friends. We can become really disgusted with others out of anger. How often do we hear remarks such as, 'Oh, I will never go out with them again'? Inappropriate gestures expressed with anger, such as foul remarks, a frowning face and so forth can definitely destroy relationships.

The main point is that anger turns away friends, relatives or partners and so forth. We can definitely relate to this significant point, and we need to be really mindful of it. One can also understand that if anger disrupts relationships of all kinds, then the opposite of anger, which is patience, will bring one closer to others, and lead to more harmonious relationships. So this contrast between anger and patience needs to be understood.

Furthermore, *anger will also disrupt the affection of those gathered with generosity*. Some may have gathered friends or subjects and so forth through being generous. While on one hand being generous brings people closer to you, on the other hand anger will destroy that relationship.

Thus the conclusion is that having contemplated these obvious disadvantages and faults of anger *one should abandon anger*. The way to contemplate this point is to reflect upon how anger can lead to forgetting the kindness of others, and

actually turn them against us. Anger can also create a distance between otherwise close friends or companions. This is how one needs to contemplate again and again the many great faults of anger.

1.1.3. A summary of the faults

The next four lines of verse summarise the faults of anger.

- 5cd. *In short, there is nobody
That abides in happiness through anger.*
- 6ab. *The enemy that is anger creates suffering
In the here and the thereafter.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

In short, due to anger there is no abiding in happiness. The enemy of anger is the supreme cause for the shortcomings explained earlier, such as suffering in the present and later.

As the commentary explains, *due to anger there is no abiding in happiness*, which relates to the very pertinent point that when anger is present in the mind there is no opportunity for the mind to abide in happiness and peace. So it is anger that causes the lack of a sense of joy and happiness in the mind. His Holiness the Dalai Lama also stresses this point and mentions it often in his teachings. He says that you can't find anyone who says that they are happy because they are angry! Anger gives no opportunity for any sense of joy or happiness in one's mind. That, in brief, is the main disadvantage of anger.

The commentary concludes, *therefore, the enemy of anger is the supreme cause for the shortcomings explained earlier, such as suffering in the present and later*, i.e. future lives.

1.2. The benefits of patience

I have, of course, presented this topic many times in the past. The relevant lines of verse read:

- 6cd. *Those who destroyed anger by focusing,
Will be happy here and thereafter.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Should a person, after having contemplated well the shortcomings of anger, focus their mind and destroy anger, then this will be the cause for their very happiness in this life and future lives.

As clearly explained in the commentary, when one has seen and fully acknowledged the faults of anger through contemplating and meditating, and taken the initiative to cultivate patience, then that *act of destroying anger will be the cause for happiness* to be experienced *in this life* right now, as well as *in future lives*.

This point was also explained by Lama Tsong Khapa. When the cause of the mental anguish that arises from anger has been removed, then what remains is happiness. What obstructs happiness is mental anguish and once that unhappiness has been removed, we find happiness. So, as Lama Tsong Khapa points out, when one takes the initiative to destroy anger, one will experience continuous happiness in this life. The happiness we experience now in this life will, as explained here, also be a cause for further happiness, as it will be a cause to obtain the high status of being reborn as a human or in the god realms, and ultimately to become a cause for definite goodness.

When one obtains such high status, it will be with perfect conditions, e.g. a human body with all the perfect conditions intact. That too causes happiness in future lives. Then the commentary continues:

Therefore one should strive in abandoning anger. If one does not abandon anger, then there are very great shortcomings, as explained in the *Sutra of the Great Play of Manjushri*.

On one hand one should contemplate the great advantages of abandoning anger, and on the other hand one should contemplate the great disadvantages of not abandoning anger. Even though it is not specified in the outline, what we can also understand here is that there can also be unobserved future benefits of practising patience, as well as the observable practical benefits we will experience in this life, where we will abide continuously in joy and happiness. So we can extract this further meaning from this section of the text.

2. BRINGING TO MIND THE METHOD TO ESTABLISH PATIENCE

This has two sub-divisions:

- 2.1. Eliminating the cause of anger
- 2.2. Meditating on the benefits of patience

2.1. Eliminating the cause of anger

Here there are four sub-headings:

- 2.1.1. The nature of the cause, including the shortcomings
- 2.1.2. Advice to strive in the method to oppose anger
- 2.1.3. The actual method to oppose anger
- 2.1.4. Striving in abandoning anger after having analysed the cause for anger in detail

We can conclude here for this evening.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

7 October 2014

As usual, we will spend some time in our meditation practice. [meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings on these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings, and put them into practice well.

2.1. Eliminating the cause for anger

2.1.1. The nature of the cause, including the shortcomings

This is a presentation of the nature of the cause of anger, as well as its shortcomings. The relevant verse reads:

7. *Finding the nourishment of mental unhappiness,
Which arises from the undesired and
From obstructions to the desired,
Hatred grows stronger and destroys self.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary opens with a hypothetical query:

Query: How does anger generate suffering?

Answer: Mental unhappiness, which comes either from that which causes the undesired or obstructs that which is desired by the self and that which is close to the self, is the nourishment which increases anger. Having found the nourishment of mental unhappiness, the body of hatred grows stronger and destroys self in this life and future lives.

This is a presentation of how anger arises within us. On a personal level, this understanding is really very helpful as it enables us to detect what causes us to feel angry in the first place. Recognising this process can help us to prevent anger from spiralling out of control.

How does anger generate suffering? The commentary begins by explaining that *mental unhappiness comes either from that which causes the undesired or obstructs that which is desired by the self and that which is close to the self*, i.e. relatives and so forth. As presented here, mental unhappiness arises due to undesired events affecting either oneself or those close to one, or an obstruction to what one desires. It is that mental unhappiness that is the *nourishment* or fuel for anger.

When we relate this to ourselves, we can see how true it is that we become really unhappy when we get what we don't want to experience, or when there is an obstruction to what we do desire to experience for ourselves and our close ones. As soon as our mind becomes unhappy we are prone to becoming angry. That is because, as presented here, mental unhappiness serves as a fuel to anger. Unhappiness nourishes and sustains anger just like food nourishes and sustains the body as it develops and

matures. Using this analogy the commentary says that, *having found the nourishment of mental unhappiness, the body of hatred grows stronger, and thus destroys our happiness in this life and in future lives*. These are really significant points about the underlying cause of anger.

We need to see the relationship between unhappiness and anger. We become unhappy when our desires are thwarted, or if we have to experience what we don't want. Then, because of that unhappiness, we focus on what we think has caused us pain and unhappiness, and anger arises. If it is an individual then our anger is directed at that person, and the more we think about how they have obstructed us, or caused us to experience something that we don't want, the more our anger increases. That is when we begin to regard the other person as an arch enemy.

We really need to understand how the process unfolds within our mind. We generate anger because we are unhappy. When we don't investigate thoroughly, we immediately blame the person who we consider has caused our unhappiness. However, if we investigate carefully, then we have to acknowledge that it is our own unhappiness that has caused the anger and which is creating so much mental agony and pain. When we use this sort of analysis we come to understand that it is that anger which is the real enemy, not the person.

Normally of course, we don't do that investigation, so we perceive external causes, such as a person or a particular situation, as the cause of our pain and unhappiness. When our mind is unhappy then, as presented here, that unhappiness fuels anger and nourishes it. As will be explained later, joy is the opposite of unhappiness, so being joyful will prevent unhappiness, which in turn prevents anger from arising. So, for example, if someone hits us with a stick, we start to feel unhappy as soon as we feel pain, and then, in a flash, we become angry with the person who inflicted that pain. But if we are not fazed by that one hit of a stick, and actually remain joyful, then there is no place for anger to arise.

The point made in the commentary is that as anger becomes stronger and stronger it destroys our happiness in this life and in future lives. Thus the exhortation, even though it is not mentioned specifically here, is that we must assiduously overcome anger.

When we consider the logic of the process by which we become angry we realise there is a state of mind between the event and the emotion of anger, which is our feeling of unhappiness. We are the owners of that unhappiness, so if we don't generate unhappiness then we will prevent the generation of anger. These are significant points that we really need to consider.

When we really embody this approach then we are practising the real meaning of patience. Many people comment on how amazing it is that His Holiness the Dalai Lama is so patient with the Communist Chinese. That is because His Holiness embodies this practice of patience so that what seems to be unimaginable becomes possible. If we really think about these significant points we will gain a very deep understanding. More details about this will be presented later on.

2.1.2. Advice to strive in the method to oppose anger

8. *Therefore I need to destroy the food
Of this enemy of mine,
An enemy who has no other function
Aside from harming me.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Therefore I should destroy mental unhappiness, the nourishment of this enemy of mine. There is nothing that harms me more than this enemy of anger, and I should strive in destroying this arch enemy of mine.

As has just been explained, our mental unhappiness serves as a fuel for anger, *therefore I should destroy mental unhappiness which is nourishment of this enemy of mine*, i.e. anger. Furthermore, because *there is nothing that harms me more than this enemy of anger I should strive in destroying this enemy of mine*. In other words, one needs to make an effort to overcome the real enemy that causes distress and agony. This is another significant point. When anger arises it not only harms others, but it also harms oneself. When one recognises that anger has no other function than to harm oneself, then one can recognise it as being the real enemy that needs to be overcome. Anger has no redeeming features. From our own experience we know that the moment anger arises we immediately feel unsettled and uncomfortable. Not only does it cause mental agony now, but anger also affects future lives as well.

The virtues of patience were presented earlier. The direct opposites of the virtues of patience are the faults of anger. Recognising that, we need to really embrace this on a personal level and do our best to overcome anger. Of course, our ultimate goal is to completely abandon anger. Meanwhile, we should, as much as possible, try to resort to these reasons and think about the disadvantages of anger when it does arise. This will help to lessen the intensity of our anger and prevent it from escalating. So we can definitely take measures now to prevent anger from taking root and increasing in intensity.

As personal practice, we need to put the most effort into protecting our own mind from anger, rather than finding excuses, like thinking, 'Oh well, they're angry so I have the right to get angry too'. If one uses that as a reason then there will be no end to one's anger. Even if one cannot stop the other person from becoming angry, one can at least make an attempt to control one's own mind and prevent anger from arising. To that extent it will benefit oneself, as well as defusing the conflict with the other.

Indeed, it is fuelling anger that causes more and more trouble in any situation. There are so many wars going on, and when we look at the situation we can see that those who are rising up are so fuelled up and angry, for whatever reason, that they will do anything to fight back. If, rather than trying to appease that anger and settle them down, one adds further causes for them to become upset, they will naturally rise up and fight with an even more intense anger. With these kinds of situations how can there really be world peace? We can never expect world peace when more fuel is added to already tense situations, with people who are already feeling unsettled.

In fact the patience practised by the stronger towards the weak is, as the teachings explain, the most supreme

practice of patience. The *Thirty-seven Practices of a Bodhisattva* mentions that the practice of patience by the mighty against those who are weaker is a really supreme practice. As the mighty can very easily crush those who are less powerful, they have no need to practise patience. In contrast, the weaker have no choice at all. They often have to take whatever harm is inflicted on them because they don't dare to fight back with someone who is mightier. So practising patience in those circumstances is said to be not as great as the powerful being patient with the weaker. At a global level, a mightier nation should be able to tolerate those who are causing some disturbance and so forth. Then peace will be possible. However, I suppose that mighty nations would not find that reasonable.

When animosity or anger between two nations or groups of people is appeased, then there is room for negotiation and peace is possible, and when anger is not appeased, there is no possibility for negotiation and peace and so forth. That is really how it is. At a personal level it is exactly the same—when there is anger there is conflict.

In fact, when a really powerful enemy crushes you, you are so afraid that there is really no time to be angry. That was my response when the Chinese came into Tibet. Someone once asked me, 'When you had to flee, did you feel any anger towards the Chinese' and my response was, 'I didn't even have time to feel angry as I was so afraid. The only thing that came to my mind at that time was that my life was in danger, and so I had to flee'. When there are guns being fired, and heavy artillery being used, the constant fear leaves no time to feel angry.

The point is that when the stronger overpower the weaker, then the weaker ones have to accept that. We can see this also with parents and their children; if parents scold or spank a young child then, of course, the child cannot do anything in return as it is so small. So when the powerful practise patience, and do not inflict harm on the weaker ones, then that is indeed a supreme act of patience.

The current conflict in Syria and Iraq is a case in point. Syria is a small country, and it seems very easy for America and Australia to decide to go there. I'm not sure about that. America has a very big population. Australia is smaller so Australia has to be very careful, otherwise the conflict will come closer to home.

In the fourth chapter Shantideva used the example of an external enemy to show the danger of befriending the delusions. When you befriend an external foe it is possible that they will turn around and become your friend if you are kind to them. In contrast, if you are kind and nice to the delusions within, they will just become more powerful and cause you more harm. These are all significant points.

Another significant verse concerning overcoming the real enemy within explained that it is easier to cover one's feet to protect them against sharp objects than trying to cover the whole earth with leather.¹ Likewise, overcoming the inner enemy of the delusions is equivalent to overcoming

¹ *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, chapter 5 verse 13.

all enemies. Some have confided in me that they have found this advice gives their practice real meaning and purpose. When we really contemplate these points they give us every reason to practise patience.

As we are inclined to engage in Dharma practice we need to derive the real essence of what is being presented here, and try to put it into practice. As presented in the teachings, we need to regard our internal afflictions and delusions as our real enemy, and use all our energy to combat and overcome them. Conversely, we need to practise love for our external enemies. So, in short, extend love towards external enemies, and don't be patient with internal enemies. Try to use every means to overcome those inner delusions. That is, in essence, the practice we need to adopt if we are to consider ourselves Dharma practitioners.

2.1.3. The actual method to oppose anger

Once again we can take note of the sequence of outlines, although, of course, Gyalsab Je's commentary only reflects what is presented in the actual text. We have just covered the reasons why it is necessary to apply the method to oppose anger. Now we are presented with the actual methods that oppose anger. Gyalsab Je's meticulous outlines really bring out the logical presentation of Shantideva's text, and it is good for us to really relate to this text in a systemic way, as a way of integrating it in our practice. Rather than just thinking, 'Oh, this is just an outline', we can see that the outlines, just by themselves, have great purpose.

The actual method to oppose anger is subdivided into two:

2.1.3.1. It is unsuitable to generate mental unhappiness

2.1.3.2. The reason for that

2.1.3.1. IT IS UNSUITABLE TO GENERATE MENTAL UNHAPPINESS

The commentary on the verse begins this query:

Query: How then does one abandon mental unhappiness?

Here we can see the elegant simplicity of the presentation. The verse that relates to this reads:

9. *Whatever happens, I should never
Let this mind of joy be disturbed.
Though disliking, one will not attain one's
desire,
And virtue will degenerate.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary goes on to explain:

Having contemplated the benefits of accepting suffering think: "I shall under no circumstances let my mental joy be disturbed." Contemplate this point well.

Mental joy is the antidote to mental unhappiness. Therefore, if one generates dislike upon meeting something undesired, then, though one generates dislike, one will not achieve one's wishes, and the virtue that bestows the desired result degenerates. In this way all sufferings are generated.

Having contemplated the benefits of accepting suffering, refers to the benefits of willingly accepting suffering, which will be presented in more detail later on in the text. The point here is that suffering does have some advantages and should not be viewed in a completely negative light. There are in fact many *benefits* in *accepting suffering*, and

contemplating this one should think, '*I shall under no circumstances let my mental joy be disturbed*'. This is a point I also make in my own teachings. I often remind people that preserving and protecting one's joy is of the utmost importance for one's wellbeing.

Having contemplated this point thoroughly, we need to make the personal commitment, 'Regardless of whether the circumstances are good or bad, and especially when things are not going well, I will not allow my sense of joy to be disturbed or diminished', and in that way maintain that feeling of joy and happiness.

As presented in the commentary, joy is the antidote to mental unhappiness. *If upon meeting something that is undesired*, e.g. being harmed, *one generates dislike*, however that dislike *will not achieve one's wishes*. In other words, developing a dislike for someone who harms us won't affect that person at all. Furthermore, rather than accomplishing one's wishes, developing dislike actually destroys the virtue within oneself, obstructing the desired result of happiness.

In summary, as the commentary states, *In this way all sufferings are generated*. The point here is that whatever the unfavourable circumstance, generating dislike will not help to accomplish our wish for our own wellbeing. Indeed, rather than accomplishing anything, generating dislike actually harms our future experience of joy and happiness, because it results in the degeneration of the virtue within us. Because it is a negativity, the moment anger is generated it destroys the virtue that we have accumulated, which is the cause of our future happiness. That is how, as explained in the commentary, all sufferings are generated.

2.1.3.2. THE REASON FOR THAT

This refers to the reason why it is unsuitable to generate unhappiness. The verse in relation to this outline is one that many have found to be extremely useful and beneficial. It is a verse that is often quoted, and you will all have come across it many times.

10. *If one can do something
What is there to dislike?
If one can do nothing,
What use is dislike?*

Gyalsab Je explains the meaning of the verse thus:

If one can do something about the object that generates mental unhappiness, then what reason is there to generate dislike? Right away one acts and the mental unhappiness vanishes. In case one cannot do something then what is the use to generate unhappiness? One can dislike that space lacks obstructions, but what is the benefit in that?

As so clearly presented here, *if one can do something about an object that generates mental unhappiness then what reason is there to generate dislike?* To take a contemporary example, if a car breaks down and the problem can be fixed then taking it to a mechanic to be fixed will solve the problem. There is no real need for dislike or an unhappy state of mind, because it is fixable. In the event that it can't be fixed and has to be written off then, again, there is no purpose in generating dislike. If it can be fixed then there is no need to worry; if it cannot be fixed then there is no purpose in worrying about that either. We can

use other examples such as someone dropping a ceramic cup. If it is cracked it can be fixed, so you fix it and then you can use it again. So there is no need to generate dislike and an unhappy mind. Whereas if it is broken into pieces and cannot be fixed, then generating dislike and worrying about it will not help to solve the situation. It will just cause more mental distress.

This advice is particularly relevant with physical illnesses. When we are ill and there is a remedy or cure then there is no need to really worry and generate a mind of dislike, as it can be cured. In the event that it is a disease that is difficult to cure then one has to accept that. The mental anguish generated from worrying will just add mental suffering to our physical suffering.

As the commentary states, if it can be fixed, *then right away one acts and the mental unhappiness vanishes. In the case one cannot do something then what is the use to generate unhappiness?* So again we are being reminded that if a situation cannot be remedied, or cannot be fixed, then there is no use in generating unhappiness. A further analogy presented in the commentary is that *one can dislike that space lacks obstruction but what is the benefit in that?* If someone were to be really upset with space because it lacks obstruction, saying, 'Oh, this space is useless. It's empty and doesn't have any function', then what purpose would that serve? None at all.

2.1.4. Striving in abandoning anger after having analysed the cause for anger in detail

This has three subdivisions:

2.1.4.1. Showing the general division of objects for generating anger

2.1.4.2. Stopping anger at undesired actions

2.1.4.3. Stopping anger at obstructions to one's wishes

2.1.4.1. SHOWING THE GENERAL DIVISION OF OBJECTS FOR GENERATING ANGER

Here we are being presented with the different kinds of objects or situations that generate anger. Some use these same objects as objects for generating patience. In fact the objects of anger and the objects of patience are basically the same, aren't they? The objects of our anger are the very objects with which one needs to generate patience with.

Here Gyaltsab Je uses these objects in the context of anger. The relevant verse reads:

11. *I do not wish for myself or my friends
Suffering, criticism, harsh words
And unpleasant talk.
For the enemy it is the opposite*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

For myself and my friends I do not want these four: feelings of suffering, criticism, harsh words spoken to one's face and the spreading of unpleasant derogatory rumours. These I do not wish for, and wish to reverse them, but in relation to the enemy these likes and dislikes are the opposite. In short, they are the eight worldly dharmas.

In relation to ourselves and those closest to us we don't want to experience any kind of *feelings of suffering*, any kind of *criticism*, or *harsh words* spoken directly to us, or *the spreading of any unpleasant or derogatory rumours*.

In fact we wish to experience their *reverse*, meaning that we want to experience the opposite of what we don't want. We do not want to feel any suffering and we want to feel happiness; we do not wish for criticism and we wish for praise; we do not wish for harsh words but wish only for pleasant words to be spoken to us; and we do not wish for unpleasant or derogatory rumours to be spread about us, but wish to have a good reputation.

But in relation to our enemies we wish the opposite. We want them to feel suffering and be the object of criticism, harsh words and unpleasant, derogatory rumours. Meanwhile we don't want them to experience the opposite of these negative experiences.

Basically, with these eight worldly concerns we want to experience the positives, but don't want to experience the negatives, whereas we want enemies to experience the negatives and not the positives. When we see how true this is for ourselves, we can see how these objects are the basis for all anger. When we are experiencing the negative side anger arises, and we also feel anger when the enemy experiences the positive side. So basically these eight worldly concerns or dharmas serve as the basis of so many unwholesome actions and non-virtuous states of mind.

Maybe we can go into a little bit more detail about these eight worldly dharmas in our next session. In the meantime it would be good for you to really look into these and understand how you actually experience them: the four that I do not wish for, and their opposites which I do wish for, whilst for my enemies I wish the reverse.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་པའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

14 October 2014

As usual we can devote some time to our meditation practice.

[meditation]

Now we generate the most positive motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

I need to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all mother sentient beings, so for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

2.1.4.1. SHOWING THE GENERAL DIVISION OF OBJECTS FOR GENERATING ANGER (CONT.)

In short, one should refrain from the eight worldly dharmas, which are the causes of anger. As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

For myself and my friends I do not want these four: feelings of suffering, criticism, harsh words spoken to one's face and the spreading of unpleasant derogatory rumours.

When we, or our close and dear ones, experience these four unpleasant situations, then anger arises. Conversely we wish for their opposites: wanting to experience happiness rather than suffering; wanting to experience praise rather than criticism; wanting to hear pleasant words rather than harsh words; and wanting to have fame rather than experience derogatory rumours. We don't want to experience the four unpleasant situations and we do want to experience the four pleasant ones.

It is the complete opposite for our enemies—we are happy when they experience suffering, but unhappy and angry when they experience happiness. We don't want them to receive any praise, and are happy when they are criticised; we are unhappy when they have pleasant words spoken to them, but glad when harsh words are used towards them. If our enemies have fame, then that makes us uncomfortable and unhappy, and thus angry, and when there are unpleasant rumours about them, we are glad.

Those, in brief, are the eight worldly concerns: one wishes to avoid four unfavourable conditions, but wishes them upon one's enemies; one wishes to enjoy four favourable conditions, but hopes one's enemies will not encounter them. As I have said, it's important for us to really look into how we get caught up in the eight worldly concerns.

In short, we basically want to experience the happiness of the contaminated samsaric pleasures. Of course, there is nothing wrong with wishing to have a higher level of happiness, but here we are talking about a strong clinging and attachment to the happiness derived from samsaric pleasures, and an aversion to any unpleasant experiences. We want to be praised and not criticised. We cling to worldly fame, and are unhappy if we are the object of any

derogatory rumours. Fame itself is not a bad thing if it is based on actual good qualities. For example, amongst sentient beings no-one could be more famous than a bodhisattva. Bodhisattvas are renowned for their deeds of benefiting other sentient beings, so a bodhisattva's fame only enables them to further benefit sentient beings, rather than being a source of harm to themselves. Thus, as the term itself indicates, we need to understand that the eight worldly dharmas refer to worldly concerns.

I have explained the means to counteract the eight worldly dharmas in detail previously, however as it is important to have a good understanding of them, I will go over it again now. So, as explained earlier, one wishes for the happiness that is derived from being attached to the contaminated worldly pleasures, and it is this happiness derived from worldly pleasures, fame, praise and pleasant remarks which are related to worldly views that we need to overcome. Whereas the happiness that one would experience from obtaining liberation or ultimate enlightenment is a happiness that we need to pursue, for it is a worthy goal. Wishing for the happiness of liberation or enlightenment will inspire us to achieve that great goal.

As explained in Nagarjuna's *Letter to the King*, as well as in the Lam Rim teachings, one needs to equalise the eight worldly concerns or dharmas. This means we need to adopt an attitude which is the opposite of our normal attitudes. Instead of wishing for happiness, one willingly wishes to endure suffering and hardship, and so forth. The way to understand this in its proper context is that the experience of even temporary happiness is the result of good karma, or the virtue that one has accumulated in the past. Thus, when we experience that wellbeing and happiness, we are actually using up our good karma. When we reflect upon this fact, then we won't feel too keen about wishing to experience samsaric pleasures, because we know that we will be using up our own good karma.

Suffering, on the other hand is the result of negative karma, and whenever one experiences suffering it is exhausting the negative karma that one has accumulated in the past. By contemplating in this way we realise that since suffering exhausts our negative karma, it is actually good for us, and the sooner our negative karma is expended, the better it is for us. By thinking in this way, we realise that it is quite reasonable to change our attitude from wishing to experience happiness and avoid suffering, to one of willingly wishing to experience suffering, and being very wary of experiencing the happiness arising from worldly pleasures. By adopting this attitude, one will not be daunted by suffering, because of the knowledge that it is expending one's negative karma. With this attitude one will also be practising the patience of willingly tolerating sufferings.

Another way to look at the significance of the practice of equalising the eight worldly dharmas is that by not engaging in this equalising practice and exchanging our attitudes, we are, in effect, longing to experience the happiness of worldly samsaric pleasures. Such a longing will increase our attachment, which will then hinder our practice. When our attachment to the happiness of samsaric pleasures increases, it further intensifies our

anger when we experience its opposite, which is suffering.

Furthermore, when we anticipate the joy of experiencing samsaric pleasures, we are ignorant of the fact that such happiness is in the nature of contaminated pleasure, rather than long-lasting happiness. Holding onto this view increases our ignorance. Thus the three poisons are increased if one does not practise equalising the eight worldly concerns.

Taking up this practice of equalising the eight worldly concerns will strengthen our *tong len* (giving and taking) practice, which we attempt to practise in our regular meditation. As I have mentioned previously, someone who doesn't wish to experience happiness, and who willingly wishes to experience suffering, can really take the *tong len* practice to heart. If one does not want to experience suffering and wants to experience only happiness, it wouldn't be possible to even think of taking on the suffering of other sentient beings. Furthermore if one is really attached to happiness, one would not want to be parted from it, so giving one's happiness away to other sentient beings would not be possible. As I have mentioned previously, the *tong len* practice would be an appropriate practice for those who have taken up the practice of equalising the eight worldly dharmas.

To summarise the main points, the 'taking' part of the *tong len* practice is when one willingly wishes to take the suffering of others upon oneself. When one is wary about experiencing happiness, one will easily be able to give it to other sentient beings, which covers the 'giving' part of the practice. As mentioned previously, being able to practise the patience of enduring suffering will prevent anger from arising when one experiences hardships and difficulties. Rather than being unhappy when our enemies experience happiness, we will be glad about that, which will also prevent anger from arising when we see our enemies experiencing good conditions. This is really a great and profound practice, so it shouldn't be taken lightly. Indeed this practice has great meaning and purpose. This should be apparent when one sees the extent to which it transforms our mind. Further details about this will be presented later on.

2.1.4.2. STOPPING ANGER AT UNDESIRED ACTIONS

This section covers how to prevent anger from arising. There are three subdivisions:

2.1.4.1.1. Stopping anger at wrongdoings directed at oneself

2.1.4.1.2. Stopping anger at wrongdoings directed at one's friends

2.1.4.1.3. Stopping anger at those who benefit one's enemies

We can see how these three types of anger definitely relate to our immediate experiences in everyday life. The moment one experiences some wrongdoing directed at oneself or one's friends, one immediately becomes upset and angry. How wonderful it would be if we could actually prevent anger from arising when we face such situations! How gentle and calm our mind would be!

STOPPING ANGER AT WRONGDOINGS DIRECTED AT ONESELF¹

This has two main sections:

1. Tolerating the generation of suffering
2. Being patient with contempt and so forth

1. TOLERATING THE GENERATION OF SUFFERING

This section is subdivided into three:

- 1.1. Meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering
- 1.2. Meditating on the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma
- 1.3. Meditating on the patience that does not think anything of harm.

This is where the three divisions of patience are presented:

- Meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering
- Meditating on the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma
- Meditating on the patience that does not think of anything of harm.

As presented many times, the definition of patience is a mind that does not become disturbed in the face of harm and suffering. So this means if our mind is not disturbed when we experience harm from external conditions, or from our own experiences of suffering, then we are practising patience.

The opposite of patience is anger. The Lam Rim teachings specifically mention an opposite to each of the three types of patience listed here. However, in general, anger is the opposite of patience. The definition of anger is the malicious mind that intends to harm, which is focused on the three objects that cause one suffering.

The patience of willingly tolerating suffering is really a paramount practice for everyday life. Anger is mostly related to lacking the patience to tolerate suffering. So whenever we experience suffering we can contemplate, 'This is the result of my non-virtuous actions in the past, and therefore it is befitting that I experience this now, as a way to eradicate the results of my past negativities'. By contemplating in this way, suffering becomes more acceptable, and we will not become despondent when we experience it.

As I said earlier, the Lam Rim explains the opposites of these three kinds of patience. As I recall, the opposite to the patience of *meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering*, is a despondent mind that feels weighed down and worthless. The opposite to *meditating on the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma*, is a lack of interest in the Dharma, and no aspiration to practise it. The opposite of *meditating on the patience that does not think of anything of harm*, is basically anger. You can check the Lam Rim as well, but these are, as I recall, the opposite of the three kinds of patience.

1.1. Meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering

This is subdivided into five:

- 1.1.1. Contemplating that one is not beyond the nature of contaminated suffering

¹ To keep them manageable the heading numbers and styles start again at this point.

1.1.2. Contemplating the benefits of meditating on suffering

1.1.3. Contemplating how they are not difficult once habituated

1.1.4. The benefits of striving to abandoning afflictions

1.1.5. Extensive explanation of the benefits of suffering

1.1.1. Contemplating that one is not beyond the nature of contaminated suffering

One is not beyond the nature of contaminated suffering means that one definitely has to experience contaminated sufferings. Because one is still in samsara, one still has a samsaric nature.

The relevant lines of verse from the root text read:

*12ab. Causes for happiness come adventitiously,
Causes for suffering abound.*

In his commentary on these two lines Gyaltsab Je explains:

In cyclic existence the causes for happiness arise only occasionally and the causes for suffering abound. Since one is not beyond the nature of cyclic existence it is appropriate to tolerate sufferings.

As explained in the commentary, *in cyclic existence the causes for happiness arise only occasionally*. One needs to understand that the cause for happiness is virtue. Thus, for example, if you were to reflect upon whether you have accumulated virtue or non-virtue today, it may be quite evident that you have created more non-virtuous deeds than virtuous ones. If that is the case, you would have been creating more causes for suffering than causes for happiness. So, as indicated in the commentary, when the causes to experience happiness are generated only occasionally, then naturally, the result of happiness is also only occasional, and instead of happiness, one experiences more suffering. This can also relate to the fact that the immediate causes for our happiness are also scarce. Even on a daily basis there are far more occasions where things go wrong, which cause us suffering, than conditions for happiness.

Since one is not beyond the nature of cyclic existence the causes for suffering abound, relates to non-virtuous activities or negativities. If the delusions are prevalent in our mind, then it is more likely that we will be creating more non-virtues or negativities on a regular basis. If we find that this is true for ourselves now, then it would also have to have been true in past lives. Through having created abundant causes for suffering in the past, one naturally experiences more suffering now. Likewise, if we failed to create the cause of happiness, which is virtue, in previous lives, we will naturally experience the result of a lack of happiness now.

These are really significant points about karma. When one creates non-virtuous deeds and negativity, the result will be suffering. Whereas if one creates virtuous deeds, the result will be happiness. As the great Kadampa masters advised, on a regular basis one should, at the end of the day, count up how many deeds were influenced by the delusions, and were thus negative deeds, and how much virtue was accrued during the day. The results of this analysis show us our progress. Then we can slowly transform our lives by creating more virtues and shunning more negativities. This is a personal instruction

on how to adopt virtue and abandon negativity. If we do that then we will then secure a better life right now, as well as preparing for our experiences in future lifetimes. This is very succinct advice that is being presented here.

In very simple terms, if we wish to experience real happiness in life, then we need to accumulate virtue. If you want to experience real happiness, then you must accumulate the causes for that, which is virtue. If you do not wish to experience suffering, then you need to abandon negativity which will eradicate the causes for suffering. One becomes a real practitioner when one abides by this code of training. When we really contemplate and think about how our experiences now are related to specific causes and conditions that were created in the past, we generate a real confidence in the importance of adopting virtue and abandoning negativity. We really need to take this on board.

1.1.2. Contemplating the benefits of meditating on suffering

One should understand that we don't need to be completely afraid of suffering, as there are actually benefits in experiencing it.

The following six lines explain this:

*12cd. Without suffering there is no renunciation
Therefore, mind be firm!*

*13. If the faithful of Durga and the Kanapa
Tolerate the meaningless feelings of
Being burned and cut, then why
Do I not have courage for liberation?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on these lines reads as follows:

It is appropriate to contemplate cyclic existence to be in the nature of suffering because without contemplating the suffering of samsara the mind definitely wishing to be free from samsara will not arise. Hence, "Mind be firm!"

It is appropriate to tolerate suffering. The faithful of the goddess Uma, in order to reverse and lessen the austerities of Ishvara, on the ninth of the middle month of autumn, fast and cut and burn themselves for one or three days in order to please her.

The people of Kanapa and so forth in the south, in order to compete with each other, endure the sufferings of cutting their bodies and the like. If one can tolerate sufferings for such meaningless purposes, then why do I fear the experiences of suffering for the great purpose of liberating all sentient beings from their sufferings? It is appropriate to tolerate them.

As explained here in the commentary, *it is appropriate to contemplate cyclic existence to be in the nature of suffering, otherwise the mind wishing to definitely be free from samsara will not arise*. As one of the great lamas, Drakha Rinpoche, who was from the same area in Tibet where I come from mentioned, there are no accounts of practitioners entering the path and gaining realisations by experiencing pleasures.

How this previously unknown booklet by Drakha Rinpoche came to be published was that there was an occasion when His Holiness the Dalai Lama was delayed in Patna for some time. In order to pass the time he said, "I'd like to check out what's in the library here, as I've heard it holds some rare texts in its collection". So

Dzongsar Rinpoche went to the Patna Library and found a collection of Drakha Rinpoche's works. When this was brought to His Holiness' attention, His Holiness was interested and wanted to see them. When he came across this particular text he was so impressed that he said "Oh, this should be made more available!" That was when this booklet was published. Apparently there is also a collection of Drakha Rinpoche's works in a library in America. It is quite amazing to think that a library in Patna and a library in America had held copies of his works, but this was not widely known.

After this text was published it remained relatively unknown until His Holiness the Dalai Lama mentioned in a teaching how he had found the advice given by Drakha Rinpoche to have been very beneficial for his own mind. The booklet was being distributed freely during a teaching, and so people quickly rushed to acquire a copy for themselves! Having gained access to this book, we can see its great significance.

Of course if we had ample time I would be referring to some of the appropriate passages in this book, along with the Lam Rim teachings. But because we don't have much time, we won't do that. In his text, Drakha Rinpoche says that there are many accounts of delusions increasing and negativities not being purified, as a result of enjoying the pleasures and happiness of samsara, and no accounts of practitioners who have lessened their delusions and purified their negativities through the experience of pleasures. However there are many accounts of practitioners who, having contemplated suffering, have lessened their delusions, purified their negativities, and accumulated extensive merit.

Then he quotes the great Kadampa master Chen-ngawa, who says one should cherish suffering, for it is through sufferings and hardships that the lamas and Sangha perform their great virtuous deeds. The great extensive deeds of the lamas are indeed the result of enduring a great amount of suffering and hardship in their practice. The sangha also endure the hardships of practising morality, and endure discomforts whilst engaging in virtues of the three doors of body, speech and mind. Thus, by willingly experiencing sufferings they are able to purify extensive negativities and accumulate very extensive merit to achieve the higher realisations of liberation and enlightenment. This is why, as explained, it is appropriate to cherish suffering.

The great lama Drakha Rinpoche was also known, amongst those who revered him, as a manifestation of Chenrezig. On a personal note, I had a classmate who came from the same town as Drakha Rinpoche. So he had an unequivocal faith in Drakha Rinpoche and he used to say to me, "Oh, there's really no lama like Drakha Rinpoche. He's a really incredible practitioner and a great being".

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains that *it is appropriate to contemplate cyclic existence to be in the nature of suffering*. As mentioned before, without contemplating the nature of samsara the wish to definitely be free from samsara will not arise. When one sees the great benefits from contemplating suffering, one will see the appropriateness of enduring suffering.

Furthermore, as explained in the commentary *it is appropriate to tolerate suffering*. Examples of such suffering include *the faithful of the goddess Uma, who, in order to reverse and lessen the austerities of Ishvara, on the ninth of the middle month of autumn, fast and cut and burn themselves for one or three days in order to please her*. So just to please this goddess, the devotees of Uma endure extreme pain and suffering.

Furthermore, *the people of Kanapa and so forth in the south, in order to compete with each other, endure the sufferings of cutting their bodies and the like. If one can tolerate sufferings for such meaningless purposes, then why do I fear the experiences of suffering for the great purpose of liberating all sentient beings from their sufferings?* So in comparison to such meaningless sufferings without much purpose, one's own sufferings, which arise from engaging in practices for the purpose of liberating all sentient beings from their sufferings, are worthwhile. By contemplating this we will not fear suffering. The implication here is that, as explained in the commentary, it is appropriate to tolerate suffering. More extensive benefits will be explained later.

There are many accounts of people enduring extremely painful acts such as putting fire on their heads and inflicting harm on their body in various other ways, for meaningless reasons.

1.1.3. Contemplating how they are not difficult once habituated

As indicated, tolerating suffering will not be difficult once one becomes acquainted with it.

That is subdivided into two:

1.1.3.1. Extensive explanation

1.1.3.2. Summary

1.1.3.1. EXTENSIVE EXPLANATION

This has four subdivisions:

1.1.3.1.1. It becomes easier with familiarisation

1.1.3.1.2. Establishing this with an example

1.1.3.1.3. The object to tolerate

1.1.3.1.4. Example of how, through familiarity the strength of patience increases

We can go over these in our next session. The main thing for you to do is to familiarise yourselves with the explanations, and try to understand them in relation to your own practice. As one of our real enemies is anger, finding ways of how to oppose this enemy is really worthwhile.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་པའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

21 October 2014

As usual we can spend some time in our meditation practice.

[meditation]

Now we generate a positive motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings, and put them into practice well.

1.1. Meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering (cont.)

1.1.3. Contemplating how they are not difficult once habituated

1.1.3.1. EXTENSIVE EXPLANATION

1.1.3.1.1. It becomes easier with familiarisation

This section of the text shows how, through becoming familiar with suffering, we are able to endure things that we may not have been able to endure previously. For example, suffering due to relatively minor ailments might be hard to endure initially, but if we familiarise ourselves with them, we will actually be able to tolerate them later on. Likewise, we may initially view harms inflicted upon us as unbearable or intolerable, but through familiarity with them we will come to tolerate them. The verse under this heading is a verse that is often cited to show that one of the characteristics of our mind is that it is possible to train it to manage things that we might previously have been unable to do. This is what *it becomes easier with familiarisation* means.

We really need to contemplate this point in relation to every aspect of our life. For example, even mundane tasks like work, or engaging in any kind of training, require some effort. If we don't develop the mind of being able to bear hardships and difficulties then we might easily give up because we think, "Oh this is too hard". All too often we see people give up their assignments, training and even their studies, saying, "Oh, this is too difficult". Thinking in that way can easily become a habit, leading some to give up as soon as there is some difficulty or hardship.

Developing a courageous mind that willingly accepts difficulties and hardships is part of the patience of willingly accepting hardship, as well as the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma. The patience of willingly tolerating harm is related to the harm that others may inflict upon us, whereas the patience of definitely relying on the Dharma can be applied to a range of different circumstances.

As the definition of patience suggests, a mind that does not become disturbed in the face of adversity or harm is definitely a calm and stable mind that is not prone to

agitation. When the mind is not disturbed then that prevents anger from arising. That is how we need to see patience as being a direct opponent to anger. When the mind is not disturbed we will be able to accomplish whatever we need to accomplish. Conversely, when the mind is disturbed then it hinders whatever one is trying to achieve, and creates many negativities as well. When we really think about what patience really means, its benefits and how it is essential for our wellbeing, then we come to the natural conclusion, "I must definitely develop patience—I cannot afford to be without it".

Just as developing patience is essential for one's own wellbeing and relationships with others, it is also true for all the practices of the six perfections. Each one of the six perfections is essential for both our personal development and as a means of benefitting others. That is why the six perfections are the core practices of the bodhisattvas. As they practise the six perfections, bodhisattvas willingly undergo hardships and difficulties with joy, rather than any sense of suffering. That is how we need to understand the significance of these practices.

The practice of patience also strengthens the capacity of the mind to face hardships and difficulties. Whenever there is an occasion where harm is inflicted, practising patience will further increase the level of our tolerance. So the harm actually becomes an impetus to further develop patience, and make it even stronger. So, once one is committed to practise patience, experiencing harm only helps to increase and further strengthen our patience, rather than decreasing it.

The verse relating to this section of the text reads:

14. *There is nothing that does not become Easier through familiarisation. Therefore, by meditating on small harm One will be able to tolerate great harm.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this oft-quoted verse begins with:

If one meditates on patience, then one will also tolerate suffering. All ways of apprehending arise through familiarisation, and therefore there is no object of the mind that does not become easier through familiarisation.

As the commentary explains, *if one meditates on patience then one will also tolerate suffering*. This is very succinctly pointing out that if one practises patience, then that will naturally enable one to also tolerate suffering. Conversely, one is unable to tolerate any kind of suffering when one lacks patience. These are very important points because as ordinary beings we are bound to experience some form of suffering or hardship at different times in our life. So if we don't develop a mind of being patient and tolerating suffering our minds will constantly be in a disturbed and agitated state. Then there will be no room in our minds to actually practise anything in depth. Indeed it is almost impossible to accomplish anything of significance when our mind is constantly in an agitated and disturbed state.

When we think about this we will come to the conclusion that patience is essential, and that we cannot function effectively without it. As the heading itself suggests, it is not beyond our capacity to practise patience because it is a matter of familiarising our mind with accepting and

tolerating suffering and harm. As we train our mind in this way it becomes possible for us to tolerate even greater hardship and suffering, because the nature of the mind is such that there is nothing that cannot be developed through familiarisation.

The commentary explains that *if one meditates on patience then one will be able to tolerate suffering*, because *all ways of apprehending arise through familiarisation*. The very basis of the mind is that whatever is apprehended by the mind is based on familiarity with it. So whatever the mind apprehends now is possible due to that familiarisation. For that reason, *there is no object of the mind that does not become easier through familiarisation*. The very basis, and hence potential of the mind is that it knows and apprehends things through familiarisation. This implies that, through familiarisation with an object, it becomes easier and easier for the mind to apprehend that object. This point supports the earlier reasons.

The main point can be summarised in this way: If one were to ask whether an ordinary mind has faults, then of course the answer is that yes, an ordinary mind does have various faults. But it also carries the inborn ability to familiarise itself with good qualities, and is thus able to develop those good qualities. In other words, while the mind possesses many faults, it also possesses the ability to develop qualities, and thus carries the ability to remove those faults.

These are essential points. We often feel despondent, thinking, "Oh, I am riddled with faults, and therefore I cannot achieve anything; I am good for nothing". All too often we just focus on our faults and feel despondent and discouraged. We give up things easily and don't really consider going further to improve ourselves. When we experience these feelings, we need to remind ourselves, "Yes, we might have faults as ordinary beings. But the very nature of the mind is that it naturally carries the potential to develop qualities, and that is done through familiarisation".

Then Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

For this reason, having meditated on tolerating small harms such as hot or cold, or harsh speech by others and so forth, know that one can also be patient with great harms such as the fires of the hell realms.

The commentary indicates that because one can learn to tolerate *small harms such as hot and cold, or harsh speech by others and so forth*, one is therefore able to train one's mind to tolerate greater sufferings. Before we can even attempt to think of tolerating greater suffering, we need to train our mind in being able to tolerate small suffering. Compared to the sufferings of hell realms, the suffering of feeling hot and cold, or being the recipient of harsh speech—which, as mere words, do not physically harm us—is really quite insignificant. However if we don't train our mind to tolerate minor suffering such as feeling a bit hot or cold, and hearing harsh words, then the mind becomes habituated with not being able to tolerate any kind of suffering, no matter how small. Whereas if we can train our mind to tolerate natural suffering like being a bit hot, or a bit cold, or occasionally hearing some unpleasant words, then it is possible to be patient with greater harms, specifically the sufferings of fire in hell realms.

This explanation is, of course, in the context of the great deeds of bodhisattvas. There are many accounts of bodhisattvas willingly accepting great sufferings - even going to the hell realms - in order to benefit sentient beings. This shows the great courage of the bodhisattvas and the extent to which they have developed their tolerance and patience in order to benefit sentient beings. They initially developed that level of patience and tolerance through familiarisation with smaller sufferings. So the point here is that if we familiarise ourselves with tolerating small harms such as heat and cold and harsh words and so forth, then it is possible for us to slowly, slowly be able to tolerate greater harms.

The main point is that developing the practice of patience is a matter of going through stages from being able to tolerate and endure small sufferings, and then slowly, slowly increasing the level of our tolerance and patience so that we are able to endure great sufferings. As mentioned here, if it is possible for bodhisattvas to endure the sufferings of the hell realms, then it is possible for us as well.

As a way to back this up, the commentary quotes from the sutra called the *Sutra of the Meeting of Father and Son*. This sutra is an account of the Buddha's life, and *meeting the father* is a symbolic expression that indicates reaching enlightenment. The quote reads:

The Bhagavan possesses the concentration called *All Phenomena Become Happiness*. Whoever attains this concentration will experience all objects of bodhisattvas only as happiness and will not experience suffering ... should they receive the harm of the hell beings they will still abide in the recognition of happiness.

The sutra is quite clear, so we don't need to explain it much more. The point is that *should they receive the harm of the hell realms, bodhisattvas will still abide in happiness*. As the sutra clearly states, due to practising patience, bodhisattvas are not troubled when they encounter suffering. Rather than experiencing suffering and unhappiness, they experience joy and happiness.

1.1.3.1.2. *Establishing this with an example*

This section presents an example of how patience becomes easier through familiarisation.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins with a hypothetical qualm.

Qualm: If we meditate on small sufferings, the patience will not have power.

This hypothetical qualm is to remove any doubt that the patience developed through meditating on small sufferings will not have much power. In response to that, the next verse is presented.

15. *Snakes and insects,
The feelings of hunger and thirst,
Rashes and so forth,
Who has not seen it with these meaningless
sufferings?*

The commentary goes on to say:

Answer: Why do you not see that if one meditates on patience for small and absolutely meaningless sufferings, such as the feelings of hunger and thirst, skin diseases, rashes and the like, that they then

become tolerable, and if one does not meditate, they become difficult to bear. This is directly observable and it is therefore appropriate to meditate on patience.

This explanation is quite clear. The main point is *why would you not see that if one meditates on patience for small and absolutely meaningless sufferings, that they will become tolerable*. The commentary says that being hungry or thirsty or having rashes and the like are quite small inconveniences. They become tolerable if one practises patience, and they become difficult to bear if one does not practise patience. We can see how true this statement is from our own experience. If, when we are confronted with being hungry or a bit too hot, we allow our mind to become obsessed by that, and see that as a problem, then we start to become more and more uncomfortable. Whereas the moment we accept the discomfort and think, "Oh well, it's OK, I will tolerate it, and just deal with it", then it doesn't appear to be a big problem anymore. This reminds me that when we first went to India there were some who complained about the heat all the time. Other monks would say, "If you keep complaining about the heat, it will only get worse. Just forget about it. It is there anyway and you won't make it go away by complaining about it. Better to just accept it". When you accept something you don't think too much about it, and it doesn't bother you so much.

The main point is that if we develop a mind of accepting everyday difficulties and problems, and practise patience with them, then they become tolerable and not so much of a problem. Whereas if we don't practise the patience of tolerating them, then they always appear as problems, and the discomfort will become greater and greater. Think about today, which was a bit warm. If we have allowed our mind to accept it, then it will actually be quite pleasant. There are some who actually like the heat and don't see it as a problem. If we have accepted a warm day today and another warm day comes up tomorrow, then it will not be too difficult to bear, because you have already accepted it today. Whereas if you haven't accepted it today, and tomorrow is also a hot day, it will seem to be an even greater problem. We can definitely understand this from our own experience.

If we train our mind to accept a bit of heat, then, through that familiarisation, we will be able to tolerate heat, and it will not be a hindrance as we carry on with our lives. We will be able to do whatever we need to do, because we have trained our mind to accept it. Likewise, if we accept the cold then, through that familiarity, we will not be hindered when it is continuously cold. We will be able to carry on doing whatever we need to do. When we train our mind to accept things, then external conditions will not be a hindrance or an obstruction to our activities.

This reminds me of one time when I went to New Zealand. When I come out of the plane, the hostesses seemed very concerned that one of my arms was bare, but that's normal for me. It comes back to the practice of patience, particularly the patience of willingly accepting hardship. When one willingly accepts hardship, then through familiarity with accepting that hardship, it becomes easier to tolerate, and we will not experience any

mental suffering. So we need to reflect the great benefit of tolerating suffering.

1.3.1.3. THE OBJECT TO TOLERATE

This basically refers to the object of patience that is to be tolerated, and the relevant verse is:

16. *I should not be impatient with
Heat, cold, rain, wind and so forth,
Sickness, bondage and beatings,
If I do so the harm will increase.*

Here Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning of the verse as:

One should not be impatient with heat or cold, rain and wind, sickness, being bound by ropes or being beaten with a stick and so forth, because if one is impatient with small harms, this will only further increase the harm, as patience decreases.

We often experience heat, cold, rain, and wind, and there are definitely occasions where we feel too hot or too cold, and times when there is torrential rain or strong winds. And, of course, to different degrees we all have experienced some ailments and felt physical discomfort. Of course most of us would not have experienced being bound by a rope or beaten, but that does happen to others. These are some examples of the sufferings that occur on a regular basis.

It is because they occur so regularly that we should be patient with these relatively small discomforts. If we are not patient with them then our suffering will only increase. It won't be because the intensity of the actual harm increases, but because our mind does not accept it, and does not apply any patience or tolerance to the suffering. Then the suffering actually increases, by virtue of the sheer fact that our patience itself decreases. As we become less patient with the suffering, our discomfort seems to increase in our mind. Indeed, if we don't begin to practise patience with the small harms that we encounter regularly, then what else are we planning to be patient with? How else are we going to practise patience if we can't be patient with the regular suffering that we experience in our daily lives? We need to begin to develop a mind of tolerance and patience towards the regular discomforts we experience, which will then prevent our mind from becoming impatient with greater sufferings later on.

Of course there are many stories of how, through familiarity, things which may otherwise have been completely intolerable, are tolerated and accepted.

Recently I heard of a monk from the same province in Tibet that I come from, who was recently imprisoned because he had recited the *Prayer for the Long Life of the Dalai Lama*. While in prison he started to recite it even more, for which he earned more beatings. But the more they beat him the louder he shouted the long life prayer. It came to the point where the guards themselves were nonplussed. Rather than struggling and screaming, and begging the guards to stop the beatings, he increased the volume of his recitation of the verses of the prayer. The guards were amazed and came to a point where they didn't know what to do with him!

Willingly tolerating hardship and suffering is indispensable to our practice and wellbeing. If we don't tolerate them, it is as if the hardships and sufferings

become our master and we, like slaves, are dominated by them. Once we willingly accept the hardships and difficulties, then we become the master rather than the slave. These are important points for us to consider.

1.3.1.4. AN EXAMPLE OF HOW, THROUGH FAMILIARITY, THE STRENGTH OF PATIENCE INCREASES

The relevant lines of verse are:

17. *For some, seeing their own blood,
Will increase their steadfastness and courage.
Some, when seeing the blood of others,
Faint and become unconscious.*

18ab. *This comes about due to natural
Firmness of the mind and fear.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads

For some brave person, seeing their own blood upon being injured by a weapon will only increase their steadfastness and courage. Some cowards will faint and become unconscious even when they see the blood of someone else. This does not come about through the force of the external object, whether it is large or small, nor does it come about due to a soft or hard body. It comes about solely through the mind being either firm or timid.

Therefore, one should strive in meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering.

Some brave people, even seeing their own blood upon being injured by a weapon will only increase their steadfastness and courage. When, out of bravery, people go into combat and see blood, then that further intensifies their eagerness to overcome their foe. Rather than becoming discouraged, seeing blood actually gives them even more courage. There are also some cowards who, let alone not being able to tolerate the sight of their own blood, become despondent and lose courage and actually faint when they see the blood of others.

You might also have come across people who faint when they see blood, because they have a mind that is not able to tolerate that. As explained in the commentary, this is not dependent on external conditions and objects. For some, blood makes their mind even more courageous, while others become discouraged, and faint. The difference is solely in the mind that interprets the situation. *Therefore*, as the commentary explains, *one should strive in meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering.* As the illustrations in the verse and commentary indicate, the benefit of tolerating suffering is that it makes the mind much more courageous.

As illustrated in the commentary, bravery is very much related to the intensity of the mind wishing to go into combat. This reminds me of an account that was related to me by someone from my home town. When the Red Guards came in, one man, who was known for his bravery, showed great courage. Using his simple gun he tried to fight the Chinese. At one point he was shot and fatally wounded, but he didn't drop dead right away. He kept on trying, unsuccessfully, to stand up and face the Chinese. Those around him saw his condition, and knew that he couldn't do anything, but they could also see his determination to try to overcome the person who shot him. After a while they were able to tell him that the

person who shot him had been killed. Only then did the wounded man relax and pass on.

This story really shows the power of the mind. With intense determination it can even prevent immediate death and hold on to life. However, the moment someone lets go of such a mind then they pass on.

Then there is the situation of extreme fear. I heard another account of someone who was normally quite a skilled horseman, but in the face of the enemy coming, was so afraid that he was not even able to get onto his horse properly. In his haste, rather than putting his foot in the stirrup, he was trying to mount his horse by putting his knee into the stirrup! So, being really fearful can be a real disadvantage!

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcribed by Su Lan Foo

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© *Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བལྟགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

28 October 2014

As usual, let us spend some time in meditation.

[meditation]

As we have just attempted in our short meditation, it is definitely highly worthwhile to familiarise yourself with the practice of *tong len*, i.e. giving and taking.

This should not be restricted just to this short session of meditation but is something you need to train yourself in in your everyday life, at every occasion and in any circumstance you find yourself in. In particular, this relates to any happiness you may experience in your daily activities e.g. the joys of eating and drinking etc. As soon as you experience these normal enjoyments, remind yourself to give that joy and happiness to other sentient beings. Then, whenever you encounter some difficulties or hardships, in whatever form, the moment you feel discomfort at any level, immediately try and use that as a way of taking the suffering of other sentient beings upon yourself. Remind yourself: "Since I'm experiencing this hardship now, may it become a means to take the suffering of other sentient beings upon myself." When you train yourself in this way you become more familiar with the actual practice of *tong len*. Then due to that regular familiarity, your meditation practice will become more profound.

The practical benefit you get from this practice is that it helps to reduce the negativity of generating attachment and anger when facing everyday life situations. When you experience joys and pleasures, if you are not mindful, these can cause increased attachment. But if you give that joy and happiness away to other sentient beings, there will be less attachment involved, which will reduce attachment to the pleasures and joys regularly experienced. Likewise, when you experience difficulties, willingly taking on the suffering of other sentient beings prevents anger from arising in your mind. In this way, *tong len* is a highly significant practice.

In this way we can see and relate to the effect of this practice outside of the formal meditation session. It would be a little strange if the practice is restricted to a few minutes of sitting in some formal meditation. If that were the case, then when you come out of the meditation, it may appear that the practice is not relevant and unnecessary. But that shouldn't be the case—that is the complete opposite of the significance of that practice. Whatever practice you attempt to do in a formal sitting, you need to ensure that the effects of it are carried through to your everyday lives, and then the real benefits of the practice will be felt. You will then have a constant 'guide' with you, reminding you of what is appropriate to engage in, and what is inappropriate and to be avoided.

Now you may set your motivation for receiving the teachings. As usual, generate the motivation along these lines: For the sake of all mother sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will engage in the teaching and put it into practice well.

1.1. Meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering

1.1.3. Contemplating how they are not different once habituated (cont.)

1.1.3.2. SUMMARY

The verse reads:

18cd. *Therefore one should disregard harms
And not be influenced by sufferings.*

19ab. *The skilled, although receiving sufferings,
Remain with the clarity of their mind
unpolluted.*

The commentary then reads:

Therefore one should make one's mind stable, disregard any harm received and not be influenced by the suffering. Those who are skilled in meditating on the Mahayana path, although receiving sufferings, through meditating on patience remain with their mind clear and not polluted by anger.

Based on the reasons presented earlier, relating to the need to tolerate the sufferings etc. one should make one's mind stable or firm. 'Firm' in this context means not allowing the mind to become agitated or troubled, particularly in the face of harm or suffering that one may experience.

In *disregard any harm received and not be influenced by the suffering*, 'disregarding harm' means that while one may experience the difficulties of the harm, do not allow this to disturb one's mind and become influenced by the sufferings one experiences. What is particularly highlighted here is the way one needs to be able to willingly accept and tolerate the sufferings, which is the real mark of practising patience. As explained further on, those *who are skilled in meditating on the Mahayana path, although receiving sufferings, through meditating on patience remain with their mind clear and not polluted by anger*. This sentence explains that those who earnestly follow the Mahayana path are the ones who voluntarily accept the sufferings. Those *who are skilled* particularly refers to the bodhisattvas who are engaging in the Mahayana path. And while they experience suffering, by meditating on patience their minds remain clear and unpolluted by the faults of anger.

In summary, what is being presented here is that if one engages in the practice of willingly accepting suffering, then the mind will not be affected and become unhappy. Then, if the mind is not unhappy, there is no room for the pollution of anger to take effect. This is how one protects one's mind from the pollution of anger. In this way (with a clear state of mind) one's mind is undisturbed and protected from the negativity of anger. We need to understand that these are highly profound levels of practice, see their significance, and incorporate this approach into our lives now. If you relate to these passages and think, 'Oh it does make sense!', but then regularly leave it aside, you will never benefit from it. Whereas if you implement it into your daily life, you will see the real benefit and significance. These verses are actually speaking to us personally—they are a personal instruction. This is how we need to derive the benefit.

1.1.4. The benefits of striving to abandon afflictions

The relevant verses here are the second two lines of the previous verse:

19cd. *One wages war with the afflictions
And while waging war there is much harm.*

20. *Disregard all sufferings
And destroy the enemies of anger and so forth.
They who win thus are heroes,
The rest kill corpses.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary clearly presents the meaning of these verses:

The objects of abandonment, such as the affliction of anger, and their antidotes are at war, and during the time of waging war many sufferings arise. If in worldly terms someone who disregards the harm inflicted by weapons and kills the enemy is called a hero, then someone who disregards all physical and mental sufferings, destroys the enemy of anger and conquers the afflictions, should be definitely called a hero. The rest kill the ones who die anyway by themselves, which is just like killing corpses. They should not be called heroes.

As the commentary explains, *the objects of abandonment, such as the affliction of anger, and their antidotes are at war*. Using some examples, the antidote for attachment would be meditating on the imperfections of the objects of attachment. Therefore within one's mind, meditating on the imperfections of the object would be like a war (or battle) between the antidote and the affliction. Likewise, a mind meditating on the various categories of phenomena, and ultimately emptiness, would be at war with ignorance.

It is useful to use the analogy of an external battle to illustrate the internal battle of the antidotes overcoming the afflictions. Just as a lot of suffering (wounds and even death) is experienced with external wars, internal conflict also brings difficulties and hardships. What is being presented here is that it is worthwhile to endure those sufferings and difficulties when combating the inner enemies of the afflictions.

A further analogy given here is that *in worldly terms someone who disregards the harm inflicted by weapons and kills the enemy is called a hero*. This illustrates that if someone goes to war and vanquishes the enemy, they will be honoured as a hero upon their return, as they have willingly endured pain and suffering during the war. We can see for ourselves that elderly war veterans are proud to wear their medals! Using my own experience, I know that even when there is some suffering, it is easily disregarded during the time of conflict or fighting. When I was young and got into fights with another young monk, even when I had wounds on my head and was bleeding, I was still able to go forward and fight with him. So I can definitely say that it is true that one is able to disregard wounds and pain when fiercely attempting to overcome the enemy.

You need to derive an understanding of how this illustration fits the meaning of what is being explained. When ordinary beings go to war to overcome an enemy, there is a lot of hardship and harm inflicted upon them, but this is endured because of the willingness to do so. If one does not willingly accept the harms, one cannot go forth and overcome the enemy (and later be renowned as a hero). Being known as a hero is due to having endured the hardships and harms inflicted during combat. So it is not in spite of, but despite of the harms that one is later renowned as a hero. If it is the case that one who disregards the harm inflicted by weapons and kills the enemy should definitely be called a hero, then someone *who disregards all physical and mental sufferings, destroys the enemy of anger and conquers the afflictions, should definitely be called a hero*.

What is being explained here is that when in combat with the inner enemies i.e. the afflictions, applying antidotes such as meditating on imperfections to overcome attachment, and meditating on compassion to overcome anger, and meditating on emptiness to overcome ignorance, all require

repeated meditation, again and again. It is not something that is quick and easy to apply. One cannot meditate once on the imperfections of attachment, and then attachment is suddenly overcome! In fact, sometimes the more we try to overcome attachment, the stronger it seems to become, and the more difficult it is to deal with.

In a worldly sense, someone can destroy the enemy and return from combat as a hero. The commentary states that this is similar to *killing corpses* as the external enemies will die naturally anyway, even without being killed. However inner afflictions are the complete opposite. If you leave inner afflictions and don't do anything about overcoming them, they will only become stronger and stronger. For example, if you don't apply antidotes to overcome attachment, and allow it to remain in your mind, indulging it, it only becomes stronger, even to the point of becoming seemingly impossible to overcome. This is also true for anger, ignorance and all other afflictions. So, unlike the external enemies, the inner enemies of the afflictions will only become stronger.

If ordinary beings who destroy external enemies are regarded as heroes, then someone engaged in the combat of overcoming the inner enemy of the afflictions should definitely be worthy of being called a real hero, as it is much more difficult to overcome the inner enemies. The commentary concludes by saying those who destroy their external foes *should not be called heroes*.

To reiterate the main point: having recognised the inner afflictions as the real enemies that destroy one's happiness and peace, one must destroy the afflictions by engaging in combat, which means applying the antidotes. Without this the afflictions cannot be naturally overcome. In addressing the afflictions one will be faced with hardships, but the hardships are worthwhile, because one has applied the antidotes, and so will definitely be able to overcome them. Once overcome, one will be a hero in the true sense, and worthy of veneration.

1.1.5. Extensive explanation of the benefits of suffering

The literal translation 'the benefits of suffering' may seem awkward so it can be understood as 'the benefits of seeing the *faults* of the suffering.'

21. *Further, the qualities of suffering are:
Through despondence it destroys pride,
It generates compassion for those circling in
samsara,
Fearing negativities and joy for virtue.*

Four benefits which are defined. The commentary reads:

Further, meditating on suffering is a great summary of the key points of practice. As the benefits of contemplating the shortcomings of sufferings are:

Seeing that one is controlled by suffering one becomes disheartened, which destroys the haughtiness of pride and arrogance.

Seeing that others are under the control of suffering one generates the compassion that thinks: How wonderful it would be if sentient beings were free from suffering.

Seeing that the suffering is the result of non-virtue and since one does not want suffering, one refrains from negativity.

Since one does not wish suffering and desires happiness, and seeing happiness to be the result of virtue one generates joy in virtue.

As Gyaltsab Je mentions in the opening line, *Further meditating on suffering is a great summary of the key points of practice*. Earlier I related that meditating, thinking, contemplating on the sufferings, really embracing them and seeing their benefits as a way to overcome them, is actually the main point of the practice. It really is a highly significant practice.

Then Gyaltsab Je elaborates on benefits of contemplating the shortcomings of sufferings.

As one experiences the sufferings one will be able to reflect upon the reality that one is still under their control and not completely free. Because of this one *becomes disheartened* and experiences a little sadness due to the suffering, and by being confronted with the fact that one is still controlled by the sufferings. That in itself helps to destroy any sense of *haughtiness* or sense that everything is fine for oneself; also pride and arrogance can be overcome.

Seeing others suffering refers to other ordinary beings who are still under the control of suffering. So seeing those in a pitiful state, one generates compassion thinking, "How wonderful it would be if they were free from suffering."

Understanding *suffering as the result of non-virtue*, and seeing that *one does not want suffering*, one will refrain from non-virtue. This, again, is a highly significant point in relation to our own practice. When one experiences suffering, one should immediately try and see that, "the suffering I am experiencing now is none other than the results of the non-virtue that I have created in the past." Since one does not wish for any kind of suffering, seeing it as a result of one's non-virtue can become an impetus to refrain from creating more negativity. In this way, experiencing suffering can help to prevent one from creating negativities such as killing and stealing etc. Thus, one refrains from the ten non-virtuous deeds.

The significant point here is that for those of us who already have a conviction in karma—this will not really make much sense if one doesn't already believe in karma—one can immediately relate to the unpleasant experience of suffering as being the results of non-virtue. One can take the suffering itself as caution not to create further non-virtues, shunning negativity and non-virtue, because one does not wish to prolong the unpleasant experience of suffering in the future. This then becomes the impetus. Since one does not wish for suffering, but desires happiness, and seeing happiness as the result of virtue, one will aim to generate virtue. The commentary specifically mentions how all are equal in wanting happiness and not wanting any kind of suffering: *since one does not wish suffering and desires happiness, and seeing that happiness then is to be the result of virtue one generates joy or enthusiasm in creating virtue*. So from the presentation here we can incorporate an understanding of karma as well as refuge. By contemplating this one has a way to overcome the sufferings.

These few lines really carry great depth in meaning and are an impetus for practice. The words *one does not wish suffering and desires happiness* are simple words. When we contemplate them and incorporate them into a broad understanding of the teachings, then because one does not wish for suffering, one thinks "I need to avoid non-virtues and stop creating negativity", and because one desires happiness one thinks "I must create virtue" and so adopt virtues to create positive karma. Take the line *one does not wish for suffering and desired happiness* as an impetus for your own personal practice. Shun non-virtue and adopt virtue. It also becomes a strong motivator to generate compassion for others. When one sees

others experiencing suffering and deprived of happiness, this becomes a reason to generate strong compassion for them.

Thus one reflects, "just as I do not wish for any suffering and wish for every kind of happiness, it is exactly the same for others as well". When others are experiencing great suffering, one relates to that as being really unfortunate, and wishes that they experience happiness. When others are deprived of happiness, wishing them happiness becomes a strong motivator. So begin with yourself, relating to your personal experience, and then you can relate that to others. We can all immediately relate to the truth of these factors. Because of the great points presented in these few lines of verse Gyaltsab Je mentions they are *a great summary of the key points of the practice*.

As mentioned in recent sessions, there are many accounts of practitioners who, by having contemplated on suffering, and by experiencing it, have accumulated great amounts of merit and engaged in great practices of purification to achieve great goals. However there are no accounts of practitioners who have achieved these goals, or even engaged in these practices, by experiencing pleasures. When considering the benefits of contemplating sufferings, taken in the context of the entire path, it is definitely the case that practitioners of all three scopes—small, medium and great—experience significant results through not wanting to experience suffering due to seeing its disadvantages and faults. Therefore contemplating the faults of samsara is what leads you to liberation. Conversely, if one seeks the pleasures of samsara, then this is what keeps one in samsara, rather than being freed from it. If one voluntarily and intentionally seeks the pleasures of samsara, there is no way that one will be free from it. How can one possibly achieve liberation if one intentionally seeks the means to remain in samsara?

This is how we need to think in a broader sense: contemplating the sufferings is a highly significant impetus for the practices. If one can see that this is a way to ultimately become free from suffering, one can willingly take it on as a practice. Sometimes there are comments about people who feel a bit overwhelmed hearing about suffering again and again, who say "There is too much focus on suffering. I don't want to hear about suffering." This occurs when one does not see the benefits, or cannot relate to the purpose and real reason for meditating on suffering. While it may seem that hearing about suffering is unpleasant, when one thoroughly contemplates the disadvantages of suffering, such as remaining in samsara to experience birth, sickness, ageing and death, then one contemplates reality. That becomes the impetus to really generate a strong wish to be free from samsara, and then suffering has served its purpose. So if one does not want to think about the sufferings of samsara, and only seeks the pleasures of samsara, then the wish to be free from it will never arise in one's mind. If we don't see the benefits of being free from samsara then why do people long to be free? And why would we want to develop an aspiration for liberation?

This is how we need to understand the significance of meditating on the various types of suffering in samsara, as presented in the teachings in great detail. At the moment we may not immediately be able to relate to the various types of sufferings in different realms. But if we take the initiative to meditate on them, imagining we are experiencing those sufferings, then, through familiarity we can gain a real sense of what the sufferings would be like, even though we are not experiencing them now. One can imagine what it would be

like, how unbearable it would be, if one were to actually experience such suffering. When one reaches that level in one's meditation it has become a personal experience. In time, a strong longing to be free from such suffering, and to be free from samsara, will definitely arise. One does not just feel the conviction to be free from the suffering of samsara in theory.

While it is true that without experience, it is hard for us to immediately relate to the sufferings, with familiarity we can gain that experience. This reminds me of a remark made by a lama some time ago. He was an ordained monk and a good student for many years, but later disrobed. Then he led a normal life, had a relationship, got engaged and went through the normal ups and downs of life. Later on, he related to some of his students, "Now I can understand what your suffering is all about". So he was able to relate the sufferings of relationships and so forth through his own personal experience.

Another account that I have mentioned previously is about a German lady who received teachings from Geshe Ngawang Dhargey when he was at Atisha Centre. She related to me that it was very meaningful, and that she got a lot out of teaching, but she confessed, "He talked a lot about suffering, and I am not too sure about all of that, but nevertheless, the teachings were very meaningful." She wasn't refuting the validity of those sufferings, but said "I am not too sure about that". Then, a couple of years later, when I met her again, she said, "Now I can definitely relate to the sufferings and I totally understand the significance of them. That is exactly true." Just as Geshe Ngawang Dhargey had related, she found it to be true for herself. This shows that when we have some experience or a deeper understanding, then we will gain a real conviction.

The significance of contemplating on the various types of sufferings, particularly thinking of death and impermanence, is that with a certain amount of familiarity it will become an integral part of one's practice. Furthermore, one will be able to maintain a constant impetus to be consistent with one's practice. In particular, meditating on the certainty of death, and the uncertainty of the time of death, one reaches the point where one recognises the truth in this. When one has a personal experience of it, rather than it just being a theory, it generates a conviction in one's mind and one will always be mindful of what one is doing—whether eating, walking or sitting. Whatever we may be engaged with, one will always try to incorporate that activity into one's practice, knowing that death can happen at any time, and that one should not waste time with meaningless activities. To that extent, the practice becomes authentic and one's purpose becomes that of a real practitioner. Without this sort of personal experience and conviction, it is very hard to claim to be a true practitioner. It is hard to regularly implement the practice in one's daily life, so we need to strive to generate some conviction in whatever practice it may be. Even if it is only a few points, to try to make an attempt to generate that conviction, whatever the practice may be.

Even though it might seem as though I am side-tracking from the actual topic, these are really important points for your practice, particularly in relation to recalling death and impermanence, which is really essential for one's practice to become more pure. Without familiarity with meditating on death and impermanence, cherishing this life and grasping at it will arise very easily. Then, whatever practice we do while clinging to this life will be mostly a worldly dharma.

Even if we meditated, the practice would only be a worldly concern rather than a real practice.

1.2. Meditating on the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma

This is subdivided into two:

1.2.1. Extensive

1.2.2. Summary

Maybe we can cover this in our next session. So you can prepare yourselves by familiarising yourselves with the commentary, and also refer to the Lam Rim teachings.

Also it might be a little bit hard to read it all, and I don't know if you have access to it, but the *Compendium of Practices* by Shantideva himself is also a very good text to study. The chapter on patience also has a lot of information, and there are a lot of quotations from the sutras as a way to show the source of these teachings.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcribed by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་པའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

4 November 2014

As usual let us spend some time in our meditation practice.

Meditation

We can set our motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will receive the teachings and put them into practice well.

Indeed, generating the bodhicitta motivation is of utmost importance. We have already established the basis of bodhicitta in our mind through our understanding of how to generate bodhicitta with either the seven-point cause and effect sequence, or the exchanging self with other technique. We need to further develop that basis by familiarising our mind with the bodhicitta motivation in every Dharma activity in which we engage. As mentioned regularly, the process of developing bodhicitta involves first generating the bodhicitta mind which has not yet been generated; once generated, to firmly establish it; and then further increase it to higher and higher levels. This is how we need to accustom our mind with bodhicitta at all levels of our practice.

Bodhicitta is the essence of the Mahayana teachings, with which we already have some familiarity. If we don't work on developing what we have already understood, and grasp on to some other form of practice, then we have entirely missed the point! Until we achieve enlightenment, we need to be continuously developing and perfecting the bodhicitta attitude, beginning with generating a contrived bodhicitta motivation, through to actually generating bodhicitta, and then engaging in the practice of the six perfections.

Although we have not yet actually generated bodhicitta, we can definitely generate a contrived bodhicitta attitude, which we can then further develop on the basis of that positive motivation. Furthermore, even though we are not yet able to practise the perfection of generosity we can definitely practise a similitude of that in the form of engaging in charitable activities. By familiarising ourselves with similitudes of both bodhicitta and the practices of the six perfections, we will gradually develop them within our mental continuum until we reach enlightenment.

1.2. Meditating on the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma

This section shows us how to meditate on the patience that definitely relies on Dharma, which is one the three types of patience.

The previous section of the text explained how to rely on the patience that tolerates the suffering that we experience. As mentioned previously, this is the core practice that allows us to engage in the practice of the Dharma itself. This tolerance of suffering is developed by contemplating the benefits of suffering, rather than seeing it as an obstacle. As mentioned previously, it was only by enduring hardships and difficulties that the great practitioners of the past were able to engage in their practices. In fact, becoming a real practitioner can only be achieved by enduring hardships and difficulties—there is no other way to become a real Dharma practitioner. I could be wrong, but this is what I personally understand from these explanations.

Meditating on the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma relate to the core Dharma of contemplating the two selflessnesses. Understanding selflessness and emptiness requires a lot of study, investigation and contemplation, and thus it involves hardship and difficulties. Although Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti elucidated the two selflessnesses very clearly, we still have difficulty in gaining a really good understanding of selflessness and emptiness. Thus we need to develop the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma.

The two subdivisions of this section of the text are:

1.2.1. Extensive

1.2.2. Summary

1.2.1. Extensive

The extensive explanation has three parts:

1.2.1.1. Anger and those getting angry depend on causes, and therefore lack independence

1.2.1.2. Refuting the existence of independent causes

1.2.1.3. The need for reversing anger

1.2.1.1. ANGER AND THOSE GETTING ANGRY DEPEND ON CAUSES, AND THEREFORE LACK INDEPENDENCE

This outline indicates that anger and the angry person are not independent; basically because things are dependent on causes and conditions. So what is presented here, in essence, is the dependent arising nature of all phenomena. Since everything is dependent on causes and conditions, neither anger nor the angry person can be independent.

If the angry person were to be independent, then it would not be possible for them to transform. It is because the angry person does not exist independently that it is possible for them to change and become a less angry person. Likewise, anger itself is also not an independent entity but arises due to causes and conditions. Therefore, by causing the cessation of the causes of anger, it is possible to overcome anger. We really need to understand this very profound point. In simple terms, what I derive from the explanation here is that we don't need to be slaves of anger, rather we need to be in control over our own mind, and abandon anger.

This section has two subdivisions:

1.2.1.1.1. Anger and the angry person are not independent

1.2.1.1.2. Their causes and conditions are not independent

1.2.1.1.1. Anger and the angry person are not independent

This in turn is subdivided into three:

1.2.1.1.1.1. The reason why it is unsuitable to be angry at an afflicted person

1.2.1.1.1.2. Anger is not generated volitionally

1.2.1.1.1.3. Since all faults are generated in dependence on conditions, they lack independence.

1.2.1.1.1.1. The reason why it is unsuitable to be angry at an afflicted person

This is a significant point that we really need to understand.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins with a hypothetical argument.

Argument: Since the other person harms me, it is suitable to get angry at them.

The point of this hypothetical argument is that it is suitable to be angry with any person who harms us. The reasoning here is that the cause of anger is the person who inflicts the harm, and not the actual harm itself. Even though the actual cause of the pain is the harm, one does not use that as a reason to generate anger. Rather, the anger is directed at the person who inflicts the harm.

In answer to that hypothetical argument, these three lines of verse are presented.

*22abc. If one is not angry at bile disease and
Other great sources of suffering,
Then why be angry at the ones with mind,*

As an explanation of these lines, the commentary begins with a response to the original hypothetical argument.

Answer: It is unsuitable.

Then the commentary explains the reason:

One does not get angry at bile disease and the like, which are a great source for the suffering of the disturbance of imbalance. Why would one then get angry at a sentient being, i.e. a being with mind?

Basically, when we experience great suffering from diseases such as bile and so forth, we do not consider becoming angry with the disease that is the cause for that suffering. So why then does one find it reasonable to become angry with an individual being who has a mind, and consider them to be the cause of our suffering?

The irrationality of our response is that while we don't become angry with a disease, for example, we find reason to become angry with an individual, when in fact, as we perceive it, both have equally caused us suffering.

Then Gyaltsab Je presents another hypothetical argument:

Argument: Since bile disease and so forth arise without control one does not get angry at them.

In answer to that a counter argument is presented:

Answer: Then it follows it is also unsuitable to be angry at the person ...

Then the following lines from the root text are presented:

*22d. Which are also all induced by conditions.
23. For example, although one does not desire it,
The sickness arises anyway.
Similarly, although one does not desire it,
The afflictions are generated powerfully.*

One needs to relate this to our understanding of interdependence and emptiness. If there is no cause of suffering, then there cannot be a result. So suffering cannot be experienced as an independent result, because the cause lacks independent existence, and is, itself, dependent on causes and conditions. Therefore the results are also interdependent, as they only arise when the causes and conditions are intact.

When one relates this understanding of interdependent origination to the lack of independent existence, then that really contributes to an understanding of how everything is empty of independent existence. We should apply our understanding of interdependence and emptiness to derive a more profound understanding of why it is unsuitable to be angry with an afflicted person. Then one can really make progress.

The commentary concludes with:

... because afflicted beings are ordered around by the condition of their afflictions and hence do not have control of their actions.

For example, similar to this sickness arising against one's wish when the conditions are complete, this person does not desire to be angry, but due to the cause of mental unhappiness and the like, the afflictions arise strongly. Therefore, if one were to get angry, then one should get angry at the afflictions and not at the person.

As presented here, *because afflicted beings are ordered around by the condition of the afflictions they do not have control of their actions.* Everything is dependent on its own particular causes and conditions. Being under the control of the delusions, beings do not have control over their actions, and are compelled to engage in actions that cause harm. And these delusions are themselves also dependent on many causes and conditions.

So the individual who causes us harm is not really an appropriate object for our anger, because they are not engaging in those harmful actions voluntarily. Rather, they are engaging in harmful actions because they are under the control of the delusions.

As mentioned previously, people engage in harmful actions because their mind is unhappy. When the mind is afflicted by delusions it is not a happy mind. We know from our personal experience that when our mind is affected by any of the delusions it is in a state of turmoil, and it is a troubled, unhappy mind. And, as we have seen, an unhappy mind is the basis for anger.

When one contemplates these points then, rather than finding reason to become angry at the individual causing harm, one feels compassion. That is because they are completely under the control of delusions that are causing them agony and unhappiness, which is the cause of their harmful actions. Therefore they are actually an object of compassion, rather than an object of anger.

Then the commentary goes on to present the analogy that the delusions are *similar to this sickness arising against one's wish when the conditions are complete.* The analogy is that when all the causes and conditions for sickness are intact, then the inevitable effect is sickness. As presented in other texts, when all the causes and conditions are intact then there is nothing that can avert the consequences. So

when all the conditions for sickness are present then the result of illness will definitely be experienced.

When the commentary says, *this person does not desire to be angry, but due to the cause of mental unhappiness and the like the afflictions arise strongly*, it is indicating that although people don't want to be angry, because they know that is not a desirable state to be in, anger will nevertheless arise when all the causes and conditions, particularly the cause of mental unhappiness and the like, are intact. Because of their unhappiness the afflictions arise strongly, resulting in harmful actions.

So the individual person is not really to blame. Being completely under the control of the delusions, they become angry when the causes and conditions are intact, and are compelled to engage in harmful actions. So the cause of their behaviour is ultimately the afflictions. If one is to become angry, then one should be angry with the afflictions and not the person. This is really the crux of the presentation: if one is to become upset, then it should be with the afflictions themselves, which are harboured within one's own mind.

On a personal level we can understand that just as afflictions cause other people to become angry and create harmful actions, our own afflictions cause us to become upset and angry. 'Just as those who cause me harm are affected by the afflictions, I too am afflicted by the delusions, so that is what I need to target, not the individual person.' By contemplating this point, one develops patience with other people through understanding how they are affected by causes and conditions.

However, we should not be patient with the afflictions themselves because that will only cause us further harm. So one applies measures to completely overcome and destroy the afflictions.

1.2.1.1.2. Anger is not generated volitionally

Gyaltsab Je begins his commentary on this section with another hypothetical argument:

Argument: Since the other person thinks 'I shall harm', it is not the same as with the afflictions.

We will be familiar with this hypothetical argument. We might reason that although the afflictions don't have an intention to harm us, the person definitely does. Using that reasoning, one might think it reasonable to become upset with the person.

The next verse presents the means to overcome such doubts:

24. *Although not thinking, 'I should get angry',
Beings become angry naturally.
Although not thinking, 'I shall generate',
Anger generates likewise.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of this verse in the following manner:

Answer: Although the causes do not think 'I shall generate anger', when the conditions are complete then beings generate anger without any choice. Although afflictions do not think 'I shall generate', anger is generated likewise. They do not have any freedom of action.

Otherwise, the first half can be related to the person and the second to the condition of the afflictions.

When anger arises due to *causes and conditions*, it is not as though the *causes* themselves think, 'I shall generate anger', and then generate anger. Rather, when the conditions are complete, beings generate anger without any choice. So it is not a voluntary act, where the causes think, 'Now I will cause anger'. Rather, when all the conditions are complete, then, even without a prior intention, one becomes angry. In that very instant, without even thinking about the conditions being intact, anger is generated spontaneously, without any choice.

Although afflictions do not think, 'I shall generate', anger generates likewise, indicates that it is not as if the afflictions themselves are demanding that anger should arise. Rather, the anger just naturally arises when the conditions are intact. Therefore there is no freedom of action.

In saying, *Otherwise, the first half can be related to the person and the second to the condition of the afflictions*, Gyaltsab Je is indicating how on a practical level we may adopt the understanding that both the person and the afflictions have some role in the generation of anger. This explanation may sound a bit fairer to us.

1.2.1.1.3. Since all faults are dependent on conditions, they lack independence

25. *All the faults that are found,
And the variety of negativities,
They all arise through the force of condition,
They do not have independence.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

All the faults of afflictions that are found, and the variety of negativities that arise from them, also arise through the force of conditions, and do not have independence. Similar to it not being suitable to get angry at water flowing downhill, thinking about these reasons stops anger.

All the faults of afflictions that are found, and the variety of negativities that arise from them, also arise through the force of conditions, and do not have independence, refers to the fact that while we do not wish to be influenced by the afflictions and create negativities, it is as if we have no control over them. When the conditions for the afflictions to arise are intact, then one does not have any control. This is also true for others. By contemplating this reality, particularly in relation to those who inflict harm, we will understand that they are completely under the control of the afflictions, and therefore have no control over their own actions.

The analogy—*it is similar to not becoming angry about water flowing downhill*—uses an illustration from the reasoning of nature, which is one of the four types of reasonings.¹ One would not become upset and angry about water flowing downhill, because that is its nature. Likewise, when others have the conditions for afflictions to arise, then the natural consequence is that they will engage in harm. Thus we should not become angry with them, but instead blame the afflictions.

¹ There are six different modes of research or investigation, and the sixth is the research of reasoning, which in turn is subdivided into four: 1. The reasoning of dependence, 2. the reasoning of the performance of function, 3. The reasoning of nature 4. The reasoning of valid establishment.

Source: *The Dalai Lama at Harvard*, Snow Lion publications

1.2.1.1.2. *Their causes and conditions are not independent*

Here we should take note of the meticulous presentation of the teaching, which is designed to rule out the possibility of any independent existence.

First of all, to overcome any notion that the faults and afflictions are independent, the faults were presented as being dependent on causes and conditions. Thus they lack independence.

One may then wonder whether the causes and conditions themselves are independent. So, to rule out that possibility, this presentation shows that the causes and conditions themselves are also not independent.

In our system, no matter how far you take it back, you cannot come to a point where you can find an entity that is an independent cause for other things to be produced. When other traditions trace the causes back, they come to the point where they have no choice but to accept an independent creator who is the primordial cause of all existence. These views will be presented in the next few verses.

What is being refuted under the heading Anger and the Angry Person Are Not Independent, is that an independent cause can produce other dependent phenomena. This will be presented in more detail later on.

The verse that is presented under this heading reads:

26. *The accumulation of conditions also
Does not have the thought 'I shall generate'.
That generated by them also does not
Possess the thought 'Why was I generated?'*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

Also the accumulation of conditions that generates the sufferings does not have the thought 'I shall generate these sufferings', and the generated sufferings also do not possess the thought, 'I was generated by them'.

Therefore it is unsuitable to be angry at the other person based on the reason that the other person thinks 'I shall inflict harm'.

The commentary quite clearly explains that it is not as though the accumulated conditions themselves have the voluntary thought, 'I will generate these sufferings'. Nor do the sufferings themselves have the thought, 'I was generated by them'. So therefore, it is unsuitable to be angry at the other person based on the faulty reasoning that the other person thinks 'I shall inflict harm'.

The afflictions themselves, and that which causes anger to arise, are all dependent on many other factors, i.e. the causes and conditions. In other words, they are not generated independently or voluntarily. Therefore one should not find reason to be angry with the person, thinking that they were actually in control, and saying, 'I shall inflict harm'.

1.2.1.2. REFUTING THE EXISTENCE OF INDEPENDENT CAUSES

Here there are three subdivisions.

1.2.1.2.1. Refuting the independent self and primary principle of the Enumerators

1.2.1.2.2. Refuting the independent self of the Logicians

1.2.1.2.3. It is unsuitable to become angry upon understanding all beings to be like an emanation.

1.2.1.2.1. *Refuting the independent self and primary principle of the Enumerators*

This is further subdivided into:

1.2.1.2.1.1. Refuting the generation of independent expressions by the principle

1.2.1.2.1.2. Refuting that the knowledge-being engages objects independently

The Enumerators are also known as the Samkhya school, which presents five characteristics of the self. We went over this in detail when we studied the *Madhyamaka* text.² In brief, the Samkhya school assert a permanent, unitary and independent self. They say that because the self is not momentary it is permanent; because the self lacks parts it is unitary; and because the self does not depend on causes and conditions it is independent. However this is all refuted in our system.

Next Tuesday there will be a teaching, the following Tuesday will be the discussion, followed by the exam, and there will be two more teachings in December. Tuesday, December 16, will be the Lama Tsong Khapa puja, which will conclude the sessions for the year.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcribed by Judy Mayne

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© *Tara Institute*

² See teachings of 22 April 2003, and 29 April 2003

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

11 November 2014

As usual let us spend some time in our meditation practice.
[meditation]

We can now set the motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines—for the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will engage in the activity of listening to the teachings and put them into practice well.

The key factor of our motivation is the purpose of doing the activity, and the ultimate purpose here is that 'I must benefit other sentient beings'. So one has to put that at the forefront of one's aim in life and engage in virtuous activity for that purpose. Then our life becomes most meaningful.

1.2.1.2.1. Refuting the existence of independent causes

1.2.1.2.1.1. Refuting the generation of independent expressions by the principle

It was explained previously that the Samkhya school assert an independent entity called 'principle', or 'nature'. This is an entity which, while in itself is independent, causes other phenomena to arise from it.

The verses read:

27. *Whatever is accepted as that called principle,
And any imputation that is called self,
They do not arise volitionally, thinking
"I shall arise."*

28ab. *If the non-generated does not exist
How can one then posit generation?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of this verse in the form of a syllogism.

Consider the dual subject—'The primary principle possessing five characteristics, which is an equilibrium of particle, darkness and courage¹, as well as the harms that are contained in its expressions' and 'the self that is imputed on the knowledge person'—it follows it is unsuitable to say that they are generated independently—because this very principle is like the horns of a rabbit that cannot perform actions. It does not arise volitionally thinking, "I shall arise to generate an independent expression" or "an independent experience of the object".

It follows it is unsuitable to assert that at the time of the generation of the result, a result is generated from the principle—because the principle itself is not generated. There is a pervasion because—if oneself is not generated, then one cannot generate a result. There is then a pervasion that one cannot generate a result.

So what is being presented here is the assertion of the primary principle (also known as nature or expression) by the Enumerators (the Samkhya non-Buddhist school), which possesses five characteristics that are the equilibrium of the

three qualities: particle, darkness and courage. The five characteristics are:

1. It is the creator of all actions and so forth.
2. Since it is unproduced it is permanent.
3. Being partless it is a single entity
4. As it lacks consciousness it is merely an object.
5. It pervades the entire environment and all beings.

Some other texts present six characteristics, by combining the three qualities of particle, darkness and courage into one, and adding that to the five characteristics.

Some texts present the meaning of particle, or motility, as suffering, darkness as ignorance, and courage or lightness as happiness.

Detailed explanations have been presented numerous times in previous teachings, such as when we studied the *Madhyamakavatara* text² and also when we studied the ninth chapter of *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*³. It has also come up in the *400 Verses* teaching⁴, in Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*⁵ and of course in *Tenets* which I have taught twice. So when we come to a topic which presents these subjects it is good for you to refer back to those teachings, where I explained it in detail, as way to refresh your mind, and become more familiar with it. By referring to the texts again and again, eventually it will be implanted into our memory so that we won't forget it. This is what is meant by really putting an effort into understanding the Dharma texts and teachings.

According to Samkhya school, the primary principle possessing the five characteristics, which is equilibrium of the qualities of particle, darkness and courage, as well as all harms contained in its expression, arise independently. We need to reflect on whether this holds true. Is this explanation in accordance with the reality of how things exist? Do things exist independently as an expression of the primary principle? Would it be reasonable to accept that? This is how you need to reflect on their presentation.

The Samkhyas assert that what they call a knowledge-being, or conscious principle, is an independent entity. They consider the primary principle itself (with its five characteristics) as arising independently. They assert this, because they believe that the experiences of suffering and happiness arise independently. Thus, because feelings arise independently, the knowledge-being (or self), who experiences these feelings, also has to be independent. This is their assertion. By understanding this we will know what is being refuted. They believe the knowledge-being or self is a solitary, independent entity, which has only one consciousness, but which functions through the five senses. For example, if there is a person looking out of five different windows in a building, they assert that it is the same consciousness that functions through the five different senses. This is how they assert a single consciousness that functions through the five senses.

The *Madhyamakavatara* text presents the Samkhya's assertion of a self in this verse:

A self that is a consumer, permanent, not a creator,
Lacking qualities and activity is imputed by the Forders.
In dependence on very slight distinctions of that;
There are the different systems of the Forders.

² See the teachings of 22 April 2003, 29 April 2003, and 18 May 2004.

³ See the teachings 31 May 2005 (which contains a complete list of the twenty-five categories of objects asserted by the Samkhyas, 23 August 2005, and 13 September).

⁴ See the teaching of 9 September 2007.

⁵ See the teaching of 6 July 2010.

¹ Jeffery Hopkins translates these terms as motility, darkness and lightness

So, according to the Forders or the Samkhyas, there are five characteristics of the self:

1. It is a consumer of pleasant and unpleasant objects.
2. It is a functional permanent phenomena.
3. It is not a creator.
4. It lacks qualities.
5. It lacks activity.

When we understand their assertion of the self, and what the five characteristics are, then we can assess whether such a self is reasonable or not. With some slight variations, all the non-Buddhist schools, in general, assert a self as being a single, permanent, and independent entity. It is this self that is being refuted here.

As the commentary explains, the principle itself cannot be generated independently to begin with, as it is non-existent like the horns of a rabbit. So it follows that the result cannot be generated independently. The absurdity, which is highlighted here, is that if the cause itself is not generated, then how can the result be generated? So the syllogism used here refutes the assertion of a primary principle that is the cause of all existence.

What is being refuted here is the manifestation of a primary principle. When that is refuted, then the next step is to refute the knowledge-being (or conscious principle) that experiences objects independently, by showing that this cannot be independently existent either.

1.2.1.2.1.2. Refuting that the knowledge-being engages objects independently

The next two lines of the verse read:

*28cd. Since it would always be distracted by objects
It will also not cease.*

While you have some understanding of the basis of what is being presented here, it is good to know how the actual logic works. Once you understand this, you can then relate it to all other instances using the same line of logic, using syllogisms and so forth. To summarise the sequence: first the generation of independent expression by the principle is refuted, and then the individual being (the conscious principle or knowledge-being), who engages with the objects that they have caused, is refuted.

The commentary explains the meaning of these two lines:

Does the knowledge-person cease when it does not engage objects? It follows it does not because it is accepted to be a permanent functionality and if it is that, then it will always be distracted by objects, because there will be no time when it is not apprehending objects.

This refutation is based on pointing out the absurdity of a knowledge-being with this rhetorical question, *Does a knowledge-being cease when it does not engage objects?* According to this assertion, the absurdity is that engagement with an object is by a self that is a permanent functionality. As such it would perpetually apprehend objects. A simple example to illustrate this absurdity is that when a self is engaged in, for example, hearing sound, it would be perpetually engaged in apprehending sound. The same would apply for the other four senses: taste, sight, tactile sensations and smell. It would be difficult for the Samkhyas to accept this, as it goes beyond the bounds of obvious reality. So the refutation is based on the absurdity of their assertion.

1.2.1.2.2. Refuting the independent self of the Logicians

This has three subdivisions:

- 1.2.1.2.2.1. It is impossible for something permanent to produce a result
- 1.2.1.2.2.2. It is impossible for such a self to depend on conditions
- 1.2.1.2.2.3. Such a self cannot be related to conditions

The assertions of another non-Buddhist school are being presented here. It is similar to the earlier one, but with slight variations, which is why it is included separately.

1.2.1.2.2.1. It is impossible for something permanent to produce a result

The non-Buddhist Naiyayika school asserts a self that is by nature a permanent entity, but which temporarily becomes impermanent due to certain conditions.

The commentary first presents their assertion:

The Naiyayika assert a self that has form and is a permanent functionality, and they say it creates harm.

The next verse reads:

*29ab. It is clear that if the self is permanent
Then, like space, it cannot act*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary then refutes their assertion:

However, it is very clear that if such a self is a permanent functionality then, similar to non-compounded space, it cannot produce a result.

The commentary presents a refutation that points out the absurdity of their assertion. *It is very clear that if such a self is a permanent functionality then, it will be similar to a non-compounded space.* This means that like empty space the self is a permanent phenomenon, and so cannot produce anything. Like space, such a self cannot produce a result. This should be clear.

1.2.1.2.2.2. It is impossible for such a self to depend on conditions

Next they say that the self depends on conditions, but it is impossible for such a self to depend on conditions.

First, their argument is presented:

Argument: Although its nature is permanent, if this self meets with conditions then it can produce a result.

The lines that serve as an answer to the assertion read:

*29cd Although conditions meet
How can they affect the unchanging?
30ab. If it is like before during the action
What did the action do to it?*

As an answer the commentary states:

It is impossible for a permanent phenomenon to meet with conditions. Although the conditions of striving and so forth meet with other conditions, how could these conditions affect the self?

What is being highlighted here is that as they have already asserted the nature of the self as permanent, how then could it possibly change when it meets certain conditions? How can conditions affect the self so it can be temporarily impermanent, when its very nature is permanent? The very definition of permanent indicates that it does not change. This again points out the absurdity of the assertion.

The non-Buddhist schools such as the Samkhyas and the Naiyayika (or Logicians) assert a permanent self, based on their acceptance of past and future lives. According to their reasoning the self has to be permanent in order to have come

from a past life to this life, and to be able to go from this life to the next life. They think that if the self was impermanent then it could not come from a past life to this, and from this life to the next? So while they accept past lives and future lives, and understand that some effects arise due to the past causes etc., the self, they say, has to be permanent, because if it changes or degenerates, then what would be left to go on to the next life? This is the reason for their assertion that the self is permanent.

We can readily relate to their limited reasoning, because we are not able to see the subtle momentary changes that occur in functional phenomena ourselves. The actual definition of impermanence implies that change occurs from moment to moment, and it is this momentary nature of change that we do not readily perceive. Thus we carry the perception of ourselves as being more or less the same self as yesterday, or the day before, etc.

Actually, the real understanding, and thus the realisation of impermanence, is actually quite difficult to obtain. While selflessness or emptiness are more profound than impermanence, and thus more difficult to realise, it seems that it is easier to understand the meaning of emptiness, rather than the subtle changes that occur from moment to moment. I definitely feel that understanding impermanence in terms of the momentariness of the existence is not easy to grasp. When we talk about impermanence it is usually in relation to the gross impermanence of phenomena, such as when a glass breaks. Because we see it break, we feel the impermanence of the glass is presented. In this way we can perceive and relate to the gross level of impermanence, whereas the actual impermanence of functional phenomena, the change which occurs from moment to moment, is subtle and difficult for us to realise.

While some of the non-Buddhist schools like the Samkhyas and the Naiyayika assert past and future lives, others do not. The self asserted by the non-Buddhist schools who don't believe in past and future lives is a self related to the body, i.e. the physical aggregate. Therefore, when the physical aggregate disintegrates, the self, which is dependent on that, also disintegrates. The analogy they use is that it is like drawings on a wall. When the wall falls down, the drawings that are dependent on the wall also disintegrate, because their very support has disintegrated.

The Christian faith, for example, does not assert past and future lives, or more specifically, reincarnation, but they do accept an individual being, which, in essence, seems to be called the soul, which doesn't disintegrate at the time of death. There is a continuity of the soul, as they present it. So, this is accepted in their religion.

His Holiness compares the Christian soul with what we call the self that goes on from past life to future lives. The common ground here is that both traditions posit a continuity that goes from the past to the future.

It is interesting to note that although there are differences between religions, there are also similarities. For example, when His Holiness speaks to other religions, he relates to them on the basis of commonality. That is something for us to also consider.

2.1.2.2.3. Such a self cannot be related to conditions

The commentary first presents the Naiyayika argument:

Argument: Although the self does not facilitate an action due to its own nature, actions are performed in relation to other factors.

30cd "These are its actions," you say.
How do they become related?

What they are saying is basically that, although the self itself does not facilitate an action by its own nature, it does perform actions in relation to other factors. So, this is what is being refuted here. The commentary presents:

Answer: This is also not valid—because if one says that the action which creates the result of this self is of a different entity, then how does it become related to the self? It could not be related to the self by nature or cause.

The assertion being refuted here is that of a self, which is permanent, but which can perform actions, and produce results in relation to other factors. What the commentary highlights is how these other factors are related to the self. If it is not related to the self by nature, or by cause (i.e. as a cause and effect), then there is no third option, and no other way to relate them. An example of something that is related through nature would be function and impermanence. Wherever there is a function, it is naturally related to impermanence through nature. Everything that functions is by nature also impermanent; so that is the relationship. Whereas the relationship between smoke and fire is that of cause and effect; fire being the cause and smoke the effect. If you assert that there is an independent, permanent self which produces some result, then there would have to be some relationship there. Any relationship has to have a relation either by nature, or by cause and effect. But that is not tenable here.

1.2.1.2.3. Understanding all beings to resemble emanations, anger is unsuitable

We can clearly see that interdependent origination is really the basis of the presentation here.

The verse reads:

31. Thus, everything is other-powered,
Through the power of this they are powerless.
Having understood this, do not become angry
At emanation-like phenomena.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Thus, all actions that produce a result are other-powered, and these conditions are again powered by earlier causes and conditions. Therefore, the result does not have any say in whether it arises or not, and hence is like an illusion or emanation.

When one understands that all functionalities perform actions while being empty of existence from their own side, one does not become angry at these emanation-like functionalities. Therefore one should train in realising the dependent arising that is the lack of existence from its own side, which destroys the seed of the afflictions.

The commentary presents the meaning of this verse. *All actions that produce a result are other-powered* implies that an action doesn't have control over itself, therefore actions are other-powered, meaning they are dependent on their previous causes and conditions. The point here is that *the result does not have any say in whether it arises or not, and hence is like an illusion or emanation.*

The commentary further explains that *When one understands all functionalities perform actions while being empty of existence from their own side, one does not become angry at these emanations like functionalities. Therefore one should train in realising the dependent arising that is the lack of existence from its own side, which destroys the seed of afflictions.*

The crux of the Prasangika view is presented here: that all things lack independent and inherent existence; that things are empty of inherent existence or they do not exist from their own side. If one understands these key points, then one really destroys the seed of the afflictions.

The very definition of illusion, or emanation, is something that is unreal or untrue, like a trick conjured up by a magician, and one should understand that phenomena arise like this, completely empty of existing from their own side. When one incorporates that understanding in one's perception of phenomena, then there is no room for one to become angry, because the very object which appears to exist from its own side as an independent entity harming us, does not actually exist in that way. Therefore there is no room for one to become angry towards it. Basically this is the crux of the explanation.

As I have presented many times before, when strong afflictions such as anger arise, it is because we relate to the object that is causing us harm, as if it were an independent object, completely arising from its own side. This is how it appears to us, so anger arises, and we feel justified in becoming angry. When one trains oneself to see that this appearance is false, that it is beyond reality, that the object one perceives is not inherently and independently existent, then that definitely helps to reduce the afflictions that arise in relation to the object of anger etc. This is hard for us initially, because we are habituated to perceiving things as independent and inherently existent. So overcoming that seemingly natural perception is not an easy task. However, to reduce the intensity of the negativities in one's mind, and eventually overcome the seeds of afflictions, we need to understand these points, and train our mind so that we can gain that realisation.

Having refuted some of the non-Buddhist schools in earlier verses, this verse is refuting the views held by all the Buddhist schools below the Prasangika, which assert inherent existence.

When one understands that all functionalities perform actions while being empty of existence from their own side, one does not become angry at these emanation-like functionalities. Therefore one should train in realising the dependent arising that is the lack of existence from its own side, which destroys the seed of the afflictions

The commentary implies the lack of inherent existence, which is the main point of the Prasangika presentation, and this refutes the earlier Buddhist schools.

1.2.1.3. THE NEED FOR REVERSING ANGER

The verse reads:

32. *If it is said: What is supposed to oppose what? Also, opposing is unsuitable. There is nothing unsuitable about asserting That in dependence on that the continuity of suffering is severed.*

Argument: If there is not even the slightest particle of inherent existence, then what antidote is supposed to oppose what object of abandonment? Since action and activity are invalid, even the action of opposing is unsuitable.

The argument is presented in the first two lines of the verse: *If it is said: What is supposed to oppose what? Also, opposing is unsuitable.* Then the counter argument, or answer, is presented in the next two lines *There is nothing unsuitable*

about asserting that in dependence on that the continuity of suffering is severed.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary expands upon the meaning:

There is nothing unsuitable about the lack of inherent existence of the conception that grasps at the two truths as mutually exclusive, and due to which one cannot posit action and activity of something that lacks inherent existence; i.e., there is nothing unsuitable about the lack of inherent existence of the object of abandonment and the antidote.

It follows it is like that—because in dependence on realising the lack of inherent existence of the object of abandonment, and the antidote all afflictions of anger and so forth become extinct and the continuum of suffering is severed.

What is being presented here is the validity of the realisation of the lack of inherent existence. Thus, gaining the understanding that inherent existence is the object of abandonment, and its antidote is the realisation of emptiness, is valid. That is so because by abandoning the grasping at inherent existence, one will overcome all afflictions, as this is the very root of samsara. So when grasping at a truly and inherently existent self is completely abandoned, the consequence of afflictions such as anger and so forth, will also be completely severed. Thus the continuum of one's suffering is completely severed, and samsara will cease.

1.2.2. Summary

33. *Therefore, whether it is friend or enemy, If one sees them acting unsuitably, Say 'it came due to those conditions'. Keeping this in mind be firm in happiness.*

Under the first verse the commentary explains that:

For those reasons, if one sees someone, whether it is friend or enemy, doing something unsuitable that harms, think "this person has only become like this due to their afflictions. They do not have any freedom". Keeping this in mind, stop anger and make your mental happiness firm by not letting it degenerate. Be patient in such a way.

What is being presented here, in relation to one's practice, is that you will reach a point where, whenever you see someone—be it friend or enemy—engaging in an activity which seems inappropriate or harmful, you will immediately recognise they are doing this only due to the afflictions in their own minds. They do not have control over their own mind, and thus do not have control or real freedom over their actions, because they are dominated by the afflictions. When you hold this in your mind at all times, you will naturally not immediately react with anger. It will stop the anger and you will maintain your mental happiness. Because you are not getting angry, your mental happiness will not degenerate, and will be maintained. This is the way you tolerate harm and engage in the practice of patience. Within the different categories of patience this relates more to the patience of willingly accepting harm and suffering from others.

The main point here is that in order to protect the happiness in one's mind, the practice of patience is indispensable—one cannot do without it. As we all wish to have a happy state of mind—no-one voluntarily wants to have a sad or despondent state of mind—protecting it, by engaging in the practice of patience, becomes essential.

You need to take these points on board, and practise them regularly in your everyday life, particularly with close relations, associates or companions. As you have daily contact with them, you are prone to becoming upset or angry with them. Rather than immediately reacting, you can recognise that they don't have control over what they are doing and saying, because they are under the control of the afflictions, and that they are not in a happy state of mind themselves.

Use your own experience as a basis to understand how others act. When you are affected by the afflictions, and when you get upset and angry, you are not in a happy state of mind. In that sense, rather than taking it personally and retaliating, this approach gives you the distance to not react immediately, and allows your anger to subside.

An analogy I have given previously, demonstrating how those afflicted by afflictions do not have control over their own mind and actions, is when a car bumps your car from behind. When you look back, your immediate reaction might be to become upset with the car behind you. But when you see that the car behind you had no control, because it was pushed by the car behind it, then you realise there is no point getting upset with the car behind you, because they had no control at all about running into you. The afflictions are the one behind you, and they, themselves are also dependent on causes and conditions. If we understand that there is no independent entity that is voluntarily causing us harm, then our reasons for becoming angry will definitely subside.

These illustrations are effective in relation to our mind. Using the car example, we are in the first car, the one in the car behind is the individual that we perceive to be harming us. Whether it is our friend or companion or enemy, the only reason they would harm us is because they themselves are affected by delusions such as anger. Therefore the afflictions are like the third car. Just as we don't blame the person who crashes into us, we cannot blame the person who harms us, because they are affected by their afflictions. Therefore it is the afflictions which we need to overcome. This is how we protect our mind.

These ways of reasoning are supreme methods to protect our own mind so that our happiness does not degenerate. If we react with our normal perceptions and reasoning we will find every reason to become upset and angry in response to those who perpetrate harm. Blaming them only causes our own mind to become agitated and disturbed. When we become angry, the happiness in our mind completely degenerates, and we actually allow the conditions for our own happiness to degenerate, and our mind to become despondent and agitated etc. So the optimum protection is using these methods and reasoning as the way to actually protect oneself from harm.

Some make comments like, 'I could not give up the Buddhist principles or path because it is based on reasoning that gives me the freedom to use my own intelligence and reasoning. Why would I want to give up that? It gives me the freedom to rule my own life with reasoning and logic, rather than being completely dominated by others. Why would I want to give that up? I could never give it up.' These are actually very good points.

As you are aware, the next session is the discussion night. I have confidence that you will do the discussions well. Keep in mind that what is being discussed is a form of revision to make the topics we have covered a little clearer. Doing the exam fulfils the same purpose. Studying serves the purpose

of revision, and discussion needs to be done with the same approach.

If one sees someone, be it friend or enemy, acting in an unsuitable way, think along the lines of the points of the teaching tonight. Who could disagree with them? No-one in a rational state of mind would disagree that practising in this way is beneficial.

One needs to understand from these presentations that the very reason that one is applying these protective measures is because not doing so is uncomfortable. We do not like to experience harm and we find ways to prevent ourselves from being affected by it. If it is our experience that the harms, inappropriate gestures etc. inflicted by others are uncomfortable, then we need to find the ways and means to protect ourselves. Applying these principles will do that. As much as they protect oneself from the harms of others, they are also a means of protecting oneself from harming others. That is how we need to understand it. These are really profound ways to understand the main points being presented here.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcribed by Su Lan Foo

Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མཁའ་འགྲུབ་ཀྱི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

2 December 2014

As usual let us spend some time in our meditation practice.

[Meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching, and put it into practice well.

1.2. Meditating on the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma

1.2.2. Summary (cont.)

The second verse of the summary reads:

34. *In case they acted independently,
Since nobody desires suffering,
None of all the embodied beings,
Would receive any suffering.*

Some other commentaries place this verse under the next heading, *Meditating on the Patience That Does Not Think Anything of Harm*. This commentary relates it to the summary of the section, *Meditating on the Patience That Definitely Relies Upon the Dharma*.

Gyalsab Je's commentary on the verse explains:

If the result would be independently created out of their own wish, without the power of other conditions then, since not one sentient being desires suffering, none of all the embodied beings should have any suffering. Since we see that they receive suffering, and they do not have freedom, it is unsuitable to be angry at them. The mental afflictions are behind them.

What is being emphasised here is that results are not independently created. If suffering were to be created independently out of one's own wish or accord, then, since no beings would ever want to experience any suffering, they would not voluntarily or independently create that suffering for themselves.

If suffering were to be generated independently then, since no being would want to experience suffering, suffering would not be generated. However we all know that beings do experience suffering and that they do not have any control over that suffering. Thus *it is unsuitable to be angry with them* for their reaction to that suffering. *The mental afflictions are behind them* indicates that the cause of their suffering is the mental afflictions, and that is what has to be targeted, not the beings themselves.

1.3. Meditating on the patience that does not think anything of harm

This is subdivided into three:

1.3.1. Bringing to mind the method of compassion

1.3.2. Stopping the cause of anger

1.3.3. Considering it one's own fault if something undesired is received

1.3.1. Bringing to mind the method of compassion

This has three further sub-divisions:

1.3.1.1. Some harm themselves out of ignorance

1.3.1.2. If they commit suicide due to ignorance, it is no great surprise that they harm others

1.3.1.3. It is suitable to be compassionate with that person

1.3.1.1. SOME HARM THEMSELVES OUT OF IGNORANCE

Out of ignorance, some sentient beings actually harm themselves. Thinking about that should be a cause to generate compassion for them.

If we experience harm from others, then we need to remember that the harm is done out of ignorance. In fact, out of ignorance others cause harm to themselves. So if they are capable of harming themselves out of ignorance, then there is no question that they would harm others. Thinking about this factor gives reason not to react out of anger when others cause one harm.

The first verse under this heading is:

35. *The reckless harm themselves
With thorns and so forth.
In order to attain women and so forth.
They become obsessed and starve themselves
and so forth.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary reads:

These people that harm others through the power of the afflictions and a lack of conscientiousness also harm themselves. To attain liberation they roll on thorns, or jump from great heights. Some become obsessed with attaining wealth and women, and out of anger starve themselves and so forth.

As clearly explained in the commentary, *those who harm others through the power of the afflictions and a lack of conscientiousness, also harm themselves*. Thus, due to a lack of conscientiousness and the influence of the afflictions some people not only harm others, but they also harm themselves.

Furthermore, with their intention to be free from suffering, gain happiness and attain liberation, they are misled about the appropriate methods to reach liberation. They engage in actions such as walking on thorns, or jumping from a high cliff, and harm themselves, under the illusion that they are creating the cause of happiness, and freedom from suffering.

Others *become obsessed with attaining wealth and women and out of anger starve themselves and so forth*. We have all seen how some people become enraged, and even starve themselves to attain wealth, or for the sake of obtaining women and so forth. This is the extent of the harm that people are capable of inflicting upon themselves, due to the afflictions and a lack of conscientiousness.

What we can learn from this on a personal level is how incredibly fortunate we are in having obtained unmistakable methods for attaining liberation. There are so many who, in their quest for liberation, are presented with and follow incorrect or erroneous methods. This presentation of how some people harm themselves due to the afflictions, and an incorrect understanding, indirectly

shows us how extremely fortunate we are to have been presented with unmistakable methods. Thus we need to really cherish these unmistakable methods, acknowledge them and put them into practice.

The next verse under this heading is:

36. *Some are obstructed and jump from heights,
Eat poison and other unbecoming things;
With unmeritorious actions
They harm themselves.*

These unthinkable things actually do happen—we see so much harm arising from drastic actions done out of ignorance. So we really need to be cautious and wary of the afflictions.

As Gyaltsab Je states in his commentary:

Some are obstructed by the afflictions and jump from great heights, eat poison and other disagreeable things. Through non-meritorious negative actions that are the cause for the lower realms they harm themselves in this and in future lives. How can it be appropriate to be angry when one is harmed by others?

Here, *obstruction* indicates an obstruction to one's life. Due to being weighed down by great suffering, and a longing to be free from that suffering, there are those who, out of ignorance, take their own life by hanging themselves, or, as mentioned here, by jumping off a cliff or bridges. Others take poison and other harmful substances and they do this out of ignorance, with the intention of ending their suffering. They want to be free from their suffering but because they don't have the correct method they have no choice but to resort to such actions.

These, as mentioned earlier, are everyday occurrences. So we can see the relevance of Shantideva's presentation even in our modern times: we see so many ignorant people taking drastic measures, thinking that they can free themselves from suffering.

Many ignorant beings, which includes ourselves, regularly create *non-meritorious negative actions that are the cause for the lower realms*. With the intention to either gain some happiness or remove some suffering we regularly engage in non-virtuous actions, such as the ten non-virtuous actions of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and so forth. I have mentioned previously that there are some who feel uncomfortable when they don't have an opportunity to create negativity, and glad when they have an opportunity to create some negativity. So you can see I was not making this up—this is indeed exactly what Shantideva is presenting here. We willingly create so many negativities, which are actually the cause for rebirth in the lower realms.

So if there are those who create harm for themselves in this and future lives, then *how can it be appropriate to be angry when one is harmed by others?* This rhetorical question implies that it is inappropriate to be angry with those who are constantly engaged in harming themselves in this and future lives. Rather than anger, one should develop compassion for them.

So the main emphasis here is that those who act in this way are an object of our compassion rather than anger.

This, in essence, is the meaning of the heading, *Bringing to Mind the Method for Compassion*.

1.3.1.2. IF THEY COMMIT SUICIDE DUE TO IGNORANCE, IT IS NO GREAT SURPRISE THAT THEY HARM OTHERS

This heading emphasises the point that if, out of ignorance and other afflictions, people can take their own life—one's most cherished and prized possession—then it is no great surprise that they would harm others. The verse under this heading reads:

37. *When under the control of the afflictions
Suffering sentient beings even kill themselves.
How could it be that at such time
They do not harm the body of others?*

We need to see how the practices, such as patience, that are being presented in this text and others are the profound practices of the great noble beings, the bodhisattvas. First of all, we need to see how profound these presentations are. Secondly, we need to recognise that the methods and means to actually practice are really profound. Thirdly, we can also acknowledge the fact that those who actually engaged in these practices, the bodhisattvas, are indeed great noble beings. Then a deep sense of veneration and genuine respect and admiration for bodhisattvas will arise. This is how we need to relate to the advice being presented here.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

When one falls under the control of the afflictions one will suffer at heart, and be despondent and even kill oneself. At this time, how could it come that one does not harm the body of other sentient beings? By thinking that it is impossible not to be harmed it is unsuitable to get angry.

What is clearly explained in the commentary is that any being who *falls under the control of the afflictions* will experience much mental agony. Then they become *despondent*, feeling completely hopeless and worthless. Under such circumstances some people will not hesitate to take their own life, and thus destroy their most prized possession. So if, under the influence and dominance of the afflictions, an individual is capable of taking such drastic measures as taking their own life, then it is no wonder that they are capable of harming others.

In the commentary this is presented as a rhetorical question, *At this time, how could it come that one does not harm the body of other sentient beings?*, which indicates that harming others is more likely, as it is a much easier task. Therefore *by thinking that it is impossible not to be harmed, it is unsuitable to get angry*.

By contemplating this point one understands how beings who become angry and harm themselves are an object of compassion rather than scorn.

1.3.1.3. IT IS SUITABLE TO BE COMPASSIONATE WITH THAT PERSON

Because of the examples given earlier, it is suitable to be compassionate towards such beings. This is the point where the emphasis is placed on those who engage in harming themselves. These of course are very important points, and this is an unmistakable presentation of how to engage in these practices. When we reflect on what we hear and study, we need to try to implement it as much

as possible in our lives. If we just leave it to a mere act of listening out of curiosity, then while there might be some benefit in hearing these sacred words, our minds are not likely to change much. If we don't actually put it into practice, it won't have the benefit of transforming our mind.

We are, of course, under the influence of the afflictions, but if we take this advice to heart and try, at the very least, to aspire to these practices by emulating them, then it will definitely help to transform our minds. Even though anger still arises, we won't be completely dominated or influenced by it. The intensity of anger can definitely be reduced; this is how we begin to become a genuinely gentler and calmer person.

That transformation will definitely happen when we try to implement these points into our practice. On the next occasion when someone harms us, or wrongly accuses us, then instead of immediately reacting with anger and finding every reason to justify being angry with them, if we can just remember the points that Shantideva presents here, then it is most likely that we can protect our mind. Rather than becoming angry with this person, it is possible to develop some compassion for them.

The verse relating to this heading is:

38. *Even if one cannot generate compassion
For those that, due to generation of afflictions,
Commit suicide and so forth,
Why should anger have the last word?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse is not too obscure for us to understand.

It is suitable to practise compassion towards such a person that, upon having generated afflictions, harms others as explained above and even kills themselves. Even if compassion is not generated then how can anger be the final word? It is extremely unsuitable to get angry.

The main emphasis is that when one sees the condition of others, who *upon having generated afflictions harm others, and even kill themselves*, it is suitable to practise compassion for such individuals.

Even if one is not able to generate great compassion for them, then, at the very least *how can anger be the final word?* In response to this rhetorical question, the final point presented here is that *it is extremely unsuitable to become angry* with such individual beings who are driven by afflictions.

1.3.2. Stopping the Cause of Anger

This heading is sub-divided into three:

1.3.2.1. If childishness is their nature, then anger is unsuitable

1.3.2.2. Although the fault of harming is adventitious, anger is unsuitable

1.3.2.3. Anger is unsuitable when the direct causes are analysed

Of course the term *childishness* is not to be taken literally. It is a translation of a Tibetan word meaning 'like a child'. It refers to ordinary beings, as opposed to the supreme beings, the bodhisattvas.

In another text there is an indication of how, just as it is extremely difficult for a child to see a hair in the palm of

the hand, all pervasive suffering is extremely profound and hard to comprehend. This is an analogy illustrating the meaning of the term meaning 'like a child'.

1.3.2.1. IF CHILDISHNESS IS THEIR NATURE, THEN ANGER IS UNSUITABLE

The verse under this heading is:

39. *In case harming others
Is the nature of the childish,
It is as unsuitable to be angry at them
As it is to be resentful at the burning nature of
fire.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

If harming others is in the nature of the childish, who do not know what has to be practised and what has to be abandoned, and, then it is unsuitable to be angry at them; just as it is unsuitable to be resentful and angry at fire for being in the nature of burning.

There are two aspects to *if harming others is the nature of the childish who do not know what has to be practised, and what has to be abandoned*. The first aspect is not knowing what has to be practised, and what has to be abandoned. The second is that one might know what has to be abandoned and what has to be adopted but, through being overwhelmed by the afflictions, one does not engage in this practice.

Not knowing what is to be practised and what is to be abandoned may be excusable if someone has not had that explained to them, and so they have no understanding. However, some people receive the teachings, and have a clear understanding of what has to be abandoned and what has to be practised, but they are still so strongly dominated by the afflictions that they are not able to actually engage in the practices. Most of us fit into that category!

These are the shortcomings of the childish, or ordinary beings. So it is unsuitable to become angry with them, because they either don't know what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded, or because they are so overwhelmed with strong afflictions they are not able to engage in the practices of adopting what is to be adopted, and abandoning what is to be abandoned. Thus, because they have no control over their own minds, it is unsuitable to be angry with them.

The analogy that is used here is that *it is unsuitable to be resentful and angry at fire for being in the nature of burning*. The very nature of fire is that it burns. So being resentful or angry with fire because it has the nature of burning, is pointless. Just as it is silly to be resentful and angry with fire because it has the nature of burning, likewise it is unsuitable to be angry with the childish, who either don't know, or are completely overwhelmed by the afflictions. It is because of their nature that they harm themselves and others, so it is unsuitable to retaliate, or be angry with them.

1.3.2.2. ALTHOUGH THE FAULT OF HARMING IS ADVENTITIOUS, ANGER IS UNSUITABLE

The verse under this heading reads:

40. *Then, even if this fault is temporary
And the nature of sentient beings is wholesome,
It is still not suitable to become angry,
Like being resentful that smoke rises in space.*

Here, Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Even if the fault of harming others arises adventitiously and the nature of the mind of sentient beings is wholesome and gentle, it is still unsuitable to become angry at the harmer, because that would be as unsuitable as being resentful at space for letting smoke to arise.

The nature of the mind of sentient beings is wholesome and gentle, and thus the act of harming others arises only adventitiously. This means that harming others occurs only occasionally, when the all the adverse conditions are intact. As mentioned here, it is *unsuitable to become angry with the harmer*, just as it is *unsuitable to be angry with space for letting smoke arise*. Other commentaries use the example of clouds developing. If we desire a sunny clear sky, it would be pointless being resentful about any temporary obstruction such as clouds or smoke. In fact being resentful about the sky allowing smoke or clouds to arise would be quite silly.

1.3.2.3. ANGER IS UNSUITABLE WHEN THE DIRECT CAUSES ARE ANALYSED

The verse presented under this heading is often quoted in the teachings. Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins with an argument:

Argument: It is suitable to get angry as the other person is harming me.

41. *Though I am contacted directly by the stick,
If I am getting angry at the wielder,
Since they are induced by hatred,
I should get angry at hatred instead.*

Then Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning of the verse:

Answer: If I were to get angry at that which directly harms me then, since I am directly touched by the stick, weapon and so forth, and thus harmed by them, it would be suitable to get angry at them. Then, since they are not doing this independently, but are wielded by a person, if one were to get angry at the wielder, they are also without independence due to hatred. Instead of getting angry at these two I should get angry at hatred.

If we were to reason that we should be angry at what directly harms us, then we should be angry with the stick, or weapon, that actually makes contact with us. However common sense tells us that even though the stick caused us the direct pain, it would not be able to hurt us by itself, because it has to be wielded by someone. Therefore, even though it makes direct contact with us, it is not really the stick that causes the pain. Rather, the real cause is the wielder of the stick, so therefore one has reason to become upset and angry with that person.

In other words the stick is not hitting us independently, but is wielded by a person, so it is pointless being angry with the stick. The logic being presented here is that the wielder of the stick is also without independence, and is controlled by hatred.

If one is able to use logic and the common sense reasoning of not becoming upset at the stick because it is not independently hurting us, then that same line of logic also applies to the wielder of the stick, because they are, in turn, controlled by the afflictions. They are not acting independently as they are controlled by the afflictions.

So the conclusion is that *instead of becoming angry at these two—the stick and the person—one should instead become angry at hatred*, or the afflictions.

We can use this meticulous line of reasoning to further develop our own ability to use reasoning and logic to make the right decisions, followed by the correct means of engaging in whatever activity we do. We need to take, from the logic presented here, the proper way of conducting ourselves in all activities that we engage in. If one were to really contemplate these points, one can see that they give us a lot of room to use profound reasoning and logic in daily life. If one does not think much about them, then of course one will not really see their value.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcribed by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་པོ་འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷོ་ལ་འཇམ་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

9 December 2014

As usual we will spend some time in meditation.

[meditation]

The *tong len* practice is a profound practice that can really assist us if we actually implement it. With respect to the *taking* part of the practice, we may not see the relevance of taking the suffering of others upon ourselves at first, and so the benefit of that part of the practice may not be immediately evident. However there is an obvious direct benefit in the *giving* part of the practice, as it is the immediate cause for the generation of love and compassion. Once love and compassion has been generated within one's heart then one will naturally and spontaneously act to benefit other sentient beings. So we can easily relate to the benefits of the *giving* part of the practice.

When one wishes for others to be endowed with happiness and to be free from suffering, and has the determination to bring about their happiness and free them from suffering, then that can definitely lead one to act in ways to bring about happiness for others, and help to remove their suffering.

The meditation and mental training that we do now will be transformed into actions that benefit others. Those who are deprived of happiness definitely wish for happiness, and those who experience suffering definitely want to be free from suffering. So if we help them to achieve this, we are benefitting others in a very practical way. So we can see that this practice is really the essence of the Buddha's teaching.

When we generate these two most precious states of mind—love and compassion—then we are naturally inclined to benefit other sentient beings. As the second Dalai Lama, Gedun Gyatso mentioned, when one generates the mind of compassion, then that instils the wish to benefit other sentient beings. Thus, a mind of love and compassion is a most valuable and supreme state of mind, which serves as a basis for benefiting sentient beings.

A mind of genuine, unconditional love and compassion that is devoid of self-cherishing and attachment, which is accompanied with the sole intention of benefiting others, is indeed a most supreme state of mind. The more we familiarise ourselves with generating love and compassion, the more we will develop that genuine feeling within ourselves, and the kinder and gentler our mind will become. This is the practical benefit of the *tong len* practice.

The practice of giving encompasses giving one's body, possessions and root of virtue. It involves initially training the mind in selflessly giving one's body, possessions and root virtues to others. As indicated in the

teachings, having trained our mind, we then need to actually practise giving to others, as way of directly benefiting sentient beings.

As the teachings explain, mind-training needs to be followed by actual practice. The way to measure our progress in this practice is to check whether our mind of giving has in fact increased. We do this practice in a form of meditation. However, reciting a prayer, and sitting for a few minutes with closed eyes is not sufficient, if it doesn't actually transform our mind into the mind of giving. When we can see that our mind of giving has actually increased and become more natural, then that is a true mark of progress, and a positive transformation.

The teachings indicate that we need to give away our body as well as our possessions and root virtues. Now, we may have not reached the point where we are readily able to give our body parts, which of course is the practice of the great bodhisattvas. However, by training our mind in giving our body in thought, we are familiarising ourselves with the practice, thus drawing closer to being able to actually give our bodies.

Practice needs to be manageable and practical, so that means engaging in practices that are in accordance with our ability. What we need to really contemplate is minimising the mind of wishing harm upon others. The true mark of progress is when the mind wishing harm upon others is reduced, and the mind of wishing to benefit others is increased.

As advised further, one needs to immediately regard any sentient being one happens to meet as being as kind as one's mother and remember that, 'They are the supreme field of my merit, because by relying on sentient beings I will be able to accomplish all the necessary conditions (such as accumulating merit and wisdom) for achieving enlightenment. Therefore this being is really precious to me. If I endeavour to please this sentient being then that will be the equivalent to pleasing all the buddhas and bodhisattvas'. That is how we need to relate to other sentient beings.

As Shantideva mentions

*When looking at sentient beings say,
"In dependence on this very sentient being
I will become a buddha",
And look at them honestly and lovingly.*

So we need to see any sentient being we encounter as being the cause for our enlightenment. In addition to reciting that verse and remembering its meaning, one also needs to put it into practice. We need to be able to look at any sentient being, and think, 'This sentient being is the cause for me to become enlightened', and hold that being with the mind of compassion.

Memorising a verse such as this and then reciting is a way to train the mind. As the teachings indicate, one needs to first train with words. So when we do the *tong len* practice we begin by reciting this verse from the *Guru Puja*:

And thus, O Venerable Compassionate Gurus, we
seek your blessings,
That all karmic debts, obstacles and sufferings of
Mother beings,
May without exception ripen upon us right now,

And that we may give our happiness and virtue to others

And thereby invest all beings in bliss.

That recitation helps to instil the actual meaning of the practice into one's mind. That is why the teachings advise us to first train in the words, which means memorising those words and then, whilst reciting them, bringing the meaning of the words to mind.

In summary, the essential advice is to practise to the extent that one is capable. This eliminates excuses about not engaging in practices because one doesn't know enough, and so forth. In fact, as some teachers have advised, we are not deprived of the knowledge of how to practice, but we are deprived of the actual effort to put in the practice. So, beginning with the basics, we need to actually apply whatever we have learnt.

Essentially, this means integrating the practices into your minds. If we think of practices as being exterior practices, and live our life in a manner that is not in accord with the teachings, then that is where we will fall short of any true transformation. We need to integrate our practises into our minds so that we always carry them with us, in whatever we do.

When they hear such advice, anyone who is keen to put the Dharma into practice will say to themselves, 'Yes, this is meant for me. This is what I need to be doing'. But when someone who is not too keen on practice hears such advice they will think, 'Oh yes, I have heard that before. I already know that' and thus fall short in implementing the advice. They have reached a dangerous point where they have this false assumption that they know all that they hear, and they don't relate it to themselves. There is a particular term in Tibetan, *cho drep*, sometimes translated as *immune to the Dharma*, which is derived from the fact that no matter how long you boil some vegetables, they never really cook well. This sort of analogy is used to describe someone who hears advice and instructions in the teachings, but keeps thinking, 'Oh yes, I have heard that before. It doesn't relate to me, because I already know it'. If that is their attitude then how could the advice in the Dharma ever help them to transform their own mind? The Dharma only transforms the mind if one takes it to heart, and practises what one hears.

Another example of how we might relate something in the teachings to some external factor is the teaching on impermanence, which is an essential teaching for helping to transform the mind. If, for example, a glass breaks and one has heard the teaching on impermanence and how things are transitory and change moment by moment, then one might think, 'Oh yes, of course. This is an example of impermanence'. However, that does not actually instil any sort of personal realisation of how one is also impermanent and changing from moment to moment. In particular, one's own life is also fragile and changing moment by moment. If one is able to relate the glass breaking to oneself in that way, then one has then taken the teaching on impermanence as a personal instruction, and used the external event as an impetus to practise the Dharma.

For those who are keen to practise, witnessing someone's death will also be a very strong impetus to remind

themselves of the fragility of their own life, and the need to practise before the moment of death arises. So we can see the difference it makes, when an instruction is applied on a personal level and put into practice.

Coming back to the main point, the practice of love and compassion is essential. We might not be able to generate the bodhicitta attitude right now, but we do have access to its base which is love and compassion. So it is just a matter of actually contemplating and putting effort into generating those states of mind. That is something we definitely can do, and generating the thought of love and compassion to the best of our ability, and meditating on that, is essential for our practice.

When we are able to generate the thought of love and compassion to a certain extent, then it becomes easier to actually move to the next step of developing the special intention in which one takes on the personal responsibility of benefiting sentient beings. One thinks, 'It is not sufficient to merely wish other beings to be free from suffering and endowed with happiness. I need to take responsibility for doing that myself. I need to take on the responsibility of freeing all beings from every type of suffering, and leading them to the state of ultimate happiness'. When we take personal responsibility in this way, then our minds become a much more fertile ground for the development of actual bodhicitta.

After having developed the special intention, we realise, 'Even though I wholeheartedly want to take on the responsibility of freeing all beings from suffering, and leading them to the ultimate state of happiness, the reality is that I don't have that ability right now'. So one contemplates, 'Who has that ability? How can I possibly achieve this ability myself?' That is when one contemplates reaching the state of enlightenment, and how it is a perfected state, where one is free from all adversity and has developed all qualities. At this point one thinks, 'When I have achieved that state of enlightenment, then I will have the capacity and ability to free all beings from suffering, and lead them to happiness'. It is at that point one has generated a very firm foundation for generating bodhicitta.

Over the past year we have been studying Shantideva's precious text together. Studying this text and making the effort together makes us real Dharma friends. From the teacher's side, I have tried my best in presenting it, and from your side, you have placed all of your attention on listening to the teachings, and trying to study them. We have made that joint effort to study this profound text by Shantideva, which presents the unmistakable methods of generating bodhicitta and then practising the six perfections. So we can all rejoice in our joint efforts.

As a result we have definitely accumulated a great amount of root virtue. So we need to secure and increase it so that it does not go to waste. Thus we rejoice in and dedicate that virtue, which is a supreme practice.

One of the greatest prayers of aspiration that is a means to dedicate one's virtues is the *King of Prayers*. As we did last year, we will recite it again, not only as a supreme means to rejoice and dedicate for our own virtues, but also as a means to dedicate that virtue to those who are connected to the Centre who are unwell, and those who

have passed away. Because of the connection we have with them, and the connection that they have with the Centre, our practice will definitely benefit them as well. So this is not just a personal practice

Of course, as you recite it in English, I will have to recite it in Tibetan. However I don't necessarily feel left out, as I'm happy and proud to be reciting the text in Tibetan! Tibetan is now being accepted as being one of the most supreme languages for the study of the Dharma. Leaving aside the contents of the texts such as Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, the language is incredibly rich with lots of deeper meanings in the words. It would be quite difficult to find any other language, even in other Buddhist countries, which presents the teachings so profoundly.

Only in Tibetan will you find all of the Buddha's doctrine intact. Many works were translated into Chinese, but a lot of them have been since destroyed. There are some Japanese translations, but I have heard that you need to know Chinese characters to be able to read them. So Tibetan is one of the rare languages that has kept all of the Buddha's doctrine intact. That is why I can claim Tibetan to be supreme. I value the language and don't wish to forget it.

Given that Buddha's teachings are preserved in the Tibetan language, it seems quite reasonable to think that being reborn as a Tibetan might be a reasonable aspiration.

There are now many Buddhist scholars in America and other countries who only became renowned after they learned Tibetan and studied the texts directly in the Tibetan language. Glen Mullin once told me that every big university in America has one student of late Geshe Ngawang Dhargye as a staff member, which has to imply that he was a great teacher. I have heard that Glen is a very learned man himself, with a very intelligent mind. I gather that he has translated many texts and also written the history of all the previous Dalai Lamas.

Glen presented me some of these translated works himself, and told me that the late Geshe Ngawang Dhargye had advised him that it will be good for him to engage in the Dharma activity of translation and so forth. But in order to do that, he advised that it would be good, not just to learn Tibetan, but to also have some understanding in the debate system. That is why Glen was advised to go to the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics in Dharamsala, where he studied for a while.

Apparently Glen indulged in a care-free hippie lifestyle in his youth. However, he developed a connection with Gen Rinpoche, Geshe Ngawang Dhargye. He would visit Geshe-la in the evening, and Geshe-la would reprimand him about his ways. Then slowly, slowly he began to transform himself to the point where he really got into the Dharma, and became a good scholar.

Before reciting *The King of Prayers*, generate a bodhicitta motivation that is based on the intention:

For the sake of all sentient beings, and to lead them to the ultimate state of happiness and free them from all suffering, I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will recite this prayer, and dedicate it to that purpose.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcribed by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་ཀྱི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

11 February 2014

As usual we will devote some time to meditation and we can base our motivation on the Refuge and Bodhicitta prayer that we have just recited. [meditation]

Prior to taking up the practice of meditation it is very important that we understand both the conducive and the adverse conditions that affect meditation. Without recognising those two aspects, and making an attempt to overcome the adverse conditions and to adopt the conducive ones, our attempt to meditate will not be very successful. We may seem to achieve a temporary focus but apart from that we won't get much out of our meditation session. For a genuine meditation session, we really need to understand the way the conducive and adverse conditions affect a meditation session.

As mentioned regularly, the main purpose of engaging in the practice of meditation is so that one may be able to subdue one's mind. In order to subdue the mind we need to understand the process of gaining control over our own mind, otherwise we will maintain our habitual pattern of being controlled by our mind, which in turn is controlled by the delusions, and of the various delusions, the main culprit is the strong grasping at the 'I'.

We can assume that whatever activity we engage in is done with the intent of gaining happiness and eliminating suffering. Regardless of whether the activity actually serves that purpose or not, that is the ultimate goal. This is true for whatever activity human beings are engaged in—the pursuit of happiness and the elimination of suffering is always the goal. When we observe the activities of others we may notice that their activity is not serving that purpose. However, we can't tell them that, because everyone has the notion that they are using the correct methods to achieve their goal. Those methods are ingrained, and they believe that they will work for them, and so it is impossible to immediately change their approach, especially when they believe theirs to be the best method. So it is worthwhile for us to simply observe what others are doing and learn from that.

The practice of Dharma and meditation is a unique method for achieving happiness and eliminating suffering. However, we also need to understand that adopting meditation should not be presented to others as being contrary to leading a normal life in a worldly environment. Some may feel that adopting the meditation technique is a religious practice and therefore not related to their everyday life existence and wellbeing. If meditation is presented as having to lead a completely different kind of lifestyle, then it would be very difficult for ordinary people to see how meditation can benefit them. Rather, we need to present the meditation technique as being relevant to leading a happier life in their everyday existence. If one seemingly leads a normal lifestyle outwardly, but experiences a true inner transformation as a result of meditation and the practise of Dharma, then, based on that personal experience, we can share something of great value with others. Others from ordinary walks of life will

feel comfortable in our presence and easily accept what we present. This will be of real benefit to others.

It is by solving our own personal difficulties and problems through the practice of Dharma and meditation, and experiencing an inner transformation, that we will be able to confidently share the Dharma with others. And, as such, what we present will be accepted by others, because no-one can dismiss a personal experience of positive transformation—especially when it relates to overcoming problems and difficulties similar to the ones they are facing themselves. How can others say that meditation has no value when you share with them the fact that it has helped to solve your own difficulties and problems? No-one intentionally wishes to experience any kind of problem or difficulty and everyone appreciates a state of wellbeing. So when a genuine technique is presented from the basis of personal experience, it will readily be accepted by others. That is because they are also striving towards the same goal of happiness and wellbeing and not to experience any difficulties and problems.

The main point is to ensure that your practice hits the target of subduing and controlling your own mind. The great Gyalsey Thokmay Sangpo said in his *Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*:

If you do not analyse your own faults,
You might put on a Dharmic facade while
behaving in a non-Dharmic way.
Therefore, to continually analyse your faults and
then discard them,
Is the practice of a bodhisattva.

The essential point here is that one really needs to detect and acknowledge the faults within one's own mind and then strive to overcome them first. Otherwise, as the great master Gyalsey Thokmay Sangpo mentions, there is a great danger that we will completely mislead others by presenting them with a false appearance. If one does not attend to the real intention of the Dharma, particularly if one engages in actions contrary to the Dharma, then there will be great danger of creating doubt about the value of Dharma in the minds of others. It can cause others to think, 'How could someone behave and conduct themselves in a way that is contrary to what they preach?' If we create the conditions where others doubt the Dharma and generate a negative state of mind it is a grave fault on our part. We should strive for others to generate virtue and not more negativity.

So we need to really pay attention to the main cause of our own faults and mental unrest, which lies within our own mind, and not in external conditions and circumstances. When we are feeling a little down or depressed we may resort to going out with friends and having a good time, which may give some temporary relief. But when the enjoyment of being with others has faded away, the mental unrest and the uncomfortable feelings and negative emotions return. That is because we are not paying attention to applying antidotes to overcoming the root cause of our problems.

Seeking temporary relief each time we feel depressed and unsettled will not help to solve the real problem. Rather, we need to ensure that whatever meditation we do, and whatever Dharma practice we adopt, becomes an antidote for overcoming the real problem that lies within. Each one of us can detect a troubling state of mind, attitude or delusion in our mind that is always there to harm us. So it is

important for us to detect the cause of that, and work at overcoming the main culprit.

Of all the various delusions found in negative states of mind, the ultimate culprit is grasping at the self, an aspect of which is self-cherishing. There is some debate about whether the self-cherishing mind is actually a delusion but, regardless of that, it is quite clear that it harms us and hinders our happiness and joy. Grasping at the 'I' and self-cherishing are mutually supportive, and they work together like master and servant to cause us so much misery and pain.

Grasping at the 'I' is the root cause of all our problems, and when we are able to fully acknowledge that then the strong wish to overcome grasping at the self will develop. So what are the best methods and antidotes to overcome self-grasping? As the teachings present, the ultimate antidote for overcoming grasping at the self is realising emptiness or selflessness. There is no more supreme antidote to grasping at the self than to gain the realisation of emptiness. This is why the view of emptiness is held in such high esteem. It is considered a most precious realisation because it serves as the sole antidote for overcoming the root cause of all our problems, which is grasping at the self.

To see why grasping at the self is the cause for all unwanted misery and suffering we need to understand how it is the root cause of all other delusions and, in particular, the cause for the development of strong attachment and anger. This is not an obscure point. If we really think about it we will notice that this is true for ourselves. From strong clinging to the 'I' there naturally follows attachment to those things and individuals that are favourable to oneself, and aversion or anger towards those who oppose one's own interests. So, there is strong attachment to one's friends, relatives and the like, and anger towards enemies. Due to this strong attachment and aversion we engage in so many different activities that revolve around trying to please those who are close to us, while trying to subjugate those we consider our enemies and who oppose our interests, thus creating much heavy negative karma. In this way we come to understand how self-grasping is the root cause of all our unhappiness.

When we investigate further and look into how we carry these attitudes into our daily life we find that we make most of our decisions based on, whether 'I like this', or 'I don't like that'. Our strongly held opinions are based merely on the fact 'because I like this, I want it' or 'because I don't like it, I don't want it'. So, the driving force behind the decisions we make is mostly because 'I' like or dislike something.

We need to further investigate how that very strong opinionated 'I' appears to us. Through a sincere and thorough investigation we will come to realise that we view this 'I' as being independently existent; a very solid and unshakeable 'I' that does not depend on any other causes and conditions for its existence.

When we further investigate whether such an independent and solid 'I' actually exists or not, we come to realise that in fact such an 'I' does not exist at all. When we come to understand that such an independently existent 'I' does not actually exist, then one has identified the basis of the object of negation. Without abandoning the object of negation we cannot possibly overcome the grasping at the self. Thus, we come to understand the importance of realising selflessness.

When the Buddhist teachings present selflessness, it is not suggesting that the self does not exist at all and that there is no 'I'. Rather, it is a self-sufficient and independent 'I' that does not exist. Our wrong conception makes us believe and hold onto such a non-existent self or 'I'. However, when we

understand that there is no such self-sufficient and independently existing 'I', then we begin to gain the true understanding of selflessness and emptiness. We also begin to understand that we have to realise selflessness or emptiness because we need to overcome that grasping at the self, which is the main cause of our suffering. Furthermore, we begin to see for ourselves why the teachings on emptiness are held in such high esteem, and why it is necessary to gain an understanding of emptiness; to work on developing that realisation.

This also leads to the main point that His Holiness the Dalai Lama presented in his recent teachings in south India, which many of you attended. You might recall that he said that the purpose of this gathering can be summarised into two main points. 'The purpose of gathering here' he said, 'is to find a means to overcome grasping at the self and the self-cherishing mind. So if you can take this essential point with you and work on that, then it serves the purpose of the teachings'. He said that if you take these two points with you and think about them constantly, then coming to teachings will have served its purpose. So, it is good to take that succinct advice to heart and really try to implement it in our daily lives.

If we work on these two essential points, then the more we reduce grasping at the self and the self-cherishing mind, the greater our happiness will naturally be. Conversely, the more we hold on to grasping at the self and maintain a self-cherishing attitude, the more our happiness decreases and our suffering increases. This is very true. To give a small practical example: if, in a mutual relationship, you have to make a decision about something and the other person says, 'Let's do it this way', and you say, 'No, I don't accept that', then from that very moment the situation becomes tense and you both start to feel uncomfortable. The stronger that sense of 'I' or 'me', along with what 'I want' and 'don't want' becomes, the more we feel unsettled and uncomfortable. But if we say, 'OK, I accept and agree with you' then things settle down. There is no conflict and dispute with the other person and naturally the situation is calm. Indeed, the more we increase our genuine kindness and concern for others, the more our happiness will increase. Thus, concern for others and taking their interests into account opposes the self-cherishing mind. The more we rise above the self-cherishing attitude and think about the welfare of others the more our happiness will increase. This is the practical way to think about the benefit of overcoming self-cherishing.

Of all the antidotes for overcoming a self-cherishing mind, the optimum antidote is none other than bodhicitta, the mind of enlightenment, and this is the subject matter of the text we are studying. In this very text *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* or *Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, Shantideva explains what bodhicitta is, how to develop bodhicitta and the benefits of bodhicitta and so forth. It is important that we have a deeper understanding of what we are studying and the purpose of this text from the very outset. Having such an overview and implementing it in our practice is really important for whatever studies we engage in.

Having earlier mentioned the importance of meditation, it is good to also understand how to develop a sound, genuine meditation practice. First of all, the mind has to have a *single-pointed focus* on the object, and secondly, it has to be a *sharp and clear state of mind*. Those are the criteria which need to be met in order to develop concentration.

It is also important to acknowledge the opposing factors to this sharp, clear state of mind that is single-pointedly

focussed. The opposing factors are excitement and laxity. *Excitement* causes the mind to waver and is the main opposing factor to developing single-pointed concentration; whereas *laxity* is the main opposing factor to having a clear and sharp state of mind.

The conducive factors for developing and maintaining concentration are mindfulness and introspection. *Mindfulness* is the state of mind where there is a constant recollection of the chosen object, i.e. constantly bringing to mind whatever meditation object one has chosen to focus on. *Introspection*, on the other hand, is a state of mind that is constantly vigilant of our state of mind and our focus. If the mind starts to waver (either becoming distracted by excitement or when it starts sinking into stupor and laxity), one immediately notices that and applies the antidotes. The state of mind which allows us to do this is called introspection. So mindfulness and introspection are the most important conducive factors.

When one understands that genuine meditation requires a single-pointed focus and a clear and sharp state of mind, then the real meaning of meditation becomes apparent. Meditation entails choosing an appropriate object to focus on and then intentionally withdrawing the mind from all forms of distraction. The meditation begins when we intentionally focus on the object and maintain that focus.

An appropriate object for single-pointed focus is one that does not give rise to delusions. Because we have chosen an appropriate object to focus on, and because the technique of focusing on that object involves withdrawing from engaging in the delusions, we will naturally experience a mind that is genuinely settled. So, during the time of the meditation, at the very least, the manifest delusions will subside, thus creating a virtuous state of mind. By acquainting our mind with this technique the delusions will begin to have less influence on our mind.

As Lama Tsong Khapa said, when one notices that the delusions have become weaker, then that is the true mark of one's practice of the Dharma. Furthermore, when this is complemented with a stronger faith in the gurus, the buddhas and in the Dharma itself, that is a true sign of the fact that meditation and Dharma practice have worked for us. If, despite our attempts to practise, we find that the delusions are not weakening and remain the same or worse, becoming even stronger, then we need to acknowledge that something is not right and that we are not hitting the mark with our practice. Perhaps it's because we are not making sufficient effort or that we are not adopting the correct methods.

If one's meditation practice serves as an antidote that weakens the delusions, then it has served its purpose and one's practice has born fruit. However if our delusions start to increase then this is a sign that we have to be very cautious about how we are adopting the practice and the effects it has on our mind. An example of how one's practice does not serve the purpose of overcoming the delusions and, in fact, actually feeds one's delusions to a certain extent is starting to feel proud about one's practice of meditation and so forth. Such a sense of pride can manifest in feeling jealous of those who are practising. That is a sign that one's practices have completely missed the mark, and that the delusions are increasing rather than decreasing. If one's attempts to practice have been genuinely applied, then far from feeling pompous and proud and thinking one is doing better than others, or looking down on others, or even feeling competitive or jealous of those who are practising,

one will feel very joyful and happy when one sees others engaging in practice. One might then rejoice in one's own attempts to practice, feeling 'I am very fortunate to have this opportunity to practise myself, and it's really great to see others engaging in practice too.' Wishing others well in their practice and encouraging them is a true mark of one's practice having a positive effect.

We also need to keep in mind how incredibly fortunate we are to have this opportunity to engage in these studies and practices. Most of you are still young and have the opportunity with all the right conditions intact, with the Dharma being available, and teachers presenting it. With all of these conditions intact, we need to really reflect upon having this great opportunity now, and understand how we really need to utilise and not waste this opportunity. We really need to cherish these ongoing opportunities to engage in study and practices, and remind ourselves again and again that the purpose of practising is to overcome the self-grasping and self-cherishing mind within us. That, in summary, is the purpose we need to always bear in mind.

We are up to the third and final part of Chapter 3, which is:

3.1. Rejoicing

Here the headings are:

3.1.1. Achieving one's own purpose

3.1.2. Achieving the purpose of others

3.1.1. Achieving one's own purpose

This is subdivided into three:

3.1.1.1. Rejoicing by eulogising the mind

3.1.1.2. Meditating on conscientiousness after having found such a mind

3.1.1.3. Generating joy because of having found a mind that is difficult to find

Having covered the first of these three we move on to:

3.1.1.2. MEDITATING ON CONSCIENTIOUSNESS AFTER HAVING FOUND SUCH A MIND

This refers to making use of this rare mind that is difficult to find, and applying conscientiousness to this mind.

The root text reads:

27. *From now on I shall as much as possible
Engage in actions befitting this lineage.
I shall act in a way so as not to sully
This faultless and holy lineage*

Gyalsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

If one thinks whether this alone is enough:

From now on I shall engage in actions of the three doors that befit the lineage of the father Buddha

I shall strive in the method in a way that does not sully this holy lineage, which is adorned only by qualities and is faultless in the beginning, middle and end, with the faults and downfalls of the wishing and engaging advice.

Having warned the reader, *lest one thinks whether having found this mind is enough* by itself, the commentary goes on to explain what needs to be done *from now on*, which is *I shall engage in actions of the three doors that befit the family lineage of the father Buddha*. As explained previously, the Buddha is like a father and, because bodhisattvas aspire to develop the enlightened mind, they are like his children. A prince who carries the lineage of the king has the responsibility of upholding that lineage in a manner that befits that lineage and without damaging it. Likewise, those who have now become the children of the Buddha need to engage in a manner that befits that lineage of the Buddha. That is the

point being made here. The commentary then explains that the commitment is to *strive in the method in a way that does not sully this holy lineage of the Buddha, which is adorned only by qualities and is faultless in the beginning, middle and end*. One would sully the holy lineage by engaging in *the faults and downfalls of the wishing and engaging advice* or instructions.

Generating the aspiring wish to achieve enlightenment entails recalling that wish three times during the day and three times during the night, refraining from engaging in the four black dharmas, and adopting the four white dharmas. Engaging bodhisattva vows has eighteen root downfalls and forty-six auxiliary or secondary downfalls. So the commentary is urging us to refrain from committing these faults and downfalls, and if one finds oneself doing so, to immediately engage in purification practices.

Having taken the engaging bodhisattva vows, one adopts the practices of the six perfections such as generosity and morality and so forth. Not sullyng the practice of generosity, for example, would be to ensure that whatever one intends to give is given without any sense of miserliness, or pride, or other ulterior motives. In other words, in order to ensure that the lineage is not sullied, one needs to ensure that one counteracts the adverse conditions for the practices of generosity and so forth. There is a Tibetan word used here, *tsunpa*, which has the connotation of being ethical. However, the main point is to ensure we are free from strong delusions whilst engaging in the practice.

Recalling the meaning of this verse on a regular basis would be a good practice in itself. It will be a personal pledge that, in itself, is very powerful as it reinforces one's dedication to developing the bodhicitta mind.

3.1.1.3. GENERATING JOY BECAUSE OF HAVING FOUND A MIND THAT IS DIFFICULT TO FIND

Here we are being exhorted to really generate that sense of *joy of having found a mind that is difficult to find*, which is, of course, the actual awakening mind or bodhicitta. We can definitely generate a sense of joy about having that aspiration. We can, at the very least, safely assume that we have some sort of contrived bodhicitta attitude within our mind. The analogy in the teachings for contrived bodhicitta is that it is like the bark of sugar cane; while the bark doesn't contain the full sweetness of the actual sugarcane it does have some level of sweetness. Likewise, while we have not yet developed actual bodhicitta we can still generate a similitude of the bodhicitta attitude.

As I regularly suggest, we can, at the very least, generate on a daily basis this thought: I will not engage in any action that harms any living being and I will try my utmost to engage in as many ways as I can to benefit other sentient beings. We can definitely manage to generate that thought which, in itself, is a very precious state of mind. However, that thought is not generated naturally or spontaneously, so we need to put some time and energy into generating it. When we do generate that thought, even just for a moment, it is a very precious state of mind. So, if on a regular basis we could work on developing the mind, 'I will not harm any sentient being and I will do my most to benefit sentient beings', it will be a mind that we can cherish and we can feel great joy about having generated that intention.

The root verse is:

28. *Just like a blind person finding a jewel
In a heap of rubbish,
I generated this mind of enlightenment
Just by coincidence.*

As the commentary explains:

This mind of enlightenment was born within me by pure chance, just like a poor and destitute blind person finding a jewel on a heap of rubbish by sheer coincidence. It must definitely be through the force of the buddhas.

In the Tibetan text the commentary begins with the analogy of *a poor and destitute blind person finding a jewel on a heap of rubbish by sheer coincidence*. Not only is this person destitute, but they are blind, which makes it even much more unlikely that they might actually find a jewel. And of course in a place of great poverty, finding jewels lying around is quite unlikely. If a person who is destitute and blind finds a jewel in a heap of rubbish, then how much joy would that person feel? They would feel incredible joy at the extraordinary fortune and coincidence of finding this jewel.

The generation of this mind of enlightenment is similar. An ordinary being can be likened to a blind person in that we don't have the wisdom realising emptiness. The heap of rubbish is analogous to the delusions that infest our mind. Yet despite being riddled with delusions and blinded by ignorance we have encountered this precious mind, the awakening mind of bodhicitta. This is like the sheer coincidence of a blind person finding a jewel in a heap of rubbish. This has *definitely occurred through the force of the buddhas*, which means that due to the buddhas' blessings we have had the great fortune to have had this opportunity to generate this mind. Thus we are exhorted to develop a sense of great joy in having had this opportunity to develop this mind.

One of the main points we need to consider here is that while bodhicitta is indeed a difficult mind to find, it would be a complete mistake to put it aside thinking, 'Oh, it's too difficult to generate' and not make any effort at all. Even though it is a difficult mind to generate, it is definitely possible, and because of that possibility we need to strive towards developing it. If it was not possible to be generated then we might as well cast it aside as being a waste of our time, but that is not the case. This is the main point that we need to bear in mind.

The new program for our study group evenings will be eight teaching sessions followed by a discussion and then an exam. Maybe Ven. Lhamo could keep track of the number of sessions because in my old age I may start to forget!

There is mutual benefit in combining the wisdom of the elderly and the energy and clear mind of the young. The elders definitely have a wisdom that arises from whatever experiences they have had, whilst the younger generation have not had the experiences to generate that wisdom. So the elders can share their combined wisdom and experience. The younger generation have a full life energy force and a clearer, fresher mind, so they are less likely to be forgetful. So the combination of youth and age can be mutually beneficial. I think this is usually the way it works.

Transcribed by Bernii Wright

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་ཀྱི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

18 February 2014

Based on the refuge and bodhicitta prayer and motivation that we have generated, we can now engage in meditation.

The most important thing is to visualise sentient beings who are deprived of happiness and genuinely and sincerely wish them happiness and goodness. Focus on beings who are experiencing tremendous suffering, and develop a very strong intention to free them from that suffering; to do one's utmost to make it happen, for them to be free from suffering. So with that intention in one's heart, engaging in the practice becomes more meaningful. Without visualising sentient beings deprived of happiness and experiencing suffering, and wishing them to be free from suffering, then one's meditation practice is on the surface with no real substance. [*meditation*]

So we'll now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings, to lead them to ultimate happiness and free them from all sufferings, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. For this purpose I will engage in listening to the teachings and put them into practice well.

3. CONCLUSION

3.1. Rejoicing (cont.)

Having completed the topic Achieving One's Own Purpose we now turn to the second part of this section of the text.

3.1.2. Achieving the purpose of others

Achieving the purpose of others is based on aspiring to develop the mind of enlightenment, the bodhicitta attitude. What is being encouraged here is to develop that mind so that one will be able to benefit others. Benefiting others is really the ultimate point of why we are striving to develop this state of mind that aspires to achieve enlightenment. So, the main point is to familiarise one's mind again and again with the intention to benefit others. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama mentions regularly, at our beginners' level, whilst we might not have developed actual bodhicitta yet, we can definitely generate the intentions 'I will not harm any living being' and 'I will engage in benefitting others as much as I can'. His Holiness says that even generating this state of mind at a beginners level can serve as a substitute for bodhicitta. Thus, focusing on this intention regularly and establishing it firmly in our minds is highly meaningful.

When we intentionally devote ourselves to cultivating this state of mind and further strengthen it, then as it becomes firmly established the result is that our mind naturally becomes happier and more joyful. Through this familiarity one is in fact establishing all the right

conditions to develop actual bodhicitta, whereby the joy and happiness in our minds will increase unceasingly.

Indeed, developing this intention directly opposes the self-cherishing mind; an attitude that is completely obsessed with one's own self interests and which has a strong focus merely on 'I' or 'me'. As this positive state of mind that intends to benefit others opposes the self-cherishing attitude, it also serves as an antidote for overcoming the manifest levels of grasping at the self. Whilst it is not an actual antidote for abandoning the grasping at the self at its very root, it does serve as a means to minimise an otherwise strong sense of grasping at the self. For as long as one maintains a firm intention to benefit others and not to intentionally harm them in any way, there is no room for anger to arise, no room for jealousy to arise and no room for the strong sense of 'I' or 'me', that which focuses merely on one's own personal interests, to arise. Thus, whilst directly opposing the self-cherishing mind, it can also loosen the strong hold of the self-grasping mind.

If we were to sincerely investigate, we will come to notice that on a daily basis most of our thoughts, ideas and attitudes are driven by a strong grasping to the 'I'. An exception may be when we are sleeping, but in the waking period during most of our activities, if we were to ask ourselves, 'What is the driving force behind my actions?' we will find that it is mostly driven by self-interests which are related to a strong sense of grasping to the 'I'. As such, familiarising ourselves with a state of mind that opposes such a strong focus on the 'I' becomes a very high level practice. We need to adopt practical ways to cultivate the means to help overcome our chronic obsession with the self-cherishing mind.

Generating a positive attitude in one's mind and trying to maintain it becomes an optimum meditation practice in itself. As one becomes familiar with this positive attitude and maintains it, the mind naturally settles down to a clear and calm state. It is also an optimum Dharma practice because one is actively following the core advice of the Buddha: not to harm any living being and only benefiting sentient beings. This is really the ultimate intention and advice of all buddhas and bodhisattvas. Buddha Shakyamuni clearly mentions in the sutras: 'if you harm sentient beings you are harming me; if you benefit sentient beings you are benefiting me'. Notice the Buddha doesn't say, 'if you harm me then that is negative'. Rather, he says: 'If you don't wish to harm me stop harming sentient beings. If you wish to benefit me then benefit sentient beings'. So this shows the unequalled love and compassion that Buddha has for all sentient beings. Intentionally generating this state of mind and focusing on it becomes an optimum means to benefit oneself in this and future lives. In relation to both short-term and long-term benefit, it is really the optimum practice because it serves the purpose of fulfilling the wishes of all sentient beings. We can all relate to the fact that every single sentient being only wishes for happiness and does not intentionally wish to experience any suffering. So, when we actually generate a state of mind that wishes all sentient beings to experience happiness and further engage in ways to benefit them, whilst wishing all beings to be free from suffering and actively

refrain from harming them, then one is actually fulfilling the needs and wishes of *all* sentient beings. One is not leaving any sentient being out, because every sentient being ultimately has this same wish. Thus, the practical approach to understanding the great benefit of generating this state of mind is to remember that you are ultimately fulfilling the wishes of all sentient beings.

By understanding this we can relate to how the bodhisattvas are always engaged in fulfilling two purposes: their own purpose, which ultimately is to fulfil the purpose of benefiting other sentient beings. Thus cultivating this state of mind benefits oneself by calming one's own mind. While I cannot personally claim that I have much experience, I do spend significant time generating this state of mind. I find that it really helps to settle and quieten the mind and make it more receptive to being virtuous. To that extent it becomes a very practical means to induce a positive and pure state of mind. If one makes a genuine attempt, one will definitely see the practical benefit on one's own mind. Thus, I encourage you and remind you again and again of the practical benefits that such a state of mind brings.

This outline, *Achieving the Purpose of Others* is subdivided into three categories.

3.1.2.1. It can eliminate the sufferings of sentient beings

This points out again that serving the purpose of others requires eliminating their sufferings and very succinctly shows how this is done.

3.1.2.2. It can eliminate its cause (its obscurations)

Again, not only does this mind eliminate the suffering of sentient beings but also the very causes which are the obscurations. Even though it is not explicitly presented here, we can relate this to the Four Noble Truths, particularly the first Noble Truth of suffering, and the second Noble Truth, which is the origination of suffering. If you can relate generating the bodhicitta attitude to the Two Truths it helps to eliminate suffering of sentient beings as well as the cause, the origination of suffering.

The obscurations here relate specifically to the deluded obscurations and the obscurations to omniscience, which encompass the origin of suffering. We derive a deeper understanding when we relate it to the Four Noble Truths.

3.1.2.3. It can achieve all benefit and happiness

Take special note that this relates to not only being able to achieve some minor level of happiness, but all benefit and happiness. So this is the extent to which the bodhicitta mind can benefit.

3.1.2.1. It can eliminate the sufferings of sentient beings

This is further divided into five sub-categories:

3.1.2.1.1. It can destroy the lord of death

3.1.2.1.2. It destroys poverty

3.1.2.1.3. It destroys sickness

3.1.2.1.4. It destroys the suffering of existence in general

3.1.2.1.5. It destroys specifically the sufferings of the lower realms

3.1.2.1.1. It can destroy the lord of death

Amongst the various sufferings we experience e.g. suffering of birth, sickness etc. this heading relates particularly to the suffering of death.

The first two lines of the verse relating to this point are:

*29ab. It is also the supreme nectar
Destroying migrator's lord of death.*

The commentary explains:

This bodhicitta is also the supreme nectar that destroys the lord of death through whom migrators die without freedom of choice.

Dying without freedom means that sentient beings have no choice over their mortality and have to experience death. That is the meaning of dying without freedom.

Bodhicitta serving as *the supreme nectar that destroys the lord of death* indicates that while there are other kinds of nectars, like those produced through the achievements of humans and gods, bodhicitta is the most supreme, as it is the one able to destroy the very lord of death. Thus, bodhicitta is likened to nectar of immortality. The *Prayer to Maitreya* reads:

Bodhicitta bars the way to unfortunate destinies;
It is the great teaching that leads to the highest realms;
And even to the state beyond old age and death.
To the mind of enlightenment, bodhicitta, I prostrate.

We can relate here to how bodhicitta is the supreme method for overcoming the lower rebirths, the supreme means for achieving the higher realms, and the supreme means to overcome aging and death.

In praise of bodhicitta, His Holiness the Dalai Lama quoted this very verse in the teachings in Sydney last year. This verse definitely summarises the qualities of bodhicitta. This is exactly how it is presented in the text here — developing bodhicitta becomes the means to overcome all unfortunate rebirths, leads one to the higher realms and to the state of being free from aging and death. Here the ultimate state of immortality is liberation, and the ultimate liberation is enlightenment. While it is possible to obtain the self-liberation of the lower vehicles without developing bodhicitta, i.e. the hearers and solitary realiser's state of liberation, there is no way that one can achieve enlightenment without first developing bodhicitta. Bodhicitta is the optimum cause for achieving enlightenment, and by relating to the benefits of developing it and maintaining it in one's continuum, a strong sense of awe can be generated in one's mind. Thus, one contemplates how wonderful bodhicitta is and the extensive benefits it brings. By developing bodhicitta one is able to achieve the most incredibly profound goal. Thus, by relating to the benefits of bodhicitta in this way, one will develop a great sense of awe, and a real inspiration that will leave the strong positive imprints to develop bodhicitta in one's mind. One will be inclined to develop bodhicitta oneself, because one sees the great value in it.

One needs to understand the explanation here in its proper context. When it says it can *destroy the lord of death* it is not referring to obtaining a miraculous feat, such as going around destroying suffering in other beings and freeing them from death without them having to create

any causes and conditions; this is definitely not what is being implied here.

Developing bodhicitta will definitely have a great positive effect upon others. As the great Khunu Lama Rinpoche mentions¹:

The sheer fact of having bodhicitta within one's own mental continuum,
Naturally brings great solace to others
Even animals feel a great sense of comfort and fearlessness,
Not to mention humans and other beings alike.

So, developing bodhicitta oneself, even without any intentional activity on one's part, can bring so much comfort and ease to those around oneself.

However, the actual way that it eliminates sufferings and destroys the lord of death is by imparting the methods and teachings to others, particularly the teachings on what to adopt and what to discard. By presenting beings with the unmistakable teachings of how to accumulate virtue and abandon negativities, and when they adopt those teachings and practices, they will overcome their own sufferings and the causes of sufferings, ageing and death. Imparting advice to others needs to be in accordance with understanding their mental disposition and with a loving and kind attitude. Thus, presenting the unmistakable teachings to others with love and compassion is dependent on having developed bodhicitta oneself first. So this is how developing bodhicitta oneself actually helps to eliminate sufferings and death in other sentient beings. This is the proper way to understand this point.

As mentioned in the commentary, the way bodhicitta destroys the lord of death is by leading sentient beings to the ground which is free from old age and death.

3.1.2.1.2. *It destroys poverty*

The indication here is that bodhicitta becomes a cause to overcome or destroy poverty. The next two lines of the verse read:

29cd. *It is also the inexhaustible treasure
That eliminates sentient being's poverty.*

The commentary meaning is that

Because it gives inexhaustible material and Dharma, this mind generation is an inexhaustible treasure that eliminates the poverty of migrators.

Actually the meaning of the verse and explanation is quite clear. Generating bodhicitta also becomes the ultimate means for achieving the state where one has complete control over material gain as well as Dharma. When a bodhisattva reaches the eighth ground they obtain complete control over material wealth and knowledge of Dharma, and thus it becomes inexhaustible. It is like having an *inexhaustible treasure* house that can *eliminate the poverty of migrators*.

So this is how bodhisattvas benefit sentient beings. Initially, through their acts of generosity and kindness to others, they gather sentient beings close and then they impart their knowledge of the Dharma.

Other benefits touching on the same point are presented by Khunu Lama Rinpoche as:

The nectar of the mind is bodhicitta,
The jewel of the mind is bodhicitta,
The moon of the mind is bodhicitta
The sun of the mind is bodhicitta.

We can see that the way Khunu Lama Rinpoche presents the benefits of the bodhicitta from his own experience is aligned to how Shantideva presents the same meaning of the benefits of bodhicitta. Through his work from his own experience, we can definitely see that Khunu Lama Rinpoche was definitely a great practitioner of bodhicitta. Khunu Lama Rinpoche also said:

Bodhicitta is the optimum way to benefit others,
Bodhicitta is the optimum means for guiding others,
Bodhicitta is the optimum means to teach others.

It is presented in poetic form with very succinct meaning regarding the benefits of bodhicitta. Furthermore, he mentions:

If one wishes to benefit other sentient beings, that is done through bodhicitta;
If one wishes to be the friend of others, then the best way to do that is through developing bodhicitta.
Being a source of reliance, then that is achieved through bodhicitta.

Khunu Lama Rinpoche also mentions that if one wishes to be a virtuous teacher to others, then the optimum way is by generating bodhicitta. This is in line with what Lama Tsong Khapa mentions—without generating the wish for others to be free from suffering and for others to obtain happiness there is no way that one can really benefit others. So, the wish to benefit others is based upon wishing others to be free from suffering and to gain happiness.

3.1.2.1.3. *It destroys sickness*

The verse which relates to this is the next two lines:

30ab. *It is also the supreme medicine
Pacifying migrators' heavy diseases.*

The commentary reads:

It is also the supreme medicine that thoroughly pacifies all diseases of migrators.

The meaning of the verse is very clear here. The commentary explains *bodhicitta is the supreme medicine that thoroughly pacifies the disease of migrators*. The meaning here is linked to the earlier explanation, that the way it pacifies the diseases of other migrators is by presenting them with teachings of what to adopt and what to discard, to achieve the state of being free from disease.

As explained in the teachings, the ultimate source of migrators' sickness and disease is basically the three poisons: attachment, anger and ignorance. These really serve as the basis for all kinds of diseases and all sufferings. So the way bodhisattvas benefit beings to eliminate their sicknesses is by presenting antidotes to the three poisons. To overcome attachment, meditate on the unattractive features of the object of attachment. To overcome anger, meditate on love. To overcome ignorance, meditate on interdependent origination and emptiness. Presenting specific antidotes overcomes specific delusions, which are the very causes of all sufferings and diseases. Meditating on them and applying the antidote becomes the means to overcome the particular diseases of attachment, anger and

¹ Khunu Lama Rinpoche, *Vast as the Heavens, Deep as the Sea*.
Chapter 3

ignorance, thus overcoming all sickness. This is how bodhicitta becomes the means to eliminate the sicknesses of other beings.

3.1.2.1.4. *It destroys the suffering of existence in general*

The verse which relates to this is the next two lines:

*30cd. It is the fruit tree that is a resting place for
migrators,
Who wander the paths of existence and are
tired.*

The commentary reads:

It is also the fruit tree that provides a cool resting place for the migrators who are wandering on the paths of existence and are tired.

The analogy presented in the commentary is that like a tree that provides a cool resting place, those who need that rest are *migrators*, endlessly wandering on the path of existence and extremely tired. The teachings refer to the three types of existence: birth, death and the intermediate state. So, endlessly cycling through the three types of existence, migrating from one existence to the next, beings are extremely tired. Just as a large fruit tree would provide a cool resting place for those travelling in the heat and sun, bodhicitta is the optimum means for providing that ultimate rest for beings who are wandering in cyclic existence. Some texts would relate this explanation to the path of the medium scope, so bodhisattvas would show the path of the medium scope to those who are trainees in the medium scope, particularly solitary realisers and hearers. General existence is explained here and it means destroying the sufferings of the existence in general by leading to the optimum state of liberation.

The main point is that bodhicitta serves as a means for beings who are wandering on the path of cyclic existence to obtain that ultimate rest of achieving liberation, being free from all samsaric existence.

3.1.2.1.5. *It destroys specifically the sufferings of the lower realms*

The verse which relates to this is the next two lines:

*31ab. It is the universal bridge that liberates
All migrators from the lower realms.*

The commentary explains that

Generating the mind of bodhicitta is also the universal bridge that liberates all migrators from the lower realms.

The analogy of the universal bridge indicates presenting teachings on adopting the ten virtues. Beings then follow this advice, adopting the ten virtues as the means to free themselves from the lower realms or to be reborn again in the lower realms. So this is how to understand how the bodhicitta attitude becomes the supreme means to present the teachings in accordance to beings' capacity and mental disposition; to present unmistakable methods and ways to be free from various types of sufferings, particularly the lower realms. It shows that when bodhicitta has been developed, it spontaneously helps sentient beings without much effort from one's own side. Also, it establishes a very suitable foundation for those who listen to the advice and teachings to naturally be able to adopt that advice and benefit from it. So this again

shows the way by which bodhicitta becomes the supreme means to benefit others.

In summary, the main points that have been presented here are how bodhicitta serves as an optimum means to overcome the various levels of sentient beings' sufferings; that it destroys the sufferings of existence in general and particularly helps to destroy the sufferings of the lower realms. This is done by benefiting others. The first step of benefiting others is when bodhisattvas lead sentient beings to the state of liberation from the sufferings of cyclic existence in general. The next step of benefiting sentient beings is when bodhisattvas lead them to the higher status, free of the suffering of the lower realms.

Other commentaries explain the analogy of bodhicitta serving as a universal bridge. The connotation is from a Tibetan word for an actual bridge or platform from which you cannot go back. Providing this platform reverses beings from the lower realms and establishes them in higher rebirths to serve as the means to obtain the highest goal of liberation and enlightenment. This becomes the very basis for beings to further develop the causes which liberate them from samsara and the ultimate liberation of enlightenment.

3.1.2.2. IT CAN ELIMINATE ITS CAUSE

Cause refers specifically to the causes of a suffering existence (samsara) and a rebirth in a lower realm. The two main causes are explained in the subdivisions of this outline:

3.1.2.2.1. Eliminating afflictive obscurations

3.1.2.2.2. Eliminating the obscurations to knowledge

3.1.2.2.1. *Eliminating afflictive obscurations*

The verse which relates to this is the next two lines:

*31cd. It is the moon shining in the mind
That eliminates migrator's misery of the
afflictions.*

The commentary reads:

This mind generation is also the shining moon that eliminates the heat and misery of the afflictions of migrators. That is, it has the power to eliminate all afflictive obscurations.

As mentioned previously, Khunu Lama Rinpoche's verse indicated that bodhicitta is the moon of the mind and the sun of the mind. This explanation also relates to moonlight or the cooling light of the moon.

The commentary explains that this mind generation is like *the shining moon, eliminating the heat and misery of migrators' afflictions*. This is because *it has power to eliminate afflictive obscurations*. Using this analogy, moonlight has a cooling effect which eliminates the suffering of the heat felt during the day when it is very hot. As soon as the sun sets and the moon rises, the moon's cooling light eliminates the suffering of extreme heat. Likewise here, the heat is an analogy for the actual misery (or afflictions) of the migrators, all their sufferings. The analogy explains that bodhicitta is that which eliminates all the afflictive obscurations of sentient beings. The main afflictive obscuration is grasping at the self and the delusions in general, but particularly grasping to the self. When bodhicitta has the power to eliminate this, there is no way for sufferings to be

experienced, because when the cause of suffering is completely eliminated from the mind there is no way to experience the result, which is suffering. This is how bodhicitta serves to bring this about.

It is good to note here the descriptions of specific symbols, such as the moon, sun and lotus. For example, whenever images of deities or buddhas are presented on the moon, the symbolism of the moon represents bodhicitta. The symbol of the sun represents wisdom realising emptiness. Enlightened beings seated upon a lotus, sun and moon disc actually represent the significance of developing bodhicitta and the wisdom realising emptiness so the individual beings obtain the ultimate state of enlightenment and become a Buddha, an enlightened being.

3.1.2.2.2. *Eliminating the obscurations to knowledge*

The verse which relates to this is the next two lines:

32. *It is the great sun that dispels
The vitreous humour of not knowing.*

The commentary reads:

It is also the great sun that dispels from the root the non-afflictive not knowing of migrators, the cataract-like obscurations to knowledge. The reason for this is that the wisdom realising emptiness is adorned with great accumulations that exhaust the seed of the obscuration to knowledge.

As explained in the commentary, *it is also the great sun that dispels from the root the non-afflictive not knowing of the migrators, the cataract-like obscurations to knowledge*. Firstly, *the non-afflictive not knowing of migrators* refers to the obscurations to knowledge (which as the analogy refers to here, are like cataracts that causes the eyes not to see clearly). What obscures one from seeing ultimate reality directly is the mistaken appearance that obscures one from clearly seeing both truths simultaneously. For as long as one has obscurations to knowledge, one will not be able to see the Two Truths simultaneously, and one's current mistaken view serves like a veil to have mistaken appearance. Because bodhicitta serves as a means to overcome this obscuration to knowledge and remove the veil of mistaken appearance, it is like the great sun.

To further explain this analogy, the sun becomes the means to eliminate darkness because as soon as it rises darkness is completely eliminated. In a similar way, bodhicitta removes the cataract-like obscurations to knowledge completely. The commentary explains that *the reason for this is that the wisdom realising emptiness is adorned with great accumulation, and this exhausts the seed of the obscurations to knowledge*. Bodhicitta serves as the means for obtaining a great accumulation of merit. The merit based on love and compassion is generated when engaging in the practice of the six perfections; also extensive practice of generosity. All can be accomplished through the power of bodhicitta.

Furthermore, extensive practices of morality are accomplished through bodhicitta, also patience and joyous effort and meditation and finally, the wisdom realising emptiness. When the wisdom realising emptiness is complemented with bodhicitta, it becomes the optimum means to accumulate extensive merit and completely exhausts the seeds of the obscurations to

knowledge, by completely eliminating it from the mind stream.

It has now been explained that developing bodhicitta is the ultimate means for overcoming all faults and obscurations and acquiring all qualities to achieve the ultimate state of enlightenment. It shows how bodhicitta serves as a means, and from the moment it is developed along the path, it achieves all the realisations and leads to the ultimate state of omniscience. This is all based on having developed bodhicitta; it becomes the very root and cause.

We'll conclude for the evening by reciting the prayer *The Eight Verses of Training the Mind* and dedicate it to the late Norman Henderson who, while he might not have been a member of Tara Institute, was definitely a very diligent student, coming here regularly. I have known him from when I was at Chenrezig Institute in Queensland. He used to come when I was up there, so I remember him and have known him for a long time; he is like an old friend. As he passed away recently, we'll dedicate the merit of the recitation of the prayer to him and also to Liam's grandfather who passed away recently.

I had already explained the visualisation that we can adopt for this practice, so I don't need to do that again. So, we try to do that visualisation as we recite the prayer.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcribed by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

25 February 2014

The *Refuge and Bodhicitta* prayer that we have just recited should suffice to generate the proper motivation for our meditation practice.

Indeed the *Refuge and Bodhicitta* prayer is the most profound prayer that we say. If, while reciting the profound words through our mouth, we can also adopt the respectful physical gesture of prostration, and mentally go for refuge and generate the bodhicitta attitude then, within just a few minutes, we will definitely collect extensive merit. There is no doubt about that at all.

What needs to be purified are negativities, which we definitely have. But we also have the means to purify those negativities. And as explained previously, the optimum method to purify negativities is to rely on the objects of refuge and generate bodhicitta. We need to keep this point in mind.

If, after going for refuge wholeheartedly as we recite the prayer, we can visualise the objects of refuge merging into ourselves and thus blessing our mental continuum, our minds will definitely settle down. There is no question that any disturbing thoughts will definitely be appeased by taking refuge in this way.

Bearing that in mind we will now engage in the meditation practice for a few minutes. *[meditation]*

Now we generate the motivation to receive the teachings, by developing this strong intention:

In order to free all sentient beings from suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself, so for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

During the *tong len* practice that we engaged in earlier, our intention was to take upon ourselves all the sufferings of all sentient beings, as well as the causes of that suffering and the very imprints giving rise to those causes, whilst in return giving them our happiness and virtues. With that intention in mind, we generate the motivation for the teaching, to reaffirm that having taken on the sufferings of sentient beings we generate the intention to lead them to the ultimate state of happiness i.e. enlightenment. The motivation 'I need to engage in the practice of listening to the teaching' complements the *tong len* practice that we have just done.

Indeed, engaging in any activity with that motivation in mind will ensure that one's life becomes most meaningful.

3.1.2. Achieving the purpose of others

3.1.2.2. IT CAN ELIMINATE ITS CAUSE

3.1.2.2.2. Eliminating the obscurations to knowledge (cont.)

The relevant verse reads:

32ab. *It is the great sun that dispels
The vitreous humour of not knowing.*

We concluded the teaching last week with these lines, which indicate how bodhicitta serves as a means to remove the obscurations to knowledge, even the very subtle imprints in our mind that are the root of non-afflictive not knowing. This shows that it is our own responsibility to eliminate those imprints by applying the antidote to the obscurations to knowledge. We need to realise that we cannot expect others to remove our obscurations and that we need to take the initiative to do so ourselves. This is what we need to derive as a personal instruction.

3.1.2.3. IT CAN ACHIEVE ALL BENEFIT AND HAPPINESS

This is subdivided into two:

3.1.2.3.1. Achieving all benefit

3.1.2.3.2. Achieving every happiness

3.1.2.3.1. Achieving all benefit

This heading relates to achieving the ability to benefit all other sentient beings, and the lines that relate to this heading are:

32cd. *It is the essence of butter
That is derived from the milk of Dharma.*

We need to see the connection between what is presented here and what we are attempting to do in our own practice. Our earlier meditation was based on wishing to bring about benefit and happiness for all sentient beings and eliminate all their suffering. *Achieving all benefit* through developing bodhicitta relates to the same intention, and it is good to remember this point.

As you know, one of the methods for developing bodhicitta is the technique of exchanging self with others. In order to engage in that practice one needs to train the mind to the point where we have no hesitation in exchanging self-interest with the interests of other sentient beings. Thus the *tong len* practice of giving and taking serves as a basis for training the mind in exchanging self with others. When we actually attain that state of being able to exchange self with others and then develop bodhicitta, we will experience tremendous joy. That is because we will have achieved what we are striving to achieve, which is a state of mind that works for the welfare of other sentient beings. That naturally brings us great happiness and joy.

We need to understand how all of these practices - beginning with the meagre attempts of training our mind now - lead to the higher state of actually developing this incredibly precious state of mind called bodhicitta. We need to see the connection between what we are attempting to do now and the ultimate result we intend to achieve.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of this verse quite succinctly:

This mind generation is the butter essence arising from churning the great ocean of milk that is the holy Dharma, with the churning wood of wisdom arising from listening and contemplating.

It is the essence of butter that can generate the taste of achieving each and every benefit, and therefore everybody should strive in it.

Here, the teachings or the doctrine of the Buddha are likened to a great ocean of milk. Butter is created by churning the milk with a wooden paddle, likewise listening to, contemplating and meditating on the Buddha's doctrine, is analogous to using a wooden paddle. Just as butter arises from churning the milk with a wooden paddle, wisdom arises from listening to, and contemplating and meditating on the Buddha's doctrine. Butter is actually a coarse substance that can be further refined to its essence by boiling it, and just like clarified butter, bodhicitta is the very essence of the Buddha's doctrine. This is similar to the presentation in *The Three Principles of the Path*, which states that bodhicitta is the very essence of the Buddha's doctrine that is praised by all the buddhas.

As the analogy explains, just as the tastiest part of butter is the essence of butter, the tastiest part of the Buddha's doctrine, its essence, is achieving the benefit of all beings through having cultivated bodhicitta. Therefore, one needs to develop that which serves as the very essence of the Dharma.

Developing the essence of the Dharma, which is bodhicitta, begins with the meagre attempts we make now of generating a genuine mind of consideration for others, with a genuine wish to help and benefit others. Part of our training is to develop that intention now to whatever extent we are able to. It would be quite lame to think, 'Oh, since I haven't yet developed bodhicitta, there is not much point thinking about it'. It is because of the very fact that we haven't yet generated bodhicitta that we are being exhorted to strive to develop it.

As mentioned previously, we do that by cultivating loving and kind attitudes to others with whatever means we have now. Then, slowly through our training and familiarity our mind will gradually become more and more attuned to having a genuine sense of concern for the wellbeing of other sentient beings. This then serves as a basis to further develop a genuine sense of love and compassion. This is how we make progress, and further develop the mind of bodhicitta.

The peerless instruction on the generation of bodhicitta by means of listening, contemplating and meditating is none other than this very text that we are studying now, the *Bodhisattvacharyavataara*. This is the best source of advice to listen to, contemplate on and meditate on. So we have the most supreme instructions at hand on how to develop bodhicitta.

3.1.2.3.2. *Achieving every happiness*

This section of the text is explained in the following verse:

33. *The migrating guests wander on the paths of existence
And wish to engage pleasant enjoyments;*

*It abides close to supreme happiness
And satisfies the great samsaric guests*

Here, Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

The migrating guests wandering in cyclic existence on the paths of the three existences wish for the pleasant enjoyments of gods and humans.

This mind generation abides close to the supreme method for establishing happiness, and satisfies the many guests from cyclic existence because it establishes the higher status and definite goodness of all sentient beings.

I have explained many times what *cyclic existence* connotes. As teachings explain, that which binds one to the appropriated aggregates again and again through the influence of delusions and karma is cyclic existence. In other words, the contaminated aggregates that we possess now are an example of cyclic existence. Over countless lifetimes we have uncontrollably obtained such contaminated aggregates, through which we experience the shortcomings of sufferings and so forth. So the real cycle is obtaining the appropriated contaminated aggregates again and again through the influence of delusions and karma. It is as if we are bound to these appropriated, contaminated aggregates which serve as the basis for all unwanted misery and suffering. This is the real meaning of cyclic existence.

The migrating guests are those who are bound by delusions and karma to this existence of obtaining the contaminated aggregates again and again. The *paths of the three existences* are the desire, form and formless realms. Thus, beings circle in these three different realms again and again. All those beings in the cyclic existence *wish for the pleasant enjoyments of the gods and humans*. So, not only does bodhicitta bring the ultimate benefit and goodness of liberation and enlightenment, but it also serves as a means to bring about the temporary benefits of humans and gods while circling in samsara.

Furthermore, *this mind generation abides close to the supreme method for establishing happiness, and satisfies the many guests from cyclic existence*. The reason for that is that *it establishes the higher status and definite goodness of all sentient beings*. So bodhicitta serves as a means to establish beings in the temporary wellbeing of the most fortunate rebirth in cyclic existence, and while bringing that temporary pleasure and enjoyment, it ultimately brings the definite goodness of the state of liberation and ultimately, enlightenment.

Thus bodhicitta is the supreme method to benefit sentient beings because the generation of this mind brings about the temporary and ultimate wellbeing of sentient beings; that is the main meaning of this verse.

Satisfying many guests also has a connotation of being a most supreme offering. There are explanations in the teachings that one of the best ways of gaining merit is making unsurpassed offerings to the enlightened beings and benefiting sentient beings. Of all the offerings that one can make to the buddhas and bodhisattvas, offering bodhicitta is the best, because it brings benefit for all sentient beings. So the generation of bodhicitta is the most supreme offering and method for accumulating merit.

We need to really contemplate these points, remembering how the generation of the mind of bodhicitta is dependent on first developing love and compassion. Thus, we need to really think about the great value of developing love and compassion again and again and train our mind daily in the development of love and compassion. This means that in whatever activity we engage, whether it is eating or drinking or going about our daily business, we constantly remember, 'I am doing this as a means to benefit sentient beings'. When we eat something, we offer it first to the objects of refuge and then we remind ourselves that we are consuming it to sustain ourselves for the purpose of benefiting sentient beings. When we drink something, we accumulate merit by offering it, and then drink it to quench our thirst and nourish us as a means of supporting ourselves so that we can benefit sentient beings.

If we can relate to every activity this way, seeing it as a means to benefit sentient beings, then we are familiarising our mind with the wish to benefit sentient beings and actually utilising our daily activities for that purpose. So, in this way we slowly and gradually establish a firm foundation for developing bodhicitta. Bodhicitta is not developed instantaneously; it requires effort and a great amount of training.

Of course, in explaining this I am not implying that I have obtained any great experiential levels from practising in this way, but I can assure you that I do attempt to practise in this way. So if you ask me whether I attempt to do these practices then the answer is definitely, 'Yes, I do try to practise like this in my daily life'. If you ask whether I have achieved any great realisation from this practice then the answer will be, 'No, I have not'. However I find that there is great benefit derived even from my genuine attempts to practice. Thus, I entreat you to really familiarise your mind again and again with these practices, and then, through constant familiarity you will gradually see a transformation taking place.

When the commentary says *this mind generation abides close to the supreme method*, the Tibetan word *nyi-war-ne*, has the connotation of 'definitely abiding'. So the meaning here is that the mind generation of bodhicitta definitely abides as the supreme method for establishing happiness.

Thus, the generation of bodhicitta is an unsurpassable offering to the supreme enlightened beings, as it is the supreme means to satisfy the many guests in cyclic existence. Why? Because, it establishes high status and definite goodness for all sentient beings.

3.2. Inducing others to be joyful

What is being explained here is that by generating the mind of bodhicitta, one induces joy in others. This can be understood with the analogy of someone who has the potential and ability to take care of all our needs by promising us, 'I will take responsibility for establishing your wellbeing and I will give you everything you need for your happiness'. Hearing such a promise would make us feel extremely joyful. Just the thought, 'Oh, I have someone who is going to take care of me', brings great solace and joy.

What actually is implied here, and this will be explained in the verse, is that someone who aspires to develop bodhicitta is making this promise to establish all beings in happiness: I will take responsibility for establishing all beings in a state of ultimate state of happiness and free them from all suffering. That is the vow that one makes.

The verse relating to this heading is:

34. *Today I have, in front of all protectors,
Served migrators the hospitality of
A tathagata and intermediate happiness.
The gods, demi-gods and so forth should rejoice.*

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

Today, in the presence of all the protectors, the conquerors and their children, I have invited all migrating sentient beings as guests and serve them the hospitality of becoming a sugata, one who has accomplished all ultimate benefit and happiness, and until they obtain that state I also give them the permission to satisfy themselves with the intermediate happiness of gods and humans.

'I' refers to oneself, and the time when the vows are taken is *today*. These vows or promises were made *in front of all the protectors, who are the conquerors and the children*, i.e. all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Then one continues, *I have invited all migrating sentient beings as guests and serve them the hospitality of a sugata*, which indicates that one has made the pledge to lead all sentient beings to that ultimate state of a sugata *who has accomplished all ultimate benefit and happiness*.

As indicated in the commentary, the ultimate intention is to lead all beings to the ultimate state of buddhahood, but until that state is obtained, one offers all beings the permission to be satisfied with the intermediate happiness of gods and humans.

Then Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

As such I have offered the supreme hospitality and from today onwards the gods, demi-gods, serpent kings and so forth should be happy.

This is to induce joy in others.

So others should be joyful because of the pledges that one has made today, in the presence of all the protectors, buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Then Gyaltsab Je exhorts us:

Preceding the generation of the two minds, as explained in this commentary:

This means that as a precursor to developing *the generation of the two minds* i.e. aspiring and engaging bodhicitta, one needs to:

Understand that mind generation upon having purified the disrupting conditions of the obscurations and building up the conducive conditions of the accumulations of merit, is the supreme way to take the essence of the precious human rebirth with freedoms and endowments, and strive in it.

This is an exhortation that the supreme means to develop the mind of bodhicitta is to engage in the practices of accumulating merit and purifying one's negativities. That is the supreme means to take the essence of one's precious human rebirth with its freedom and endowments. That is what we need to strive for.

Summarising Verse

Gyatso Je offers this summarising verse as a final exhortation:

They who understand they have attained a human
rebirth with freedoms and endowments
Should strive in generating the two bodhicittas,
The essential meaning of all the teachings of the
conquerors,
The sole path traversed by the tens of millions of their
children.

Anyone *who understands that they have attained such human rebirth with its freedom and endowments* indicates that those who have the wisdom to understand the value of the precious human rebirth, definitely need to strive in generating bodhicitta, which is *the essential meaning of all the teachings of the conquerors, and the sole path traversed by the tens of millions of their children.*

II. THE NAME OF THE CHAPTER

The root text concludes the chapter with:

This is the third chapter on taking the mind of enlightenment, from Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas.

The commentary reads:

This is the commentary on the third chapter called Taking the Mind of Enlightenment, from the commentary on the *Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas*, called *The Entrance for the Children of the Conquerors*.

Now we come to the fourth chapter, the title of which is Applying Conscientiousness. To explain the context of this chapter, we need to return to the subdivisions introduced in chapter 1.¹

2. THE ACTUAL EXPLANATION OF THE STAGES OF THE PATH

2.2. The method for taking the essence

2.2.2. Explaining the individual meanings²

2.2.2.2. THE WAY OF TRAINING IN THE PRACTICES OF GENERATING THE TWO MINDS

2.2.2.2.1. Taking the mind of enlightenment

This was the content of the last chapter. Now we come to:

2.2.2.2.2. The Way of Training in the Actions, the Perfections

This has four subdivisions:

2.2.2.2.2.1. The way of meditating on conscientiousness, the limb preventing the degeneration of the training in the mind of enlightenment³

2.2.2.2.2.2. Explaining the way of training in morality, by relating it to introspection and mindfulness, the methods for keeping virtuous dharmas pure⁴

2.2.2.2.2.3. Explaining the way of training in the remaining four perfections⁵

¹ See the teaching of 26 March 2013.

² The following two subdivisions were listed in the teaching of 2 July 2013.

³ Covered in chapter 4.

⁴ Covered in chapter 5.

⁵ Covered in chapters 6 to 9.

2.2.2.2.2.4. Explaining the way of practising the generosity of offering one's body, possessions and roots of virtue to others, by way of the limb of dedication⁶

This list encompasses all the remaining chapters.

The first three chapters of the text, as you would recall⁷, present the means of generating bodhicitta, which has not yet been developed. The next three chapters, Conscientiousness, Mindfulness or Introspection, and Patience present the means of maintaining the bodhicitta that has been generated. Chapters 7 to 9 present the means of increasing bodhicitta, and the final chapter dedicates the merits of bodhicitta.

2.2.2.2.2.1. The way of meditating on conscientiousness, the limb preventing the degeneration of the training in the mind of enlightenment

This section also includes other practices that are needed for developing bodhicitta.

Conscientiousness is defined as state of mind that prevents one from being influenced by the delusions, and by maintaining enthusiasm it protects one from contaminated states of mind and increases virtue.

This definition has two main elements:

- It is a mental state of mind that prevents delusions from arising
- While maintaining enthusiasm it protects one from contaminated states of mind and increases virtue

That which encompasses all these attributes is called conscientiousness. Without conscientiousness, it said that one will not be able to engage in any of the three trainings of morality, concentration and wisdom. Therefore conscientiousness is an essential state of mind that we must develop if we wish to engage in our practice properly.

CHAPTER 4: APPLYING CONSCIENTIOUSNESS⁸

The chapter has two elements.

- I. Explaining the text of the chapter
- II: The name of the chapter

I. EXPLAINING THE TEXT OF THE CHAPTER

The chapter has three subdivisions

1. Short explanation of the way to meditate on conscientiousness
2. Explaining it extensively
3. Summary

1. SHORT EXPLANATION OF THE WAY TO MEDITATE ON CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

The first verse of the chapter reads:

1. *After the children of the conquerors,
Have very firmly accepted bodhicitta,
They should unwaveringly strive always
To not transgress the trainings.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explanation of this verse reads:

⁶ Covered in chapter 10.

⁷ See 12 February 2013.

⁸ To keep things manageable the numbering system starts again.

After the children of the conquerors, the bodhisattvas, took very firmly the two minds of enlightenment as explained earlier, they should unwaveringly protect them with conscientiousness, so as not to wander from them for even a second.

They should also unwaveringly protect the trainings of the six perfections and the four ways of attracting disciples, so as not to waver from them, and that they never decrease.

I have already explained in the past the connotation of *children of the conquerors*, and also what *conqueror* refers to, so you may recall that. Having *very firmly* established *the two minds of enlightenment*, which were *explained earlier*, we must *unwaveringly protect them with conscientiousness*, so as not to wander from them for even a second. Furthermore *they should also unwaveringly protect the trainings of the six perfections and the four ways of attracting disciples*, so as not to waver from them, and that they never decrease.

What we need to understand from this is that once a bodhisattva generates the two states of mind of bodhicitta, there are only two activities that they will engage in from then on—activities that encompass fulfilling their own purpose, and activities that encompass fulfilling the purpose of others. The *six perfections* are specifically the means to fulfil one's own ultimate purpose, although they also directly benefit others. *The four ways of attracting disciples* are the activities that specifically and directly benefit other beings. Bodhisattvas have no other activities than these two.

The six perfections serve as a means to fulfil one's ultimate goal of achieving enlightenment, solely for the purpose of benefiting other sentient beings. As explained in the teachings, having generated a state of mind of bodhicitta, bodhisattvas are committed to striving to achieve enlightenment, which takes many eons of practice. So bodhisattvas need to ensure that they are not deprived of good conditions and that they have sufficient wealth and so forth over the many lives needed to achieve the ultimate state of enlightenment. Because that takes many eons, one has to ensure that all the conditions are in place so as to be able to continuously engage in the practices until achieving the state of enlightenment. The supreme means of ensuring that one has the appropriate conditions of sufficient wealth and so forth is none other than engaging in the practice of *generosity*. That is how the practice of generosity is the optimum means to establish those necessary favourable conditions.

In order to engage in the practice of generosity to amass sufficient means in good conditions one needs to have a basis, which is a perfect physical body. This is obtained through none other than the practice of *morality*. Thus, morality is the main cause of obtaining a perfect body.

Furthermore, having amassed the perfect conditions of sufficient wealth and so forth, and having the perfect base of a sound body, one needs to have a good retinue if one is to make use of those conditions. In both a worldly context and for the Dharma, one needs to have an appropriate retinue to help us to utilise those good conditions. What brings about a perfect retinue is none other than the practice of *patience*. That is why the practice of patience is said to be essential.

We also need to ensure that whatever activity we engage in is completed. That which ensures that any activity reaches completion is none other than the practice of *enthusiasm* or joyous effort.

Then we need to make sure that all the earlier good conditions that we have obtained do not become a condition for delusions to arise. So we need to adopt the practice of *meditation* to ensure delusions do not arise.

Being able to discern what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded is essential, and the unmistakable discriminating *wisdom* is acquired through the practice of wisdom.

We can see the relevance of all of this to our own practice. By seeing the practical benefits of engaging in these practices of generosity, morality, patience, joyous effort, meditation and developing wisdom, we are further encouraged to engage in these practices to accomplish our ultimate goal.

The purpose of obtaining the perfect conditions we enjoy now is twofold: ultimately it is to benefit other sentient beings, and to achieve one's own ultimate goal. The first three perfections, generosity, morality and patience are a direct means of fulfilling the benefit of other sentient beings.

Our own ultimate purpose is gained through the wisdom that leads one to obtaining the bliss or happiness of liberation. However, if the mind is distracted and wavering then it is not possible to develop that wisdom. So, in order to cultivate that wisdom one needs to have a very stable and undistracted mind, which is established through meditation, in particular concentration.

The ultimate concentration is calm abiding and based on calm abiding one achieves the wisdom of special insight. The union of calm abiding and special insight can only occur after having first obtained calm abiding. So we need to understand that special insight is preceded by calm abiding. However concentration and wisdom cannot be established if one is lazy. Therefore the perfection of joyous effort is essential to achieve both one's own purpose as well to benefit other sentient beings.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་ཀྱི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

4 March 2014

Based on the motivation we had just generated, we can engage in the practice of meditation.

[meditation]

In our last session we started Chapter 4, which is Conscientiousness.

1. SHORT EXPLANATION OF THE WAY TO MEDITATE ON CONSCIENTIOUSNESS (CONT.)

The importance of applying conscientiousness was explained earlier as being essential to prevent bodhicitta from declining after it had been generated. I also explained how the bodhisattvas' activities are encompassed in the practices of the six perfections and the four means of gathering disciples.

Although I have already identified and explained the four means of gathering disciples previously, I will list them again. They are: giving whatever is necessary; speaking pleasantly; helping others; and consistency between words and deeds. Here we will notice that the incomparably kind Buddha presented these ways of benefiting others in very practical manner.

The first is giving people what they need through generosity. By engaging in giving, you develop an acquaintance with them where they begin to feel comfortable and develop a bond with you. Along with that, if you utter kind and pleasant words, that will really appeal to them.

We can all relate to the benefit of giving, however generosity needs to be accompanied with kind and pleasant speech so that the recipients can receive it gracefully, without fear or hesitation. For example, when you give food to animals, if you do so with pleasant words it creates a gentle atmosphere that makes them feel comfortable, and then they come close to you and gracefully accept the food. If even animals can appreciate this kind and gentle gesture, then there is no need to mention how humans would relate to it as well.

As you would know, generosity is classified into two types: generosity with material wealth and generosity with the Dharma. Likewise, speaking pleasantly can also be related to a worldly context—such as greeting and welcoming people with pleasant words, and presenting the actual meaning of the Dharma.

The third way of gathering disciples, helping others, particularly relates to presenting the Dharma. Taking the example of helping animals again, when an animal has been treated kindly (with food and pleasant words) it develops trust in the owner, who can then explain things which it will follow, like certain behaviour patterns or even tricks. Animals can learn quite a lot of skills willingly from their owners or trainers that they trust. In

the context of bodhisattvas helping sentient beings, it refers not only to temporary benefit, but that which will benefit sentient beings in all future lives, up until achieving the ultimate state of enlightenment. As part of the means to benefit other beings, you can see that these ways of gathering disciples play a very important role in developing a good relationship with other beings. It is very much in line with the worldly concepts of enacting good deeds for others, thus we can easily relate to this as being a practical ways and means to benefit others.

When we see how the teaching presents these points so meticulously and logically, it gives us the initiative to implement and integrate them in our own practice. It gives us a deeper sense of understanding, and entreats us to use our intelligence, our reasoning and logical way of thinking. For me it definitely provides very good ways to think critically and logically; I am sure you can relate to it as well.

As explained to me by my own teachers and previous masters, the fourth means of gathering disciples, consistency between words and deeds, means to act in accordance with the Dharma. This relates to both entreating others to act in accordance with the Dharma and to follow the advice of the Dharma oneself. So, the third means is to help others by explaining the meaning of the Dharma while the fourth is to implore others, as well as to follow the Dharma oneself.

In our last session I explained how the six perfections serve as a means to acquire good conditions. It is important to also take note of the opposites to each of the six perfections, as the exact opposite is a hindrance to engaging in the practice. For example miserliness is the opposite of generosity, so when we are affected by miserliness this obstructs us from being generous. We will not be able to perfect the practice of generosity if we don't overcome miserliness. Thus, we need to apply an antidote to overcome miserliness to become more and more accustomed to being naturally generous.

We can definitely relate to the ill effects of strong miserliness. Some are not able to make offerings because they are too miserly to use their resources. Furthermore, out of miserliness some are not able to benefit others with their wealth and may not even be able to use their own wealth to benefit themselves. So we can see in a very practical way how miserliness obstructs one from using one's wealth in an optimum way. The antidote for overcoming miserliness is none other than actually engaging in the practice of generosity, by seeing the advantages and benefits of being generous. As we gradually increase acts of generosity, we will begin to overcome miserliness.

To list the other opposites: the opposite of morality is corrupt morality; the opposite of patience is anger or hatred; the opposite of joyous effort is laziness; the opposite of meditation (concentration) is mental wandering and the opposite of wisdom is corrupt wisdom.

So identifying the opposites of the six perfections and overcoming them is necessary to engage in the actual practices. By relating to a bodhisattva's practice of generosity we can definitely understand how it enables a

bodhisattva to fulfil the purpose of others as well as one's own purposes. That should encourage one to also overcome miserliness and begin to practise generosity and so forth.

2. EXPLAINING IT EXTENSIVELY

This is subdivided into two.

- 2.1. Meditating on conscientiousness for bodhicitta
- 2.2. Being conscientious of the trainings

2.1. Meditating on conscientiousness for bodhicitta

This is further subdivided into two.

- 2.1.1. The reason why it is unsuitable to give up bodhicitta
- 2.1.2. The fault of giving it up

The first explains that having taken the bodhisattva vows and making that pledge, it is unsuitable to give up bodhicitta. The reason presented is encompassed in the second point, the fault of giving it up. That is, if one were to give it up, what would the faults be?

2.1.1. The reason why it is unsuitable to give up bodhicitta

The next two verses explain the meaning of this heading.

The first verse reads:

2. *Any action done in the spur of the moment,
Or done without having been considered
carefully,
Although having already committed to them,
It is appropriate to analyse whether to act or to
leave it.*

The commentary explains the meaning of this verse as follows:

Actions that were just engaged in impulsively, without consideration of their benefits and drawbacks, or actions that were minimally analysed but not well investigated before engaged in, are actions that are suitable to be investigated later on, to decide whether to continue them or not, despite having made an earlier commitment.

The first part of the translation reads *actions that were just engaged in* and uses the term *impulsively* which relates to the Tibetan term that has the connotation of not taking any measures to check whether the action one is about to engage in has any advantages or disadvantages, or benefits or drawbacks i.e. just engaging in an activity without first checking. For example, compare taking the bodhisattva vows without first checking the benefits and drawbacks, with first doing some analysis and then taking them. Taking the bodhisattva vows after analysing and understanding them is proper practice, whereas taking the bodhisattva vows without first analysing and understanding what they are would be improper and a fault.

The point to note here is that *without consideration of the benefits or drawbacks or actions that were minimally analysed but not well investigated, are suitable to be investigated later on to decide whether to continue or not, despite having made earlier commitment.*

The Tibetan commentary begins with *despite having made an earlier commitment*, which implies that one has already made a promise to do a certain action. However even if one has made a promise, there are actions that are

suitable to be investigate later on, and decide whether one should continue doing them or not.

The point being presented here is in relation to a bodhisattva's promise. While this may not apply to us directly, as we have not actually developed bodhicitta yet, nevertheless we can still relate this to other aspects in our everyday life. As I regularly share with you, don't be hasty making promises or commitments to others prior to fully understanding what you are committing to. I have often heard people speak of a commitment in a lamenting way such as, 'Oh, I have to follow this through now because I have already made a promise'. A promise is taken very seriously and even though you no longer find the action suitable, because of a promise you feel an obligation to do it. So my advice, which is in line with what is being presented here, is don't be hasty making promises or commitments prior to investigating whether it is something suitable or manageable for you do to. You need to apply this advice into your everyday life situations.

The main point being presented here is that if normal activities that need further investigation are not given up because a promise is made, then what need is there to mention not giving up bodhicitta! This is explained further in the next verse.

What is explained here can also be understood in terms of the two types of trainees on the path: those of intelligent faculty and those of dull faculty. Those of intelligent faculty investigate thoroughly before they actually undertake any activity or practice etc. whereas those of dull intelligence or faculty don't really have the means to thoroughly investigate. They just accept and engage in the practices without too much investigation.

It is explained in the teachings that when those of intelligent faculty make a promise, the commitment is much more firm and stable than from those with dull faculty. That is because the promise or commitment is made after employing thorough investigation and analysis.

However, there is also a phrase in a text which says that siddhis or attainments may be obtained more swiftly by those with dull faculty because they immediately engage in the practice. By taking much more time to investigate and analyse, those with intelligent faculty sometimes get held back and don't engage in the practice right away. So there can be some drawbacks in taking a longer time to achieve their goals.

This relates to stories about some trainees who actually investigated bodhicitta for twelve years before finally feeling committed enough to engage in the practice, whereas those who did not have much intelligence but strong faith, just engaged in the practice, and would have developed bodhicitta sooner.

In comparison to actions done without considering the benefits and drawbacks, or minimally analysed with further room to be investigated and decided upon, the next verse points out:

3. *But how can I discard that
Which has been analysed
By the buddhas and their children with great
wisdom*

And also analysed by myself repeatedly.

The meaning of this verse is explained with a quote from a sutra. It reads:

As it is stated in the *Sutra Requested by Subahu*, the buddhas, and their children such as Maitreya, ...

At this point you can relate to an earlier explanation about the close children or disciples of the Buddha, such as Maitreya, Manjushri and so forth, who

... investigated with great wisdom the mind, praised its qualities and taught it to be indispensable in the *Array of Stalks Sutra* and others. One had also investigated with various reasons why one should definitely take this mind, by thinking about its benefits and so on.

The sutra says *investigated with great wisdom the mind*, which refers to the mind generation of bodhicitta. The close disciples of the Buddha investigated with great wisdom the benefit of bodhicitta, praised its qualities and thought it to be indispensable in *Array of Stalks Sutra* and other sutras. Likewise one had also investigated with various reasons why one should definitely take up this mind by thinking about its benefits.

So, what is being explained here is that if one had already investigated and analysed the various reasons why one should definitely generate the mind of bodhicitta, by thinking of its numerous benefits (which were explained in the first chapter) then one should definitely see reasons to actually adopt it. Having taken such action to consider the benefits of bodhicitta, how can one discard it? One needs to protect it from degenerating until attaining enlightenment.

2.1.2. The fault of giving it up

This outline is further subdivided into three:

2.1.2.1. The fault of going to the lower realms

2.1.2.2. One will degenerate from the welfare of others

2.1.2.3. One has become far from attaining a ground

The thought of *giving it up* refers to the two stages of bodhicitta: aspiring and engaging. When one first takes the vows, one generates a genuine aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, and to bring about ultimate benefit and remove all suffering. Based on this very sincere and very strong intention, the aspiration to achieve enlightenment for that purpose is developed. So the aspiring bodhicitta is developed first and then based on that, one goes further and makes a commitment to actually engage in the practices of a bodhisattva in order to accomplish one's aspirations. So the pledges one makes when one takes the bodhisattva vows have great benefit in themselves. It is a great fault to give up bodhicitta after having taken the vows.

In one prayer about generating this mind, it mentions that one invites all sentient beings as guests to partake in the ultimate happiness and bliss of enlightenment. So having invited all sentient beings as one's guests, one then makes a further commitment to engage in the practices to serve the invited guests, to help them partake in ultimate happiness.

The fault, if one were to give up bodhicitta, is going to the lower realms. As one will have degenerated from the welfare of others, one has become far from attaining a ground.

2.1.2.1. THE FAULT OF GOING TO THE LOWER REALMS

This is subdivided into three

2.1.2.1.1. The reason for going to the lower realms

2.1.2.1.2. Stating supporting evidence

2.1.2.1.3. Refuting objections

2.1.2.1.1. The reason for going to the lower realms

The text reads:

4. *After having made this promise
If one does not engage into the actions,
Then one deceives all sentient beings.
How could one become a migrator?*

The commentary clearly explains the meaning of this verse:

Having made the promise to place all sentient beings in the state of enlightenment, if one then does not practice the path to achieve this aim, then one will have deceived all sentient beings. How will one then become a migrator, as one will never go beyond the lower realms?

The first part of the explanation begins with *having made the promise to place all sentient beings in the state of enlightenment, if one then does not practice the path to achieve this aim*. Many of you, who have already taken bodhisattva vows, will recall that taking the vows initially involves making the promise of generating the aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. Based on that strong aspiration to free all beings from suffering and lead them to ultimate state of happiness, you then generate the mind, 'I definitely need to achieve enlightenment myself'. So, based on that aspiration, the promise involves willingly making the pledge to engage in practices of the six perfections and the four means of gathering disciples.

The pledge one makes when taking the vows is done in the presence of all enlightened beings, the conquerors and their children, i.e. all buddhas and bodhisattvas, so it is in their presence that one generates the aspiration to achieve enlightenment. If it were just an aspiration then there wouldn't be much more responsibility than just being an aspiration, but the pledge involves making a conscious commitment to engage in the practices to achieve enlightenment. So since these vows and pledges are willingly made in presence of all buddhas and bodhisattvas, one has already taken upon oneself the commitment.

One has already promised sentient beings that one will do that. So having made a pledge, if one gives it up, then one will have deceived all sentient beings. Why? Because it is a lie. One promised to do something but one is not keeping that promise. One is not just deceiving one being. Telling a lie to one being is a non-virtue, so you can imagine the negativity one would incur by deceiving all sentient beings. *How will one then one become a migrator* implies how then could one ascend to higher and more fortunate realms? One would not. Having incurred the negativity of deceiving all beings one is certain to take rebirth in the lower realms. It is commonly accepted in all religions traditions that lying and deceiving others is a non-virtuous act, and that is what is being explained here.

2.1.2.1.2. Stating supporting evidence

5. *If one will become a hungry ghost
When one does not give to the person
Even the common objects
That one already offered in one's mind,*

In explaining the meaning of this verse, the commentary reads:

Regarding not giving the object of offering that one has already given in one's mind, even if it is just one morsel of food, it states in the *Sutra of Close Placement by Mindfulness*:

The sutra presents the faults of this mind using a particular example, the fault of not giving something that one has already promised to give. The fault relates to not giving even to one being something as small as a *morsel of food*. In relation to pledges made to provide happiness to all the sentient beings invited as one's guests; in the presence of all buddhas and bodhisattvas, one has made the pledge to offer them the temporary happiness of high status of humans and gods, and ultimate happiness which is the definite goodness of liberation and enlightenment. That is what one has promised to do for all sentient beings in the presence of all buddhas and bodhisattvas. The commentary next gives explanations from the sutras about the fault of not giving even a small object, such as a morsel of food.

The quote here from the *Sutra of Close Placement by Mindfulness* reads:

If they do not give even the little they intended, they will take rebirth as a migrator in the hungry ghost realm. If they do not give what they promised, then the sentient being will go to the hell realm.

The *Sutra Dividing Migrators* also states:

Whichever person, by not giving the rice and vegetables, the roots and fruits they intended to, they will experience the hungry ghost world and terrifying suffering.

The meaning of the sutra is quite easy to understand. It states quite clearly that for *whichever person, by not giving the rice and vegetables, i.e. the roots and fruits they intended to give*, but does not give it afterwards, the consequence is that *they will experience the hungry ghost world and terrifying suffering*.

The next verse in relates to this same subheading:

6. *Then how could one go to a happy migration
If one deceives all sentient beings
Concerning the highest happiness
To which one invited them from the depths of
one's mind*

The commentary explains the meaning of this verse:

If this is regarded as a cause to be reborn in the hungry ghost realm, then if one deceives all sentient beings with regards to the highest happiness and the temporary happiness of gods and humans, to which one invited all sentient beings, not just in mere words, but respectfully from the depth of one heart with a loud and clear voice, by discarding them, then how can one migrate to the happy realms? One will not.

The commentary clearly explains that when one makes a pledge and then does not give one's own food to others as intended, it creates the cause to be born in the hungry ghost realm.

If one deceives all sentient beings with regards to the highest happiness and temporary happiness of gods and humans, to which one invited all sentient beings, not just in mere words but respectfully from the depth of one's heart with a loud and clear voice: One has actually made a pledge, analysed the benefits and seen the purpose, so *the decision is made from the depth of one's heart* and one is not taking it lightly. One has considered the vows in all seriousness, not just mumbled them barely audible, but made the pledge in a clear loud voice. This relates to when we took the bodhisattva vows, when we all knelt down and put our palms together respectfully and we repeated the vows quite loudly after the master.

This point relates to those of us who have taken the vows and made those promises. We have followed in these footsteps, so while there are benefits in having taken the vows we also need be mindful of the faults of not upholding them.

2.1.2.1.3. Refuting Objections

As the text explained that the fault of giving up bodhicitta is that one will go to lower realms, an objection is raised:

The commentary first states the objection:

Question: The superior Shariputra, after having previously generated bodhicitta, was engaged in the practice of the perfections when he was asked by a demon for his right hand. Shariputra cut off his right hand and gave it to the demon with his left hand. Because of this he was severely abused by the demon and so Shariputra became sad and gave up bodhicitta. Yet he later attained the state of an Arhat. Does this not contradict what is taught in the quotes?

The objection here is that Shariputra apparently had given up bodhicitta, so Shariputra should have gone to the lower realms instead of attaining liberation.

The commentary explains that Shariputra, having previously generated bodhicitta, was engaged in the practice of perfections. When a demon disguised as Brahmin asked for his right hand and then abused him for giving it him with his left hand, Shariputra became disheartened thinking, 'I can't even help or please one sentient being', and that is when Shariputra gave up bodhicitta. So, we need to take notice that if one gives up the intention to benefit even one sentient being, one is giving up bodhicitta. From this account, we need to understand that giving up on one sentient being becomes a cause for giving up bodhicitta.

The objection here is how could Shariputra later attain the state of an arhat? *Does that not contradict what is taught in the sutras?*

The verse explains:

7. *Whichever person who gave up bodhicitta,
Their striving for liberation
Is karmic beyond thought,
And only known to the omniscient.*

In explaining the meaning of this verse, which refutes that objection, it explains that

Answer: When Shariputra, or anybody else for that matter, attains Arhatship despite having abandoned bodhicitta, then that is a karma that is beyond the knowledge of ordinary beings and can only be

understood by an all knowing Buddha. It cannot be understood by anybody else.

The point here is that despite having given up bodhicitta, Shariputra attained arhatship. This is actually a result of previous karma, but it is an aspect of karma that is beyond the knowledge of ordinary beings. Only a Buddha with an omniscient mind is able to see the subtlety of the karma which became the particular cause for him to attain arhatship. It is generally explained in the teachings that the subtleties of karma are known only by an omniscient mind.

The subtleties of karma are inconceivable in relation to the time a particular karma was created, the individual who created it, and particular circumstances under which it was created. These details are said to be known only by an omniscient mind, the all-knowing Buddha. Consider a contemporary example such as a glass. It is a fact that glass is a combination of many billions of atoms. How many atoms make up this glass and where they came from? It is not something that we are not able to know. It is only something that the mind of a Buddha would know. Likewise, karma with subtleties of time, duration, manner and location, details of previous karmas committed a long time ago, is only known by an omniscient mind. I recall one of the previous masters in Sera monastery, Gyalrong Khensur Rinpoche often used to mention the quote 'karma is unconceivable' is something.

Despite Shariputra having given up bodhicitta at a particular time, and later obtaining the state of arhatship, he not only obtained that state of arhatship as a personal liberation but also to benefit many others who had particular karmic connection with him. They definitely benefited from Shariputra after he had obtained arhatship. So these factors then, the karma that Shariputra would have created in the past to obtain those results is really something which is said to be inconceivable, something which just cannot be known and conceived by ordinary minds.

There are various other explanations as to why, rather than falling to lower realms, Shariputra actually obtained liberation. One explanation is that when Shariputra gave up bodhicitta it was only the conventional bodhicitta he gave up and he did not give up the ultimate bodhicitta which is the realisation of emptiness. And so because he did not give up the realisation of emptiness that is what caused him to obtain the state of liberation. Another explanation is that even though he had given up bodhicitta, it actually became the cause for him to obtain liberation because he hadn't given up his determination to obtain liberation. Both explanations are valid. The first explanation, that is because Shariputra didn't give up ultimate bodhicitta (the realisation of emptiness), is in accordance to Gyaltsab Rinpoche, the author of this commentary. It actually has a profound meaning.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེད་ཀྱི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

11 March 2014

As usual we will now spend some time in meditation practice.

[meditation]

Now we can generate the motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines:

In order to liberate all sentient beings from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I definitely have to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

If we carefully think about the meaning of this very brief motivation, we will realise that it encompasses both the aspirational bodhicitta attitude as well as the engaging bodhicitta attitude. It is aspirational in the sense of making a determination to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, whilst listening to the teachings and making a commitment to practise well encompasses engaging bodhicitta.

2.1. Meditating on conscientiousness for bodhicitta

2.1.2. The fault of giving it up (cont.)

2.1.2.2. ONE WILL DEGENERATE FROM THE WELFARE OF OTHERS

It is good to keep the essential points of the chapter in mind by relating to the outline.

There are three sub-divisions under this category:

2.1.2.2.1. If one's bodhicitta degenerates, then it is a heavy downfall and one's work for the welfare of others will degenerate

2.1.2.2.2. Even if one obstructs the virtue of another bodhisattva it is similar to that, and one will go to the lower realms

2.1.2.2.3. The reason why this is so

2.1.2.2.1. If one's bodhicitta degenerates, then it is a heavy downfall and one's work for the welfare of others will degenerate

If one's bodhicitta degenerates, then it is a heavy downfall, because it is one of the eighteen root downfalls of the bodhisattva vows. Relinquishing bodhicitta is said to be one of the heaviest of the eighteen root transgressions. One's work for the welfare of others will degenerate refers to the fact that if one gives up bodhicitta then that entails giving up the pledge to engage in the practice of the six perfections. As the very basis for benefitting sentient beings, i.e. bodhicitta, is uprooted, one will not be able to adequately benefit sentient beings.

The verse relating to this outline reads:

8. *This is for bodhisattvas
The heaviest of downfalls.
Therefore, if one receives it
One harms the purpose of all sentient beings.*

In his commentary Gyaltzab Je gives this explanation:

To degenerate from bodhicitta is for bodhisattvas, out of the root downfalls, the heaviest one. Since the wish to benefit degenerates, if one receives this downfall, then it harms the welfare of all sentient beings, because the basis for practice degenerates.

As the commentary clearly explains, allowing *bodhicitta to degenerate is the heaviest of the root downfalls of the bodhisattva vows*. Giving up bodhicitta *harms the welfare of sentient beings* because one's bodhicitta has degenerated as a result of having given it up. One harms the welfare of sentient beings because one breaks the pledge to help sentient beings. It is good to take note that giving up bodhicitta is one of the three ways in which a bodhisattva's vows degenerate. Another is giving up working for the welfare of even one sentient being; and the third is having an inclination to follow a path of the Lower Vehicle, e.g. the hearer's path.

Gyaltzab Je further explains that *it harms the welfare of all sentient beings because the basis for practice, which is bodhicitta, degenerates*. When bodhicitta degenerates, then the very basis for the practices of the six perfections, which are the means to bring about the welfare of sentient beings, is harmed, and hence the welfare of sentient beings is harmed.

Then the commentary quotes from a sutra:

From the *Superior Compendium*:

Although one has practised the path of the ten virtues
For 10 million eons, if one generates the wish to be a self-liberator arhat,
At that moment morality has received a fault and degenerates.
Generating such a mind is heavier than the defeat of a fully ordained monk's vows.

As explained here, if one generates the wish to be a self-liberator arhat (a state of liberation in the Lower Vehicle) then, at that moment, morality has received a fault and degenerated, even though *one has practised the path of the ten virtues for millions of eons. Generating such a mind is heavier than the defeat of a fully ordained monk's vows*.

Here we need to take note that bodhicitta degenerates the moment one generates the mind of a Lesser Vehicle goal, by thinking, 'Alas, achieving enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings is too hard'.

Furthermore, as mentioned previously, one gives up bodhicitta if one develops the thought, 'I will never, ever do anything to bring about benefit for this particular sentient being'. It is mentioned in another text that if one part of something degenerates then the whole is affected. The analogy given in the teachings is that if just one bead of a rosary falls off or is damaged, then the whole rosary is incomplete. Those of you who do the six session guru practice will recall that it mentions that giving up bodhicitta is a downfall of the root bodhisattva vows. Also, the tantric vows are broken if one gives up love for sentient beings.

The promise made in the bodhisattva vows is to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, who are as vast as space, and for that purpose one promises to engage in the practices of the six perfections. Thus, taking the bodhisattva vows encompasses all sentient beings. If

the promise made was to help only some sentient beings, then not working for the welfare of one sentient would not necessarily be giving up bodhicitta. But a pledge has been made to work for all sentient beings, so if, at some stage, one decides from the depths of one's heart, 'I am not going to benefit this sentient being or engage in working for their welfare', then the bodhisattva promise has been broken. It's good to know why giving up on even one sentient being is giving up bodhicitta.

Gyaltsab Je then explains the meaning of the quote:

As it is stated, if a bodhisattva with vows gives up bodhicitta, he receives a root downfall. If he has no vows, then his negativity is still heavier than the root downfall of the vows of individual liberation.

In Tibetan the last line of the verse, translated here as *one harms the purpose of all sentient beings*, contains the word *men*, which has a connotation of being inferior. As some commentaries explain, a bodhisattva, overwhelmed by the goal of achieving enlightenment for the purpose of all sentient beings, might change their goal to that of achieving the liberation of the Lower Vehicle. If they give up bodhicitta in that way, and then attain the state of an arhat, they will, of course, still benefit beings to their capacity. However, compared to the buddhas' ability to benefit sentient beings it is quite inferior; after all, buddhas are able to help liberate countless sentient beings with just one ray of light emanating from their body; that is one explanation of the meaning of this verse.

2.1.2.2.2. Even if one obstructs the virtue of another bodhisattva, it is similar to that and one will go to the lower realms

The verse relating to this reads:

9. *When another, even only for one instant,
Obstructs their merits,
They harm the purpose of sentient beings,
There is no other possibility than to go to the
lower realms.*

Gyaltsab Je begins his explanation with:

Whoever obstructs the merits, which are the virtues of a bodhisattva for even just one moment, harms the ability of that bodhisattva to accomplish the welfare of sentient beings. Where else could he go but to the lower realms infinitely?

Here Gyaltsab Rinpoche is emphasising a point made in the teachings, a point that I have presented several times in the past. The meaning of *whoever obstructs the merits, which are the virtues of a bodhisattva for even just one moment, harms the ability of that bodhisattva to accomplish the welfare of sentient beings* is quite clear. The consequence of this is that *there is no other possibility than to go to the lower realms many times over*.

Since any activity of a bodhisattva has the sole purpose of leading all beings to the ultimate state of enlightenment, anyone who obstructs the activities of a bodhisattva is obstructing the cause for the ultimate happiness of sentient beings. Such a person definitely creates the cause to take infinite rebirths in the lower realms. Another way of understanding *obstructing the merits* is that it refers to causing the bodhicitta of a bodhisattva to degenerate. As mentioned previously, that would be a very heavy

misdeed, which will be a cause for infinite rebirths in the lower realms.

The main point being emphasised here is that every deed of a bodhisattva is a cause for the unsurpassable happiness of all sentient beings, and if one obstructs those deeds even for a moment then one is obstructing the unsurpassable happiness of all sentient beings; that incurs great negativity.

To back up this explanation Gyaltsab Je quotes from a sutra.

From the *Sutra of Magical Emanations Definitely Pacifying*:

It is heavier to obstruct the virtue of a bodhisattva of offering one instance of food or drink to an animal, than to rob all sentient beings of Jambudvipa of their food and kill them.

As the quote says: *It is heavier to obstruct the virtue of a bodhisattva of offering one instance of food or drink to an animal, than to rob all sentient beings of Jambudvipa (or the world) of their food and kill them*. This clearly explains that obstructing a bodhisattva's deeds incurs much more heavy negative karma than actually robbing others of their food and life.

Then Gyaltsab Je's commentary further explains:

Because there are quotes like that, one should be careful regarding this point. One does not know who is a bodhisattva and so it is very easy to make this mistake. If one is able to protect oneself from this, then one is able to abandon the door of creating most faults with regard to people.

Here Gyaltsab Rinpoche is re-emphasising a point that he makes in his other works. We cannot judge other people from their appearances, and we cannot know another person's status just from their appearance. In other texts he says that one has to be very mindful and careful about judging and criticising others, because it could be similar to walking over a pit of fire that has been camouflaged with branches. If one is unaware of the pit of fire and, based on the external appearance, steps onto the branches, one will fall into the pit of fire and will be consumed by it. This analogy illustrates how we need to be very careful when it comes to judging and being critical of others, because we cannot know who is a bodhisattva. As Gyaltsab Rinpoche emphasises here, we cannot know who is actually a bodhisattva, because real bodhisattvas hide their qualities, and would appear as anything but a bodhisattva.

Here we can consider the example of the great Khunu Lama Rinpoche. When I had the great privilege of meeting him in Bodhgaya, he was wearing very simple clothes, almost rags really, and living very simply with only basic needs. If you saw Khunu Lama Rinpoche walking around in the street, you might think he was an ordinary beggar. People who didn't know him would not see his great qualities, but he was in fact a great practitioner of bodhicitta and a real bodhisattva. Even though I have not received any formal teachings from him I definitely had the opportunity to make a good Dharmic connection with him. When I went to see him he gave me a seed from the bodhi tree, and said I should recite the mantra of the Buddha and eat the seed as, 'That will be really good for you'.

Even though I didn't take particular note of it at that time, when I look back I really feel that it was a very significant gesture. Receiving that seed and instruction from Khunu Lama Rinpoche was almost a prediction that I would really try to take strong interest in teachings such as the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*. I received teachings on the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* from His Holiness, who received it from Khunu Lama Rinpoche. So it is a very close lineage—I received the teachings from a bodhisattva who received it directly from Khunu Lama Rinpoche himself. I have had that privilege of studying the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* and now I have the opportunity to teach and share it with you.

When I met Khunu Lama Rinpoche I definitely had the opportunity to make a good connection with him. Even though I did not have much money I did have a silver coin with me which I was able to offer to Khunu Lama Rinpoche; it was the greatest offering I could make at that time. And in return Khunu Lama Rinpoche gave me that seed from the bodhi tree.

To return to the commentary, since one doesn't know who is a bodhisattva and who is not, if one refrains from this misdeed of criticising and being judgemental of others, or, worse, harming them and their good deeds, one is able to avoid the great misdeed of potentially harming a bodhisattva.

Also, as explained in the *Precious Garland*, harming others who are engaged in virtuous deeds such as Dharma practice is a great misdeed, because one is depriving them of the opportunity to create the causes for their happiness over many future lifetimes. So we also need to be really mindful about not harming the Dharma practice of others by causing them to give up the Dharma and so forth; we really need to be mindful of these points.

So we really need to take on board this succinct advice from Gyaltsab Rinpoche and try implement it in our own lives, then we won't create those misdeeds.

2.1.2.2.3. *The reason why this is so*

Gyaltsab Je begins his commentary on this section with a question.

Why are the abovementioned actions of infinite negativity?

The relevant verse reads:

*10. If one degenerates just by harming the happiness
Of even one sentient being,
What need is there to mention
Harming the happiness of beings infinite like space?*

Then Gyaltsab Je states:

If one destroys the happiness of abiding with life of just one sentient being, one degenerates from one's high status.

What need is there to mention that one will be reborn in the lower realms if one destroys the cause for the highest happiness of all sentient beings equalling space?

If one destroys the happiness of abiding with life of just one sentient being is basically saying that if one robs just one sentient being of their life, then *one's high status degenerates*. This is an unequivocal statement that the

consequence of taking the life of just one sentient being isn't restricted to the loss of life of the other, but has the inevitable consequences of causing one's own high status to degenerate. That being the case with the life of one sentient being, *what need is there to mention that one will be reborn into the lower realms if one destroys the cause for the highest happiness of all sentient beings equalling space?* Again, we have a very clear explanation of the great negativity that one will incur in that instance; we need to be very mindful of that.

These explanations explain why obstructing the merits and virtues of a bodhisattva are a cause for infinite rebirths in the lower realms. If one creates a great misdeed of harming the happiness of even one sentient being, then by implication, obstructing the happiness of infinite numbers of sentient beings, who are as vast as space, will definitely be a cause for infinite negativity and infinite rebirths in the lower realms.

This is another very meticulous presentation: first there is an explanation, which is followed by logical reasons, which are illuminated with analogies and examples. It is important that when we read a text we are able to make that connection between its earlier and later parts, and so derive the full meaning of the text. It is good for us to know how to relate to the texts we study in this way.

The explanation we have just covered is also a profound explanation of the cause and effect sequence of karma. As mentioned earlier, one's high status degenerates if one destroys the happiness of abiding with life of just one sentient being. The implication is that those who are ignorant of the cause and effect sequence of karma will engage in acts of negativity, such as taking the life of others. It is basically through the ignorance of the law of karma that one incurs the fault of allowing one's high status to degenerate. So we can regard ourselves as being extremely fortunate to have been introduced to the law of karma. Through having some understanding and faith in the law of karma we are protected from creating misdeeds that would be the cause for one's own high status to degenerate.

2.1.2.3. ONE WILL BECOME FAR FROM ATTAINING A GROUND

As will be explained in the verse and in the commentary, it is implied here that if one generates very strong bodhicitta at one point, gives it up later and then strongly regenerates that bodhicitta, one will still be far from attaining a ground.

The verse relating to this heading reads:

*11. Thus, those with the heavy downfall
And with strong bodhicitta,
Should they further alternate in cyclic existence
Shall be far from attaining a ground.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Thus as explained earlier, those who have received the heavy downfall of abandoning bodhicitta, as well as those who re-generate bodhicitta strongly afterwards, will further circle in cyclic existence alternately, by taking alternate rebirths in the lower realms and in the higher realms due to afflictions and karma. It will take a long time to obtain the grounds such as Very Joyous and so forth. Therefore one

should strive to avoid the degeneration of one's bodhicitta, even at the cost of one's life.

This is clearly explaining that for anyone who has incurred the heavy downfall of abandoning bodhicitta, as well as those who regenerate bodhicitta strongly afterwards, will further take alternate rebirths in the lower realms and higher realms due to afflictions and karma. Thus, as explained here, *it will take a long time to obtain the grounds such as Very Joyous and so forth.*

This explanation is quite specific: once bodhicitta has been developed strongly it has to be maintained without degeneration to obtain the intended result of enlightenment for the sake of all beings. Even though this explanation is directed towards bodhisattvas who have developed bodhicitta, it is also relevant to us. We sometimes have a strong aspiration to develop a good attitude and meditate, and we try to practise the Dharma with a lot of zest. But sometimes we completely forget about that and allow the delusions to run rampant. This is particularly the case when we leave this room. During a session we might assume a pious aspect of meditating and so forth, and then as soon as we leave we become completely crazed with attachment. We need to take the advice given here as personal instruction, which is to maintain continuity in our practice. The habit of vacillating between practising and not practising does not bear any fruit.

2.2. Being conscientious in the trainings

This section is divided into three:

2.2.1. Conscientiously abandoning faults

2.2.2. Conscientiously meditating on virtue

2.2.3. Conscientiously abandoning the afflictions

2.2.1. Conscientiously abandoning faults

Here there are five subheadings:

These are quite empirical points; it is good to have a general understanding of the structure and sequence of the sub-headings.

2.2.1.1. If one does not abandon negativity and downfalls one will stay in the lower realms

This shows us the importance of recognising negativities and downfalls. Then we can protect ourselves from committing them, and if they are created, we need to purify them. Otherwise we will have to endure the consequence of staying in the lower realms for a long period of time.

2.2.1.2. The buddhas and bodhisattvas will remain impartial

This indicates that if we don't take the initiative to develop and to uphold the bodhicitta vows and so forth from our own side, then the buddhas and bodhisattvas will remain impartial because there is not much more they can do for us. They can't do anything extra for us if we don't take the initiative to implement these vows in our own practice.

2.2.1.3. The freedoms and endowments will be difficult to find

2.2.1.4. If reborn in the lower realms one has no opportunity to generate virtue

2.2.1.5. Why it is difficult to find freedoms and endowments

2.2.1.1. IF ONE DOES NOT ABANDON NEGATIVITY AND DOWNFALLS ONE WILL STAY IN THE LOWER REALMS

Again, this is a personal instruction; it is really important to ensure that whatever activities we engage in become a cause for attaining liberation and enlightenment. Thus it is important for us to check whether an activity is in line with creating the causes for liberation and enlightenment, or whether it could become a cause to be reborn in the lower realms. One needs to investigate and analyse one's activities in this way to protect oneself from these unwanted consequences.

The verse that relates to this outline is:

*12. Therefore I should practice respectfully
According to my promise.
If I do not strive starting from today
Then I will go from low to low.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

Therefore I should practise respectfully the trainings to attain enlightenment for the welfare of sentient beings according to my promise.

If, after having generated bodhicitta and taken the vows, I do not make an effort, I will continuously go from lower realm to lower realm due to heavy downfalls.

As the commentary clearly explains, because of the reasons explained earlier, *I should practise respectfully the trainings to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings according to my promise.* Having considered the consequences of giving up bodhicitta (or allowing bodhicitta to degenerate), one commits here to practise *respectfully*, which means with great reverence, and one practises and engages in the training with *great humility* to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings in accordance with the *promise* that one has made earlier. So this is what is clearly explained.

Furthermore, *if after having generated bodhicitta and taken the vows, I do not make an effort, I will continuously go from lower realm to lower realm due to heavy downfalls* reminds us again of paying heed to avoiding the downfalls. Here, downfalls refer to breaching a commitment of the bodhisattva vows. Likewise for those who have self-liberation vows, one incurs a downfall if one breaches a commitment of the self-liberation vows.

2.2.1.2. THE BUDDHAS AND BODHISATTVAS WILL REMAIN IMPARTIAL

The root text is introduced with this rhetorical thought:

One may think: I shall be all right because the buddhas and bodhisattvas will rescue me.

This section indicates that one cannot be complacent and think in this way. It is also indicating the unique manner in which the Buddha's teachings benefit sentient beings. You should take note of this.

The main point presented here is that we cannot be complacent, thinking, 'Even though I've not managed too well to date, things will be better later on'. We often fall into this habit of thinking, 'Oh, maybe I didn't do so well this year, but that's fine. I will do better next year' or 'Next time round, I will do better!' We often procrastinate in this way and rather than taking the initiative to put everything into practice now, we leave it for later.

Here, the fault is along the same lines: even if I have incurred some faults and so forth, the buddhas and bodhisattvas who are comparatively kind, will definitely rescue me and I will have no problem.

The verse which relates to this is:

13. *Although innumerable buddhas benefiting
All sentient beings have passed,
Due to my faults
I was not an object of their help.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins with:

Innumerable buddhas and bodhisattvas who have worked for the benefit of all sentient beings have passed already, but due to one's own fault of degenerating bodhicitta and the trainings, one did not become the object of their cure.

As the commentary explains, *innumerable buddhas and bodhisattvas who have worked for the benefit of all sentient beings have passed*, which means that they have come to this world and have passed on. But *due to one's own fault of degenerating bodhicitta and the trainings, one did not become the object of their cure*.

This is also in line with a verse in the *Guru Puja*, which states

Even with the countless buddhas who have
descended,
I have not been able to be subdued.

The implication of the heading *The buddhas and bodhisattvas will be impartial* is that if one allows one's bodhicitta and practices to degenerate then even though they are kind and have descended, one will not be an object of benefit from the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Then, Gyaltsab Je quotes this line:

From the *Ornament of Clear Realisation*:

Although the king of gods shower rain, and so forth

This is an analogy: even though the gods may send down heavy rains, if the seed in the ground is actually faulty or rotten then no matter how much rain descends, it will not be able to sprout. The fault is not the lack of rain, but lies with the seed. Likewise, the rain of Dharma from innumerable buddhas has fallen, but because of their faults many sentient beings have not benefitted from that, and thus realisations and so forth have not sprouted in their minds.

Then Gyaltsab Je continues his commentary with this:

One may then think: I will be all right because they will rescue me later.

Then follows the second verse under this sub-heading:

14. *If I continue to act like this
It will be the same again and again.
I will experience sickness, bondage,
Being cut and mutilated in the lower realms.*

Gyaltsab Je's explanation of the meaning of the verse reads:

If I continue to act recklessly, I shall not become the object of their cure and will have to experience suffering continuously. I will have to take rebirth in the lower realms and even if I take rebirth in the happy realms I will have sickness and lack of freedom.

Either that or I will have sickness in the lower realms, and experience innumerable sufferings there, such as my arms and legs being cut off, and my body being lacerated.

This is explaining that after having made the pledge and generated bodhicitta, if one actually gives it up and acts recklessly, then one will *not become an object of their cure*. Rather, one will have to experience suffering continuously.

In relation to the ripened results, one *will have to take rebirth in the lower realms*. The environmental results are that, *even if I take rebirth in the happy realms*, such as the human realm, *I will have sickness and lack of freedom*. Even when reborn in the human realm, one may still *experience innumerable sufferings such as arms and legs being cut off and my body being lacerated* and so forth. So these are the types of sufferings that can be experienced even in a higher rebirth.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་ཀྱི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

18 March 2014

As usual we will now spend some time engaging in the meditation practise.

[meditation]

It is important to generate the appropriate motivation to receive the teachings. The main point is to ensure that the motivation is not tainted with self-interest. Then it is important to familiarise our minds with the wish to benefit others, as this naturally reduces self-interest. We need to intentionally develop this approach because otherwise almost every activity in which we engage has 'What is in it for me?' at the forefront of our minds. The practical benefit of generating the wish to benefit others is that the more we familiarise our minds with this wish, the less likely we will intentionally harm others. At the very least it will prevent us from harming others and actually help us to benefit whenever possible. By cultivating this approach we can start to measure the extent to which we have developed the genuine wish to benefit others.

Lama Tsong Khapa highlights that if we genuinely engage in benefiting others then our own needs will be fulfilled subsequently; this is an essential point. At his recent teachings in India His Holiness the Dalai Lama twice emphasised this point; we need to derive the real meaning from this. And that is, if we genuinely benefit others, our own needs will naturally be fulfilled subsequently, which in turn implies that we do not need to intentionally think or worry about our own needs. This approach prevents one from feeling discouraged from benefitting others. To summarise, the main point is that if one knows that one's own needs will be met and that we are not missing out by benefiting others, then one will not feel overwhelmed or discouraged about helping others. These are the essential points to bear in mind.

2.2.1. Conscientiously abandoning faults (cont.)

2.2.1.3. THE FREEDOMS AND ENDOWMENTS WILL BE DIFFICULT TO FIND

In relation to oneself, the point here is that if we give up bodhicitta (as mentioned previously), then this causes difficulty in finding the freedoms and endowments again.

As the outline here presents, the *freedoms and endowments will be difficult to find*, so we need to take this as a personal instruction to be conscientious in utilising the freedoms and endowments that we have now obtained. This heading is subdivided into two:

2.2.1.3.1. If bodhicitta degenerates, the freedoms and endowments with the condition of four wheels are difficult to find

2.2.1.3.2. Although attaining one, as it disintegrates quickly make an effort

2.2.1.3.1. If bodhicitta degenerates, the freedoms and endowments with the condition of four wheels are difficult to find

Due to a lack of conscientiousness, if one's bodhicitta degenerates, then the freedoms and endowments and the conditions of the four wheels, which are necessary to traverse the Mahayana path, will be difficult to find.

I will list and then explain the four wheels:

1. Living in a conducive place
2. Relying on a sublime being
3. Making aspirational prayers
4. Accumulating merit

1. The first is to abide in a place which is conducive for the Mahayana path to be actualised. This is also presented simply in some texts as living in a place where one can accumulate virtue.

2. The second is to associate and rely on a sublime being, such as a virtuous friend, who leads one on a path to abandon negativity (overcoming faults) and adopt virtue (acquiring good qualities). Thus, the first indicates the kind of place that one should abide in, and the second is in relation to the kind of being that one should rely upon.

3. The third is to be endowed with the results of aspirational prayers that one has previously made.

4. And the fourth is to be endowed with the results of previously accumulated merit.

The conditions of the four wheels were also presented in *Precious Garland*. As direct advice to the king, Nagarjuna highlighted that the freedoms and endowments with the condition of the four wheels are difficult to obtain in the future. He exhorts the king, 'since you have obtained the eight freedoms and ten endowments with the conditions of the four wheels now, you must definitely use them to ensure that they don't go to waste, by practising the Dharma'.

To take this as personal instruction, we need to relate all the points in the four conditions to our own lives; that is, to actually see the significance of making aspirational prayers and see the significance of accumulating merit etc. Whatever attempt we make to accumulate merit is extremely important because the merit that we accumulate now will be experienced later as ripened results with favourable conditions. Likewise, making very strong aspirational prayers now when we have the opportunity is also important and has great significance. As mentioned in other sutras and teachings, the enlightened beings are constantly benefiting sentient beings now as a result of their past aspirational prayers. These are the points we need to keep in mind by understanding their significance.

The main point here is that it is not sufficient just to have the eight freedoms and ten endowments and the conditions of the four wheels. What we need to do is ensure that they are utilised by practising the Dharma to bring about the ultimate goals we seek. That is the main point. It is presented here that the freedoms, endowments and conditions of the four wheels are extremely difficult to find, so we definitely need to utilise them wisely. You will recall that at the end of the *Guru Puja* there is a dedication, 'May I not be separated from the four

Mahayana wheels'. This is exactly what is being explained here.

The commentary introduces the meaning of this verse with a hypothetical query:

One may think: I will make an effort when I attain the freedoms and endowments later on.

One may become complacent by thinking *I will make an effort when I attain the freedoms and endowments later on*. So, as a way to overcome this sort of apathetic resolution in one's mind, the verse presents:

15. *The coming of a tathagata
Faith and the attainment of a human body—
These, making it possible to meditate on virtue,
Since they are rare, when will they be attained?*

The commentary then reads:

To have attained the five personal endowments and the five circumstantial endowments that make it possible to meditate on virtue, is as rare as the Udumbara flower.

These are, among others:

- A tathagata has descended.
- One has faith in the three baskets of the Buddha's teachings.
- One has also attained a human body.
- One has been reborn in a central country.
- One has complete faculties.
- One has not transgressed the border of karma.

The commentary explains that *a tathagata* (or a buddha) *has descended* relates to one of the endowments. The ten endowments are categorised into five personal or internal endowments, and five that are circumstantial or external endowments. That a Buddha has descended to this earth is an external endowment. It relates to the fact that we are born in a light eon or an illuminated eon, which is at a time when the Buddha has descended to this earth; thus this condition is intact for oneself. There is also the period called a dark eon, which is a time when the Buddha has not descended.

The next line in the verse, *One has faith in the three baskets of the Buddha's teachings* is a personal endowment. The Lam Rim teachings present this in abbreviated form as having faith in the source, which is *having faith in the three baskets of the Buddha's teachings*. It is very rare indeed to have genuine faith in the three baskets of the Buddha's teachings.

The next lines are: *One has also attained a human body and not only has a human body been obtained, but one has been born in a central country*. These are both personal endowments.

The final two lines are: *One has complete faculties* and *One has not transgressed the border of karma* (or extreme actions).

The five personal endowments have been explicitly presented here: one has faith in the Buddha's teachings; one has obtained a human body; one has been reborn in a central country; one has complete faculties and one has not transgressed the border of karma, for example having wrong views about karma is concluding that karma doesn't exist, or that the objects of refuge don't exist and so forth.

Among the five circumstantial endowments 'a tathagata has descended' is presented here. The remaining four

after the Buddha has descended are: the Buddha has taught; the teachings still remain in the world; there are those who are practising the teachings; there are those who are kind and support practitioners.

For us, all these endowments are intact. There is no question we've been born a human; born in a light age when the Buddha has come to this world and taught, and where the Buddha's teachings remain; born in a central country where the Buddha's teachings are taught; and being born with full faculties. Even though we may not have met the actual Buddha Shakyamuni, the teachings are presented to us by great teachers of his direct lineage. As these teachers represent Buddha Shakyamuni, we have received the unbroken lineage of the teachings from the unmistakable masters who are practicing at this time.

The commentary continues:

If this is so rare, then to have attained a precious human rebirth where one trains in the two minds is even rarer.

The *precious human rebirth* refers to one with the endowments, and *where one trains in the two minds* refers to the two minds of bodhicitta. The key point here is that if it is difficult to obtain the endowments, then to actually attain a state where one develops the two minds of bodhicitta is even rarer.

2.2.1.3.2. *Although attaining one, as it disintegrates quickly make an effort*

The next verse is preceded by another hypothetical doubt:

One may think: This body I have currently attained has no obstructing conditions against it and is endowed with conducive conditions. Hence I shall practise later.

This doubt represents the need to contemplate on death and impermanence as a way to show how such doubts and queries occur and obstruct one from utilising one's perfect opportunities.

The verse reads:

16. *A day like this without sickness,
Although there is food and no harm,
Life is deceptive on a momentary basis,
The body is a one-time loan.*

The commentary begins with:

One should not act as if one has leisure.

We need to really consider this point, as we often procrastinate about our practise of Dharma by falling under the illusion that we have time to practise later. When we look at how this thought affects us in what we do now, it leads to mostly non-virtuous activities which incur negativities. One must judge one's own activities. If one finds one is leaving one's practise until later, then what is being done now is activities that will incur negativity. This is the fault of thinking that we have leisure and that we have plenty of time to practise later.

An understanding of death and impermanence definitely relates to this point in that the reason why *one should not act as if one has leisure* is because one's life with the freedoms and endowments could end at any moment and then one's opportunity to practise Dharma would have been completely wasted.

The commentary further explains:

A human body without the obstructing condition of sickness is like a day in the context of saying: 'A day like this'.

The key here is the word 'a day' (or 'a sun' in Tibetan) which means a day without sickness.

The commentary goes on:

But a day like this, without sickness, without the obstructing conditions of harm...

This line refers to factors that oppose one's health or wellbeing, oneself in general, or one's life conditions

...and with the conducive conditions of food and so forth, is deceptive....

This line explains that it is deceptive to maintain the view that one has everything going well for oneself (food etc.) because, as the commentary goes on to explain:

Life does not abide even for one moment and disintegrates quickly. This body is only a one-time loan and one has no power over it.

The point presented here is that our life is being used up on a momentary basis, and it can end at any given moment. Thus one should not fall under the deception that one has time to practise the Dharma later on.

The commentary uses the analogy *that the body is like a one-time loan*. This is a very significant analogy to illustrate the point that our body is indeed like a loan, because we have to give it back—we don't have real power over it; i.e. all the good conditions that we have with this body can end at any moment. Recall using something borrowed: we always know we do not have complete control over the object because it belongs to someone else, and eventually will have to be given back. Also, we cannot use it for as long as we want, or do anything we like with it. Because it is on loan we have to take good care of it and give it back at the appropriate time. Similarly, our bodies are like this. An analogy presented in the thirty-seven practices of a bodhisattva compares our bodies to a guest house with the guest being our consciousness. So just as a guest stays in a guest house for a short time and then moves on, our consciousness comes into this body, remains for a short time and then moves on.

The teaching emphasises that our body is like something which is on loan. If we ask ourselves whether our body belongs to oneself, then technically it does, however we also recognise that we don't have real power or ownership over it because we have to discard it. At the time of death, the consciousness moves on and we have to leave our body behind. The Lam Rim teachings state that since our consciousness will definitely depart from our body, only the Dharma will help us at that time. This is the point to recognise: that it is only the Dharma that will help one at the time of death when our consciousness departs the body. As only the Dharma can help us, we need to try and implement it in our everyday lives to the best of our ability. I have tried to emphasise these points to you, and of course I do this out of great concern and kindness for your well-being. Recognise that you have an opportunity to accrue virtue even in everyday activities such as eating and drinking, by making offerings, by reminding oneself that one is eating for the sake of

benefitting all sentient beings, that one is drinking for the benefit of all sentient beings etc. In this way, whatever activity one does, when one walks, sits, does tasks at work, in short, whatever activity one engages in can be utilised, and incorporated into one's practise so that it becomes a means to accumulate virtue. The practise of Dharma in short is to engage in creating virtue.

The commentary concludes:

Therefore, do not act as if there is time, and make an effort.

2.2.1.4. IF REBORN IN THE LOWER REALMS ONE HAS NO OPPORTUNITY TO GENERATE VIRTUE

Try to embrace what is being presented here and take it to heart. As I remind you again and again, don't lose the opportunity to practise or accumulate merit and virtue in whatever way you can now, when you have the opportunity, because if you were to lose that opportunity, it would be an incredibly great loss. It is hard for us to imagine being reborn in the lower realms (such as an animal) where one would not have the same opportunities again. In comparison to losing wealth, losing the opportunity to practise Dharma is a far greater loss. Recently you might have heard of instances where some very wealthy people, due to certain circumstances, lost their wealth and consequently became depressed, sick and died soon afterwards. All the sickness, the worry and the sadness was caused merely by losing material wealth. Compared to losing the opportunity to practise Dharma, losing material wealth is not really significant at all. Losing material wealth will not cause one to go to the lower realms, but losing the opportunity to practise Dharma is definitely a cause to go to the lower realms and be reborn as something like an animal. Therefore, pay attention to the following points.

Under this heading there are three subdivisions:

2.2.1.4.1. There is no opportunity for virtue in the lower realms

2.2.1.4.2. If one does not strive while in the happy realms one will be confused in the lower realms concerning what is to be practised and abandoned

2.2.1.4.3. It is extremely difficult to be liberated from the lower realms

2.2.1.4.1. There is no opportunity for virtue in the lower realms

The verse is again preceded with a hypothetical query:

It is unsuitable to relax, thinking: I will attain a succession of precious human rebirths, so I will practise later on.

The verse reads:

17. *With behaviour like this
I will not even attain a human body.
If I do not attain a human body
There will be only negativity and no virtue.*

The commentary reads:

Someone like myself, through actions that create negativity and no virtue, will not even attain a human body in the next life.

If I take rebirth in the lower realms, without attaining a human body I will only generate non-virtue and not the slightest amount of virtue, and it will be difficult to be reborn again in the happy realms.

As the commentary indicates we need to take the advice here as personal instruction. When looking into one's own behaviour, *someone like myself*, one is one's own best judge; one knows oneself best. Therefore looking honestly into oneself, if one's actions incur negativity and hardly any virtue *through actions that create negativity and no virtue* then the result is that one *will not even attain a human body in the next life*. This aims to counteract the notion we may have that: 'Oh, if I don't get around to doing well in this life I shouldn't worry too much because in my next life I can continue to practise.' But what does obtaining a human rebirth in the next life depend on - virtue or negativity? If the causes depend on virtue, then the question one needs to ask oneself is, 'Have I accumulated virtue?' Is one actually engaging in virtue now, or is one engaging more in negativity? This is something we have to look into. If, when you look into your actions you find that you are creating virtue and no negativity, then a good rebirth in your next life is guaranteed. But if, after looking into your actions you find you are creating more negativity and hardly any virtue, then, as the commentary states, you will not *even attain a human body in the next life*.

The commentary continues: *If I take rebirth in the lower realms, I will only generate non-virtue and not the slightest amount of virtue, and it will be difficult to be reborn again in the happy realms*. So, if one has found that one's actions are mostly negative, then the result is rebirth in the lower realms. If one were to be born in the lower realms, the opportunity to accrue virtue is almost none. Thus, since it is hardly possible to accrue virtue in the lower realms, it will be extremely difficult to be reborn again in the happy realms such as a human again.

The emphasis here is the importance of ensuring that one engages in virtue and shuns negativity. The cause for a fortunate rebirth in the happy realms is virtue, and the cause for rebirth in the lower, unfortunate realms is non-virtue. To be free from a rebirth in the lower realms, we must shun negativity and adopt virtue. At the time of death we don't disappear and become nothing; there is a continuity. Even those who believe in a creator or God agree that we don't completely disappear or disintegrate at the time of death and that there is continuity. They believe that if one has acted according to God's wishes then one will progress into a good state, and if not, one will go into an unfortunate state. The explanation here is the same: if we have created negativity we will have an unfortunate rebirth, and if we have accumulated virtues we will have a fortunate rebirth. The point is, as we will not disappear and become nothing after our death, we need to take responsibility for ensuring that we have a good rebirth. His Holiness explains that what the Christian faith calls the soul is similar to what we call the 'self'. So even in the Christian faith they say that after death the soul continues.

Again, why is it difficult to be reborn again in the happy realms? Firstly, we can relate to the existence of unfortunate rebirths. So, if we were to be reborn in any of these unfortunate states, such as the hell realms, the hungry ghost realms or the animal realms, we would be completely immersed in suffering. If this occurs there would be hardly any opportunity for virtue to occur in

the mind. Take the example of the animal realm, where we can see that with many, their very existence depends on preying on other animals and consuming their flesh. They must actively go out and kill other living beings for their very survival. If they didn't do that they would not survive. Imagine how much negativity they incur just having to survive by killing other beings. Hence there is hardly any opportunity for animals to accumulate virtues when in the lower realms, which is why it is difficult to go from a lower realm to a higher realm. Note that it is easy to go from a higher rebirth to a lower rebirth—that is very easy! However, ascending from a lower rebirth to a higher rebirth is very difficult.

To summarise the meaning of the text in more practical terms, it is suggesting it is better not to go to a place where you would have much suffering and misery and in which it would be very difficult to accumulate virtue. Rather, wouldn't it be better for you to remain in a happier state where you can accumulate virtue? If you're enjoying some leisure now in this realm, wouldn't it be better to be reborn into such a realm again in the future, rather than having to take rebirth in a state of much suffering? If you agree that you don't want to be reborn in a realm where there is more suffering, and you want to be reborn continuously in happy rebirths, then what you need to do is intentionally avoid creating negativity and proactively accumulate virtue. This is how we need to practise to create the causes for that outcome.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་པོ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

25 March 2014

As usual we can spend some time in meditation.

[meditation]

Now we can generate the motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, to alleviate all their suffering and bring them to ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put it into practice well.

2.2.1. Conscientiously abandoning faults

2.2.1.4. IF REBORN IN THE LOWER REALMS ONE HAS NO OPPORTUNITY TO GENERATE VIRTUE (CONT.)

2.2.1.4.2. If one does not strive while in the happy realms one will be confused in the lower realms concerning what is to be practised and abandoned

We need to consider how fortunate we are to have obtained this perfect human rebirth with its freedoms and endowments. If we were to be reborn in the lower realms we would hardly have any opportunity to engage in virtue, because of the lack of wisdom, and thus no opportunity to create the causes to obtain higher rebirths. So we need to remind ourselves again and again that it is like a miracle and pure chance that we have obtained such good conditions now. When we think about it in great detail we can see how incredibly fortunate we are to have these amazing conditions now, and in that way develop a great sense of joy. It would be extremely foolish to waste the good conditions that we enjoy now!

When we think of our own circumstances we can see how remarkable it is that we have all of these perfect conditions now. In my case it may seem more natural, in that that I was brought up as a Buddhist because of my birth into a Buddhist family. Traditionally, the very first thing Tibetan parents do is bring their child to a revered and respected lama or geshe. This happened in my case and I was given the name Lobsang Dorje. So we could say that the conditions were already there for me to be a Buddhist. Of course there was no choice—it was my destiny to be brought up in that way. As amazing as that is, your situation is even more amazing. Considering your background and so forth, it is really quite amazing for you to have met all of these conditions now.

The main point in considering all of this is that it should encourage us to engage in the practice of Dharma. Having considered how we enjoy these great conditions now, and how they will not come our way again easily, we need to take the initiative to utilise every minute of the day to practise the Dharma.

Newer students seem to find it hard to deal with the explanations of the sufferings. As many of you are already quite familiar with them it might be easier for

you, but it seems to be really difficult for new students to listen to the extensive explanations of sufferings. At his recent teachings in Sera, His Holiness the Dalai Lama commented on the late Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey's great skills in presenting the teachings. Those of you who were there would have heard him say that. Indeed, when Geshe Ngawang Dhargye presented teachings on bodhicitta, the students' minds would naturally become subdued. Apparently there was one occasion when a new student attended a class where Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey was teaching on bodhicitta and the kindness of others. He went into great detail and explained it in a way that made this person really inspired and drawn to the teachings. However, when Geshe-la started to explain the sufferings, it became difficult for this student to take it in, so he started to slowly come out of the teachings. He just didn't want to listen to accounts of suffering.

In 1985 when Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey came to Australia he gave teachings at Atisha Centre. This time there was a lady from Germany who later commented that when she went to the teachings she was really inspired and it was very helpful for her mind. She did, however, confess that when it came to the topic of suffering, it was hard to accept all of it. About three years later she came to see me and confided, 'Those sufferings that Geshe-la was explaining in detail were hard for me to accept then, but later I actually experienced those very sufferings. It was exactly as Geshe-la described them'.

Initially it was hard for her to accept some of descriptions of the sufferings—even the sufferings of the human realm were hard for her to accept. However, later she found from her own experience that they were definitely true. This is an instance of where it might be difficult to fully grasp some aspects of the teachings initially, but because they are the words of truth, they gradually become much clearer due to one's understanding and experiences.

The verse relating to this heading reads:

*18. If, although having the fortune to practice virtue,
I do not create virtue,
Then what am I going to do
When completely confused by the lower realm's sufferings.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

If, although having the fortune to practise virtue, I do not make an effort now to practise virtue, then how am I going to practise when I am in the lower realms?

At that time I am miserable because of continuously experiencing the feeling of suffering of the lower realms, and I am confused concerning what has to be practised and what has to be abandoned. As a result, I cannot practise anything.

Hence I need to make an effort now at this time when I have obtained freedom and endowments.

First of all, the commentary acknowledges that one has the *fortune to practise virtue*. Here we can use ourselves as an example of a fortunate one who is endowed with two types of fortune; the fortune of not being deprived of material necessities, and not being deprived of the conditions for practising the Dharma. I consider one is fortunate if one is endowed with both good external and internal conditions.

The Tibetan term *kal-den*, translated into English as fortunate, has the literal connotation of someone who possesses their share. So if we use that literal meaning from the Tibetan word, then *fortune* can relate to having our share of the perfect conditions to practise the Dharma, as well as having our share of material conditions.

As the commentary explains, *although one does have this fortune to practise virtue*, i.e. the good conditions that enable us to practise virtue, that is not sufficient in itself if *I do not make an effort now to practise virtue*. It is not sufficient to have these good conditions if we don't strive to put them into practice.

Here we need to understand that the emphasis is on the necessity for engaging in the practice of Dharma if we are to be saved from the sufferings. What is being implied here is that the Dharma Jewel is the real protector which needs to be cultivated within oneself. As the *Offering Prayer* reads:

To supreme teacher, the precious Buddha;
To the supreme protector, the precious Dharma;
To the supreme guides, the precious Sangha;
To these Three Jewels, the objects of refuge, I make
this offering.

The Dharma developed within oneself is indeed the real protector, which implies that one is one's own saviour and liberator.

What we really need to consider is how we are our own protector and guide. The person who guides us to fortunate rebirths in the higher realms is none other than ourselves. So we are the ones who need to take the initiative to guide ourselves to a higher rebirth and protect ourselves from lower rebirths. How foolish would it be to practise the reverse, and guide ourselves to the lower realms? Why on earth would you want to work towards an unfortunate rebirth? That wouldn't be wise at all. No-one else but ourselves can guide us to a higher rebirth, so it is up to us to take the initiative. Likewise, no one can lead us, or drag us down to the lower realm but ourselves. We are the ones who must take the initiative to prevent being reborn in the lower realms. Likewise, one cannot ultimately guide others to the higher realms or lead them to the lower realms. The point here is that we have to take personal responsibility for securing good conditions for ourselves in the future.

Thus, in very simple terms, if the finger is to be pointed, it has to be pointed at ourselves; we need to constantly remind ourselves, 'Don't lead yourself down to the lower realms, but lead yourself up to a higher rebirth'. This is the sort of internal dialogue we need to engage in to ensure that we are creating the causes for higher rebirth.

Even though it is not in the Tibetan root text, the commentary poses a rhetorical question: *how am I going to practise when I am in the lower realms?* The point here is that one will not be able to practise in the lower realms, because *at that time I am miserable because of continuously experiencing the feeling of suffering of the lower realms*. There is a Tibetan word here, which has a connotation of intense suffering. The point is that being completely immersed in intense suffering deprives one of the initiative to practise Dharma.

Furthermore, *I am confused concerning what has to be practised and what has to be abandoned. As a result, I cannot practise anything*. The point here is that because one lacks the intelligence or wisdom to be able to know what is virtue, which is to be adopted, and negativity, which is to be abandoned, one cannot engage in practice. How can you abandon what you don't know? These are actually quite pertinent and pointed points. They are a personal instruction that we really need to apply in our everyday thinking. Hence, Gyaltsab Je concludes, *we need to make an effort now when we have obtained the freedoms and endowments*.

It is also then good to complement these points with our understanding of the Lam Rim teachings, which explain the need to practise Dharma, and the need to practise Dharma right now.

2.2.1.4.3. *It is extremely difficult to be liberated from the lower realms*

One might think, 'If I were to go to lower realms, then I would eventually be able to free myself from that'. However, once in the lower realms it is very difficult to leave them.

Again, we need to relate this point to our understanding of the difficulty of finding the freedoms and endowments that we have gained from the Lam Rim teaching. The Lam Rim explains that finding the freedoms and endowments is difficult because accumulating their causes and so forth is extremely difficult.

The relevant verse reads:

19. *One did not generate virtue
And one accumulated negativity easily.
Even for ten million eons
One will not hear even the words 'happy
realm'.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

It is extremely difficult to later obtain the freedoms and endowments because in this life one has not generated any virtue, and accumulated negativity easily, and so one will not even hear the words 'happy realm' for ten million eons.

The essential point here is that it *is extremely difficult to later obtain the freedoms and endowments*. While the explanation in the commentary is quite easy to understand, the main point is that we really need to incorporate it into our minds so that it is a constant source of encouragement. As explained here, the reason why it is extremely difficult to obtain the freedoms and endowments in the future is *because in this life one has not generated any virtue and has accumulated negativities*. If one has not generated any virtue and accumulated negativities, then it is difficult to obtain the freedoms and endowments in the future. Again, we can relate this to the explanations in the Lam Rim, which say that the cause of obtaining the freedoms and endowments is virtue.

If we have not accumulated the causes then naturally we will not be able to experience the result, specifically the result of the freedoms and endowments. If one is reborn in the lower realms then *one will not even hear the words 'happy realms' for ten million eons*. This means that if one were to be reborn in the lower realms then, let alone being able to create the causes for the freedoms and

endowments, one will not even know what the freedoms and endowments are, just like a creature in the depths of the ocean could not be aware of other types of existence. Without even knowing about them, the chances of creating the causes for a happy existence would be very remote, to the point of being virtually impossible. Again, the main point here is to take this as an encouragement to actually practise the Dharma.

To explain this in practical terms, if we wish to obtain a perfect human rebirth with its freedoms and endowments in the next lifetime, then we need to shun negativity and accumulate virtue. We can wish as much as we want, to obtain good conditions and be born as human beings, but if we continuously create negativity and put little or no effort into accumulating virtue, then we are not creating the causes to enjoy these good conditions again in the future. All too often we fall into a state of procrastination thinking, 'Well, even if I don't do too well this time round I will probably obtain a human rebirth again next time and it might be better the next time round. I will do better then'. However, being able to obtain a perfect a human rebirth again in the future is dependent on the causes and conditions that we need to be creating now.

2.2.1.5. WHY IT IS DIFFICULT TO FIND FREEDOMS AND ENDOWMENTS

The relevant verse reads:

20. *For that very reason the Bhagavan taught
That merely becoming human is extremely
difficult,
As it is for a turtle
To put its neck through the yoke floating on the
great ocean.*

Gyaltsab Je begins his explanation of this verse with:

Because it is very difficult to find a happy rebirth from the lower realms, the Bhagavan taught in his perfect scriptures:

Then Gyaltsab Je quotes the *Perfect Sutra*:

Bhikkhus, if all this ground were to become a great ocean on which a yoke with one hole is moved by the wind. And in that ocean if there was a blind turtle that only sticks its neck out of the water once a hundred years.

Bhikkhus, what do you think? Is it easy for the turtle to catch the yoke with its neck? 'Tathagata, it is not so'. The Tathagata replied: Bhikkhus, similarly is it difficult merely to attain a human rebirth.

The commentary then continues

If one does not create virtue and accumulates negativity, then one does not even hear the word 'happy migration'. For that reason, the Bhagavan taught that merely to attain a human rebirth is much more difficult than for the blind turtle that comes up only every hundred years, to stick its neck into the single hole of the yoke floating on the surface of the ocean, being moved here and there by the wind.

Therefore one needs to make an effort to practise virtue when one is in the happy migration.

As the commentary explains, the freedoms and endowments are incredibly difficult to find, and even more so when one is in the lower realms. In the *Perfect Sutra* the Buddha gave a hypothetical example to illustrate the degree of difficulty this entails. We imagine

the whole ground becoming an incredibly vast ocean, and on that the ocean is a single yoke with only one hole in it, and this yoke is constantly moved by the wind. At the bottom of the ocean is a blind turtle, which surfaces only once every hundred years. The likelihood of that blind turtle entering its neck into that single hole of the yoke is very remote indeed.

Then the Buddha asked his disciples, 'What is the likelihood of this happening? Is it easy for a blind turtle to enter its neck into the hole?'. They replied, '*It is not so, it is very difficult*'. This, said the Buddha, is as difficult as attaining *a human rebirth*.

As explained in the teachings, each part of this example is an analogy.

- The blind turtle represents ignorant beings who are ignorant of the wisdom as to what to adopt and what to discard.
- Once every hundred years is an analogy to the fact that it is very rare to be reborn as a human being with all the perfect conditions.
- The turtle surfacing is analogous to being reborn in a higher rebirth.
- The yoke on the surface of the ocean represents the Buddha's teachings.

Just as the likelihood of that blind turtle placing its neck into the yoke is a near impossibility, taking a higher rebirth, with the chance of meeting with the Buddha's teaching is very, very remote. One might be reborn as a human, but in the country or place where his teachings are not available, or where there are no conditions for the Dharma to be taught or practised. So one might be born as human, but without the conditions to practise. From this analogy, we can see how extremely difficult it is to find all these freedoms and endowments intact.

Obtaining the freedoms and endowments of a higher rebirth, with all the perfect conditions, is said to be even more remote than this hypothetical example of the chance of a blind turtle sticking its neck into the hole of the yoke. That is how it explained in the teachings.

Then the commentary on this section concludes with, *Therefore one needs to make an effort to practise virtue when one is in the happy migration.*

2.2.2. Conscientiously meditating on virtue

This section is subdivided into three:

2.2.2.1. It is appropriate to strive in abandoning the infinite negativity accumulated previously

2.2.2.2. Why a single suffering in the lower realm exhausts that karma, but does not exhaust the karma of the lower realm

2.2.2.3. Why it is appropriate to strive in the antidote to negativity

2.2.2.1. IT IS APPROPRIATE TO STRIVE IN ABANDONING THE INFINITE NEGATIVITY ACCUMULATED PREVIOUSLY

This explanation follows on from the earlier explanation that if creating negativity is the cause for one to be born in the lower realm, then it is most appropriate that one strives to purify the infinite non-virtue accumulated previously.

The verse relating to this outline reads:

21. *If one remains in the naraks for eons
Due to one moment of negativity,
Then why even mention that one won't go to
the happy realms
Due to the negativity accumulated in
beginningless samsara?*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

If one has to remain in the hells without respite for eons due to only one moment of anger at a bodhisattva, then what need is there to mention that one will not go to the happy migrations due to the negativity in one's continuum that has been accumulated since beginningless time, and has not been destroyed by an antidote?

One should train in purifying negativity by way of the four powers.

When the commentary says, *If one has to remain in the hells without respite due to only one moment of anger at a bodhisattva*, it is referring to the impact of just one moment of negative karma. This is in contrast to the intense negative karma that is created over a long period in many previous lifetimes. Here, because the object of one's anger is a bodhisattva, a very superior object, the negativity created is a cause leading to the hells without respite, for a long period of time. We can also relate this to the fact that karma multiplies greatly, which is one of the four characteristics of karma. So the main point here is that even a short moment of negative karma such as anger can have heavy negative consequences.

The duration of the cause might only be *a moment of anger at a bodhisattva* but the result is that *one has to remain in hell without respite for eons*. Because of the short duration of the negative deed, one might think, 'Oh, this is a very small negative deed over a short period of time, so the consequences may not be too bad'. However, as explained here, if one were to create negative karma in relation to a supreme object such as a bodhisattva, even if it is of short duration, the consequence is that one will have to experience being born in the hell realms for many eons. Gyaltsab Rinpoche also explains this point very clearly in his other works, where he exhorts us to be mindful and particularly careful not to criticise and be judgemental of others with anger, because we cannot know who is a bodhisattva. So we need to protect ourselves from this grave misdeed lest we end up criticising and becoming angry with a bodhisattva.

The commentary then further explains that if one will remain in hell without respite for eons just from one moment of anger towards a bodhisattva, *then what need is there to mention that one will not go to the happy migrations due to the negativity in one's continuum that has been accumulated since beginningless times and has not been destroyed by an antidote?* As we have been in samsara since beginningless time, we have accumulated infinite negativities in the past. For as long as those negativities are still within our mental continuum, not destroyed by an antidote, there should be no doubt about the possibility of being reborn in the lower realms. The point here is that these negativities that have been accumulated since beginningless time can be destroyed when the antidote is applied. So *one should train in purifying negativity by way of the four powers*.

The four opponent powers were explained previously, and we need to take this advice to heart as a personal instruction. We need to remind ourselves again and again that we need to be constantly mindful of purifying the negativities that we have accumulated in the past by applying the four opponent powers. Then we need to guard ourselves from creating even more negativities. When we adopt this as our practice in our daily life then we will definitely be applying the antidote for overcoming these negativities. If we adopt the reverse of that i.e. keep virtues at bay and embrace the negativities, then the price will be rebirth in the lower realms.

However we also need to be mindful about not becoming disheartened because we have accumulated so much negativity in the past, or the fact that we find ourselves continuously engaging in negativities now, seemingly without control, which is due to our habituation with these negativities. While that prospect may seem quite daunting, we do have the ability to purify negativities. We have the knowledge and we have the means to firstly identify what is negativity, and when we find that we have engaged in some negativities, we have the means to purify them by applying the four opponent powers.

So it is not at all a hopeless situation because we do have that opportunity to purify our negativities. As I have mentioned previously, while an immediate negativity may be the trigger for a purification practice, when we actually engage in that practice it is very important that we also bring to mind any negativity that we have created in the past. In relation to this life we can definitely recall negativities that we had created in the earlier part of the day, last night, last week, last month, last year, and in the earlier part of one's life. By recalling them we can inevitably feel strong regret about accumulating those negativities.

As the teachings mention, when one develops a very strong regret then that suffices to purify a great amount of negativity. The four opponent powers entail being profoundly regretful that yet again one has been compelled to engage in these negativities; taking refuge, as a quick way of applying the antidote; and then resolving not to commit these misdeeds again. If we find that we have created negativity in the morning, we try to purify it by noon. If further on in the day one finds one has again created negativity then, towards the evening one again applies the four opponent powers of developing regret and so forth. In this way, by applying mindfulness we are able to apply the measures of purifying negativities through the four opponent powers, by taking refuge and so forth.

In fact, the practice of purification is, by default, also the optimum means for accumulating merit. So purification practice is incredibly worthwhile. When we conduct ourselves in our daily life by regretting negativities we have created in the past, then that regret will be the impetus to purify these negativities. Likewise, when we think about the virtues we have definitely created, we can rejoice. If we conduct our daily life in this way, rejoicing in good deeds and purifying our negative deeds, then we will secure a meaningful life. As we purify negative karma and engage in these practices the mind naturally becomes happier and happier, and there will naturally be

more joy in one's mind. That is a practical positive result of the purification practice.

A Dharma practitioner is one who, based on their understanding of karma, understands that virtue results in happiness and non-virtue results in unhappiness. Based on that simple principle, if we find that we have created some non-virtue, then, because we don't want to experience the result, which is unhappiness and suffering, we can take the initiative to purify those accumulated negativities. And then, in every possible way, we try to adopt a virtuous mind, and engage in virtuous deeds, because we wish to experience the positive result of happiness. When we conduct ourselves in that way then that constitutes a real Dharma practitioner.

Put simply, when we apply the purification practice with the four opponent powers then that very practice becomes the means to block the passage or doorway to the lower realms. And then, as when we engage in virtues and accumulate merit it opens the doorway or passage to a higher rebirth.

There are only two doorways and it is up to us to choose which one we want to enter. We have no other choice but these two doorways, so we need to make the right choice.

2.2.2.2. WHY A SINGLE SUFFERING IN THE LOWER REALM EXHAUSTS THAT KARMA, BUT DOES NOT EXHAUST THE KARMA OF THE LOWER REALM

The next verse is explained in the context of overcoming another hypothetical doubt; we might again think, 'If experiencing the sufferings in the lower realms will exhaust one's karma to be in the lower realms, then I will be reborn again in higher realm'. However, by virtue of being in the lower realms one will be continuously creating more causes to remain there, which is why it is not easy to free oneself from the lower realms.

As will be explained, once born in the lower realms one will quite naturally and spontaneously create further negative karmas to remain in the lower realms, continuously propelling one from one unfortunate rebirth to the next. We can avoid that by using our current fortunate rebirth to apply the causes and conditions to be born again in the higher realms. That would be a crucial way to practice, for just experiencing the consequences of one unfortunate rebirth does not mean that the karma to be born in the lower realms will be completely exhausted.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་པའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

1 April 2014

When we recite the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer* at the beginning of any practice, it is really good to reflect on it as an opportunity to generate the optimum motivation for doing the practice. We need to remember that taking refuge is the essential criteria for ensuring that the practice is a Buddhist practice, whilst generating bodhicitta ensures that the practice is a Mahayana practice.

It seems that every religion has its own form of refuge prayer that is recited at the beginning of every ceremony.

So, based on the motivation we have generated during the recitation of the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, we can now engage in our meditation practice.

[meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teaching, and put it into practice well.

2.2.2.2. WHY A SINGLE SUFFERING IN THE LOWER REALM EXHAUSTS THAT KARMA, BUT DOES NOT EXHAUST THE KARMA OF THE LOWER REALM

Gyaltsab Je begins his commentary on this section of the text with this query:

One may think: It is not difficult to become liberated from the lower realms because after the result is exhausted I will take rebirth in the happy migration.

This query is yet another excuse to procrastinate in one's Dharma practice, where one thinks, 'If I were to be reborn in the lower realms, then when that karma is used up I will be able to take a higher rebirth, and I'll be able to achieve liberation then'. This thinking is based on the fact that the karma to be reborn in the lower realms occurs as a result of previous karma, and that karma exhausts itself. Reasoning that rebirth in the lower realms means using up negative karma, thus leaving it possible to be able to take rebirth in the higher realms sooner rather than later, and then achieve liberation, can lead to laziness and procrastination about practising the Dharma.

The verse relating to this outline reads:

22. *Only through the mere experience
One will not be liberated, because
During the experience
One generates other negativities.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

A person will not be liberated from the lower realms merely through experiencing the result of only one negative action, because while one is experiencing the suffering result of previous karma one adventitiously

creates other negativity that brings forth powerful suffering.

As explained here, merely experiencing the results of previously created negative karma does not mean one will be *liberated from the lower realms*. The commentary further explains that *while one is experiencing the suffering result of previous karma, one adventitiously creates other negativity that brings forth powerful suffering*. In addition to experiencing the sufferings of the lower realms, the conditions there are a cause to repeatedly create even more negative karma, which brings about even more suffering. Here we can use the example of the animal realm, a lower realm with which we are very familiar. We can see that most animals have to constantly engage in negative actions for their very survival. They cannot recognise their actions as negativity, let alone know that they can be purified. Due to their state of ignorance they have no knowledge of the ways to create virtue, or to shun negativity. Even we humans, who do have that intelligence and knowledge, find it difficult to avoid negativity and adopt virtue. Animals have no such choice.

The personal instruction here is that being reborn in the lower realms will be a perpetual cause for creating further negative karma, and thus continuous rebirth in the lower realms over a long period of time. To avoid that situation we need to use the good conditions we have now to avoid the negative causes that will lead to rebirth in a lower realm, and adopt the positive causes or virtue that will ensure that we have a good rebirth. Then we can continuously go from one fortunate rebirth to the next, continuously engaging in creating virtue and merit until we reach the ultimate goal. Just as the result of previous negative karma is to be reborn in the lower realms, rebirth in the fortunate realms is definitely the result of positive, virtuous karma.

Since we have now achieved that fortunate rebirth, we need to ensure that we do not use up our positive karma. Just as the karma of lower realms can be exhausted, our karma in the fortunate realms can also be used up. If we don't seize the opportunity to create further virtuous karma, then there is no other possibility than a lower rebirth. Then the situation of repeatedly creating negative karma will befall us. Therefore, we need to really understand that we are responsible for our own future, and whether we have a fortunate rebirth or an unfortunate rebirth lies entirely within our own hands. So we need to take the initiative if we are to achieve our goal.

On a personal level, the advice here is that we should not relate being reborn in lower realms to external circumstances, i.e. as only happening to others. Rather, we need to personalise this advice and keep in mind the fact that it relates to oneself. So, one needs to be thinking, 'If I were reborn in the lower realms then it will be extremely difficult for me to escape from that'. That will be an impetus to really take this advice to heart for the need to practise the Dharma.

Then Gyaltsab Je concludes his commentary on the verse:

On the basis of the lower realms, virtue is weak and negativity is continuously accumulated. Therefore one should strive to stop the cause of the lower realms.

Here Gyaltsab Je is re-emphasising Shantideva's advice. If one were to be reborn in the lower realms there will be hardly any opportunity to accumulate virtue, because the conditions for accumulating virtue are very minimal. Furthermore, because of the conditions in the lower realms we would be continuously creating negativity. We see the truth of this when we look at the animal realm. What opportunities do they have to accumulate virtue? We might help a pet to create some virtue by taking them around a holy object like a stupa, or say some mantras, but apart from that they don't have any opportunity to willingly create virtue. When we think about the prospect of having to experience those kinds of conditions ourselves, we will see why we need to *strive to stop the cause of the lower realms*. We need to take this as a personal instruction to constantly remind ourselves, 'Be careful, be careful. Now that I have these good conditions I have to use them wisely and not waste them'.

The crux of the advice is in the words *the cause of the lower realms*—we need to reflect on the causes for rebirth in the lower realms. Here we consider the ten non-virtues. Killing, such as taking the life of another being, is a cause for the lower realms; taking what belongs to another is a cause for the lower realms; and engaging in sexual misconduct is a cause for the lower realms. We need to take note here that sexual misconduct applies to lay people, who don't have the vow of celibacy.

We can see here how kind and skilful the Buddha was in his advice on accumulating virtue and abandoning non-virtue. It would be extremely difficult for lay people to completely abstain from sexual activity, so here the advice is to abstain from sexual misconduct. If one wishes to practise on a higher level one can take the self-liberation vows of an ordained monk or nun, which include the vow to completely abstain from sexual activity, i.e. the vow of celibacy. So the Buddha meticulously presented many opportunities for engaging in virtue and abstaining from negativity on various different levels, in accordance with the capacity of his followers.

Further causes for rebirth in the lower realms are lying, slander, harsh words, idle gossip, covetousness, ill will and wrong view. Engaging in these non-virtues is a cause to be reborn in the lower realms, whereas willingly abandoning the ten non-virtues and thus adopting the ten virtues is the cause for a fortunate rebirth. None of these ten virtues are beyond our capacity. We can all abstain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and so forth, while engaging in virtuous deeds such as protecting the life of others, practicing generosity and so forth.

Here we need to engage in a personal dialogue. 'If you have the choice, would you rather go to the lower realms or take a fortunate rebirth in the next lifetime?' The natural answer should be, 'I definitely want to have a fortunate rebirth'. 'So, if you want to have a fortunate rebirth and avoid an unfortunate one, then you need to create the causes for it. If you just lie back and do nothing, then how could you possibly create the causes for a fortunate rebirth?' Reprimanding oneself with a personal dialogue like this is a good method to encourage oneself to accumulate virtue. It is in this way that we gradually develop more faith in the Dharma and an

aspiration to engage in the practice. Adopting a life of accumulating virtue and shunning negativity will gradually become more stable for the sublime Dharma to take root in one's life.

As I mentioned previously, while we acknowledge that we should avoid negativity and adopt virtue, we may still find ourselves uncontrollably engaging in non-virtues. You might find yourself (accidentally or intentionally) taking the life of another sentient being, or taking something without permission, or engaging in sexual misconduct. These things may occur from time to time because we are habituated to them. With a proper understanding of the Dharma that should not become a cause for despondency and feeling that things are hopeless. Rather you should remind yourselves again and again of the teaching that purification is a powerful means to purify negative karma.

When you remember that you can purify negative karma, then the great privilege of understanding the Dharma means that you will be able to apply the antidote to any negativity immediately. When you find you have created some negativity, rather than feeling hopeless and depressed, and thinking, 'Oh, I have created so much negativity I am definitely going to the lower realms. There is no hope for me anymore', one should immediately remember, 'OK, I have created some negativity but negativity can be purified'. That is why the kind Buddha presented us with the means for purification. The first part of purification is feeling regret, and based on regret one applies the appropriate antidotes.

By taking the Dharma to heart in this way, when you do find yourselves unwillingly creating some negativity out of habituation, you can rest assured that you can still purify that negative karma; that will prevent rebirth in the lower realms. We need to also use that as a reminder to ensure that we are creating the causes for a fortunate rebirth.

This is how we need to apply ourselves if we want to take the Dharma practice to heart. If one thinks, 'Oh, I don't care anymore' then one has definitely fallen victim to one's own negativity; one will not purify negativities because one does not care about it. In fact, one may even start to feel joyful about creating negativity and regretful about creating virtue. When we think about it we will see how, even though we have this incredible, fortunate rebirth with the freedoms and endowments intact, somehow there are times when we regret not having been able to create some negativity, and feel hesitant about opportunities to create virtue. Feeling glad that we have had the opportunity to create non-virtue and sad that we have missed an opportunity to create non-virtue or negativity would be a really pitiful situation, to say the least, given the great conditions we have now.

In summary, the main point to consider is that we definitely have the capacity to obtain a fortunate rebirth in the next lifetime. The causes to obtain such a fortunate rebirth, as well as taking another fortunate rebirth from a higher rebirth are not difficult or obscure. What is difficult, is obtaining a higher rebirth from the lower realms. Thus, we must take matters into our own hands. There is no-one who puts us into a lower rebirth but

ourselves. Likewise, no-one else can obstruct us from taking a fortunate rebirth except ourselves. Who creates the causes for a fortunate rebirth? Again, it is none other than ourselves. The causes definitely lie within our hands as we have the capacity and we have the means. The main thing to consider is that this explanation is a way to encourage us to use these good conditions we have now to create the appropriate causes for a good rebirth.

In simple terms, Shantideva is saying, 'You have the full capacity and the appropriate conditions to create the causes for a fortunate rebirth. If you go to the lower realms it will be very difficult freeing yourself from that. Now, when you have those good conditions to create a cause for a fortunate rebirth, is the time to create those causes'. These incredible conditions that we all possess right now are such that we can create extensive merit even in just a second. As you would have heard many times, if an ordinary person generates the mind of bodhicitta, even for just a second, the amount of merit they accumulate would be difficult for all the buddhas to articulate.

2.2.2.3. WHY IT IS APPROPRIATE TO STRIVE IN THE ANTIDOTE TO NEGATIVITY

We can relate this section to Nagarjuna's definitions of negativity and non-virtue, which have been explained in past teachings. Nagarjuna defined negativity as that which is an onset to rebirth into the lower realms, whereas non-virtue is defined as that which is shunned by the noble ones. Here Nagarjuna is making a distinction that is very pertinent to this outline.

This outline is subdivided into four:

2.2.2.3.1. If one does not strive in virtue upon having obtained the freedoms and endowments, then one is deceiving oneself

2.2.2.3.2. One will experience suffering in this life

2.2.2.3.3. Later one will be tormented by the sufferings of the lower realms

2.2.2.3.4. Why it is appropriate to abandon negativity and practise virtue

2.2.2.3.1. If one does not strive in virtue upon having obtained the freedoms and endowments, then one is deceiving oneself

The point here is that no-one is depriving us of this opportunity to create virtue but ourselves.

The relevant verse reads:

23. *If, upon having found this freedom,
I do not meditate on virtue,
Then there is no greater deception,
There is no greater ignorance.*

With respect to this verse Gyaltshab Je's commentary reads:

Having found this freedom which is difficult to find, and when found has great meaning, if I do not strive in and meditate on the cause for higher status and liberation, then there is no better method of self-deception.

There is also no greater ignorance than the ignorance concerning what has to be practised and what has to be abandoned.

The commentary gives a very clear explanation of the verse. *Having found this freedom which is difficult to find*

refers to the freedoms and endowments that we enjoy now. We had to create many virtuous causes in the past to obtain these great conditions, and having found this life *there is great meaning* refers to the great capacity one has to obtain the causes for one's future goals.

This not talking about goals like finding the necessities for survival. Rather, it is referring to the great potential we have to obtain the causes for a fortunate rebirth. Based on the conditions we have now, we have the full capacity and means to avoid the ten non-virtues and to engage in the ten virtues. That then becomes the cause for a fortunate rebirth in the next life. Furthermore, on the basis of the conditions we have now, we have the full capacity and potential to generate renunciation, which becomes a cause to obtain liberation, becoming free from rebirth in cyclic existence. And finally, with these conditions we also have the full capacity to generate bodhicitta and gain the realisation of emptiness, which are the causes to obtain the ultimate goal of enlightenment.

Because we have these freedoms and endowments we can create the causes for these three goals. So, *if I do not strive in, and meditate on, the cause for higher status and liberation, which includes enlightenment, then there is no better method of self-deception.* As I have mentioned previously, if we do not utilise the good conditions we have now, and just focus on our survival and worldly concerns, then that would be a great deception. Indeed, the greatest deception is to waste this incredible opportunity and potential we have to obtain these supreme goals. Furthermore, there is no greater ignorance than to be ignorant of what is to be adopted and practised, and what is to be abandoned. So we are being encouraged to use these great conditions to ensure that we do not fall victim to self-deception, and apply these good conditions to creating the causes to obtain our goals. While it is easy to understand what is being explained here, we need to take it to heart and really try to implement it in our daily life and practice.

2.2.2.3.2. One will experience suffering in this life

The verse relating

24. *Should I, after having understood this,
Still be indolent due to ignorance,
When the time to die comes
Great misery will arise.*

Here Gyaltshab Je's commentary reads,

Should I, after having realised that I have to strive in achieving virtue and abandoning negativity, still be indolent with regard to the mind of enlightenment, the practice of the perfections and so on, then at the time of death, when I know I am going to the lower realms, great misery will arise. Therefore I should strive with great effort.

The meaning of the commentary is quite clear. The significant point is that when, if one has realised that one must adopt virtue and abandon negativity but disregards this and continues to engage in frivolous activities, or if one has not adopted the mind of bodhicitta, not practising the perfections such as generosity and so forth, then at the time of death one will generate great sorrow and misery. Realising at that time, when one reflects upon one's life, that negativity is the cause for rebirth in

the lower realms, and that one has mostly engaged in negativity and not accumulated virtue, one will be tormented and have great regret in one's mind.

It is a fact that when people are in the last stages of death appearances occur to them that are linked to what they have done in their life. Some appearances cause them real joy because they have accumulated virtues. However, for those who recognise they've mostly engaged in negativity, the appearances bring great fear and unease in their minds. This definitely occurs. Here in the west, dying people who are in pain are often sedated with morphine which seems to numb their mind and senses, so even if they have some experience of these appearances they may not be able to express it. However, when body and senses are not numbed there are clear signs of anxiety at the time of death from those with strong regret.

For yourself, the advice here is *to strive with great effort*. By bringing to mind the great misery that will occur at the time of death, and wanting to avoid it, one will create the causes for a fortunate rebirth. One needs to apply great effort to adopt virtues and refrain from negativities. The crucial point is realising that one has to strive to adopt virtue and abstain from negativity. If one does not apply the practice, one becomes complacent. There is a Tibetan term describing this which has the connotation of becoming immune or desensitised to the Dharma. This is a very dangerous situation to be in, and one to avoid, so take it to heart and apply the practice of Dharma sincerely now.

The teachings explain that great practitioners have only joy in going onwards at the time of death. A medium-level practitioner has no hesitation in facing death and the lowest-level practitioner will not have any regrets in their mind. Thus, one needs to ensure that at the very least, one can prevent strong regret arising at the time of death. It would be a good achievement to know one has done one's best to adopt virtues and purify negativities, and that there is no need for regret at the time of death. It is important to ensure that we practise the Dharma wholeheartedly now, when we have the opportunity.

We can see how Nagarjuna's definition of negativity, which is that it is the onset to rebirth in the lower realms, is very relevant here. This means that creating negativity is like being in the state that is one step away from the lower realms. For individuals who have created a lot of negativity, there will be fear, anxiety and sorrow at the time of death, due to the prospect of what will come next. In relation to that, we can see that Nagarjuna's precise definition of negativity is very pertinent. Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti were great masters. His Holiness mentioned recently that Lama Tsong Khapa clearly matched their attributes and their capacity for reasoning and discernment. In both ancient and modern times there are hardly any other masters who equal them. As their explanations and advices are extremely clear and precise, we really need to take heed of them.

The first Dalai Lama said that the real enemies to overcome are the delusions, and these lie within oneself. Take this advice to heart and recognise that the real enemy lies within; as such, the delusions are the main culprit that cause all the turmoil and harm for oneself.

Recognising this means that we need to protect ourselves from the intensity of the negativities. It might be difficult for us to completely prevent negative states of mind such as anger, jealousy or attachment from arising occasionally, but while they are difficult to prevent, we can stop them from escalating. We can stop anger becoming intense anger such as hatred; we can stop intense jealousy that harms our mind and causes harm to others, and we can stop attachment from becoming obsessed with the object.

We have the means to overcome strong emotions, so we can apply antidotes to anger etc. But if one doesn't apply them and holds onto the anger, one is then befriending anger. Again, with attachment, if, rather than applying the antidote, one actually befriends attachment, one makes oneself a slave to attachment, listening to whatever attachment (or anger) says. One might find it hard to listen to the advice of one's gurus, but when it comes to listening to our anger and our attachment we have no hesitation. We become completely submissive to our attachment, anger and ignorance and allow them to be our masters, who we willingly serve. In summary, the delusions, which are the real cause of harm and destruction, lie nowhere else but within oneself, so we need to recognise and overcome this.

Although it will be explained further in the text, I want you to prepare yourself now and to familiarise yourself with identifying the delusions, particularly the six root delusions and the 20 secondary delusions.

2.2.2.3.3. Later one will be tormented by the sufferings of the lower realms

In case one feels that one could enjoy oneself in the lower realms, what is being explained here is that one will be tormented by the sufferings of the lower realms.

The next verse in the outline reads:

25. *When my body is burned by
The difficult to bear fires of hell for a long time,
The fire of terrible regret will light up,
And the mind will be despondent, this is
certain.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains :

Through the faults of degenerating the mind of enlightenment and so forth one will take rebirth in the lower realms. When then the difficult to bear fires of hell burn my body for a long time, the fire of terrible regret will light up and my mind will be tormented. Since this is certain, make an effort to not incur any faults and downfalls.

The commentary explains here that the fault of allowing the mind of enlightenment or bodhicitta to degenerate is one of the heaviest of the downfalls. Previously, this was explained extensively. What is being explained here again is that *through the faults of degenerating the mind of enlightenment, one will take rebirth in the lower realm*. If one were to be born in a hell realm, such as the hot hell realm, one's body and fire become inseparable, and it is as if one's body and the fire is of one entity. So in that kind of situation, how could one even imagine that one's mind will not be tormented; there is no question about how much unceasing torment one would experience in both body and mind. The commentary explains here that this

outcome is certain and that such consequences definitely have to be experienced.

What one needs to take to heart now is to make an effort not to incur any faults and downfalls. The main point is that once one takes those pledges of practising, one should ensure that one does not incur faults and downfalls, and that as one has the ability to apply the antidote to negativity, one should do so, as this serves as the means to overcome negativity.

2.2.2.3.4. Why it is appropriate to abandon negativity and practise virtue

Having contemplated the consequences of negativity, what logically follows is that it is appropriate to abandon negativity and practice virtue. So this is again subdivided into two:

2.2.2.3.4.1. Having wasted the freedoms and endowments, if one goes to the lower realms again, then one resembles something mindless

2.2.2.3.4.2. It is appropriate to contemplate the cause of ignorance

2.2.2.3.4.1. Having wasted the freedoms and endowments, if one goes to the lower realms again, then one resembles something mindless

I have elaborated on the fact that if one does not actually put these incredibly good conditions of the freedom and endowments to use, and seize that opportunity to use them optimally to create virtue and abandon negativities, and if one lays back and engages in frivolous worldly activities, then one has wasted those good conditions. Thus, having wasted the freedoms and endowments one goes to the lower realms. It is as if there is no common sense at all. This is what is being reflected here.

The verses under this heading read:

26. *Having found somehow
This extremely difficult to find basis of benefit
If I return to the lower realms later again
Despite having knowledge,*

27ab. *Then, similarly to one confused by mantra,
This makes me someone without mind.*

Here, Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

This basis of benefit, the precious human rebirth with freedoms and endowments, is extremely difficult to find and, if found, is of great purpose.

Having found it somehow by chance, should I again go to the lower realms despite having knowledge of what is useful and what is harmful, then that makes me someone without a mind achieving just the purpose of the moment for self, similarly to a person confused by mantra.

The commentary explains here that the basis of benefit is *the precious human rebirth with freedoms and endowments*, and that this *is extremely difficult to find*. Reflect back on the explanations given in the Lam Rim teachings about why it is difficult to find the freedoms and endowments, where three reasons are given: the causes are difficult to accumulate; explaining with an analogy why it is difficult; and because of the number of precious human rebirths being minimal in comparison to the numbers of living beings in other realms.

As mentioned in the commentary, having *found this precious human rebirth is of great purpose*. As explained

previously, the great purpose is to achieve one's temporary and ultimate goals, and one can achieve all this having found, as if by chance, this precious human rebirth with freedoms and endowments. So, if one were to go back again to the lower realms, *despite* having known *what is useful and what is harmful, makes me someone without a mind*. This means that it is as if one does not have a rational mind that knows what is good and beneficial and what is harmful to oneself.

Achieving just the purpose on the moment for oneself, refers to being completely immersed in temporary gratification and goals, rather than thinking about virtuous actions, and the necessity for long-term achievements. The analogy for being mindless is that it is similar to a person who is under the spell of a mantra of another person. They would be completely confused, and do things that are completely irrational, because they are completely dominated or influenced by the spell of the mantra. Thus, wasting one's perfect opportunities now with its freedoms and endowments would be similar to one who is mindless (lacking any common sense), like being under the spell of a mantra.

2.2.2.3.4.2. It is appropriate to contemplate the cause of ignorance

In presenting the meaning of the next two lines of verse, Gyaltsab Je opens his commentary with a query:

Query: How did one become confused?

Then as a response to that query the two lines of verse read:

*27cd. I do not know how I got so confused
What is lurking inside of me?*

Then the commentary explains:

Answer: I also do not know due to which cause I got confused and thus deceived. What cause for confusion is lurking inside me? I think there definitely is something.

If one falls into laziness, then one should think in this way.

What is again being reflected upon here is that even though we have all the good conditions such as the eight freedoms and ten endowments, and the knowledge and understanding of what is to be adopted and what is to be shunned, one still finds that one is not taking full opportunity and wastes the opportunities with frivolous worldly activities that focus on oneself. 'What could be causing that? There must definitely be something inside of me that is causing that confusion. What could it be?' This is a means of recognising that it is the delusions within oneself that are causing the confusion.

This introduces the next verse which refers to *my enemies of anger, craving and so forth*.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Adair Bunnett and Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett and Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe*

Edited version
© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་བ་ལ་འཇུག་བ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

8 April 2014

Based on the motivation we have just generated we can engage in the practice of meditation. [meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to become enlightened myself, and so for that purpose I will engage in the teaching, and put it into practice well.

The *tong len* meditation practice that we have just attempted to do is, of course, the basis for developing love and compassion, which is the core practice of Buddhism. We cannot possibly assume that we are engaging in any real practice if we leave this essential element aside.

This is in line with an understanding of what it means to be a practising Buddhist. A practising Buddhist is someone who, based on the teachings on non-violence that the Buddha gave, wholeheartedly entrusts themselves to the Three Jewels (the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha), seeing the Buddha as their protector and teacher, and following his teachings. It is essential that we, who consider ourselves Buddhists, know what Buddhadharma encompasses. It would be quite pitiful if, when we are asked what Buddhadharma is, we hesitate in giving an answer. Several years ago at one of the Easter courses, I recall that when Vanessa's younger sister was present and showing interest, I told her to take the question 'What is Buddhadharma?' to her discussion session. When she posed that question, no-one seemed to be able to give a succinct and good answer to it.

It is particularly important that those who present Buddhism to newer students respond to questions with succinct answers that encompass the essential points. As I regularly share with those who present the classes for beginners, you need to prepare yourself not only for the presentation, but also be prepared to answer any questions that are asked.

When classes are advertised as an introduction to Buddhism, people will inevitably ask such questions as 'What is Buddhadharma?' It would not be sufficient to answer, 'It is the practice of abandoning the ten non-virtues such as killing and so forth' because the morality of abandoning killing is common to other traditions as well, such as Christianity and so forth. So we cannot present the practice of abandoning negativities and adopting virtue as being unique to Buddhism.

2.2.2.3.4. Why it is appropriate to abandon negativity and practise virtue

2.2.2.3.4.2. It is appropriate to contemplate the cause of ignorance (cont.)

Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins with a query:

Query: How did one become confused?

Why is it that one is not taking the freedoms and endowments, which enable us to engage in the practice, to heart? Why are they not being utilised to engage in practice?

Something must be causing this confusion and inability to act. As the verse states:

*27cd. I do not know how I got so confused,
What is lurking inside of me?*

Then Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

Answer: I also do not know due to which cause I got confused and thus deceived. What cause for confusion is lurking inside me? I think there definitely is something.

If one falls into laziness, then one should think in this way.

The hypothetical query at the beginning is presented as a way to really look into the main culprit that is causing one to not adopt the practices. As the commentary states, *I also do not know due to which cause I got confused and thus deceived. What cause for confusion is lurking inside me? I think there definitely is something.* Presenting this point in the form of a personal dialogue brings to light the fact that, although we see the value of observing morality, and engaging in the practices of listening, contemplating and meditating, and have the inclination to practice, there seems to be something that is preventing us from really embracing that practice on a continuous basis. So what is it that is preventing us from practising?

We need to take particular note that this presentation is suggesting that we undertake a personal investigation. The very words *what cause for confusion is lurking inside me* indicates that there is definitely something lurking within that is the cause of our procrastination and hesitation about practising. So, as suggested here, we need to take the measure of checking within to identify the main cause of the confusion that causes the hesitation, laziness and so forth. Then, as emphasised here, lest *one falls into laziness* and becomes complacent, *one should be thinking in this way*, again and again, about how there is something within that is causing such confusion.

Then the text presents the causes of that confusion.

2.2.3. Conscientiously abandoning the afflictions

This heading implies that having identified the afflictions, one needs to apply conscientiousness and joyful effort as a way to abandon the afflictions.

This section of the text has three subdivisions:

2.2.3.1. Contemplating the faults of the afflictions

2.2.3.2. How it is unsuitable to tire of the difficulty of abandoning the afflictions

2.2.3.3. Meditating on joy knowing that if one makes an effort it is possible to abandon the afflictions

2.2.3.1. CONTEMPLATING THE FAULTS OF THE AFFLICTIONS

This has three further subdivisions:

2.2.3.1.1. Contemplating how the afflictions harm oneself

2.2.3.1.2. How it is unsuitable to meditate on patience for the afflictions

2.2.3.1.3. Generating courage to destroy them

2.2.3.1.1. Contemplating how the afflictions harm oneself

This is subdivided into four:

2.2.3.1.1.1. They take away our freedom

2.2.3.1.1.2. They generate boundless suffering

2.2.3.1.1.3. They harm over an infinite amount of time

2.2.3.1.1.4. The reason why it is unsuitable to befriend the afflictions

Following the earlier presentation where the great master Shantideva entreated us to look into ourselves and really contemplate the sources of the confusion that cause all of the aforementioned faults - hesitation about practising, procrastination and so forth - when we genuinely and honestly look within we will be able to identify that it is the afflictions that are the main cause. So, as a way of overcoming them, we need to think about the disadvantages of these afflictions. Shantideva then presents four disadvantages.

2.2.3.1.1.1. They take away our freedom

Once we are dominated by the afflictions, they overpower us and we are completely under their control.

The verse that relates to this heading reads:

28. *The enemies of anger, craving and so forth
Do not have legs, arms and so forth,
They are neither brave nor wise,
How did they make me like their slave?*

We need to see this presentation as being related to our own circumstances, right now, and not just as some dry hypothetical presentation. While we are easily able to acknowledge the very good conditions that we enjoy now, we also need to identify what prevents us from fully utilising our potential, and taking full advantage of these conditions. It is not sufficient to look within once or twice, but rather we need to implement this in our regular daily practice, investigating our minds again and again.

The more we analyse our own state of mind, the clearer it becomes that the afflictions, or delusions, are the real cause of all our faults. It is not immediately apparent to us that anger, for example, is a cause of our faults and our mistakes. When it comes to attachment, it is even more difficult for us to recognise attachment as being a fault. Thus it requires careful analysis again and again, and careful attention to fully identifying and recognising these delusions such as anger, attachment and the like as being the real causes of all our problems. When we take initiative to really personalise this investigation in our contemplations, then that, in itself, becomes a very worthwhile and productive object of meditation.

Gyalsab Je's commentary on the verse reads:

My enemies of anger, craving and so forth, which are contained in the root and associated afflictions, do not have legs, arms or weapons in their hands and they are not very brave with great effort, nor are they wise with skilful means.

How did they take away my freedom and make me their slave?

In order to acknowledge the afflictions as being faults, we need to first identify them. To understand what the afflictions are, the Lam Rim presents them under these headings: identifying the delusions; the stages in which the delusions develop; the causes of delusions and the faults of the delusions. Some Lam Rim texts present the delusions under four headings and some under three, however, the main structure is essentially the same: identifying the delusions, understanding how they are developed, and knowing their causes and their faults.

Here, the identification of the delusions is presented in summary form. In order to abandon the afflictions, they definitely need to be identified. If one doesn't even recognise the afflictions for what they are, then there is no way that one can abandon them. For example, if one doesn't acknowledge anger as an affliction then there is no way one

will take the initiative to abandon anger; it is the same with attachment and so forth. One will be able to recognise anger as a faulty state of mind when it is clearly identified as a delusion that is not based on reality, but on a faulty perception, and thus has no sound basis. Then the initiative to abandon this affliction can be strongly generated and one will make the effort to abandon anger. It is the same with the rest of the afflictions: first we need to clearly recognise and identify what they are, and then, based on the understanding that they are faulty states of mind, we then take the initiative to abandon them.

The text presents the afflictions identifying two of them, *the enemies of anger, craving and so forth*—which includes all other afflictions in summary form. As explained clearly in the text, the real enemies that hinder our wellbeing are the delusions or afflictions.

As indicated here, these delusions such as anger, craving and so forth are the real enemies, *yet they do not have legs, arms or hold weapons in their hands*. The comparison here is with an enemy that has form, such as a well built, muscular person protected by amour and carrying weapons and so forth. It would be difficult to face such a powerful enemy if we are comparatively smaller in size. However, these afflictions are not like that. As they are not form, they don't have legs, arms or weapons and so forth. Again we can take note of how, as explained in the teachings, it is seemingly easier to practise a bit of patience with a powerful figure because of our sheer incapacity to be able to combat or to fight them. So it is no wonder that we show a bit more tolerance toward someone who is more powerful! But practising patience with someone who is weak and meek and thus much easier to defeat, is much harder. So when one is able to practice patience with such weak beings, it is much more admirable.

Unlike a powerful external enemy, the delusions such as anger and craving and so forth are not equipped with any physical protection or intimidating size. Furthermore, it is not as if these delusions are also *very brave with great effort*, meaning that they are not very persistent. We need to also remind ourselves that one reason why the delusions are not very persistent is that they are aided by another delusion, called laziness. Furthermore, it is not as if these delusions are *wise* and have *skilful means*; in fact, they are not based on sound wisdom or intelligence of any sort. That is because they associate with yet another delusion, which is ignorance.

So if the afflictions do not have any of the aforementioned attributes then *how did they take away my freedom and make me their slave?* This is a significant point, implying, by means of a rhetorical question, that one is essentially enslaved by the afflictions. A powerful master can make his slaves do anything he commands, because the slaves are completely under his control. The slaves have to follow every wish or command of their master, who completely dominates them. Likewise, we are enslaved by our own afflictions. Why else would we do things that we know are not really wise or favourable to our wellbeing? Yet still we find ourselves following the commands of afflictions such as anger and craving and engage in actions that ultimately harms us.

This is a very significant point about why we continue to create negative actions, even though we understand that they are faults, and know the consequences are not favourable. There is no other reason than being dominated by the afflictions that overpower us. It is the same with the faults or misdeeds that others commit. When they see others committing murder or stealing and so forth, some people

comment 'Why is there so much violence in the world? Why are people killing each other?' We need to understand that the reason they engage in the negative actions of killing and so forth is because they are completely dominated by the afflictions. When the afflictions compel them to engage in those actions it is as if they don't have any control over their own actions. Analysing things in this way enables us to understand the real motivator behind the negative actions others commit, and thus becoming more tolerant and compassionate towards them, rather than seeing them only as negative and evil. These are important points to keep in mind.

For as long as the delusions have complete control or dominance over us, we don't have much choice. But if we recognise the afflictions for what they are, then we have a chance of not being influenced by them. About two years ago, Maria's daughter, who was sitting in the very place where Maria is sitting right now, commented that having been introduced to the afflictions and their disadvantages, she came to a point in her meditation where she was able to recognise how those afflictions affected her. Even though this recognition did not prevent the afflictions from arising, she felt that recognising them had definitely helped her to become a little more wary, and helped to reduce their intensity. She said that she had been meditating for about a year and found it had been really helpful for her. She was making a really significant point, and had used a lot of intelligence and understanding to come to that conclusion.

In summary, we need to recognise the delusions for what they are. But if we don't do anything once we have recognised them, then the act of recognising afflictions would be quite pointless. As Shantideva has so very precisely presented here, we do have the potential, and we do have the ability to overcome the afflictions. So it is possible not only to identify the delusions, but to apply the antidotes and overcome them as well. Shantideva is giving us really profound advice: we have these great conditions of the freedoms and endowments, so it is definitely possible for us to overcome and abandon the afflictions.

2.2.3.1.1.2. They generate boundless suffering

Having briefly identified the afflictions, the next section presents their disadvantages.

As I have mentioned many, many times, these are very essential points to keep in mind, because this is a profound practice that can really protect your mind. When seeing others engaging in inappropriate deeds or saying inappropriate things, we need to be able to identify that it is the fault of the delusion, rather than a fault of the person *per se*. That will help to generate a sense of compassion for them rather than agitation and feelings of annoyance and anger. This is a really profound practice that we need to keep in mind. That recognition and understanding in relation to others can only come about when we have fully identified and recognised the delusions within ourselves, and understood how they actually dominate us so that we are then compelled to engage in negative deeds and actions, even though we don't want to. Then, based on our understanding of our own difficulties, we can recognise and apply that to others. It is really important to remember this if we want to maintain a good harmonious relationship with those around us. I have spoken about this many times in the past, and the point cannot be stressed enough.

The following points on the faults or disadvantages of the afflictions will encourage us to really try to overcome the afflictions, and apply the appropriate antidotes. Why should

we want to do that? Because delusions generate boundless suffering and so forth.

The verse relating to this heading is:

29. *While they remain in my mind
They harm me joyfully.
Bearing this patiently without anger,
Is unsuitable and this patience is an object of
criticism*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of the verse in this way:

To practise patience with regard to those that joyfully create the sufferings of the lower realms whilst they abide in my mind is unsuitable. This patience is an object of criticism and one should regard the afflictions as enemies and strive to abandon them.

Having identified and recognised the delusions or afflictions for what they are, it would be inappropriate to patiently and willingly allow them to remain within us, because not only do the delusions that lurk within us cause immense suffering, but they lead us to the extreme *sufferings of the lower realms*. Willingly being patient with these causes of immense suffering is not appropriate. As you would recall, not retaliating to the harms and sufferings inflicted by others is one of the classifications of patience. However, willingly enduring the dominance of the afflictions, rather than ensuring that one overcomes them, is inappropriate.

This patience is an object of criticism indicates that the buddhas and bodhisattvas would take a dim view of such patience, and not regard it as an appropriate type of patience. Being patient with anger would mean allowing anger to arise and infest our minds. Even from a worldly perspective we can all see that wrong deeds, such as killing and so forth, come from none other than the influence of delusions such as anger. Such misdeeds arise from being willingly submissive to anger and following its dictates. Just as we recognise this in others, it is exactly the same for ourselves. Being patient here means becoming submissive and allowing anger or attachment to arise and then following every command they give.

As the commentary explains, *one should regard the afflictions as enemies and strive to abandon them*. This means that as soon as an affliction arises, we need to immediately recognise it as harmful and, rather than willingly becoming submissive and patient with it, apply an antidote to overcome whatever affliction it is.

In order to do that, the commentary further explains:

One should work at understanding the definitions, divisions, causes and functions of the afflictions as they are explained in the *Knowledge Treatises* and mainly meditate on their disadvantages.

The author of the commentary, Gyaltsab Rinpoche, is explaining that one should know the afflictions in detail *and mainly meditate on the disadvantages*, which is the key point. For as long as we don't recognise or contemplate the disadvantages of the afflictions, then the need to overcome or abandon them will not arise. Therefore, contemplating the disadvantages of the afflictions again and again is, as explained here, a key point.

This relates back to that very intelligent and wise comment which I related earlier, about the fact that even just recognising the delusions definitely helped that student to become a little more wary, and helped to reduce their intensity. Recognising the afflictions for what they are definitely helps to minimise their intensity.

As presented in the teachings, the definition of an affliction is, that which causes discomfort and unease in our mind as soon as it is developed. We know this from our own experience; we can see that the moment certain kinds of afflictions are generated, we immediately feel weighed down, uncomfortable and unsettled. The fact that there is this discomfort is the sign that it is an affliction.

There are many people who make comments about how they sometimes, without any apparent reason, feel unsettled, unhappy, or disturbed. If we contemplate the real cause of that, it will be understood that is because of the delusions being prevalent in the mind.

As presented earlier in the commentary, there are six root delusions and twenty associate or secondary delusions.

The Lam Rim teachings present six causes of the delusions.

1. **Basis:** This means having the very seed or imprint of the delusions within one's mental continuum.

2. **Object:** It is very easy to understand that one develops attachment to an attractive object, and aversion or anger towards an unattractive object.

3. **Social context:** This refers to the people with whom you associate, where conversations with them can cause delusions such as attachment, anger and so forth to arise.

4. **Faulty narration:** This refers to faulty treatises and so forth that cause delusions to arise. For example, there are treatises that define sexual positions and so forth, which would cause attachment to arise and manifest themselves within one's mind. Likewise, friends might talk about things that can cause various delusions to arise.

5. **Habituation:** The more one is familiar with a particular delusion, the more likely it is that the delusion will be generated—and we can be affiliated with certain delusions from a very young age. We see people who are intolerant with the most insignificant and minute things, such as feeling strong attachment when they see an attractive object, or feeling angry and great disappointment when things don't go their way, or feeling despondent and so forth. These are delusions that manifest easily due to long-time habituation.

So we need to use our situation now to try to minimise our familiarity with the delusions as much as possible by applying the appropriate antidotes. If we continuously allow ourselves to become more and more familiar with delusions, then that will be the cause for the delusions to become more dominant and increase even more. Therefore we need to utilise our conditions to de-familiarise ourselves with the delusions.

6. **Inappropriate attention:** This refers to paying attention to the objects that cause the delusions to arise. We might see something that looks very attractive. If it is a mere glance and we pay no further attention then it may not cause much attachment to arise, however if we pay further attention to the details of that attractive object, then the more attention we pay to the colour, shape and so forth, the more the attachment will increase. If we take the example of a man being attracted to a woman, then the more the man thinks about her attractive figure, the smoothness of her hair, the complexion of her skin and so forth, the more his attachment will increase, to the point where he is obsessed. Likewise with anger, when one thinks about someone who has inflicted harm upon us, the more we pay attention to what they did; and thinking how they have harmed me in the past, 'They used this kind of measure to harm me', 'They harmed me just the other day, and they will harm me again

in the future'. So in this way the more we pay attention, thinking again and again about how they harm us, the more reasons we find to become angry with them, to the point where anger becomes intense like a burning fire in one's heart. Many of you would have had the experience of paying attention to past memories of particular incidents and so forth, resulting in feeling sad or angry, despondent and so forth. These, in brief, are the six causes of delusions.

This explanation here is in accordance to the knowledge treatises, the *Abhidharma* in which three primary causes for delusions to arise are presented. I have explained this to you several times in the past, and they are very significant points to keep in mind. As presented in the *Abhidharma*, when 1) the delusions are not been abandoned, and 2) one is in close proximity with the objects of delusion, and 3) one applies incorrect attention to those objects, then the causes for the delusions to arise are all intact.

As presented here, for an ordinary being whose afflictions have not been abandoned, even if the delusions are always dormant, even though they are not manifest at present. Thus, the delusions manifest immediately as a result of not having abandoned the delusions, when one is in close proximity to an object that causes delusions to arise coupled with the incorrect attention that one applies whilst perceiving that object. The incorrect or improper attention is a faulty state of mind which taints one's perception to exaggerate the qualities or faults of the objects. So, just recognising a delusion as a fault will help to prevent incorrect attention from overpowering one's perceptions when perceiving any object.

The functions of the afflictions will be presented later on in the text. As I have mentioned previously, it is good for you to be able to identify and understand the six root delusions which are attachment, anger, ignorance, pride, and deluded doubt and wrong views. Wrong views can have a fivefold and a ten-fold classification. Basically there are five wrong views and this becomes ten if you include the five non-views.

The reason the term 'wrong views' is used is that there can also be correct views, such as the view of realising emptiness. Likewise, not all doubts are necessarily afflicted or deluded. There can be some virtuous doubts, so to be included as one of the six root delusions, the doubt must be a deluded or an afflicted doubt. The associated afflictions are belligerence, resentment, concealment, spite and so forth.

As presented in some of the texts I have come across—although not many mention it—the distinction between the root delusions and the associated delusions is that root delusions are generated in many different ways with many different objects whereas secondary delusions are more targeted at specific objects. The associated delusions are described as being closely related to either of the six root delusions¹. When we understand that associate delusions are closely related to one of the six root delusions, we can see how they stem from one of the main root delusions.

It would be good to have a list the six root delusions and the secondary delusions along with the six causes, as such a list is good for those who are not familiar with them. The delusions are clearly explained in the Lam Rim texts and it also good to go to other sources and become more familiar with their explanations.

© Tara Institute

¹ Translator's note: Proximate delusions might be an appropriate term.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་པའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

15 April 2014

Based on the motivation we have generated we can now engage in meditation practice.

[Meditation]

For receiving the teachings, we can generate our motivation along these lines: in order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for this purpose I will listen to this Mahayana teaching, and by studying and understanding it, I will put it into practice well.

2.2.3.1.1.2. They generate boundless suffering (cont.)

The two verses under this heading read as follows:

30. *Even if all the gods and demi gods
Arise against me as enemy,
They are not able to guide me into
The fire without respite.*
31. *This enemy of the powerful afflictions
Throws me in an instant into
Where even the ashes of Mount Meru
Do not remain upon contact.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains these verses.

Even if all the gods and demi gods arise as my enemies, if I do not fall under the control of the mental afflictions, then they are not able to guide and place me into the fire without respite.

But this powerful enemy of the afflictions in my continuum throws me in an instant into the fire without respite, where even the ashes of Mount Meru do not remain upon contact.

Therefore one should strive to destroy the enemy of the afflictions.

The verses explain that the afflictions which are within oneself are extremely powerful, more so than any kind of external enemy or entity. Powerful enemies could include gods, such as Brahma, who is said to be extremely powerful in terms of might and ability; also demigods and their retinues who have extremely powerful means to engage in combat. Even within humans, there are certain individuals known to be very brave and skilled in combat. There are stories of how one human being was capable of killing thousands of people. So there are definitely powerful humans who could be our enemies.

What is being explained here is that even if all of these powerful enemies: gods, demigods and powerful humans, were all combined together and simultaneously rose up as one's enemy, they cannot place one in the hot hell realms, such as the fire without respite. It is, of course a given that if from one's own side one does not allow the afflictions to overpower oneself, then all those powerful external enemies cannot place us in the hell realms from their side.

Note here that if someone were to kill another living being, then just through the act of taking the other's life they are not placing them in the lower realms. Rather through the negative act of killing, they are creating the karma to go to lower realms themselves.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on the next verse begins with, *But this powerful enemy of the afflictions in my continuum.*

The main point one needs to reflect upon here is that the powerful enemy of the afflictions are within one's own mental continuum and it is none other than these internal afflictions that lead one to the lower realms. The main instruction here is that the afflictions are not random categories of phenomena that lie outside of oneself. If one thinks 'Yes there is anger, there is attachment, there are delusions' - relating to them as a mere categorical list, then that doesn't help one to identify the delusions within oneself. Even if one is able to list many afflictions and describe them in detail, if one doesn't recognise the afflictions within oneself, one will not be able to take any initiative to overcome them. The emphasis here is that one must look within one's own mental continuum to identify the delusions within oneself, so that one can take the initiative to overcome them.

As mentioned previously, the first step to overcoming the delusions is to identify them, and then to contemplate the causes and the disadvantages etc. As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains, it is these *afflictions* within one's mental *continuum* that throw me *in an instant into the fire without respite*, which is the hot hell realms. Even Mount Meru, the most grandiose of mountains, will be rendered to ashes upon mere contact with the intensity of the heat in the fire without respite. Thus the consequences of being born in such a place of unimaginable suffering is the result of the afflictions. Here, Gyaltsab Je highlights that one must destroy the enemy of the afflictions.

To take on board what is being explained here, it is by engaging in personal reflection to identify the afflictions or delusions within oneself, recognising their causes and particularly their faults, that one can slowly and gradually take the initiative to overcome them. Even the process of identifying them is a gradual process—the afflictions are not something that we are able to recognise right away.

Of course it is easier to recognise delusions in others! It is easy to identify the faults of someone else's anger, attachment and so forth. However, when it comes to one's own faults of anger and so forth, we always have good excuses thinking, 'I am OK, there is no problem.' If we are not able to identify the anger within oneself, then that is a real problem. Even if one recognises it, but rationalises it, and thinks that there is no problem, then that will prolong the process of taking the initiative to abandon it. So one really needs to take to heart the need to recognise the shortcomings of the afflictions within oneself, and that one's own anger and attachment etc. have been the cause of all of then one's problems.

I am not referring to those of you who don't have any delusions. But for those who are able to identify the delusions within yourself, then you need to take careful consideration in recognising how the delusions affect

your wellbeing. Harboursing the delusions in one's mind causes turmoil and an unsubdued mind.

The very function of a delusion is to make one's mind unsettled and troubled. Therefore if one aspires to achieve a subdued mind, one definitely needs to take the initiative to recognise and really acknowledge the afflictions within oneself, then one can gradually take the initiative to overcome them. We need to take a gradual approach, the afflictions are not something which can be abandoned quickly. Even the study and understanding of them takes time and needs to be a gradual process. We need to ensure that the study and understanding of Dharma becomes integrated with our mind-set, slowly but steadily transforming our minds.

When studying texts which identify the delusions, the main point is not to treat it as a mere list that one goes over, as if they are not related to oneself. Rather we need to use these explanations as way to identify the delusions within oneself. Having identified and clearly seen the faults of the delusions, one can then take the initiative to slowly abandon them. As Dharma practitioners we need to ensure that whatever we do becomes the means to subdue the mind and overcome the delusions. The great Kadampa master Geshe Potawa said that regardless of whether one is engaged in the Dharma or worldly activities, if the activity becomes an antidote for overcoming the delusions, then it has served its purpose well. This is the kind of advice that the great Kadampa masters give; not many words but really to the point.

If one does not ensure that our so-called Dharma practice is an antidote for overcoming delusions, then the very aspect of the Dharma practice can become a worldly concern. This is because one has not protected one's practice to ensure that it overcomes delusions.

The Lam Rim teachings explain that the way to measure one's progress in studying and practising the Dharma is that if one's practices actually help one to gain more and more confidence, and more faith, and one's mind gradually becomes more subdued, then one can feel confident that one's practice is working (whatever form it may take). However if we find that certain practices or study are making one more and more agitated, more and more deluded, and one is losing one's faith in the Dharma, then that is a sign that it is not making a positive effect within oneself.

In relation to developing love and compassion, particularly in the section of how to develop the superior intention, the Great Lam Rim text explains that meditating just once in a while is not sufficient to develop this mind. Rather one must meditate on love and compassion again and again for the superior intention to develop in one's mind. Quoting from another text the Lam Rim uses an analogy to illustrate this point—it would be like attempting to sweeten a big sour tree with just a few drops of a sweetener. If one wishes to transform a sour tree into a sweet one, one needs to put many, many drops of a sweet substance over a long period of time. Then eventually it is possible for a sour tree to actually become sweet. His Holiness the Dalai Lama uses this analogy in his teachings regularly. The delusions within our mind are like a sour taste which is hard to transform into a sweet taste. If one meditates on

love and compassion just once in a while we cannot expect to transform the afflictions in our mind and develop superior intention; we cannot expect a positive outcome from just a few attempts. Rather we need to make a consistent effort in identifying the delusions, seeing their disadvantages, and applying the antidote, whereby we will gradually overcome the delusions within oneself.

It will be good for you to refer to that quotation by reading the section in the Lam Rim that explains how to develop the superior intention. These are important points for us to reflect upon and as way to improve our practice.

We need to consider the fact that we are not deprived of the means—we do know how to engage in Dharma practices. What we need to keep in mind, is that if we leave aside certain practices that we already know how to engage in now, and try to adopt other practices that may well be beyond our reach, then that would be completely missing the mark. It is far more productive to actually implement the practices that we are familiar with now. Lama Tsong Khapa mentions that we do not have the fault of not knowing the practices, but rather we might be incurring the fault of not implementing the practices that we do know. The point is that we need to take the initiative to actually apply the practices with which we are already familiar. Then a gradual but true transformation takes place.

To summarise Shantideva's main points, what he is advising us in simple terms is this:

The trouble maker for all your problems is not something which lies outside, but rather within yourself which are called the afflictions. When you recognise them within yourself, you can then take measures to apply the antidote and abandon them. So, you need to apply effort in doing just that.

If one really uses one's study and practice as a means to combat the real troublemaker within oneself by taking that initiative at the very outset, that motivation can make a tremendous difference in our approach to the study or practice of the Dharma. I am not implying that I have gained great insight or developed realisation from my attempts, but what I can assure you is that I have definitely had a proper motivation from the very outset. Early on when I was studying in the monastery, studying the texts and engaging in the debates, my intention was always, 'When I finish my studies, I definitely want to put what I have learnt into practice by spending time in meditation and doing retreats'. This was definitely my intention. That has not become a reality because I have come to a foreign country to teach instead, so I have not had the opportunities to do long-term retreats. However because the studies were done with that intention, I can definitely say that they have had a positive effect on my mind. What I am sharing here is that if from the very outset one has the proper motivation for doing the studies and practice, then to that extent there will definitely be a positive effect.

2.2.3.1.1.3. They harm over an infinite amount of time

The afflictions are unlike external enemies, which no matter how powerful and mighty they might be, will

eventually disintegrate of their own accord, even without us taking many measures to try to vanquish them. Over time that is what will occur. However with the internal enemy, by leaving delusions as they are they will not just disintegrate by themselves. Even after a long period of time they remain intact. If we don't take any measures to apply the antidotes and just leave them as they are, they can become even more powerful rather than disintegrating.

This point is explained in the following verse:

32. *No other enemy has
Such long term ability
Like the enemy of my afflictions,
With extensive time, without beginning or end.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Another drawback of the afflictions to contemplate:

No other worldly enemy has such an ability to live for a long time like the enemy of my afflictions, who abide for extensive time, without beginning or end.

Since meditating on the antidote to the afflictions only for one session at a time does not do anything, one should strive to have an uninterrupted stream of effort in destroying the afflictions.

As the commentary clearly explains here, *no other worldly enemy has such an ability to live for a long time like the enemy of my afflictions, who abides for extensive time without beginning or end*. Unlike the external enemy which won't live for long, the inner enemy of afflictions abides much longer and harms one to greater extent. The external enemy can give us a certain amount of harm periodically, but because it cannot take us to the lower realms it cannot give us extensive sufferings. However the internal enemy of afflictions is the one that can lead us to the most extreme sort of sufferings.

Following that is, *Since meditating on the antidote to the afflictions only for one session at the time, does not do anything, one should strive to have an uninterrupted stream of effort in destroying the afflictions*. In relation to the earlier analogy, a big sour tree cannot be expected to become sweet by pouring just one drop of sweetener a few times. But if one were to constantly apply sweeteners then there is a possibility to transform it into a sweet tree. Similarly with the afflictions within oneself: we cannot expect to subdue them by meditating on the antidote just once, or periodically, rather we need to constantly apply vigilance over one's state of mind and apply the antidote whenever the afflictions arise. It should not be as if one aims to go out and have a good time outside, and doing one or two meditation sessions when one feels like it. Otherwise one could spend all the time just going around and having a good time. That sort of attitude will not overcome the delusions.

The analogy also shows that *one should strive to have an uninterrupted stream*. The Tibetan word actually refers to a stream of water. In the same way as a small stream of water can be consistent and run for a long period of time, our practice should be like that. Even though we might not be able to apply great measures of practice right away, whatever practice we can apply with uninterrupted effort, continuously will have an effect. Where we have a burst of energy and get excited about a

certain practice, that is something which we need to be a wary of because it may not last too long and might actually cause discouragement afterwards.

2.2.3.1.1.4. The reason why it is unsuitable to befriend the afflictions

This heading explains that one may attempt to befriend external enemies by being kind to them or generous to them, and with this it is possible that they will start to become friendly to us. However with the internal enemy of afflictions, one cannot expect that by befriending the delusions they will not harm us; the more we befriend the delusions, the more powerful they become in harming us. This is explained in the next verse and commentary.

33. *When agreeably and respectfully relied upon
Then everybody acts beneficial and causes
happiness,
But if one relies on the afflictions
They will retaliate and cause harm.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning:

When one relies on the outer enemy after having honoured them agreeably by serving them food, drink and so forth, then they will benefit us and help us to have happiness.

But if we rely on the enemy of the afflictions and act agreeably to them, then they will increase in strength, retaliate and cause us harm. To destroy them is the only method to attain happiness.

I have summarised this earlier, but to reflect again upon the main point. If you relate to an individual external enemy kindly, followed by giving gifts, food and so forth then it is possible that someone who was once disagreeable to one, or who considered you an enemy, can turn around and actually become a friend. With an external enemy, if we keep our distance and show an attitude of antagonism then that will only cause the rift to become bigger and the dislike greater. Then there is no possibility of befriending them. It is a very significant point that if we don't want enemies we should take the initiative ourselves. The great beings will act in ways that show gratitude and repay harm with kindness, whereas ordinary worldly beings will return harm for harm. Returning kindness for harm inflicted upon oneself is an act of a great being who takes the initiative to engage in this way.

Unlike the external enemy, if one acts kindly to the internal enemy of afflictions, as though they are our masters. By saying 'yes' to whatever the delusion wants, bowing down and not doing anything to confront them or combat them from within oneself, they will increase in strength, retaliate and cause us harm. You will notice through your own experience that certain delusions or afflictions act like adding fuel. If we harbour them and keep contemplating on them, the stronger they become. So if you find yourself in a situation now where the delusions are occurring like a stream of water, continuously affecting you one after another, then that is because we have not applied the antidotes previously and we are not making any attempts to apply them now. If we make an attempt to apply the antidote to whatever extent we are able, during the time we apply it, the delusions will actually stop. In this way one can see that it is possible to begin to overcome an otherwise

continuous stream of delusions. If we don't apply the antidotes then the afflictions won't subside naturally by themselves. If destroying the delusions within oneself is the only method to experience genuine happiness and wellbeing, then we have no choice but to apply the antidotes.

2.2.3.1.2. *How it is unsuitable to meditate on patience for the afflictions*

This has two sub-headings

2.2.3.1.2.1. Contemplating how they harm the mind

2.2.3.1.2.2. Contemplating how they harm the body

2.2.3.1.2.1. **Contemplating how they harm the mind**

The root text states:

34. *Therefore, if this continual long time enemy,
The singular cause for the increase of the
accumulation of harm,
Takes up permanent residence in my heart,
How can cyclic existence be fearless and joyful*

The commentary on this verse reads as follows:

Therefore, if this continual long time enemy, who is the singular unrivalled cause for the strong increase of the accumulation of all harm, takes up permanent residence in my heart, then how can cyclic existence be fearless and joyful?

Since there is no chance for happiness, strive in destroying the afflictions.

Gyalsab Je's commentary states that *if this continual long-term enemy* (the afflictions), identified here as *the singular unrivalled cause for the strong increase of the accumulation of all harm, takes up permanent residence in my heart* (meaning that if we don't do anything to overcome the afflictions and therefore maintain them in our heart), then while we abide in *cyclic existence*, how can we be *fearless* and how can we be *joyful*? We need to take this as real personal advice on how to overcome the causes for our own unhappiness. What is being explained here is that the real cause for one's unhappiness, whatever the situation, are the afflictions within one's own mind. So regardless of the external situation, the actual causes of mental agony lie within oneself. If we fail to identify this and constantly try look outside for external causes and so forth, we are completely missing the point.

Harbouring the enemy within, and looking for solutions outside to overcome them will not bring real joy and fearlessness to one's life. Again, one needs to reflect that if we make a genuine attempt to slowly identify the real enemy (the afflictions within) and make genuine attempt to gradually apply the antidote and overcome them, then it is possible for one to gradually experience a real sense of joy regardless of external situations. Wherever one goes, one will be able to maintain some inner sense of tranquillity within one's mind which can definitely have a positive effect upon one's physical body. There are clear signs that a joyful and happy mind can contribute to good health. Take this into considerations for your own benefit.

Practical measures that assist one to develop the inclination to overcome the delusions really rely upon identifying the negative effects the delusions have within oneself. One can reflect upon one's own state of being and ask oneself, 'Would I want to be in a very angry state,

or would I rather be free of anger? Would I like to be feeling completely attached, and upset with attachment or would I rather be in a state free from the pangs of attachment?' Likewise with jealousy, would you like to harbour jealousy in your mind, or would you rather be appeased and not have jealousy? Likewise with pride and so forth. By having an internal dialogue with oneself, and clearly and honestly answering that one would rather be free of these negative states of mind (the afflictions), then knowing there is a means to overcome them, one needs to apply the antidotes.

Equally and naturally we would all like to have mental and physical happiness. There might be other measures presented by other traditions, or even worldly means to gain some happiness, but these may or may not contribute to genuine happiness.

We are in the category of people who look internally to attempt to resolve afflictions to develop genuine mental and physical happiness. To recap, to do this one must identify the causes for mental agony and physical suffering which are the result of afflictions. As we can consider ourselves as beings who look internally to deal with our internal world, we might as well actually make that attempt now and put this understanding into practice. This is how to take this explanation as personal instruction.

We can assume that you coming here is a rare opportunity and you can take pride in yourself for coming here. In a normal worldly situation, after work people might say, 'I have gone to work. I have been busy all day so I am tired now, and I'd just like to lie down and relax and take it easy'. So while many of you have gone to work during the day, and are busy and tired, you have still taken the initiative to come to a teaching here and listened to it. So having sacrificed relaxation time at home don't feel that it is a waste of time. Making an attempt here will definitely have a positive effect and will help overcome hardships and difficulties. On a practical level, if you were to stay home, you may not really have a full opportunity to relax and have a good time anyway. You might get into an argument with your partner, or be annoyed by the children, and not have a very relaxed time at home. So you might as well come here to have a genuine relaxing time.

Some have confided in me that even before they leave work, they already feel anxious about what they have to face at home. Some lament saying, 'I have a headache when I think of what I have to do when I get back home.' I tell them, not to worry about the next job before finishing the first one. This is giving oneself extra worries and agony. Some seem to see going home to cook, and do the washing up, and take care of the children as an extra burden. If one thinks about these as a chore then it does present itself in that way, so try to have a proper attitude. It often seems that causes for conflict and argument are based on who is trying to do what in the household. Indeed the outside work may seem harder and more difficult in comparison to someone who is staying home, but I would think that the work involved with staying at home and cleaning up, looking after children etc. is not easy work either. It is very important to look after the wellbeing of children. For example someone that I know

has a family of three children, and the mum said 'If I have another child I might go crazy' and she related how difficult it was to care for the young one's. I can relate to that.

Again, I acknowledge you coming here to the teachings. I definitely admire it and am happy about it and appreciate that you take the initiative and sacrifice some time to do the study. While that is incredible and such a fortunate occasion for you, what I am attempting to add on to what you learn here, is to encourage you to try to implement it in your life. Try to put the teachings into practice a bit and that will be really worthwhile and beneficial for you. Even though I am not able to practise extensively, as I mentioned earlier, I do feel there is definitely great benefit to be achieved as a result of practice.

In the material you have already studied, for example the previous text *Precious Garland* by Nagarjuna, recall how precise and practical the advice was; one verse after another on how to engage in practice. We went through the extensive explanations according to that text: first of all what causes us to achieve high status, then how to achieve the definite goodness. Prior to that was Aryadeva's *400 Verses* text which explained the path based on the conventional truth as well the ultimate truth, again these were presented very precisely. We have studied these, we have all heard them and we have created a very, very positive imprint in our mind by going through these texts.

Prior to that we studied Chandrakirti's *Madhyamakavatara*, where again explanations of the five paths and ten grounds were very clearly presented.

Having the opportunity to study these texts and reflect upon them is a great fortune. We need to acknowledge that, then and now, as we can still derive benefit from these teachings every time we rejoice, and dedicate the merits of the attempts we have made, to the study and practice. Rejoicing helps to increase the virtue, then we can dedicate the virtue we derive, and benefit from that.

Before this was the teaching *Liberation on the Palm of your Hand*. You indicated that you didn't care how long it took and we actually spent about six years on it. With all this time spent, we were able to go into great detail on this Lam Rim teaching and actually many of you have been able to use it as a basis for presenting and teaching to others. This again is a significant point to recollect as a way to generate joy in one's mind, and to acknowledge the great fortune one has had to be able to study these texts. However one should also make prayers to be able to continuously meet with the conditions to study and practice these teachings, from life to life, in all one's future lifetimes.

Up until now we may all equally assume that we have not had much opportunity to accumulate much external wealth, however we have definitely spent time and energy acquiring some inner wealth. We have obtained something that is indestructible. No matter how much external wealth we might have accumulated, it is not something that we can take with us—not one single dollar can we take with us to our next life. However with the internal wealth of the studies and the practices, and good positive imprints in our mind is something that we

can all confidently take with us to our future life. In making a choice between external wealth and internal wealth, we have made the choice to spend more time and energy acquiring internal wealth. So we have definitely made the right choice.

However, I have also regularly said that we do need external means. While we are making attempts to acquire internal wealth, we also need access to external wealth as for our survival, for ongoing, good conditions for our life. It is a reality that without adequate external conditions we will not be able to practise the Dharma.

I recall when I escaped from Tibet, on the route there were certain occasions where we passed some really beautiful areas, like beautiful valleys. When you looked up there were mountainous regions and I could even detect that there might be a cave up there. On a few occasions I definitely thought, 'Oh how nice if I could just go up to the cave and stay there to meditate. Wouldn't that be wonderful?' And even though there was a strong intention to want to do that, immediately the next thought was 'Who would feed me?' 'How would I get anything up there?' There were no villages around, and it was doubtful whether there would be any natural plants that I could eat. In the winter especially there is hardly anything growing in that remote area, up so high. So that was the practical aspect which prevented an otherwise noble thought of wanting to go into the little cave.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་པོ་འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷོ་ལ་འཇམ་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

6 May 2014

Based on the motivation that we generated during our recitation of the refuge and bodhicitta prayer, we can now engage in the meditation practice. If we ensure our mind is focused on the object of refuge with strong faith, and then generate bodhicitta in relation to all sentient beings, then these two elements will ensure that our practice, even if it is for only a few minutes, will be really meaningful. We need to keep that in mind while engaging in the practice.

[meditation]

As a motivation for receiving the teaching, we can strengthen the earlier bodhicitta motivation by generating this thought:

In order to benefit all sentient beings, to liberate them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching, and put it into practice well.

2.2.3.1.2. How it is unsuitable to meditate on patience for the afflictions

2.2.3.1.2.1. Contemplating how they harm the mind (cont.)

In the text we are up to the section that explains the faults of afflictions and so forth. Rather than treating it as some intellectual understanding, we need to really pay careful attention to these explanations and relate them to our own mental continuum. In this way we will ensure that what we understand from these teachings serves its purpose, which is to reduce the afflictions in one's own mind. Conversely, if our study of the teachings serves to increase afflictions, then it completely defeats the purpose of our study.

We need to pay careful attention to our state of mind, so that our study does not increase the afflictions in our mind, specifically the delusion of pride. If, having understood some points in the teachings, we start to feel pompous, thinking, 'Oh, now I have much better understanding and knowledge of the Dharma than others' and develop a puffed-up superior attitude, then our study has increased the delusion of pride.

Initially when we didn't have much understanding of the Dharma we might not have had much pride in relation to the teaching. But when we gain some understanding then a newly formed pride may arise. It is not that there was no pride to begin with, as the basis of pride is always there. Here we are referring to the pride in thinking, 'Now I have some understanding of the Dharma, I know it better than others'. That is a newly formed pride which comes about as a result of having studied the Dharma.

Likewise, one may not initially have much jealousy in relation to others who are studying the Dharma. In the beginning one didn't have much knowledge of the Dharma, but as one begins to study and gain some knowledge, then that is when a sense of jealousy may arise in relation to others who are also studying and trying to practise the Dharma. Likewise, a sense of competition may arise. This is the classic example of where the Dharma has been completely misused and turned into a poison. Now, of course that doesn't mean that the Dharma itself turns into poison, because the essence of Dharma can never turn into poison. But if the Dharma is completely misused, then it actually becomes a cause for afflictions to increase. In this case, rather than serving as medicine to subdue the mind the Dharma becomes a means to further escalate the poisons in the mind.

These are really important points we need to take into consideration so that whatever study, understanding and practice one has in the Dharma does not become a further means to strengthen the afflictions. That would defeat the whole purpose of studying and practising the Dharma, which would be a disgrace. In sharing this point with you I am not implying that I'm skilled in Dharma practice myself, however I really do feel that these are important points that we need to keep in mind. I share this with you out of a genuine concern for you and your Dharma practice, so that your attempts to study and understand the Dharma do not go astray, and that the Dharma actually fulfils its intended purpose.

It is when the Dharma nourishes the afflictions in the mind rather than benefiting the mind that followers of a tradition will start to squabble and come into conflict. That is a mark of real degeneration. It is not the fault of the Dharma or the religion, but it is the fault of those who follow the religion or the Dharma having not utilised the teachings to really subdue their minds. When that happens amongst the followers of any particular religion or tradition it becomes a disgrace to the religion itself.

It is really important that we relate the faults of the delusions to our own mind and not use them as a means to judge others. The faults of the delusions that are described in the teachings should relate to one's own state of mind. If one is not careful, situations such as those that have occurred in our very own study group can arise. Several times in the past people have brought to my attention that some students who were quite new to the study group had a sense that they were being looked down upon by those who had a little more understanding, and they felt that they were being put down. This problem has now subsided, but there may be occasions where it can happen again. So we need to be really mindful and careful that this doesn't occur.

The faults of the delusions are described in the teachings very meticulously, and the best way to validate this is by relating the teachings to the delusions that we find within ourselves. Seeing the faults of our own delusions is the best reference point to test the truth of the Dharma.

The great master Shantideva mentioned that we need to really protect ourselves against the attitude of jealousy towards those who are higher than oneself, against pride and contempt towards those who are lower than oneself,

and competitiveness with those who are on the same level as oneself. When we think about it, these three attitudes are the cause of a lot of distress and turmoil in any society. As Shantideva mentioned, it is very hard to please worldly beings who are completely engrossed with these types of attitudes, for as long as they maintain these attitudes in their mind they will not be able to relate to the truth of the Dharma.

It is not sufficient to merely recognise the faults of the delusions, but rather, having recognised the faults, we need to apply the antidotes to overcome the delusions. That is what we really need to take on board. The process of identifying the delusions and seeing the faults of the delusions is something we need to do on a regular basis in our everyday life. Although we don't have the ability to recollect the faults of delusions that we have committed in previous lifetimes, we can, in our everyday life, do a thorough analysis of the delusions that are affecting us now on a daily basis. If our day begins with feeling unsettled and a particular delusion becomes manifest and prevalent, then we can notice how it affects the rest of the day. We might feel unsettled throughout the day and become prone to even more delusions manifesting in our mind. That is what occurs when we have not really paid attention to the delusions that lie within, and made genuine attempts to apply the antidotes. Whereas if we check our state of mind every morning, and ensure that it is not affected by any strong delusions, and if it is, then make genuine attempts to apply an antidote, then we will find the rest of the day will be quite fine, that there will be no big drama or upheaval taking place. Towards evening we can feel quite content and happy that we've had a good day, a day where we have not been completely overpowered and consumed by negative states of mind. That is how we can feel content and happy that we have had a worthwhile day. We can then rejoice and dedicate our good virtues and merits of the day.

As explained earlier, we need to combat the delusions by applying an antidote, making sure that we don't allow them to overpower us. We need to follow the examples of Kadampa masters such as Geshe Bayen Gun-gyal, who used to have dialogues with the delusions saying, 'If you become relaxed then I will be relaxed too, but if you start becoming powerful then I am going to use force to overcome you'. You will find these quotes in the Lam Rim teachings, and it would be good for you to refer to them. This is the sort of measures that earlier practitioners used as a way of combatting the delusions in their mind; applying the antidote the moment the delusions arise.

If we don't take the initiative to recognise the delusions and apply an antidote, then it is most likely that we will become completely overwhelmed and overpowered by the delusions as they arise. As beginners, even just recognising a delusion for what it is when it manifests will reduce its intensity and strong hold on our mind. It is to that extent that we gain the benefit of recognising the delusions within oneself. That is the measure of how we need to apply our practice on a daily basis. It will take some time before we actually get to the point of being able to apply an antidote to overcome the delusions

completely. However we need to begin the process by gradually taking these steps in our everyday life.

The Lam Rim teachings, and indeed all the Buddha's teachings, explain that the purpose of overcoming the delusions and afflictions is to subdue our mind. So we need to ensure that we are taking that onboard, and that we are applying the teachings at a level within our capability. That is where we begin. If we leave that aside and start thinking that there are grander practices that we should be doing, then that is again missing the point. We need to begin with the basis and develop a strong foundation. I am sharing this as a way of reminding you of the essential point of the whole study and practice of the Dharma, so that it benefits you and that you don't miss the point.

There is no way to become a real practitioner without paying attention to death and impermanence. Through logic you will be able to find that this is true, because the focus of all the activities of a person who does not recollect death and impermanence will be merely on the benefits and affairs of this life. Thus they cannot become a true practitioner. Without recollecting death and impermanence, our activities will be those that are focused on staying in this world rather than moving on to the next. We need to be prepared for our inevitable onward journey, rather than thinking that we will remain here for ever.

The last line of verse 34 asks:

How can cyclic existence be fearless and joyful?

There are different interpretations of the meaning of this line. Gyaltsab Je's explanation implies that if one does not combat the afflictions in one's mind, then how could remaining in cyclic existence be fearless and joyful? Other commentaries explain that if one does not have a fear of cyclic existence then one may regard cyclic existence as being joyful. However, regarding cyclic existence as being joyful is completely contrary to how we need to regard cyclic existence. That joy arises because one lacks any fear of cyclic existence. That is a slightly more profound explanation.

2.2.3.1.2.2. Contemplating how they harm the body

The relevant verse is:

35. *If this guardian of the prison of cyclic existence,
Who becomes the executioner and torturer in
hell,
Abides within the net of attachment in my
mind,
Then how can I have happiness?*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

These afflictions do not grant freedom from cyclic existence. Rather they become the guardians of the prison of cyclic existence and the hell realms. They also become the executioners killing in the upper and lower realms.

If these afflictions abide within the net of the mistaken conception, within the net of attachment in my mind, then how can one have a chance for happiness?

There is no chance for mental or physical happiness

These afflictions do not grant freedom from cyclic existence, this identifies the specific cause that imprisons us in cyclic existence, which is none other than the afflictions

themselves. It is afflictions that prevent one from being free from cyclic existence. Further, the afflictions *become the guardians of the prison of cyclic existence*. That which guards us in cyclic existence and keeps us there is none other than the afflictions. Also the torturers in the hell realms that inflict the harms in the hell realms are none other than manifestations of one's own afflictions.

Furthermore *they also become the executioners killing in the upper and lower realms*. In hell realms, as you would have heard, after the body has been torn apart in every direction the body regenerates itself and has to experience the sufferings all over again, and if one faints one is revived and has to experience the sufferings again. The cause of that is none other the afflictions. Even in the upper realms such as the human realm, as we all know, there are many who take their own life, which is caused none other than the afflictions. As Shantideva mentions in another text, the afflictions in the mind, such as anger, can cause someone to take their own life. With this understanding we can understand the point about the afflictions being like executioners.

The main cause for all the sufferings that will be experienced, regardless of whether one is of higher status or lower status, is none other than the afflictions. What is being implied here in simple terms is that for as long as the afflictions are not abandoned no one is spared by them. *The net of mistaken conceptions* can apply, on a broader sense, to any kind of delusion that manifests itself in the mind, but more specifically it is applied to self-grasping. So the root of the delusions, grasping at a truly existent self, is the primary root of all our mistaken conceptions. Thus, held within the net of mistaken conceptions we are trapped in samsara. Here *net* is analogous to the net of a bird cage that prevents the bird from escaping.

How can one have a chance of happiness, implies that for as long as the afflictions abide in one's mind *there is no chance at all for mental or physical happiness*.

Mistaken conceptions also relates to the inappropriate attention that we place on objects when we perceive them. As I have already explained this in detail previously, we need not elaborate on it again here.

2.2.3.1.3. Generating courage to destroy them

Merely acknowledging the afflictions as being harmful, and seeing their faults is not sufficient. Just thinking about these faults could be overwhelming unless one also thinks about the possibility of overcoming them. Therefore this heading is saying that we need to develop the courage to destroy the delusions.

The verse relating to this outline reads:

36. *Thus, as long as I do not destroy this enemy directly
For that long I shall not give up striving here.
The very proud ones that become angry even due to small harm,
Sleep will elude them until they have destroyed it.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Since everything unwished for is generated by the afflictions, for as long as I have not definitely destroyed this terrifying enemy directly, it is

appropriate that I shall not give up even for one moment striving in the antidote to the afflictions while I am here in this migration.

If the very proud worldly people get angry at even small harms such as harsh words, they will be very vengeful, sleep will elude them and they will not rest until they have destroyed their enemy.

Therefore it is appropriate to strive in destroying the enemy of the afflictions.

The commentary begins with *since everything unwished for is generated by the afflictions*, so we need to apply that understanding to any unwanted or unpleasant experience. These experiences don't occur randomly without any reason or without any causes. Rather, as stated here, every unwanted experience is caused by delusions.

For as long as I have not definitely destroyed this terrifying enemy directly implies that having understood that the cause of unwanted or unwished for experiences is generated by the afflictions will not be sufficient to overcome the manifest level of delusions. Rather, one needs to strive to overcome them from their very root. Here, *directly* has the connotation of *from its very root*. Thus what is being explained here is that until and unless one overcomes the afflictions from their very root, *it is appropriate that I should not give up for one moment striving in the antidote to the afflictions while I am in this migration*. What is being implied here is that one will not experience any real happiness until the afflictions have been completely uprooted.

The intent to *not give up even for one moment striving in the antidote* explains that having generated the antidote, one should not give up applying that antidote.

When the commentary mentions *if the very proud worldly people get angry*, it is referring more specifically to the mental factor of spite. Very proud worldly people can become very spiteful. As explained previously, spite is a specific state of anger that escalates to the point where you do not give up on the intention of harming the person who harms you. As stated here, even with *small harms, such as harsh words, sleep will elude them and they will not rest until they have destroyed their enemy*. Some individuals cannot rest until they have taken revenge on someone who has harmed them, either with actual words or by harbouring ill-will and thinking, 'I have to get back at them'. As mentioned here, they may not even be able to go to sleep until they have been able to take revenge. Some individuals are affected by such strong pride that they are not able to endure even small harms.

This example of very proud individuals who constantly think about how to get back at those who have inflicted even trivial harms is used to indicate how it is far more appropriate to strive to destroy the enemy of the afflictions, who harm us on a constant basis. For as long as we harbour the afflictions in our mind, they constantly harm us and affect us in a negative way. It is far more appropriate and worthwhile to apply the antidote for overcoming the delusions at all times, rather than wasting time trying to take revenge on external enemies. Therefore, day and night, we should be concerned with applying the antidotes to overcome the afflictions.

2.2.3.2. HOW IT IS UNSUITABLE TO TIRE OF THE DIFFICULTY OF ABANDONING THE AFFLICTIONS

Having recognised the afflictions and seen the need to abandon them, one might become discouraged and give up striving to overcome them. This section is explaining why one should not tire in this endeavour.

What is implied here is that abandoning the afflictions is not going to be an easy task. The delusions are powerful and they are very persistent in harming us. When we apply some antidote and reach a point where we may have some control over the delusions, they very sneakily arise in another guise. So the delusions find so many different ways to harm us. We are not dealing with an easy enemy here, so abandoning the afflictions will require farsighted endurance from our side. But we should not tire of the difficulty. As outlined in the heading this is exactly what the following verses encourage us to do.

This heading has three sub-divisions:

2.2.3.2.1. Donning the armour that will enable one to destroy the afflictions, it is unsuitable to tire of the difficulties

2.2.3.2.2. The benefits of striving to destroy the afflictions

2.2.3.2.3. It is appropriate to strive in the trainings that destroy the afflictions

2.2.3.2.1. Donning the armour that will enable one to destroy the afflictions, it is unsuitable to tire of the difficulties

There are two verses under this heading.

37 *The afflicted ones, who suffer anyway due to dying naturally,
At the height of battle, deeply wishing to destroy,
They disregard sufferings inflicted by weaponry, arrows and spears,
And will not retreat until their purpose is achieved.*

38 *What need is there to mention that they who strive
In destroying the natural enemy, which is the continual
Cause for all suffering, strive without despondence or laziness,
Despite hundredfold sufferings.*

Gyaltsab Je's explanation explains the meaning of the verse:

The afflicted ones, whose nature it is anyway to transform into the suffering of death, even without being killed, are the object of compassion.

When they are doing battle with the strong will to fight and to overcome the enemy, they will disregard the suffering inflicted by weapons such as arrows, spears and so forth, and will not retreat until their aim is achieved.

What need is there to mention that it is appropriate for me, who has taken up austerity, wishing to destroy the enemy of the afflictions, who has treated me as an enemy from the day of my birth, to not give up striving to destroy this enemy, and to not give in to despondency and laziness despite hundredfold sufferings such as cold, hunger and thirst.

As the commentary explains, *the afflicted ones* refers to the worldly enemies, who are afflicted by the delusions.

Because they are afflicted by the delusions they will naturally experience the consequences of their afflictions in the form of suffering, in particular the suffering of death. In other words, these external enemies, who are afflicted by the delusions, will naturally be vanquished by death, even without someone taking measures to destroy them. So, because they are afflicted by the delusions and will consequently experience the suffering of being completely destroyed by death, they *are* in fact *an object of compassion*.

When these afflicted worldly beings try to destroy others, they go into *battle with a strong will to fight and to overcome the enemy*. With the intention of overcoming their enemy, who will naturally be consumed by death anyway, they will have to experience *the suffering inflicted by the enemy's weapons such as arrows, spears and so forth*. Yet despite all of the harms inflicted on them by their sworn enemy, they are intent on fighting until the end, and *will not retreat until their aim is achieved*.

As the commentary explains, those intent on destroying external enemies generate great willpower and thus endure the harms inflicted on them. Despite all the harm inflicted on them, they still face the enemy with the intent of destroying them. That is the measure that worldly beings take. That being the case, the main point being emphasised here is, *what need is there to mention that it is appropriate for me, who has taken up austerity, (i.e. one has willingly taken up austerity practices) wishing to destroy the enemy of the afflictions who has treated me as an enemy from the day of my birth*. It is not as if the delusions became our enemy later in life, because from the very moment we were born the delusions were there to harm us. That being the case, we should *not give up striving to destroy this enemy, and not give in to despondency and laziness despite hundredfold sufferings such as cold, hunger and thirst*.

As explained here, based on having seen the faults of the delusions, and understanding how they have harmed us since we were born into this life, we need to develop the courage to not give up striving to destroy this enemy and not give in to despondency. This implies that there are some who, having made few attempts to overcome afflictions, resort to thinking, 'Oh, this is hopeless! I can't overcome the delusions'. Once one makes that decision one falls into despondency and laziness, and will no longer strive to apply the antidote. Lest one falls into despondency, we are urged that despite the sufferings of cold, hunger and thirst that will naturally accompany one's practices of austerity, one should not give up the intent to destroy the enemy of the afflictions.

As the outline presents, we need to don the armour of joyous effort to maintain our enthusiasm. Just as those who go into battle put on armour so that they are not harmed by their enemies' weapons, one needs to put on the armour of joyous effort in order to engage in austerity practices, and overcome the delusions. The *Guru Yoga Puja* also refers to donning the armour of joyous effort.

So the main point being emphasised here is that we need to apply joyous effort as a way of combatting the delusions.

2.2.3.2.2. *The benefits of striving to destroy the afflictions*

This is subdivided into three

2.2.3.2.2.1. Being the cause for one's welfare austerities are suitable to bear

2.2.3.2.2.2. Being the cause for other's welfare, austerities are suitable to bear

2.2.3.2.2.3. Why one needs to complete the earlier given promise

2.2.3.2.2.1. **Being the cause for one's welfare austerities are suitable to bear**

The verse from the root text reads:

39. *They sustain scars from the enemy for no purpose
And wear them on their body like ornaments.
If I strive stridently to achieve the great purpose
Why should sufferings be something that harms me?*

Gyalsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

Worldly beings sustain scars for no purpose at all and wear them like ornaments, saying: 'this scar I got at such and such a time'.

As the commentary explains, *worldly beings sustain scars for no purpose at all and wear them like ornaments*. The scars received in a fight become something to show off to others as a mark of bravery. They take great pride in those scars, saying, 'I got these scars in my fight'. That is how some worldly beings view their scars.

That being the case:

Why would one then be harmed by the sufferings endured while striving stridently in the austerities? They are to achieve the great purpose of complete enlightenment!

Since they are only of benefit one should rely on them.

What is being implied here is that it is worthwhile to endure the hardships of austerity practices to overcome the afflictions, since these practices are a cause to achieve the great purpose of complete enlightenment. *Since they are of only benefit* for oneself and they cause no harm, *one should* definitely *rely* on these practices.

The main point being emphasised here is that when ordinary, worldly people take great pride in their scars and so forth for even small meaningless purposes, one, who has committed to overcome the afflictions, which serves the great purpose of achieving enlightenment, need not be overwhelmed by the difficulties and hardships that one may incur. That is because the hardships serve as the means to achieve a great purpose.

The main point is that it is definitely worthwhile to bear those austerities as a way to obtain one's ultimate welfare. The ultimate result is to achieve the excellence of one's own purpose, which is enlightenment. When one achieves enlightenment, then that fulfils the purpose of obtaining the excellence of one's own welfare.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་ཀྱི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

13 May 2014

Based on the motivation we have generated during the recitation of our *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, we can now engage in the meditation practice. [meditation]

You have just meditated on the Giving and Taking practice, and I am sure you have done it to the best of your ability. With the 'taking' you imagine taking in three types of phenomena from all sentient beings: all their sufferings; the causes of their sufferings, which are the afflictions and karma; and the imprints or latencies of those afflictions. In the 'giving' part of the practice, in return you imagine giving three of your most valuable objects: your body, your possessions and all your virtues of the three times. It is important to recollect these main points when you engage in the meditation practice and apply them to the best of your ability. That will make the practice really worthwhile.

2.2.3.2.2. The benefits of striving to destroy the afflictions

We have covered the first subdivision Being the Cause for One's Welfare Austerities Are Suitable to Bear. Now comes the second subdivision.

2.2.3.2.2.2. Being the cause for other's welfare, austerities are suitable to bear

The verse reads as below and is accompanied by examples in the root text:

40. *Fishers, butchers, farmers and the like
Are bearing cold, heat and such
Solely with thoughts for their livelihood.
Why can one not bear this for the happiness of
migrators?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Fishers, butchers, farmers and the like kill fish, do lowly work, work on the fields and so forth, and are bearing difficulties like cold or heat and such, all this solely with the thought of their livelihood.

If that is so, then why can one not bear similar sufferings to accomplish the happiness of all migrators? It would be appropriate to bear them.

The message from the commentary and the verse is quite easy to understand: if one is able to bear hardships to achieve trivial purposes in life, then why shouldn't one strive to bear some hardships to achieve the highest purpose for oneself?

Beings who exert a lot of effort and bear hardships for trivial purposes, like *fishers* and *butchers* who take the life of other beings merely to sustain themselves in this life, or *farmers* who toil year round in the *cold*, *the rain*, and in the *heat of the sun*, do this *lowly work* and bear difficulties solely to sustain themselves for this life. These examples show how some people have to put in so much time and effort, and endure so many hardships just to sustain their basic needs. When we see examples of this around us, we should be inspired not to complain about our lives and ready to bear some difficulties ourselves for our own welfare.

Individuals who expend effort and bear hardship to achieve their goals, even if they may be temporary ones, do achieve significant results. Of course, whenever one endeavours to achieve something, one should understand that there are always some necessary conditions that are required, as well as some obstructions that need to be overcome. As such, the method for achieving one's goals should encompass strategies for establishing the conducive conditions and eradicating any obstructions. This requires a significant amount of time and effort, and bearing hardships. So we can learn from others who expend energy and bear hardships to achieve their goals. In order to achieve the great purpose, one needs to make this resolve, *if that is so, then why can one not bear similar sufferings to accomplish the happiness of all migrators? It would be appropriate to bear them. To accomplish the happiness of all migrators one needs to achieve the ultimate goal of enlightenment. That is the highest aspiration and goal for anyone who has taken bodhisattva vows. Since many of you have taken the bodhisattva vows and promised to work for the welfare of all sentient beings until achieving enlightenment, it is important for you to continue your practices and willingly bear whatever difficulties and hardships that may occur. The phrase it would be appropriate to bear them has the connotation in Tibetan of being patient with them; that means to be patient when facing hardships. So, in order to achieve the great purpose one needs to apply the patience of willingly enduring hardships. This is the resolve we need to make when engaging in Dharma practice.*

Of course the advice here is mainly directed at the practices of a bodhisattva. While we aspire to do these practices, in reality we may not be able to apply our practices at a bodhisattva's level right now. However, the personal instruction here is to generate a strong aspiration to be able to practise *like a bodhisattva*. Bodhisattvas bear hardships with farsightedness, engaging in the practices over long periods of time, withstanding many adversities, and continue to practice whilst not giving up their bodhisattva vows or bodhicitta. This should inspire us to generate a strong veneration and genuine respect for them, along with an aspiration that we may also practise in a similar way.

The point here is that it is most fitting to bear sufferings by applying the patience of willingly enduring hardships. The definition of patience is not to allow one's mind to become disturbed in the face of adversities such as harm and sufferings. We should apply this understanding of *willingly bearing hardships*, because if one is not able to bear hardships and difficulties, it will affect one's mind negatively, and one will become distraught and overwhelmed. When there is agony in one's mind because of hardships, those feelings will then cause anger to arise. Anger is always preceded by a feeling of discomfort or agony, which one is not able to bear. The best way for our mind not to feel overwhelmed is by willingly accepting and bearing hardships, and to regard them as being worthwhile.

The ultimate result of having born hardships and difficulties on the path is to become an enlightened being. An enlightened being, such as Buddha Shakyamuni, is an individual being who has willingly born many hardships as a practitioner, and having completely traversed the path, finally achieved the state of enlightenment. If we aspire to become like Buddha Shakyamuni, how can we expect to succeed if we easily become distraught and willing give up our practices when faced with the slightest difficulty or hardship? We may not be able to practise on a bodhisattva's level right now, however we can definitely generate the

aspiration to practise like a bodhisattva. Admiring the bodhisattva's deeds leaves very positive imprints on our mind, which helps to develop our capacity to practise just like a bodhisattva in the future. So, these are significant points to keep in mind.

2.2.3.2.3. Why one needs to complete the earlier given promise

The verse is preceded by a doubt:

Doubt: One has made the promise to destroy the afflictions in the continuum of others and it is unsuitable to strive in destroying the afflictions in one's own continuum, because one would fall into the extreme of peace.

To explain the hypothetical doubt: having *made the promise to destroy the afflictions in the continuum of others*, the doubt is that it would be *unsuitable to strive in destroying the afflictions in one's own continuum because one would fall into the extreme of peace* i.e. the peace of self-liberation or nirvana. The doubt is that if one works towards *destroying the afflictions* or the delusions *in one's own mental continuum* then once destroyed this would imply that one would reach the state of self-liberation, with the risk of abiding in a state of personal peace. This reminds me of a similar doubt raised some time ago by Vanessa. She said that as Mahayana practitioners "if we are striving to overcome our personal sufferings, wouldn't that contradict the Mahayana attitude that we should be developing?" These are significant doubts.

When you really think deeply about the meaning of the teachings, doubts will arise. This is significant because they arise as a result of contemplation and investigation of the topic. In relation to the earlier doubt, for someone merely seeking self-liberation the main object of abandonment is the afflictions, and the main purpose for abandoning them is to attain personal liberation. So when the afflictions have been abandoned they reach the state of self-liberation, a state where one abides in perpetual bliss. An arhat or foe destroyer is an individual who has abandoned the afflictions and has reached that blissful state and remains in a blissful state of meditative equipoise. That is what is being referred to here as *the extreme of peace*.

The corresponding verse and a half read:

41 *When one made the promise to liberate
Migrators equalling the expanse of space
From the afflictions,
Oneself was not free from afflictions.*

42ab *As one did not know one's abilities
How was it not crazy talk?*

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains the meaning:

Answer: At an earlier time when one generated the mind and made the promise to liberate all migrators equalling the expanse of space from their afflictions, if oneself is not free from afflictions, then not to mention the welfare of others, one cannot achieve even one's own welfare. Being under the control of the afflictions one does not know one's own measure. How is it not crazy to say that one will liberate others from their afflictions?

If one is bound by cyclic existence, one cannot complete the welfare of others and therefore one should strive to abandon the afflictions in one's continuum.

What is being explained is that since one has earlier *generated the mind of bodhicitta and made the promise to liberate migrators equalling the expanse of space from their afflictions, then*

in order to fulfil this promise one must abandon one's own afflictions. Otherwise one cannot achieve the welfare of others.

The verse explains that *being under the control of the afflictions one does not know one's own measure*, or state of mind, so how can one *liberate others from the afflictions*. What is being presented here is that to claim that one would free all beings from their afflictions while doing nothing about abandoning one's own afflictions would be similar to a *crazy person's* approach. The commentary goes further: *if one is bound by cyclic existence, one cannot complete the welfare of others and therefore one should strive to abandon the afflictions in one's continuum*. The conclusion is that one definitely needs to strive to abandon afflictions.

This relates to the meaning of the outline Why One Needs to Complete the Earlier Given Promise, which is that in order to complete an earlier promise to work for the welfare of all sentient beings and ultimately free them from all afflictions and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, one needs to abandon the afflictions within one's own mental continuum. That is why the conclusion here states: *one should strive to abandon the afflictions in one's continuum*. This is similar to an analogy presented in the Lam Rim teachings of the father of a starving family who finds a piece of meat. He reasons that if he were to share the piece of meat with his family there will be little benefit for each of them. So he decides to eat it all himself in order to gain enough strength and energy to find sufficient food to feed the whole family.

The analogy illustrates the importance of first freeing oneself from the afflictions; otherwise there is no possibility to help free others from the afflictions. This is why one needs to achieve enlightenment and become a buddha oneself before one can lead others to buddhahood. When one practises developing bodhicitta, one first practises developing the aspiration to benefit others, and then based on that, one generates the aspiration to achieve enlightenment oneself in order to achieve that purpose.

This is how one trains one's mind and how the path is traversed; another key point to keep in mind.

2.2.3.2.3. It is appropriate to strive in the trainings that destroy the afflictions

An earlier verse explained that it is appropriate to abandon the delusions or afflictions. The verses below explain the appropriateness of striving in the trainings which destroy the afflictions.

This is subdivided into two:

2.2.3.2.3.1. Strive in the antidote to the afflictions

2.2.3.2.3.2. Strive to never let the mind fall under the control of the afflictions

These are really significant points to apply to our own practices. **Striving in the antidote to the afflictions** means to work towards developing the antidotes in one's mind to overcome the afflictions. The next point, **striving to never fall under the control of the mental afflictions**, means working towards control over one's mind, so that one does not fall under the dominance of the afflictions.

In our daily practice bring to mind the importance of applying the antidotes. Whatever antidotes one has not yet developed, one should strive to develop as a means to overcome the afflictions within oneself. And whatever antidotes one has already developed, one should ensure that one further strengthens them. Likewise with the afflictions: whatever afflictions one has not yet abandoned, strive to

abandon them. And whatever afflictions one has successfully controlled or has reduced, ensure that one applies continual measures and diligence to keep those delusions at bay so that they don't arise strongly again.

It is similar with virtue: whatever virtues one has not yet developed, strive to develop them, and whatever virtues one has already generated, strengthen and further develop them. Try to bring these to mind as an aspiration: "May I be able to overcome the afflictions which I have not yet overcome and apply the measures to overcome them; and may I be able to develop the virtues that I have not yet developed and maintain the virtues I have already developed".

This becomes a really significant aspiration. When one applies this, the aspiration itself can bring solace and ease to the mind. It is good for us to relate to these seemingly simple practices which we may easily neglect, thinking we should be doing some grander practices. I feel that often our shortcoming is that we neglect practices within our own reach and try to aim for something higher or grander; we need to pay attention to this.

A key point from the outlines is that when an affliction arises in our mind, rather than just leaving it and doing nothing about it, we need to recognise that this only creates a condition for the affliction to increase in intensity. What we are being encouraged to do here is that as soon as an affliction arises, we need to immediately remember to apply an antidote to overcome it. Next, since the afflictions arise at any given moment, when they do arise, we should not allow ourselves to fall under their dominance or control. These are both things that we are able to do. We can take measures to apply antidotes and ensure that we are not under the complete control of the afflictions. These are reasonable practices that we can apply in our daily lives.

2.2.3.2.3.1. Strive in the antidote to the afflictions

The parts of the verse which relate to this are the second two lines of the earlier verse and the first two lines of the next verse.

*42cd Therefore I shall never reverse
From destroying the afflictions.*

*43ab One should hold onto it
And meet them in war with a vengeance.*

The last two lines of verse 43 will be explained later on.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Since they are suitable to be abandoned one should never reverse from the thought and action of abandoning them. One should hold onto the antidote and destroy the afflictions by meeting them in battle with a vengeance.

The commentary highlights that *since they are suitable to be abandoned* (having given reasons earlier) *one should never reverse from the thought and action of abandoning them*. One needs to be committed to never reversing from the thought and action of abandoning the afflictions. Having seen their faults and disadvantages, one needs to develop the determination never to reverse, never to waiver from the thought of abandoning the afflictions. The next line explains the extent to which one makes that commitment: *one should hold onto the antidote and destroy the afflictions by meeting them in battle with a vengeance*. 'Battle' here is used as an example to illustrate the forceful extent to which one needs to engage in the application of an antidote.

A second doubt is raised here:

Doubt: That which is to be abandoned and the antidote are attachment and anger, and revenge for that to be abandoned is an affliction, and therefore to be abandoned too.

The hypothetical doubt raised here is: isn't being attached to the antidote, generating anger and a vengeful attitude towards what has to be abandoned, i.e. the delusions, an affliction in itself? Doesn't that have to be abandoned too? In other words, attachment to the antidote and anger towards that which is to be abandoned would be an affliction in itself, so wouldn't that have to be abandoned as well?

The next two lines of the verse relate to this:

*43cd Afflictions with such an appearance
Are the destroyer of afflictions, nothing else.*

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

Grasping on to the antidote and the vengeance to that which is to be abandoned, appear like afflictions but they actually belong to the side of the antidote that destroys the afflictions. Thus they are not contained in that to be abandoned.

What is being explained here is that grasping at an antidote and generating vengeance towards that which is to be abandoned may appear to be like afflictions, but actually they help to destroy the afflictions. Generating a vengeful attitude towards the afflictions (which are to be abandoned) is having thoughts such as, "I have recognised you, afflictions, to be the one that constantly harms me; I will definitely overcome you now. I will not rest until I have destroyed you". So when one targets the mind at overcoming the afflictions in such a way, that is the type of vengeance needed. As mentioned here, *it belongs to the side of the antidote*.

2.2.3.2.3.2. Strive to never let the mind fall under the control of the afflictions

The next verse is preceded by this query:

Query: Is it not better to follow the afflictions since to abandon the afflictions brings hundreds of sufferings with it?

These are exactly the kinds of doubts we have when being wary of applying the antidotes to the afflictions. We find that "it is so difficult to overcome these afflictions, so maybe it is better to just follow them". It is this kind of attitude which has kept us in samsara for so long, and which prevents us from making any genuine attempts to overcome the afflictions. A very significant doubt has been raised here.

The verse which relates to this reads as follows:

*44 Dying due to being burned,
Or even being decapitated is easy.
But one should never submit
To the enemy of the afflictions.*

The point to examine here is which is better: the difficulties and hardships in overcoming the afflictions, or waiting for the afflictions to completely control our mind so that we must experience their more serious consequences at a later time? This is the choice we need to make.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of the verse as follows:

Regardless of whether one dies by being burnt or whether one is decapitated, it is still easy, because at that time one is only separated from this life's body.

But one should never submit to the enemy of the afflictions that causes us to take birth in the great sufferings of the hell realms, and is an obstacle to

attaining our wishes. We should never fall under their control.

The explanation: *regardless of whether one dies by being burnt or whether one is decapitated, 'it is easy', implies that being burnt or consumed by fire or experiencing death from decapitation is merely a suffering one experiences from being separated from this life's body, and this will not in itself lead one to the lower realms e.g. the hell realms. These are regarded as easy in comparison to the great sufferings one would have to experience being under the influence of the afflictions. The commentary continues: but one should never submit to the afflictions that cause us to take birth in the great sufferings of the hell realms and is an obstacle to attaining our wishes. If one were to give power to the enemy (the afflictions), this is what causes one to take birth in the great sufferings of the hell realms and so forth, as well as being an obstacle to attaining our ultimate goal of enlightenment. The conclusion here is that one should never fall under the control of the afflictions.*

2.2.3.3. MEDITATING ON JOY KNOWING THAT IF ONE MAKES AN EFFORT IT IS POSSIBLE TO ABANDON THE AFFLICTIONS

This heading presents the meaning of the next few verses, which is that one should generate joy in one's mind; one should not feel daunted by the difficulty of overcoming the afflictions but rather generate joy; and that if one makes an effort, it is definitely possible to abandon the afflictions which should cause some joy. This heading is subdivided into three:

2.2.3.3.1. Once the afflictions are expelled from one's continuum they have no other basis in which to abide

2.2.3.3.2. If one makes an effort they can be abandoned because they arise from a mistaken cause

2.2.3.3.3. If they are abandoned from the root, there is no other basis on which they can abide so they are suitable to abandon!

2.2.3.3.1. Once the afflictions are expelled from one's continuum they have no other basis on which to abide

This verse is preceded by another query:

Query: Afflictions are like worldly enemies in that, after having been expelled from one's place, they find again strength and harm again. So it is appropriate to follow them likewise.

The doubt here is that one may feel daunted in overcoming the afflictions if one perceives them as external enemies, because with external enemies, even if you overpower them for the time being and expel them from your area, they might congregate in another area, regain power and strength and again come back and cause you more harm. So if one uses an external enemy as an example for one's afflictions, one may have that doubt that "even if I were to overcome the afflictions now, they might reoccur later and affect me and harm me, so what is the point in trying to overcome them; I might as well just follow them".

The verse relating to this reads:

45 *When the ordinary enemy gets expelled from one place
They conquer another place and remain there.
Having regained strength they return.
The way of the enemy of the afflictions is not like that.*

The commentary provides an answer to the query:

Answer: It is not the same. When the ordinary enemy gets expelled from one place they conquer another place, regain their strength there and then return to

take their revenge. The way of the enemy of the afflictions is not like that. Once they have been expelled from the root they cannot remain in another place and they cannot return.

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains, external worldly enemies and the afflictions do not have the same meaning. When an ordinary enemy gets expelled from one place, they conquer or reside in another place and regain their strength and return to take their revenge. That is what an external enemy is capable of doing. As explained further: *the way of the enemy of the afflictions is not like that because once they have been expelled from the very root they cannot remain in another place and they cannot return to harm oneself.*

If one makes an effort, afflictions can be abandoned because they arise from a mistaken cause. If the causes were based on a valid basis then one would not be able to abandon them because they would have a substantial base. But because the very causes of the afflictions are mistaken there is no sound basis for them and therefore one is able to abandon them. Understanding this gives one further encouragement to apply the antidotes to overcome the afflictions.

With the cause, we can again reflect upon the explanations in the *Abhidharma* which outlines three main conditions for afflictions to arise: When the afflictions have not been abandoned; when one is in close proximity to objects; and when concepts based on inappropriate attention is applied then all the conditions for the delusions to arise in one's mind are present. Inappropriate attention is in itself a mistaken consciousness which is one of the causes for afflictions to arise. It is precisely because inappropriate attention arises based on a mistaken consciousness that it can be eradicated, because a mistaken consciousness is not based on a valid basis.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བལྟས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

20 May 2014

The *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer* that we have just recited will suffice as our motivation for engaging in our meditation practice. [meditation]

As mentioned many times in the past, prior to engaging in the Giving and Taking meditation practice one needs to first spend some time trying to cultivate a sense of love and compassion towards all beings who we visualise in front of ourselves. As a result of contemplating how beings lack true happiness, one develops a strong wish that they abide in happiness which is how one generates love for all beings. Then, by contemplating the various sufferings sentient beings are experiencing one generates the very strong wish that they be free from all those sufferings. That is where one generates the sense of compassion for all beings.

When one ensures that one has generated the mind of love and compassion for all beings, then to whatever degree one has developed these positive states of mind, to that extent the practice itself becomes really meaningful and fruitful. As a result of having spent some time focusing on these positive attitudes when we come out of the meditation practice we will be able to detect real transformation taking place in our minds. We will notice that the earlier chaotic and negative state of mind has been now replaced with a kinder and gentler state of mind which is a direct benefit of the practice. Generating love and compassion for other beings definitely has a positive effect on our mind, for when love and compassion is prevalent there is no room for any harmful intentions to arise. So, our mind will naturally be calmer and more peaceful because of the lack of harmful intent. It is important that we check whether our meditation practice is contributing to a positive change in our mind or not. It is not sufficient to merely focus on an object single-pointedly if it doesn't contribute to a positive change to one's mind.

As Lama Tsong Khapa said, one must abandon mere calm abiding and strive towards developing the union of calm abiding and special insight. This is a very significant point to bear in mind.

The main point here is that while we may have studied and have accumulated a great deal of knowledge, if we don't put that knowledge into practice it will not help to transform our mind. This point is emphasised at the end of this chapter.

2.2.3.3.2. If one makes an effort, they can be abandoned because they arise from a mistaken cause

The verse relating to this reads:

46. *The deluded afflictions are abandoned by the eye of wisdom
When cleared from the mind where will they go?
Where will they abide to gain strength and return?
The weak mind does not let me strive.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

Once the afflictions have been abandoned from their root they have no other base. Since the afflictions arise

from a faulty or mistaken root, one should strive to abandon them with the eye of wisdom that realises emptiness.

Once they are cleared, or what is called abandoned, from the mind, where will they go and find new strength to return and retaliate? It is impossible. Although it is like this, the weak mind does not let me strive to uproot them once and for all.

What is being explained here is that once the afflictions have been abandoned from the very root they will not return. When the manifest afflictions are overcome that does not mean that they will not return. So, the emphasis here is on *abandoning* the afflictions from their very *root* so that there is no other base on which they can abide. This also relates to the doubt raised earlier in the text, which says that once afflictions have been overcome wouldn't it be possible for them to return just like an enemy? If you vanquish an enemy temporarily they can regroup and return to harm one again in the future. So, this verse further clarifies the response to the earlier doubt.

When the commentary states, *since the afflictions arise from a faulty or mistaken root*, the *root* refers to the self-grasping ignorance that is a faulty state of mind. Some teachings relate this to the misconceptions that arise from inappropriate attention, as presented in the *Abhidharma*. However, the main root is the grasping at a truly existent self which is the basis for all misconceptions to arise. As explained in other texts as well, it is because of grasping at a truly existent self that all the afflictions manifest themselves.

With this understanding one can see how attachment actually arises from grasping at a truly existent self. It is because of this faulty state of mind which superimposes and causes objects to appear as being truly existent, and further grasps at them as being truly existent, that afflictions such as attachment manifest themselves. Even though self and other phenomena do not exist inherently, it is the misconception that perceives them as being truly existent and inherently existent that makes them appear in that way. So, it is this faulty and mistaken mind that has to be eliminated from its very root.

As mentioned in the commentary, *one should start to abandon them with the eye of wisdom that realises emptiness*. Having identified the root of the afflictions, the way to strive to abandon them is, as mentioned here, with the *eye of wisdom realising emptiness*. Just as eyes see things directly, it is the wisdom that realises emptiness directly that overcomes or abandons the afflictions. The implication here is that just as one sees objects nakedly with one's eye, one uses the wisdom that realises emptiness directly as an antidote to abandon the afflictions.

With respect to *once that has been cleared or what is called, abandoned from the mind*, the Tibetan word *sal* translated here as *cleared* has the connotation of separating them from one's mind. So, once they have been cleared or separated from one's mind, the rhetorical question is: *where will they go and find new strength and return and retaliate?* implies that once abandoned, the afflictions do not and cannot return. What is specifically being explained here is that it is the wisdom realising emptiness directly that serves as the antidote to abandon afflictions from their very root. This wisdom severs the continuum of the afflictions. Thus, because the very continuum of the afflictions has been completely severed, a similar affliction cannot arise in the next moment. Once the afflictions have been completely severed there is no continuity, i.e. they cannot produce the next moment of

afflictions. The very meaning of being uprooted means that it cannot produce any more results. Thus, once the afflictions have been completely uprooted there is no way for them to return, and there is no other place for them to *abide*. To give a contemporary analogy, it is like the Tasmanian tiger which is extinct. It is because there is no continuity of the Tasmanian tiger that it can never return.

However this is not the case with an external enemy. As mentioned previously, when an external enemy is expelled from a place it can regroup and return. When the Communist Chinese took over Tibet many Tibetans left Tibet and relocated in India, and from there into many other countries. At this point Tibetans cannot stand up and fight back because there is no might. However, the fact is that if there was enough might and power then some Tibetans might want to retaliate and try to fight the Communist Chinese and return to Tibet. And it is possible for Tibetans to return to Tibet because even though they have been expelled the continuum of Tibetans has not been severed.

Unlike this example, when the afflictions have been overcome by the wisdom realising emptiness (which is the ultimate method to completely uproot the afflictions) then where would they go and find new strength to return and retaliate? This rhetorical question implies that it is impossible for them to return. Like the earlier analogy with the Tasmanian tiger, they can never return. The wisdom realising emptiness serves as an optimum antidote for overcoming the afflictions at their very root. This point has been explained many times in the past and you have to relate it to those earlier explanations as well. The reason I explain this again and again is so that you can derive the real meaning and gain an unmistakable and clear understanding of emptiness. Though the teachings explain this in many different ways, it all comes down to the same essential point.

When we take this explanation at a personal level then we really need to acknowledge that we have been able to identify the afflictions, i.e. we have a good understanding of what afflictions are. We also have quite a good understanding of what the antidote, the wisdom realising emptiness, implies. So with this understanding we need to try to overcome the afflictions within ourselves to the best of our ability. We have gained some really precious and valuable understandings and it is now up to us to actually apply this by taking measures to overcome the afflictions, in particular the root affliction of grasping at a truly existent self. To the extent that we can recognise and apply some antidote to overcome the grasping at a truly existent self, the strength of the afflictions, such as attachment and anger and so forth, will also be naturally reduced. Conversely, the stronger our grasping at a truly existent self and the more rigidly we hold onto this misconception, the greater the strength of the afflictions will be. So, to the best of our ability we need to apply the antidote for overcoming that grasping at a truly existent self.

When the commentary states although *it is like this*, it is referring to the fact that it is impossible for the delusions to return once they have been uprooted. However, the *weak mind* (a mind that lacks wisdom), *does not allow one to strive to uproot the afflictions once and for all*. Unless and until one has completely uprooted the delusions, they will reoccur. So if we find that we are affected by the continuity of afflictions, it is none other than because we have not applied the antidote—we have not applied a sufficient amount of wisdom to actually uproot the delusions. If we had done that

previously, then we would not be affected by afflictions now.

An arhat or foe destroyer is no longer affected by the delusions because of the fact that they have uprooted the delusions through the wisdom realising emptiness. Furthermore, as explained in the teachings, those on the Great Vehicle path of seeing have reached the state where they have the direct realisation of emptiness. The power of that realisation will not allow the grasping at a self to strengthen and to become a means to create a newly formed throwing karma which would propel them into rebirth in cyclic existence once again. As explained in the teachings, what prevents beings on the path of seeing from creating a newly formed karma to be reborn again in cyclic existence is the wisdom realising emptiness directly. Of course, even though they do not create any new throwing karma due to the strength of their wisdom directly realising emptiness, that doesn't mean they are completely free from being reborn in cyclic existence.

When a being realises emptiness directly then, even though the grasping at a truly existent self has not been completely uprooted yet, it is nevertheless overpowered by the wisdom realising emptiness. Thus they do not create any new throwing karma. Likewise, even though we still have afflictions, they will be weakened with whatever wisdom we accumulate. So the more we increase our understanding of emptiness through study and practice, the more we will reduce grasping at a truly existent self. Conversely, the stronger our grasping at the self, the more likely it is that we will continuously create throwing karmas, which perpetuates our cycle in samsara. The stronger our grasping at a truly and inherently existent self, the stronger the notion of 'I' or 'me' will be. And the stronger that sense of 'I', the more likely it is that one will reject anything that opposes the 'I', and be attached to whatever pleases that 'I'. That is how we continuously create karma through aversion and attachment, and this is what we need to understand.

2.2.3.3.3. *If they are abandoned from the root, there are no other bases to abide. Thus they are suitable to abandon*

The explanation of the meaning of the next two lines of verse is preceded by this doubt:

If you say, the afflictions are also generated from one's own continuum and exist inherently and thus they cannot be abandoned.

In answer to that doubt the next two lines of verse are presented:

47ab. *Afflictions do not abide in the object, not in the faculties nor in-between.*
Since they are also nowhere else, where do they go to harm all sentient beings?

In his commentary Gyalsab Je begins his explanation of the meaning of these lines thus:

Answer: The afflictions do not abide in objects such as form, otherwise arhats would also generate afflictions when they see forms and so forth.

The answer to the doubt is that the afflictions do not abide inherently. If they were to abide in an object such as form, then an arhat (who has in fact abandoned the afflictions) *would generate afflictions when they see forms*, because they still perceive forms. This implies that the arhats, as a consequence of having interacted with forms, would also generate afflictions. But that is not the case. Furthermore:

They also do not abide in the collections of the sense powers of the eyes and so forth, because when one

contemplates the actual mode of existence, the eyes exist, but the afflictions do not.

A being on the non-interrupted path of seeing who has the direct realisation of emptiness still has the sense powers of the eyes and so forth, but because they have the direct realisation of emptiness the afflictions are not manifest. If they were to *abide in the collections of the sense powers of the eyes and so forth*, then that would imply that afflictions are still manifest in the being on the uninterrupted path of seeing. The commentary further explains:

They also do not exist in-between or somewhere else.

Since it is like this, once abandoned where can the afflictions that were uprooted in this way, and which exist from their own side, go to inflict harm? They do not abide anywhere.

Then the next two lines of verse are presented.

47cd. Since they are like illusions, abandon fear in the heart and rely on striving for wisdom. Why harm myself meaninglessly with the hells and so forth?

The commentary explains the meaning of these two lines as follows:

These afflictions are like illusions. They are empty of inherent existence and yet appear as if they exist from their own side. Therefore, abandon the fear in your heart that they cannot be abandoned because of existing inherently.

Having generated the wisdom that realises emptiness it is suitable to strive in abandoning the mental afflictions. Since one has this ability, why would one create meaninglessly the harm of the lower realms of the hells and so forth? This is unsuitable.

This explanation is quite clear. It follows the earlier explanation that used this analogy of the afflictions being like illusions.

Summary

48. Strive to achieve the trainings, That were thus explained and contemplated. There is no medicine that can cure If one does not listen to the advice of the physician

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Contemplate in the above way repeatedly. Make an effort to strive with conscientiousness in how the Buddha earlier explained bodhicitta, and to protect the trainings. There are no sicknesses that can be cured only by medicine without listening to the instructions of the physician that contain many truths. Strive in abandoning the afflictions according to the instructions of the great physician.

Contemplate in the above way repeatedly refers to all the instructions that were given earlier as well as the advice given by the Buddha in his teachings. So the emphasis here is to *make an effort to strive with conscientiousness* to protect the trainings which serve as the basis for developing bodhicitta. This is really an exhortation to put into practice the instructions that were given earlier. The analogy which is used here is that *there are no sicknesses that can be cured only by medicine without listening to instructions of the physician*. The analogy is that when a sick patient goes to see a physician, a skilled physician would give the medicine along with specific instructions on how to take the medicine with possible dietary restrictions. If the patient doesn't take the medicine then they cannot be cured, but if they take it

without following the physician's specific instructions then again that will affect the chances of being cured. In this analogy Buddha Shakyamuni is like the skilled doctor, and the holy Dharma, which consists of the practices of hearing, thinking and meditating, is like the medicine. One is like the patient, and the afflictions in one's mind are analogous to sickness.

As mentioned earlier, the Dharma was presented by the Buddha on the basis of the three trainings—training in moral ethics, training in meditation and training in wisdom—and the various different teachings which have been precisely presented along with the unmistakable instruction, is the medicine itself. If we don't put these instructions into practice then there is no way that we can be cured of the sickness of the afflictions. More specifically, without putting these instructions into practice there is no way that we will be able to overcome the root affliction of grasping at the self.

Gyaltsab Je is exhorting us to *strive in abandoning the afflictions according to the instructions of the great physician*, the Buddha. So the emphasis here is to make every effort to apply conscientiousness to our training.

Then Gyaltsab Je concludes his commentary on this chapter with this verse:

Freedom from the quagmire of faults within one's own continuum,
Increasing virtues without degeneration,
These depend with certainty on meditation on conscientiousness.
Therefore those proficient should always rely on conscientiousness.

So with this verse Gyaltsab Je points out that being free from *the quagmire of faults and increasing virtues without degeneration, depends on meditating or maintaining conscientiousness*. Therefore, he exhorts the wise need to always depend on conscientiousness. As mentioned here, in order to increase virtue within ourselves and prevent it from degenerating we need to apply conscientiousness. As presented earlier, the definition of conscientiousness includes being constantly mindful of that which needs to be adopted.

Conscientiousness was explained at the very beginning of this chapter so one needs to relate it to that explanation, otherwise we would have to explain it each time it is mentioned again. I don't blame some geshe who seem to be a bit exasperated. Some have said that they put quite bit of effort into explaining things clearly, and at the time it seems that the students have understood it, but after a while they seem to have completely forgotten the points, and it has to be explained all over again.

The importance of remembering the instructions actually leads us into the next chapter, which covers mindfulness and introspection.

II. THE NAME OF THE CHAPTER

This is the fourth chapter of Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas called Applying Conscientiousness

The commentary reads:

This is the commentary on *the fourth chapter of the Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas*, called *Applying Conscientiousness*, from *The Entrance for the Children of the Conquerors*.

Now we come to the fifth chapter, Introspection.

To explain the context of this chapter we need to return to the subdivisions introduced in chapter 1.¹

2. THE ACTUAL EXPLANATION OF THE STAGES OF THE PATH

2.2. The method for taking the essence

2.2.2. Explaining the individual meanings²

2.2.2.2. THE WAY OF TRAINING IN THE PRACTICES OF GENERATING THE TWO MINDS

2.2.2.2.2. The Way of Training in the Actions, the Perfections

2.2.2.2.2.1. The way of meditating on conscientiousness, the limb preventing the degeneration of the training in the mind of enlightenment³

2.2.2.2.2.2. Explaining the way of training in morality, by relating it to introspection and mindfulness, the methods for keeping virtuous dharmas pure⁴

CHAPTER 5: EXPLAINING THE WAY OF TRAINING IN MORALITY BY RELATING IT TO INTROSPECTION AND MINDFULNESS, THE METHODS FOR KEEPING ALL VIRTUOUS DHARMAS PURE

The point here, as in other teachings, is that morality through pure conduct is the very basis for one to keep virtuous Dharma pure.

The importance of mindfulness and introspection is encapsulated in this verse which will come later in the text.

*Those who wish to guard their mind
Definitely need to adopt mindfulness and
Introspection and keep that,
I implore you to please keep the heart.*

So Shantideva, putting his palms at his heart, respectfully says, 'I implore you to adopt this'. He is pleading with us to guard and protect our mind with the optimum methods of mindfulness and introspection. So he is showing us the great importance of applying these methods in our practice.

The chapter is in two sections:

1. General Presentation
2. Individual presentation

GENERAL PRESENTATION

This has three parts:

1. Having generated the mind, why it is necessary to cultivate the trainings
2. Training in method and wisdom separately will not lead to enlightenment
3. The sequence of cultivating the trainings

1. HAVING GENERATED THE MIND, WHY IT IS NECESSARY TO CULTIVATE THE TRAININGS.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Merely generating the wishing or aspiring mind has, of course, great benefits, but it is impossible to attain enlightenment without making the perfections the essence of one's practice.

Generating the wishing or aspiring mind to achieve enlightenment definitely has great benefits, and one gains an incredible amount of merit from just generating that aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all

sentient beings. However that aspiring mind in itself will not be sufficient to become a cause to achieve enlightenment unless it is accompanied by the commitment to engage in the practice of perfections.

Hence one should engage in the practice of the perfections.

Then Gyaltsab Je provides some quotes:

From the *King of Concentration Sutra* :

Youth, therefore, make practice the essence. I shall explain why: For someone that makes practice the essence, the attainment of highest enlightenment is not difficult.

Furthermore the *Initial or First Stage of Meditation* states:

Thus, bodhisattvas that have generated bodhicitta, after having understood the subdued and the unsubdued, need to strongly engage into the trainings of practicing generosity and so forth. Without practice they will not attain enlightenment.

Practice here refers solely to the training concerning the vows, after one has taken them.

This is a reference to the bodhisattva vows.

2. TRAINING IN METHOD AND WISDOM SEPARATELY WILL NOT LEAD TO ENLIGHTENMENT

Under this heading Gyaltsab Je states:

The method for attaining enlightenment that one engages in must be an unmistakable method. A mistaken method will not bring about the desired result although one engages in effort.

This very meticulous explanation is quite clear. *A mistaken method will not bring about the desired result although one engages in effort* is emphasising that one needs to adopt an unmistakable method from the very beginning.

Then the commentary continues:

One's effort will also not bring about a result if the engaged method is incomplete, even though it is unmistakable. Therefore one needs to train in a complete, unmistakable method.

This is a prelude to what will be presented as the unmistakable and complete method for training.

Next, Gyaltsab Je quotes from the text, *Purification of Vairochana*,

The transcendental wisdom that knows all, the keeper of the secret, arose from the root of compassion, arose from the cause of bodhicitta, is the culmination of method.

Gyaltsab Je then explains the meaning of that quote:

As quoted, one goes beyond through great compassion, conventional and ultimate bodhicitta, and the method of generosity and the other perfections.

In order to go completely beyond to the state of enlightenment, one first needs develop great compassion. Then one realises conventional bodhicitta, followed by the realisation of ultimate bodhicitta, which is the wisdom realising emptiness. So basically method and wisdom are presented here with conventional bodhicitta and ultimate bodhicitta, and the following methods or trainings of generosity and the other perfections.

3. THE SEQUENCE OF CULTIVATING THE TRAININGS

Having explained the trainings in brief, how does one engage in those trainings sequentially?

¹ See the teaching of 26 March 2013.

² Introduced in the teaching of 2 July 2013.

³ Covered in chapter 4.

⁴ Covered in chapter 5.

Gyaltsab Je explains that:

Upon taking the wishing bodhicitta, one trains in the aspiration to engage into the trainings. Following this, one takes the bodhisattva vows, and then practises the trainings accordingly.

One first develops a *wishing* or aspiring *bodhicitta*, and with that one develops the commitment *to engage in the trainings*. Following this, one takes the *bodhisattva* vows and practises the *trainings* accordingly. So having first generated aspirational bodhicitta, one develops the wish to engage in the trainings. That is followed by the development of engaging bodhicitta, where one actually makes a commitment and takes the vows to train in the practices of perfections. That is how the sequence is presented.

Then Gyaltsab Je explains:

If the different types of trainings are summed up in accordance with the *Ornament of Mahayana Sutras*, then they are the six perfections.

The various practices and the many trainings a bodhisattva engages in can be subsumed into the six perfections. As explained here, this is *in accordance with the Ornament of Mahayana Sutra*. There is also an extensive explanation of this in the *Extensive Lam Rim*. It would be good for you to refer to that because having quoted the *Ornament of Mahayana Sutra* the commentary gives only a general presentation of why the practices of bodhisattvas are subsumed into the six perfections.

Gyaltsab Je begins this brief explanation with:

Six perfections are the definite number from the point of view of:

- Higher status.
- The two purposes
- The complete achievement of the welfare of others
- Containing all the Mahayana
- Complete path or method
- The three higher trainings

So the practice of the six perfections suffices for obtaining higher status, the two purposes and so forth. I have presented this in detail many times in the past.

The commentary presents this classification but does not go into much detail. So it would be good to refer to the explanations in the *Extensive Lam Rim* which will help to develop a better understanding of these points. If we can relate these classifications to the explanation in the *Extensive Lam Rim* then they will be quite clear. Otherwise it would take a lot of time to explain them. So it would be beneficial to refer to a more extensive explanation to gain a better understanding of what is being presented here. Those of you who have the *Extensive Lam Rim* can bring your book to class next week.

Indeed, if the *Bodhisattva's Way of Life* were to be explained in conjunction with the explanations in the Lam Rim teachings, the Madhyamika text, the tenets (which will be explained in the ninth chapter) and the Prajnaparamita text we could spend our entire life studying it. The *Bodhisattva's Way of Life* really subsumes all of the other texts, and what is referred to here in passing is explained in greater detail in these other texts. Because it covers all the meaning of all of the other texts, one could spend a very long time going through this text in detail.

It is really good to read and develop a familiarity with the *Extensive Lam Rim*, which many of you have. It was composed with the intent of subduing the mind, and there is

no more supreme text for subduing the mind. If we read it and become familiar with its explanations it will definitely help to settle down and subdue our mind, and we will notice that any sort of upheaval in the mind will naturally subside.

Dr Tony Hammond, who used to come to study group, used to mention that without engaging in studying in this way we might be similar to a long life god. Do you recall why the long life gods are considered to be in a state without leisure? It is because they spend their entire existence absorbed in a worldly meditative concentration and don't have the time to practise Dharma. That is why they are an example of someone who does not have the leisure to practise Dharma.

This indicates that just engaging in some sort of gross or worldly concentration is not sufficient. It will not suffice as engaging in the real practice of holy Dharma as it does not help to subdue the mind. This is an important point.

Shantideva is really exhorting us to engage in the real practice of Dharma. I try to emphasise this essential point again and again, with the intention that you might actually pay heed to this advice and use your understanding and knowledge for the practice of subduing the mind. Otherwise, if we don't make any effort now when we have the opportunity, our mind will remain unruly and unsubdued for an infinite period of time. These are really important points that we need to keep in mind.

If being absorbed in some meditative concentration brings some sort of bliss then we cannot say that it has no benefit at all. It does have some temporary benefit, but it won't help to actually subdue the delusions. So it cannot be a cause for liberation; indeed, it enhances the conditions to remain in cyclic existence for a longer time. I am relating all this to you as a friend who has genuine concern for your wellbeing!

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་པའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

27 May 2014

Based on the motivation that we have already generated during the recitation, we can now engage in the meditation practice. (*pause for meditation*)

We can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

When one generates this motivation, even as an aspiration, we can see how incredible and expansive the thought: "in order to benefit all sentient beings, I, myself, will need to achieve enlightenment" actually is. One individual being thinking of all sentient beings and meditating for their wellbeing is really wonderful, and a powerful means to accumulate extensive merit.

From our last session we are at the point where it states:

If the different types of trainings are summed up in accordance with the *Ornament of Mahayana Sutras*, then there are the six perfections.

All the practices of the bodhisattvas can be subsumed into the six perfections. In other words, there is no practice which does not fit into the category of the six perfections.

The six perfections are the definite number from the point of view of higher status.

The six perfections serve as a means for obtaining higher status. If one were to ask: "why do bodhisattvas need to obtain higher status?", then it is because engaging in the bodhisattva's deeds to perfect their practices can take up to many lifetimes. So, in order to be able to practice continuously with the conducive conditions in all future lifetimes, the excellence of high status is needed. There are four excellences of high status: excellent body; excellent resources; excellent entourage; and excellent activities or actions.

The practices of the six perfections serving as causes to obtain these excellences are also referred to in the early parts of the *Extensive Lam Rim*:

In particular, to obtain complete leisure and opportunity requires many roots of virtue, such as having a foundation of pure ethical discipline, augmenting it with generosity and the like, and when dying making a connection with your next lifetime through stainless aspirational prayers.

For bodhisattvas to continuously train in the practices to achieve enlightenment, they need to have a good basis (sound body) in all successive life times. While we may not yet be able to engage in the practices of the six perfections to the extent of a bodhisattva, we can however practise a similitude of the six perfections. So, as

explained in the teachings the specific cause for obtaining a *good body* is the practice of *morality*.

Just having the excellent base of a sound body is not sufficient, one also needs *good resources* to sustain one's body. So, *generosity* is a specific cause for obtaining good resources such as wealth and so forth.

Furthermore, it is not sufficient just to have good resources, if one lacks good companions. Thus, a good *entourage* (excellent companions) are also required as a necessary condition to engage in the practices. The specific cause for obtaining excellent companions is the practice of *patience*.

Finally, in order to obtain what one wishes to achieve, one needs to have the excellence of *activities*. Because reaping the fruit of any activity is dependent on the completion of that activity, one needs to conduct excellent activities. The cause which for excellence of activities is *joyous effort* or enthusiasm.

Thus, these four are called the four excellences. Having acquired them one needs to ensure they do not become causes for afflictions to arise, so the next two perfections are presented as a means to prevent that. This is an essential point because for us in our situation, we will find that whenever we acquire these excellences they can very readily become a cause for afflictions to manifest. For a practitioner aspiring to achieve enlightenment, if the excellences become a cause for afflictions to arise, then it will defeat the very purpose of one's endeavours to achieve that state. So the next two perfections, concentration and wisdom become the specific causes that prevent the excellences or good conditions from becoming a cause for afflictions to arise. *Concentration* is the means to control or subdue the mind and will prevent manifest afflictions from arising. *Wisdom* (which encompasses analytical wisdom) allows one to recognise and distinguish between what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded and so stops afflictions from developing further; ultimately removing them from their very root.

Each of the six perfections has a specific result. If one were to ask "what is the result of having practiced morality?" the positive result is explained precisely. Likewise this is the case with generosity, patience etc. The specific results to be reaped by engaging in the six perfections are explained in detail in the teachings.

The point here is that we need to be mindful that our practices (e.g. meditation) do not become the means to escalate the afflictions in our mind. A practitioner such as a bodhisattva uses the practice of concentration as the supreme means to overcome the delusions and afflictions in their mind. In our situation, if we are not mindful of our practice of (for example) meditation, it is very easy the delusions, such as pride, competitiveness, jealousy and so forth to escalate. Rather than the practice becoming a means to subdue the mind it becomes the means to further strengthen the delusions, which is a disgrace. This is an important point to bear in mind. Of course if we don't pay heed to this cautionary advice, then it is mere words and we would not get any benefit.

So, if it is possible for practices such as meditation to serve as means to further enhance the eight worldly

concerns, then one needs to be really mindful. From when I was quite young I have paid particular attention to the practice of meditation. When I analyse and look back now, I notice that there were definitely taints of worldly concerns in the early years. However these days I can assure you I am quite free from that. I'm declaring to you openly what I feel is true for myself, which is what His Holiness the Dalai Lama has repeatedly encouraged us to do.

Explanations on the six perfections are clearly and extensively explained in Lama Tsong Khapa's *Extensive Lam Rim*, so please take the initiative to read the text. It specifically covers the way each perfection serves as a specific cause to acquire a specific result, and serves as a good condition to further enhance our practice. It also explains that if one were to be missing any of these good conditions, then that becomes an obstacle for one's practice.

The six perfections are the definite number from the point of view of the two purposes

Bodhisattvas have made the pledge to work for the welfare of all sentient beings, and aspire to achieve enlightenment for that purpose. The bodhisattvas' purpose for engaging in practice is two-fold: to fully actualise one's own ultimate potential and to benefit other sentient beings.

Generosity becomes a most important practice to benefit others. The first means of fulfilling others' purposes is to benefit others by providing material wealth, including food and clothing; then grant them with the wealth of dharma knowledge. Providing material assistance will make them more receptive to receiving the ultimate help of the Dharma. If one is generous to others but harms them at the same time, then while some benefit may remain from the generosity, most of it will be nullified. So while engaging in the practices of generosity, one must refrain from harming the beings to whom one has been generous by using the practice of morality—this is the most essential element for accomplishing pure benefit without harm.

While one may successfully refrain from harming others, they may cause us harm; but if one retaliates, then again, one will be harming them. Even if initially one didn't have any intention to harm them, when one retaliates they will be harmed. So, to prevent oneself from retaliating and bear harms upon oneself, one needs to practise *patience*. As such the practice of patience is most essential in order to willingly accept harms inflicted by others.

The text explains one must acquire *wisdom* to obtain liberation and freedom. For wisdom to assist one achieve liberation, one has to be free from a distracted mind because if one is distracted one will not be able to utilise wisdom. The practice which serves as an aid to free oneself from distractions is *concentration*, which refers here to the concentration of being able to focus on an object for as long as one wishes, i.e. the state of calm abiding. Thus, this level of single-pointed concentration supported by the wisdom realising emptiness becomes the supreme means to achieve liberation.

One cannot possibly develop concentration and cultivate wisdom if one is affected by laziness. So the optimum means to overcome laziness is to practice *joyous effort* or enthusiasm. This is how the practices of the six perfections are meticulously presented as the means to fulfil both purposes.

The six perfections are the definite number from the point of view of complete achievement of the welfare of others.

The *Extensive Lam Rim* presents:

You first relieve others' poverty by giving away material goods. Then you do no harm to any living being and, in addition, are patient with harm done to you. Without becoming dispirited you joyously persevere at helping those who harm you. You depend on meditative stabilisation and inspire them through displaying supernormal powers and so forth. When they become suitable vessels for the teachings, you rely on wisdom and give good explanations, cut through their doubts and thereby bring them to liberation. Because you do all this, the perfections are fixed as six in number.

As explained, to relieve others from the suffering of poverty one first helps others with the practice of *generosity*, by providing them with material goods. To prevent oneself from harming them one needs to practise *morality*. That which serves as the means to protect oneself from other's harm is *patience*. As there is the danger of losing one's patience if one feels daunted or overwhelmed when facing the harm by others, one needs to practise *joyous effort* so that one doesn't give up benefiting others.

When one obtains the ability to perform miraculous feats which is depended on the practice of *concentration*, one can then enchant others and draw them close to you. Thus when others become the perfect recipients for receiving Dharma teachings, by relying on *wisdom*, the bodhisattva can then provide the clear explanations that completely eliminates all doubts and leads them to the state of liberation.

This, then, is how the six perfections serve as a means for the complete achievement of the welfare of others.

The six perfections are the definite number from the point of view of containing all the Mahayana

As further presented in the *Extensive Lam Rim*:

You are indifferent to resources because you are not attached to those you have and do not pursue those you lack. Since you then have the ability to safeguard precepts, you adopt and respect ethical discipline. You are patient with the suffering that comes from living beings and inanimate things, and you are enthusiastic about whatever virtue you set out to cultivate, so you do not get dispirited by either of these. You cultivate a non-discursive yoga of meditative serenity and a non-discursive yoga of insight. These six comprise all the Mahayana practices through which you advance by the six perfections, for you accomplish these practices in stages by means of the six perfections and you do not need any more than these six perfections.

The text explains that when one practices supreme *generosity*, one can become detached from the resources one already has and will not engage in pursuing resources which one lacks. In other words, one is content

with what one has. With that ability one can safeguard one's practices of *morality* so they become purer. Basically, it becomes a supreme practice for having less desire and being content, hence one becomes an object of respect. Based on the achievements of the earlier practices, when one engages in *patience* one is able to endure the suffering caused by other sentient beings or inanimate objects. Because one is able to endure these sufferings, that is be *enthusiastic* or joyous in one's virtues, that is how the practice of patience induces joyous effort.

As explained in the text:

You are enthusiastic about whatever virtue you set out to cultivate so you do not become dispirited by either of these.

Furthermore, you cultivate a non-discursive yoga of meditative *concentration*, which is the state of clam abiding, and the *wisdom* of special insight. These six then comprise all the Mahayana practices, through which you advance by the six perfections.

The six perfections are the definite number from the point of view of the complete path or method

The *Extensive Lam Rim* presents:

The path—i.e., method—for not being attached to the resources that are your possessions is generosity, because you become free from attachment to your things by becoming habituated to giving them away.

The text explains meticulously that the supreme means to overcome attachment to one's own possessions is by actually giving them away. When you are *generous* with your own possessions it becomes the method for overcoming attachment to them.

The text continues:

The method for restraining yourself from the distraction of trying to possess what you do not possess is ethical discipline, for when you maintain a monk's vows, you do not have all the distractions of making a living.

What is being explained here is that ethics or *morality* is the best basis for preventing one from having distractions in one's mind.

As mentioned earlier, within the three trainings the first is morality because by engaging in the practice of morality it will reduce the gross levels of our distractions. Then when one is free from the gross distractions, through the practice of *concentration* one can then further enhance the ability in one's mind, overcoming more subtle distractions.

The text continues:

The method for not abandoning living beings is patience, because you do not despair at the suffering caused by the harm others inflict.

The reason we would feel discouraged and abandon working for the benefit of sentient beings is when we lose our patience. When we are unable to endure hardships, either when others harm us or due to our own sufferings, then that experience may cause us to give up helping beings. So, the practice of *patience* protects one from this.

The text continues:

The method to increase virtues is joyous perseverance, because you increase them when you joyously persevere at what you undertake.

If someone were to state "I really want to practice meditation", or "I really want to study. How can I best do that? What is the best method?", then the text explains that the best method is to develop *joyous effort* or enthusiasm, which becomes the supreme method to increase one's ability to practice and study.

The text continues:

The methods for clearing away obscurations are the final two perfections, because meditative stabilisation clears away the afflictions and wisdom clears away the cognitive obscurations. Thus the perfections are fixed as six in number.

As explained, *meditative stabilisation* clears away the afflictions and *wisdom* clears away the cognitive obscurations or the obscuration to omniscience. Thus as the text states, the perfections are fixed as six in numbers.

The six perfections are the definite number from the point of view of the three higher trainings

The *Extensive Lam Rim* explains:

The nature of the training in ethical discipline [the first of the three trainings] is the practice of ethical discipline.

The precondition of the training in ethical discipline is generosity, because once you have generosity that is indifferent to resources, you can properly adopt an ethical discipline.

This is similar to what was explained earlier: through *generosity*, when one has less attachments and more contentment, it becomes easier for one to actually practice discipline or *morality*.

The Lam Rim text continues:

The aid to the training in ethical discipline is patience, because the patience of not retaliating when scolded, etc. safeguards your properly adopted ethical discipline.

Patience here refers to an aid to training in ethical discipline. The verse explains how they are all interrelated—to practice one needs the base of the others as well.

The Lam Rim text continues:

Meditative stabilisation is the training of mind [the second training, the training of meditative concentration], and *wisdom* is the training in wisdom [the third training]. As for *joyous perseverance*, it is included in all three trainings, so the perfections are fixed at six in number.

This concurs with Gyaltsab Je's commentary of the *Bodhicharyavatara* which lists the six reasons of why the six perfections are definite in number and we have covered all of them.

CAUSE, NATURE, DIVISION, MEANING OF THE NAME AND RESULT OF THE SIX PERFECTIONS

Gyaltsab Je's commentary presents the six perfections under the headings: Cause, Nature, Division, Meaning of the Name, Result of the Six Perfections. Again, the actual practices of the six perfections are those that only a

bodhisattva or true Mahayana practitioners will possess as they are practices which have to be combined with bodhicitta (as explained later). However at our level, even though we have not actually developed bodhicitta, and our practice may not be an actual practice of the perfection of generosity etc., to whatever extent we can engage in the practices, we can say that we have a similitude of the practice of the six perfections within ourselves now.

CAUSE

Under this heading Gyaltsab Je states:

It is bodhicitta that is held by method and wisdom and focuses on the three baskets of the Mahayana teachings and depends on the special Mahayana lineage and the condition of a Mahayana teacher.

Bodhicitta is the cause for the practices of the six perfections. Take the example of generosity, whether our level of generosity becomes a practice of the perfection of generosity or not is dependent on whether we have the conditions in ourselves or not. So if we find that we lack the condition, then of course our practice of generosity will not be an actual perfection of generosity.

NATURE

Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

The nature of generosity is the virtuous mind of giving and all the actions of body and speech that arise from it.

The definition of generosity is the virtuous mind that wishes to give.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

Morality is contained in the thought of abandoning harm to others and abandoning sole personal liberation.

Harm here refers to the ten non-virtuous actions. The first seven of these encompass the three of the body (killing, stealing and sexual misconduct), the fourth is speech (allowing harmful or divisive speech and idle gossip), all of which cause direct harm to others. The basis is in the three non-virtues of the mind (covetousness, harmful intent and wrong views).

Morality contains the actual deeds, and the causes of those negative deeds towards others, as well as abandoning sole personal liberation. While sole liberation is not an abandonment for those following the lower vehicle, for a bodhisattva sole liberation is definitely something which has to be abandoned. If bodhisattvas do not protect themselves from the thought of self-liberation they will degenerate their bodhicitta. Therefore protecting themselves from sole liberation is part of their ethical practice.

In brief, *the definition of morality is the mind that restrains from harming others.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

Patience is a mind that abides in its natural state, unaffected by harm and suffering and also strongly abides in the dharma.

Patience as a mind that abides in its natural state refers to being able to remain in a natural or calm state in the face of harm or suffering. Other texts define patience as a mind which does not become troubled in the face of harm and

sufferings. Patience has three types: not being disturbed in the face of harm; or sufferings; and strongly, i.e. definitely, abiding in the Dharma.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

Enthusiasm is the joy of accumulating virtue and achieving the purpose of sentient beings and the actions of the three doors which arise from it.

Enthusiasm or joyous effort is the state of mind which takes joy in accumulating virtue. Thus when one derives joy from accumulating virtue, then naturally the actions that arise from the three doors (mainly body, speech and mind) are in accordance with benefitting others and overcoming negativities.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

Mental stabilisation is the single pointed abiding on a virtuous object.

To the statement *mental stabilisation is the single-pointed abiding on a virtuous object* some texts add *from its own side*, meaning through its own power. This carries more weight.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

Wisdom is the discerning that occurs upon analysing ultimate and conventional objects.

DIVISIONS

Generosity has [three sub-divisions:] generosity of the Dharma; material generosity; and generosity of fearlessness.

The generosity of fearlessness refers to protecting the lives of other beings.

Morality has [three sub-divisions:] the morality of vows (observing vows); accumulating virtue and achieving the welfare of others.

There are actually eleven ways of achieving the welfare of others as the divisions of morality encompass all the virtuous deeds of a bodhisattva. The *morality of the vows* and the *morality of accumulating virtue* relates to fulfilling one's own ultimate purpose while the morality of achieving the welfare of others is fulfilling the purpose of other beings. As Lama Tsong Khapa mentions in the prayer *Foundation Of All Good Qualities*:

Even if I develop bodhicitta, but don't practice the three types of morality,
I will not achieve enlightenment.
With the clear recognition of this,
Please bless me to practice the bodhisattva vows with great energy.

These are really essential points to keep in mind. The morality of vows is also presented as the morality of restraining from faults.

Patience has [three subdivisions:] the patience of thinking nothing of being harmed by others; tolerating one's suffering; and definitely abiding in the Dharma.

In the first division of patience, what is being emphasised is not allowing one's mind to be disturbed when others harm oneself. This implies willingly enduring or willingly accepting harm from others; when one is able to do this then it does not cause one's mind to become disturbed, and thus harm others by retaliating.

In the second division, tolerating one's suffering, again being able to willingly bear or accept the sufferings becomes a means for one's mind not to become disturbed. These are important points for one's practice. Indeed, for whatever one wishes to achieve because whatever one's endeavours, there are bound to be hardships and difficulties, and if one is not able to endure them or accept them, then it can cause the mind to become daunted and the mind can start to get upset and angry.

Enthusiasm has [three divisions:] armour-like enthusiasm; enthusiasm in accumulating virtue; and enthusiasm in achieving the welfare of sentient beings.

Mental stabilisation has [three divisions:] mental stabilisation to abide in happiness in this life; for achieving qualities; and for accomplishing the welfare of sentient beings.

Wisdom has [three divisions:] the wisdom which realises the ultimate; the conventional; and the actions for the benefit of sentient beings.

THE MEANING OF THE NAME

In Sanskrit the word for generosity is *dhana*. You will notice some temples have *dhana* written on the donation box as a way to encourage generosity when making offerings. Here:

Dhana means to willingly give up that which is to be offered, hence generosity.

Shila means to cool the heat and misery of the afflictions, hence morality.

Patience because of being patient with aggression. In Tibetan the term *sopa* has the connotation of bearing or to tolerate aggression.

Enthusiasm because of training for the highest.

Mental stabilisation because of mentally holding.

Wisdom because of knowing the ultimate.

RESULTS

As explained in *Precious Garland*:

From giving there arises wealth, from ethics happiness,
From patience a good appearance, from joyous effort
[effort in] virtue, brilliance,
From concentration peace, from wisdom liberation,
From compassion all aims are achieved.

The result of *generosity* is that one will obtain wealth, and the result of *morality* is that one will obtain the happiness of the high status.

As a result of *patience*, one will obtain a good complexion,
As a result of practising patience, one obtains lustre and a good appearance.

As a result of joyous effort one obtains virtuous brilliance.

As a result of practising *concentration*, one obtains a subdued mind.

As a result of practising *wisdom*, one obtains liberation or a liberated mind.

With compassion one obtains the two purposes which encompass one's own purpose and the purpose of benefitting others.

Having explained how the six perfections serve as a means for obtaining all these excellences, if we were to ask ourselves, "would I like to have these good

conditions?", our answer would definitely be "Yes! I would like to have these good conditions, all these excellences".

Again, we might not yet be capable of engaging in the actual perfections of these practices, but we do have the capacity to practice a similitude of them to the best of our ability, so to that extent it is most meaningful and most worthwhile for oneself. When it is accompanied by the right (altruistic) motivation then it definitely becomes a really meaningful practice.

As Gyalsab Je's commentary presents:

The nature, division and so forth of the six perfections should be ascertained more extensively from the *Small* and *Great Stages of the Path*. The way of practising them is explained extensively here in this text.

To understand a more extensive presentation of the nature, division and so forth one would need to refer to the *Extensive Lam Rim* teachings. However as the commentary states, the way to practice is presented in this very text in the following verses.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བལྟས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

3 June 2014

Based on the motivation we generated in the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer* that we have just recited we can now engage in the practice of meditation. [meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings, and put them into practice well.

In our last session we covered a general presentation of the way of training in the six perfections. A lot of material was presented then, and it is good to keep it in mind as we cover the individual presentations of each of the perfections.

INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION

CHAPTER 5 EXPLAINING THE WAY OF TRAINING IN MORALITY BY RELATING IT TO INTROSPECTION AND MINDFULNESS, THE METHODS FOR KEEPING VIRTUOUS DHARMAS PURE

There are two parts to the chapter:

- I. Explaining the text of the chapter
- II. Explaining the name of the chapter

I. EXPLAINING THE TEXT OF THE CHAPTER

This has two subdivisions:

1. Explaining extensively how to practice
2. Concluding summary showing that one has to practice the meaning and not just the words

1. EXPLAINING EXTENSIVELY HOW TO PRACTICE

This is subdivided into four sections.

- 1.1. Guarding the mind as a method for guarding the training
- 1.2. Guarding mindfulness and introspection as methods for guarding the mind.
- 1.3. Practice of guarding the mind with mindfulness and introspection
- 1.4. Method for perfecting the trainings

With these outlines, we need to take note of how meticulously the material is being presented. If we pay particular attention to this, we will notice that we are being presented with a supreme technique for meditation practice. We may assume that we are meditating, but if we fail to apply these points, we are not actually meditating properly.

1.1. Guarding the mind as a method for guarding the training

As most of us have taken many vows and agreed to comply with certain commitments, this section presents the trainings on how to protect our vows and commitments.

There are three sub-divisions:

- 1.1.1. By protecting the mind all will be protected
- 1.1.2. The reason for this
- 1.1.3. Striving in guarding the mind

1.1.1. By protecting the mind all will be protected.

This is again subdivided into three:

- 1.1.1.1. Showing in brief the necessity of protecting one's mind
- 1.1.1.2. The fault of degenerating the mind
- 1.1.1.3. The benefits of protecting the mind

1.1.1.1. SHOWING IN BRIEF THE NECESSITY OF PROTECTING ONE'S MIND

This is presented in the first verse of the chapter:

1. *They who wish to protect the trainings
Protect the mind after focusing it strongly.
Without protecting this mind
It is impossible to protect the trainings.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

They who wish to protect the trainings of generosity and the other perfections from degeneration must strongly focus their mind on the trainings, and then protect the mind from wandering off to mistaken objects.

This explanation is in fact a personal instruction. As mentioned here, those *who wish to protect the trainings of generosity and the other perfections from degeneration must strongly focus their mind on the trainings, and protect the mind from wandering off to mistaken objects.*

Basically, those who wish to engage in the trainings such as the six perfections—generosity and so forth—as well as the three higher trainings—the trainings of morality, training of concentration and the training of wisdom, need to protect their minds. For example, those who wish to train in morality must definitely protect their minds, likewise those who wish to train in concentration and wisdom also need to protect their minds.

One needs to understand what protecting the mind means in this context. Here it specifically relates to protecting the mind from being influenced by the delusions that obstruct one's training. With respect to the six perfections, if one's mind is influenced by the delusion of miserliness then there is no way one can practise generosity. If one's mind is influenced by corrupt ethics, then there is no way one can practise pure ethics or morality. If the mind is influenced by anger then one cannot practise patience. If one's mind is influenced by laziness then again there is no way that one can practise joyous effort. If the mind is influenced by distraction and excitement, then it cannot engage in the training of the perfection of concentration, and if the mind is influenced by corrupt wisdom then one is not able to practise wisdom properly.

This is how we need to understand the need to protect the mind from the delusions. You will have noticed that when I introduce the meditation technique I always emphasise that meditation is a method for protecting the mind, and why it is important to do that. Some of you might wonder why I emphasise this point again and again. The reasons that I share it with you are precisely as presented here. I place great importance on these points because, as explained here, it definitely relates to the core practice.

I have said many times that there is a difference between protecting the mind and restraining the mind. You might have taken notes, although if you just left it on the paper as notes then I don't know if you will recall it. Restraining the mind means to make the effort, from the very beginning, not to allow the mind to be influenced by the delusions. Protecting the mind means to take notice when the mind is being influenced by delusions, at which point one

immediately applies antidotes to turn the mind away from them.

As the commentary mentions, *if one does not focus the mind strongly on the trainings and protect the mind from wandering off to mistaken objects*, then it is impossible to engage in the trainings such as generosity and so forth. We should follow the example of the Kadampa masters who, as mentioned previously, practised protecting the mind in the form of a dialogue with the delusions. 'When you are strong, I will apply the antidote to combat you with great force. When you relax then I will also relax'. That is the scope of one's attack on the delusions. If one relaxes when the delusions are strong they will overpower the mind and, as one has not protected the mind, one will be unable to apply the actual training or practice.

This is a really succinct point about meditation as well as the practice of Dharma. As I have mentioned previously, meditation and the practice of Dharma really come down to the same point. Meditation, as I explain regularly, protects the mind from being influenced by the delusions, by keeping it focussed on a virtuous object. Likewise the practice of Dharma protects the mind from the delusions, by withholding the mind from negativities and mistaken conceptions. That measure of withholding the mind from following misconceptions and mistaken views is called the practice of Dharma. As you can see, my regular explanation on these points is similar to the very point that Shantideva is presenting here—if one does not protect the mind from wondering off and from focusing on mistaken objects then it is impossible to engage in the trainings.

This succinct point is an explanation of the meaning of training or practising Dharma, and the meaning of meditation.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

If one does not protect the mind from wandering off, then it becomes impossible to protect the trainings.

Here *wandering off* specifically implies that the mind is being influenced by the deluded distractions. If one does not protect the mind from this then the consequence is that it will be impossible to actually protect one's training, meaning that one will not be able to apply the trainings or the practices of the Dharma.

We should keep these explanations in mind whenever we refer to the text or read it, as a way to be mindful and contemplate the main points. The reason to contemplate these points is so that when the delusions arise we will be able to immediately recall that following these delusions will cause one to lapse from one's training and practice. It is when we notice the delusions arising that we need to apply particular attention and apply the methods for protecting one's mind.

The delusions that we need to protect ourselves from were explained in detail in the earlier chapter which identified the delusions, their faults and so forth.

1.1.1.2. The fault of degenerating the mind

This relates to the faults that arise from allowing the trainings to degenerate as a result of the influence of the delusions on the mind. The verse relating to this reads:

2. *Letting the elephant mind wander
Creates harm beyond pain.
The unsubdued crazed elephant
Does not do as much damage here.*

Gyaltsab Je's explanation of this verse in his commentary reads:

Letting the crazed elephant mind wander off to mistaken objects creates the harm beyond pain of the *naraks* [hell realms]. The normal unsubdued and crazed elephant does not create as much suffering here in this world. Hence one should strive in protecting the mind.

The explanation here is quite clear. However to give some further clarification, the state of our mind is presented here as being analogous to a crazed, untamed elephant. If an untamed elephant is let loose it will cause a lot of havoc. Likewise, if we allow our mind to just wander off towards objects of delusion then that will create a lot of harm. The harm that it causes is, of course, not only the sufferings in this life, but also in our future existence, such as the sufferings in the hell realm. Some may think, 'What's wrong in allowing the mind to just wander off and become distracted? How could a distracted mind possibly harm oneself?' This presentation explains that the consequence of allowing the mind to wander off and be distracted by mistaken objects, or objects of delusions, is that it will cause great sufferings, in this life and future lives.

When the commentary states, *the normal unsubdued crazed elephant does not create as much suffering here in this world*, it is referring to stories about untamed elephants being given intoxicants like alcohol to make them even wilder, and then letting them loose in battle. They cause a lot of damage which can be used to overpower the enemy. In the analogy here, an elephant that is already untamed is given mind-altering substances such as alcohol or drugs. When an elephant in such a crazed state is let loose it can cause lot of damage.

The implication here is that the damage will at worst be physical damage to the environment, the buildings and people, who might be crushed and lose limbs, or even die. However such a crazed elephant cannot bring about the intense sufferings of the hell realm. In comparison, as mentioned previously, the consequences of allowing a mind to become distracted by the delusions are much more severe, not only in this life, but in the immeasurable sufferings of lower realms, such as the hell realm, in future lifetimes.

By reflecting on this illustration, and really thinking about the gravity of the consequences of having an unsubdued distracted mind, the conclusion, as presented here, is that *hence one should strive in protecting the mind*. We could elaborate on how the mind is like an untamed elephant, but this should be sufficient for now.

1.1.1.3. The benefits of protecting the mind

Having first explained the faults of not protecting the mind, one might wonder, 'Well, what is the benefit of protecting the mind? Does protecting the mind have any benefits?' So we can see that this is a very systematic and logical presentation which relates well to our normal state of mind, with its many queries and doubts. These doubts are being systematically addressed one after another. So we can see that this is a really marvellous presentation.

The benefits of protecting the mind is explained in two subdivisions:

- 1.1.1.3.1. In brief
- 1.1.1.3.2. Extensive

1.1.1.3.1. In brief

The relevant verse reads:

3. *If one tightly fastens the elephant of the mind
Comprehensively with the rope of mindfulness,
All dangers become completely non-existent
And all virtues will come into one's hand.*

This explanation is similar to that in the *Essence of the Middle Way*.

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

Through tying the crazed elephant mind to the virtuous object by tying all one's actions of body, speech and mind comprehensively with the rope of mindfulness, all the general dangers of this life and the next become non-existent, and all the virtues of the practices of the three types of beings of the graduated path to enlightenment fall naturally into one's hand.

Therefore, one should never let one's mindfulness of the virtuous object degenerate.

The mind is analogous to the crazed untamed elephant; The virtuous object is analogous to the pillar to which you would tie the elephant so that it does not cause havoc; The rope to tie the crazed elephant is analogous to mindfulness.

What one is binding to the pillar is one's mind as well the three doors of body, speech and mind.

If one were to apply mindfulness as a means to bind our crazed, untamed mind to a virtuous object then *all the general dangers of this life and the next become non-existent, and all the virtues of the practices of the three types of beings of the graduated path to enlightenment fall naturally into one's hand*. This is implying that one will naturally be able to engage in all of the practices of the three scopes.

So we can see how wonderful this text really is, as it presents the essential practices for meditation and Dharma practice.

One needs to take particular notice of the essential meaning of this presentation. The object to which one binds one's mind with mindfulness, is not any random object; as specified here it has to be a virtuous object. If it were possible to subdue our mind by being mindful of any object, there would be no need for the text to specify that it needs to be a virtuous object. So the essential point being presented here is that the meditation object has to be a virtuous object if it is to serve as an antidote to overcome negativities.

In summary, the commentary states, *therefore one should never let one's mindfulness on the virtuous object degenerate*. This is an essential instruction. I regularly emphasise when I introduce meditation that meditation is the optimum means to protect one's mind. The specific emphasis here is that one should never let one's mindfulness of the virtuous object degenerate or lapse. Applying mindfulness means that during the meditation session one will be able to protect one's mind from mistaken conceptions and views, and delusions. Then, through that familiarity with mindfulness during the meditation practice, one will be able to maintain that awareness of the virtuous object, even when one has come out of the formal meditation sessions.

As we familiarise ourselves with the virtuous object throughout the day, and the following days and weeks and months, then due to that familiarity we will naturally be able to recall the virtuous object at the end of our life when we come to our death. As explained in the teachings, if, at the time of death one's mind is in a virtuous state then there is no possibility of taking rebirth in the lower realms. This is how we need to see the way in which our everyday practices are related to the crucial juncture of passing on from this life to the next.

By engaging in practice through being mindful of the virtuous object we are able to take the essence of our precious human life and make it meaningful. Of course the optimum way to make our life meaningful is to create the causes for enlightenment, next best is liberation, and at the very least we take a good rebirth in our next lifetime with all the good conditions.

What we can derive from this explanation is that protecting our mind from delusions lies within our own hands. If we take the initiative to apply mindfulness then we can actually protect our mind from the influence of the negativities, delusions and so forth. Protecting one's mind protects one from immediate external dangers, as well as from future sufferings. That is what is being explained here.

1.1.1.3.2. *Extensive*

The extensive explanation reads:

4. *Tigers, lions, elephants and evil spirits,
Snakes and all other enemies,
The guard of sentient beings in the hells,
Evil mantras [or sorcerers] and likewise blood
drinkers [or blood thirsty demons],*
5. *Simply by fastening this mind
They all become controlled.
Solely by subduing the mind
They all become subdued.*

The commentary on this verse explains:

It is appropriate to fasten the mind to a virtuous object. By subduing the mind one overcomes all dangers such as tigers, lions, crazy elephants, evil spirits, snakes, and all human enemies. One also overcomes the looming danger of the guards of the sentient beings in hell, those that harm others with evil mantras such as sorcerers, as well as the harm of the different types of spirits called blood thirsty demons and the like. Stopping the cause for any threat in this way, solely by fastening the mind with the rope of mindfulness completely to a virtuous meditation object, equals binding all dangers, and one will not be harmed in the least.

Solely subduing the mind with mindfulness and introspection, and thus stopping engagement in negative actions, equals subduing all dangers. Therefore one should strive in subduing the mind.

While this presentation is quite clear, the point that we can derive here is that *stopping the cause for any threat in this way solely by fastening the mind with the rope of mindfulness completely to a virtuous meditation object, equals binding all dangers*. In other words, fastening our mind to a virtuous object will protect us from all the other dangers mentioned earlier, *and one will not be harmed in the least*.

Other texts explain that harms, like those mentioned earlier, will not befall upon someone who observes ethics purely. The concluding exhortation is that *subduing the mind solely by mindfulness and introspection, and thus stopping engagement in negative actions, equals subduing all dangers*. Therefore one should strive in subduing the mind.

1.1.1.2. THE REASON FOR THIS

This is presented in two subdivisions:

- 1.1.1.2.1. Faults depend on the mind
- 1.1.1.2.2. Qualities depend on the mind

1.1.1.2.1. *Faults depend on the mind*

This is a presentation showing that both faults and qualities are dependent on the mind itself. The way the faults are

dependent on the mind is presented under three subheadings:

1.1.1.2.1.1 Quotes

These are unmistakable citations from the sutras, from the teacher himself

1.1.1.2.1.2. Reason

1.1.1.2.1.3. Summary

1.1.1.2.1.1. Quotes

The verse that relates to this section is:

6. *That all dangers
And the boundless sufferings
Arise from the mind
Is shown with faultless quotation.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

One's experiences of dangers and sufferings are created by one's own mind. The reason is because all dangers and the boundless suffering of this life and future lives arise from one's own negative mind; this is said by the Able One, who explained faultlessly and perfectly all objects of knowledge.

Gyaltsab Je first states that *one's experiences of dangers and sufferings are created by one's own mind. The reason is that all dangers and the boundless suffering of this life and future lives arise from one's own negative mind. All dangers and sufferings that we experience are created by one's mind, because all the dangers and boundless sufferings of this life and future lives arise from one's own negative mind. This was said by the Able One (Buddha Shakyamuni) who explained faultlessly the objects of knowledge.* Then the commentary gives a number of quotations:

As he said in the *Sutra of Clouds of Jewels*:

If one controls one's mind one controls all phenomena.

He also said:

Whether it is virtue or virtuous karma, it is accumulated by the mind.

He also said:

The mind precedes all phenomena. If one knows the mind well, one knows all phenomena well.

Also from the *Perfect Compendium of Phenomena*:

All phenomena depend on the mind.

The Buddha also said that a subdued mind is a happy mind.

1.1.1.2.1.2. Reason

7. *The weapons of the hell beings,
Who made them with purpose?
Who made the burning iron ground?
From whence did the burning inferno arise?*

8ab *All the likes of these
Arose from negativity, taught the Able One.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning of these lines:

If the sufferings that are experienced by sentient beings in the hells, and elsewhere, do not arise from the person's own preceding negative mind, then who forged purposefully the weapons of the hell guardians, these swords, spears and so on? These were not made purposefully by a creator god, nor were they made purposefully by someone else. Who created the burning iron ground, who created the hosts of females that cause one to climb and fall off the crystal mountain? There is no other cause or creator.

The points at the beginning are quite easy to understand, the emphasis being that these *sufferings of the hell realms and elsewhere were not made purposely by a creator god, and nor were they made purposely by someone else.* If we were to take the example of this very building, it was created by someone else, and then we partake of the good conditions here. However, unlike the physical conditions that we experience in this world, the various types of hell realms are said to be created by none other than one's own mind. It is not as if someone specifically created the hell realms for someone else to take us there. It is actually the creation of our own mind. The point made in answer to the opening rhetorical question is that *there is no such god which created these sufferings realms, nor were they made by someone else.*

Then the commentary asks, *Who created the burning iron ground, who created the hosts of females that cause one to climb and fall off the crystal mountain?* Those of you who are familiar with the explanations presented in the Lam Rim teachings will recall the specific hellish state where, due to one's own negative actions in the past, in particular severe, lustful attachment to women resulting in sexual misconduct, one would have visions of women on top of a mountain calling out to you. As you hear the sirens beckoning, you try to climb up the mountain but there are downward facing swords that cut you. Then, having reached the top, you hear the sirens beckoning you from the ground, but when you try to go down, the swords are facing up at you, and again you are pierced by them.

These suffering experiences arise from a hallucination that there is someone calling you. It is due to familiarity with the object of attachment and, in particular, engaging in sexual misconduct that one really believes the sirens are calling out to you. In the process of listening to that, one experiences immense suffering. When we think about it, this is not too farfetched at all. Even in their dreams, someone who is really affected by strong, lustful desires can have all sorts of unimaginable experiences. This is explained extensively in the Lam Rim teachings, so you can refer to that. As Shantideva emphasises, *there is no other cause or creator* for such things, other than being the consequence of one's own state of mind.

Then Gyaltsab Je continues in his commentary:

Since it is also incorrect to say that they are generated without cause, the Able One taught in the *Close Placement with Mindfulness Sutra* and others that they are generated from one's own negative mind.

From *Close Placement with Mindfulness Sutra*:

The mind is the greatest among all enemies.
There is no enemy like the mind.

We'll just read through the commentary as I have explained the points that are presented here when I taught the *Madhyamakavatara*.

An allegorical opponent: They were generated from the aggregation of fire, but this is a faulty parable.

An opponent without refined reasoning who wishes to deny karmic cause and effect poses this quailm: Where a pure water stream appears to humans, blood and pus appears to hungry ghosts. This is however only an appearance created by the ripening of previous negative karma, and the blood and pus cannot be used by hungry ghosts in the slightest. Because if it existed, then it would have to also appear to humans.

Answer: This is thoroughly mistaken. That something does not appear is possible of course, but if we accept

that it is necessarily non-existent, then also the fires of hell are only mere appearances due to previous negative karmas. If we have to say here also, “Fire does not exist”, then it would be the same up to the eons and finally we also say that the hells do not exist. The need to deny karma then arises.

That it is suitable to appear to humans is also not established. According to the view of the nihilists and you, there are no hot or cold sensations when suffering is generated.

As these are points which have been presented earlier you can refer back to those teachings.¹

1.1.1.2.1.3. Summary

*8cd. Thus, in all the three realms
There is nothing as dangerous as the mind*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Since all faults arise from mind, all three realms are created by one's mind. There is no danger apart from this.

What, *since all faults arise from the mind, all three realms are created by one's own mind. There is no danger apart from this*, means that just as all qualities arise from the mind, all faults also rise from the mind. Therefore, in order to increase one's qualities, one needs to apply one's mind appropriately. To minimise and overcome all faults, one has to apply antidotes and so forth, which are generated within one's own mind. That is the main point.

That covers the verses that specifically explain how the faults depend on the mind.

The main point we need to understand as a personal instruction is that since we all have faults and many shortcomings, the best way to address that is to look within. While we might not be able to detect subtle faults or shortcomings, the grosser levels are not too obscure. At a manifest level we can detect some negative states of mind and the faults that arise from them, and it is up to us to take notice of that, and apply appropriate measures to overcome those shortcomings. That is the most practical approach, because if someone else were to point these faults out to us we might become very angry and defensive, rather than accepting what they say.

Geshe-la says in English that a good mind, which is very pleasant and filled with compassion, does good actions, and is liked by everyone. There's also a bad mind that no-one likes. We need to see them as separate, enemies even, and make sure the good mind works to defeat the bad mind. I always say that a good mind is a good friend. My best friend is my mind of loving kindness and compassion—I don't have much bodhicitta though. I encourage the good mind and say 'go away' to the bad mind. I do this all the time and day-by-day my good mind wins.

It is through applying these measures that we will then become accustomed to right ways of thinking. This is a point that is good for us in the western context to understand. It's good to make a distinction between yourself and the negative state of mind. Then it is more acceptable to point the finger at the fault, 'It's not me that's at fault. It's my negative state of mind that is at fault'.

The point here is that we need to make that distinction between oneself as an individual being who has qualities and good potential, and the faulty negative states of mind. When one is able acknowledge and accept that it is the

negative state of mind that is influencing one to engage, seemingly without control, in negative actions that are harmful, and which are not appreciated by others. When we recognise that within ourselves, then when we relate to others it will be easy to accept that it is not the person who is at fault but their negative state of mind that is compelling them to say, or do things that are inappropriate and so forth. Then one will protect oneself against becoming angry at the person. Rather one will feel compassion for them, knowing that they are influenced by their negative states of mind.

In this way we can see for ourselves that one way of looking at things will lead to compassion and love for the other, but a different kind of view of the same object can generate anger and hateful thoughts. Then we can understand how our own state of mind influences our attitudes and perceptions and so forth. When we can detect that for ourselves then we will reach the crucial point of understanding that when we have a wrong perception that causes us angst, and hatred and anger and so forth, then we need to transform and change that perception. These points are the crux of our practices, and are not to be taken lightly.

If two individuals living together are sincerely practising in this way, then there will be no reason to frown at each other—they will always be nice and smile at each other. So even in this life you can see that there are great practical benefits to be had from practising the Dharma.

Based on these mind training practices we can then reach a point where we are capable of feeling love and compassion for the enemy, rather than anger. By using correct ways of perceiving things we can see that there is no real enemy, and that there is no person out there aiming to get us. Rather, the harm that they are inflicting upon us doesn't come from the person themselves but from the influence of their delusions, and negative states of mind. So this is where we can develop real compassion for them, rather than becoming angry with them. When one trains in this way, it is definitely possible to see one's enemy as one's best teacher or best friend.

In fact, this way of training is the subject of the following verses presenting the practices on generosity, morality, patience and so forth.

1.1.1.2.2. Qualities depend on the mind

This relates to the practice of the six perfections, which we will cover in our following sessions.

Basically the presentation is that the six perfections depend on the mind: generosity depends on the mind; morality depends on the mind; patience depends on the mind; joyous effort depends on the mind; and concentration and wisdom depend on the mind.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version © Tara Institute*

¹ See, for example, the teaching of 30 September 2003.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

10 June 2014

Based on the motivation we generated during the recitation, we can now engage in the practice of meditation.

[meditation]

You can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: for the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. For that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

1.1. Guarding the mind as a method for guarding the trainings

1.1.1.2. The reason for this (cont.)

1.1.1.2.2. Qualities depend on the mind

Here there are six subdivisions:

1.1.1.2.2.1. Generosity depends on the mind

1.1.1.2.2.2. Morality depends on the mind

1.1.1.2.2.3. Patience depends on the mind

1.1.1.2.2.4. Enthusiasm depends on the mind

1.1.1.2.2.5. Mental stabilisation depends on the mind

1.1.1.2.2.6. Wisdom depends on the mind

So, what is being presented here is that the practices of the six perfections are all dependent on the mind. Actually, the giving and taking meditation practice we engaged in earlier also combines all the essential points of the six perfections. When we visualise giving our body, wealth, merits etc. this includes the practice of generosity. With the sincere intention for other beings not to experience any suffering, when we take their suffering upon ourselves one is naturally refraining from harming them, thus it includes the practice of morality. When we generate a sense of compassion for other sentient beings we naturally refrain from feeling anger towards them, thus it encompasses the practice of patience. When we do the practice willingly and joyfully, then that encompasses joyous effort. Having a focused mind while engaging in the practice includes the practice of concentration. Likewise, because the intelligence of differentiating between what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded—the intelligence of knowing what is beneficial and what is harmful—increases through repetition of this practice, it includes wisdom as well.

Thus when we do this practice sincerely with all the conditions intact it definitely becomes a very profound practice. While we may not be able to incorporate the actual practices of the six perfections in our meditation practice yet, we can, however, still adopt an approximation of the six perfections. Our ability to do this depends on our motivation. As explained in the teachings, three conditions need to be intact for the practice to become a perfection. For example, when the practice of generosity is accompanied with actual bodhicitta, the realisation of emptiness, and sealed with the profound dedication of complete enlightenment, then it becomes the perfection of generosity and so forth. So, if we generate the bodhicitta motivation to the best of our ability, recall the view of emptiness during the practice, and seal our virtues with the dedication towards obtaining enlightenment at the end, this will then

ensure that our practice becomes an approximation to the actual perfection of the practices of generosity and so forth.

The *Heart Sutra* clearly indicates the need for the practice to be accompanied by the understanding of emptiness when Shariputra asks Avalokiteshvara, *How should any son or daughter of the lineage train who wishes to practice the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom?* and Avalokiteshvara replies *Any son or daughter of the lineage who wishes to practise in the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom should look upon it like this, correctly and repeatedly beholding those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.*

While each of the six perfections are not explicitly mentioned in the *Heart Sutra* the way the perfection of wisdom is to be practised relates to each of them and this is how we derive an understanding of the teachings. So, if one wonders, 'what is the difference between the individual practices such as generosity and so forth and the perfection of those practices?', then you need to understand it as was explained earlier.

In relation to the three conditions mentioned earlier, we already have the basis of love and compassion, we also have some understanding of emptiness, and we know how to dedicate our virtues. So the reason I emphasise this point again and again is to remind you that you already have a good basis for understanding the teachings. It is now a matter of putting your understanding of the Dharma into practice. Whenever we have any time to engage in a practice it is good to draw upon the understanding we have already gained from the teachings and then actually apply it in our practice. That makes it much more meaningful. For example, with love and compassion the general description is wishing other beings to be happy and to be free from suffering. However, we can make that practice much more profound with the understanding we have gained from the teachings. This is how we can develop the essential practice and make it more meaningful for ourselves. I encourage you in this because you have already received so many teachings and ways of applying these in your practice, and it would be a pity not to utilise that. It is with the intention of benefitting you that I encourage you again and again.

What I am trying to emphasise is that we need to use what we have already received and what we already know. With that serving as a basis we can then endeavour to acquire some new understanding or knowledge. Often we fall short in our practice by not utilising what we already know and keep looking for something new or grander. Often I find that many people fall short in their practice because of this attitude, and don't really advance themselves. I am not saying that gaining more or new knowledge is wrong. I am not implying that and you should not misunderstand me. What I am emphasising here is that we need to utilise what we already have, and if we acquire new understanding or knowledge, based on that, then it can only enhance our practice and will not confuse it.

As I emphasise regularly, love and compassion is the basis, and by maintaining this we can then incorporate other understandings, or knowledge, to enhance that within ourselves. That would be good—otherwise we could completely go astray. If I were to relate something as my personal practice I would say that it is the attempt to adopt love and compassion in my everyday life. This is actually a point I related to the late Khensur Rinpoche when I was in India. I spent about an hour with him, listening and talking, when he asked me, 'What are you meditating on these days?' and I said that I take love and compassion as my

main practice and we had a discussion about that for about an hour.

Rinpoche said, 'Oh, that is a simple practice, even lay people and elderly people, who are not monks and nuns, would practice that'. Perhaps Khensur Rinpoche was expecting me to give a much more profound answer. So when he questioned me further I said that I felt that this practice encompasses a lot of other practices. Of course I was sharing what I truly believe. Indeed, when we train our mind more and more on love and compassion, then every time we generate that mind it brings us closer to enlightenment. So this is why I see it as an essential practice. Sadly, Khensur Rinpoche passed away shortly after this meeting.

The three main conditions that help to subdue the mind are love, compassion and concentration (or mental stabilisation). So if we can take these three as our essential practices then there is no question that we can work towards subduing our mind.

With the first perfection of generosity, what is being explained here is that it actually depends on a state of mind which is generated within oneself. This dispels the doubt that if generosity were to depend on material objects then how could one practise generosity if one lacked material objects to give? So, to clarify this point, what is being explained is that the perfection of generosity does not depend on external material objects but actually on one's state of mind.

The worldly perspective is that if someone were to give \$100 to another person we would say they are very generous, because they gave \$100. We immediately relate to the object they give as a mark of their generosity, as if the giving of that physical money was the actual practice of generosity.

A literal translation of the Tibetan term for the perfections *par-chin* is *gone beyond*, which relates to the practices that have gone beyond the states of samsara and nirvana and reached the state of complete enlightenment. The Svatantrika middle-way school gives a very literal explanation of the term *gone beyond* and says that the perfections of the practices of generosity and so forth are found only in a buddha's mental continuum. However, the Prasangika middle-way school differentiate between that which is actually gone beyond and that which is in the process of going beyond. Thus, the perfected practice of generosity, which has actually gone beyond, is indeed found only in a buddha's mental continuum. However the practice of generosity, which is in the process of going beyond, is in the trainee's (bodhisattva's) mind. According to the Prasangika, it would be a case of applying the name of a result upon the cause: the perfection of generosity is the practice of generosity that is in the process of going beyond in the bodhisattva's mind. It is good to understand the difference in interpretations from the different schools.

1.1.1.2.2.1. Generosity depends on the mind

This heading is subdivided into two:

1.1.1.2.2.1.1. Completing the perfection of generosity does not depend on eliminating the poverty of all migrators.

1.1.1.2.2.1.2. It is perfected through the acquaintance with the mind of giving.

1.1.1.2.2.1.1. *Completing the perfection of generosity does not depend on eliminating the poverty of all migrators*

The verse reads:

9. *If generosity goes beyond
Through eliminating the poverty of migrators,
Since migrators still have poverty,
How could the previous refuge have gone
beyond?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

If it were necessary to eliminate the poverty of all sentient beings to complete the perfection of generosity, then, since impoverished migrators still exist, how could the generosity gone beyond exist?

How could the previous Buddha protectors possibly have completed the perfection of generosity? It would be impossible.

Bringing up this hypothetical query Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains that, *if it were necessary to eliminate the poverty of all sentient beings to complete the perfection of generosity* then, since there are still impoverished beings in need of things that would imply that the Buddha has not perfected the practice of generosity. This doubt is a way to present that the practice of the perfection of generosity does not depend on eliminating the poverty of all living beings.

We need to understand that our practice of generosity should not depend on the other, whether they are rich or poor, in great need or not. From our own side we need to be able to engage in the practice of generosity that is generated in our own mind.

Another practical illustration is that if the practice of the perfection of generosity depended on being generous with material objects that would mean that ordained Sangha would not be able to perfect the practice of generosity, because they don't have many material possessions to give away.

Another more prominent illustration would be Buddha Shakyamuni's own life. In his early days he would not have given up the wealth of his royal kingdom because that would have deprived him of the means of being able to practice generosity. Later, he actually left behind all his princely wealth, and become completely renounced.

Here again, the point is that the practice of generosity is not dependent on actual material wealth or completely satisfying other's needs. Rather it is dependent on the intent of giving, which is generated with one's own mind.

The means to perfect the practice of generosity is explained under the next heading.

1.1.1.2.2.1.2. *It is perfected through the acquaintance with the mind of giving*

The verse reads:

10. *Through the mind offering to all sentient beings
All possessions including their results,
Generosity goes beyond it is taught.
Therefore it is only mind.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

It is taught that the generosity gone beyond is perfected through acquainting one's mind with the wish to give away one's body, possessions, roots of virtue including their results, and one's merits to all sentient beings.

For this reason generosity depends on the mind.

The commentary clearly explains that the resultant or perfected state of generosity, which is completely going beyond, which is the mental continuum of an enlightened being, is reached through acquaintance with the mind that wishes to give away, now, one's body, possessions and roots of virtue including the results.

Again, the actual definition of generosity is the mind of giving or the intention to give. So the way to practise generosity is by generating the state of mind of wishing to give away one's body, possessions, roots of virtue etc. Again, we can relate to the giving and taking practice we did earlier. I need not elaborate too much on the importance of this practice, as it is exactly what is being presented here by Shantideva and further explained in the commentary, as being an essential practice. So we can see that our earlier practice, when done fully, encompasses all of these points.

So the way to engage in the practice, for it to become an authentic practice of generosity, we train our mind, gradually and slowly, to increase the intention of giving. To become an actual practice of generosity try to make it free from miserliness and, to the best of our ability, encompass an understanding of emptiness—that oneself, the giver, what is being given, and the action of giving, is empty of inherent existence. Incorporate that understanding as much as possible and then dedicate at the end. In this way our practice of generosity becomes really profound and we get so much merit from engaging in these practices. Giving away these merits as well makes it a profound practice.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

For this reason generosity depends on the mind.

We gain a better understanding of this point after the explanation.

1.1.1.2.2.2. Morality depends on the mind

This is subdivided into two:

1.1.1.2.2.2.1. Completing the morality gone beyond does not depend on the absence of sentient beings that one could kill

1.1.1.2.2.2.2. It is completed by acquainting the mind of abandoning.

1.1.1.2.2.2.1. Completing the perfection of morality does not depend on the absence of sentient beings that one could kill and so forth.

This does not depend on the absence of beings that one could harm. The point explained in the next the verse is that the perfection of morality is actually completed by acquainting the mind with abandoning the intention to harm.

*11ab. Fish and so forth, where should they flee to
So as not to be killed?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

It follows that the completion of the morality gone beyond does not depend on removing all sentient beings that could possibly be killed, because it is unfeasible to move all the animals such as fish and so forth to a safe place.

The explanation here is that completing the perfection of morality does not depend on removing all sentient beings that could be possibly killed, because it is not feasible to move all animals such as fish to a safe place where no one could harm them. We may be able to move some fish to a safe place where they would not be killed, but to remove all fish to where no one would be able to kill them is something that cannot possibly be done. Also there is no person who could always guard them, so that no-one comes and harms them.

1.1.1.2.2.2.2. It is completed by acquainting the mind of abandoning

The first two lines of the next verse explain this:

*11cd. Through the mind of abandoning,
Morality goes beyond, it is taught.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary highlights:

For this reason the morality gone beyond is achieved by acquainting the mind of abandoning, such as on the mind abandoning the thoughts of killing or stealing.

The practice of morality, relating to the perfection of morality, is dependent on a mind where from the depths of one's heart one makes the commitment that, 'I will not harm others. I will not kill even if my life is at stake. I will not take the life of other sentient beings'. In the commentary, *for this reason*, aligns to the earlier point that it is not even possible to find a safe haven for all of the animals and so forth, so they can never to be harmed. The perfection of morality is not dependent on establishing the situation (or place) where no beings will be harmed. Rather, as explained here, the morality gone beyond is achieved by acquainting the mind with abandoning the thoughts of killing and stealing. When one generates the mind of abandoning negativities such as killing and stealing (and likewise the other ten non-virtues), this clearly illustrates that while refraining from killing and stealing etc. is a good deed, doing so when one makes an actual commitment and intentionally generates the mind to refrain from such misdeeds, one gains much more virtue.

Many of you would already have vows which would include these sorts of commitments, but again even with the vows it is good to refresh them. It is much more meritorious to have vows than not, so one gains much more virtue when one actually intentionally develops the mind of refraining from engaging in misdeeds. Whenever one generates the mind of intentionally refraining from the ten non-virtues, such as making a commitment like, 'Today, at all costs, I will not engage in the act of killing or taking others' lives. Likewise I will not engage in the act of taking others' possessions. I will not engage in the act of sexual misconduct. Likewise I will not engage in lying, stealing, harsh words, divisive speech, idle gossip and so forth', then that is acquaintance with abandoning those negative deeds, and what we call the practice of morality. Each time we generate the intention of refraining from these misdeeds we accumulate great merit, much greater merit than if one were to just naturally refrain from these misdeeds.

The quote from a sutra encompasses the definition.

From a sutra:

If the morality gone beyond is explained: It is the intent to give up harming others.

1.1.1.2.2.3. Patience depends on the mind

Patience is the mind which, in the face of harms and sufferings, does not become disturbed. This has three subdivisions:

1.1.1.2.2.3.1. Meaning

1.1.1.2.2.3.2. The example

1.1.1.2.2.3.3. Relating the meaning and the example

1.1.1.2.2.3.1. Meaning

The verse reads:

*12. Unsubdued sentient beings equal space,
Destroying them is impossible.
Merely destroying this mind of anger,
Equals destroying all enemies.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Patience is completed by destroying one's anger, which equals destroying all external enemies. It is not achieved through the extinction of the objects of one's anger.

This is conclusive because unsubdued sentient beings equal space and it is impossible to destroy them all. Therefore patience also depends on the mind.

I have referred to the explanation *patience is completed by destroying one's anger which equals destroying all external enemies* several times. What is being implied here is that the practice of patience is not trying to overcome all external enemies since that is impossible. The actual practice of patience is dependent on one's own mind.

It is dependent on one's mind as it specifically destroys the anger in one's mind. Completing the perfection of patience is dependent of destroying anger in one's mind, rather than trying to overcome the external enemies. The commentary goes further when it says *this is conclusive because unsubdued sentient beings equal space and it is impossible to destroy them all*. The commentary concludes, *therefore also patience depends on the mind*.

1.1.1.2.2.3.2. The example

The verse reads:

13. *To cover the whole earth with leather,
Where should the leather come from?
To cover one's soles with leather
Equals covering the whole earth.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary proceeds:

Where would one find enough leather to cover the whole earth to prevent one's feet from being harmed by thorns and other sharp objects on the ground?

Covering the soles of one's shoes with leather will do the trick and prevent the feet from being harmed by thorns, sharp stones and the like. It equals covering the whole earth.

The verse poses the rhetorical question *where would one find enough leather to cover the whole earth?*, which implies that it is not possible to find enough leather to cover the whole earth to prevent one being harmed by thorns and other sharp objects. However *covering the soles of one's shoes with leather will do the trick and prevent the feet from being harmed by thorns*. So that is the method that equals covering the whole earth.

1.1.1.2.2.3.3. Relating the meaning and the example

The verse reads:

14. *Similarly, I do not oppose
External phenomena.
I should reverse this mind of mine,
Where is the need to oppose others?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

Similar to the analogy, it is impossible to oppose all harmful external phenomena. Instead one focuses one's mind on these objects and reverses the mind from generating anger. By acquainting the mind in such a way, patience is completed. Why should I oppose the objects of anger, it is impossible and unnecessary.

The commentary explains that, *similar to the analogy of not being able to find enough leather to cover the earth to prevent sharp objects from harming oneself, it is impossible to oppose all external phenomena*. The method used to perfect patience is to focus one's own *mind on these objects*, and reverse *the mind from generating anger*. This is a very

profound point—the actual practice of patience implies overcoming anger within oneself. By acquainting the mind in such a way, patience is completed. The point is emphasised again with another rhetorical question, *why should I oppose the other objects of anger since it is impossible to oppose them and actually quite unnecessary*. There is no reason to try to oppose all others and objects when it is possible to overcome the anger in one's own mind.

What is being explained here is that the practice of patience implies overcoming anger within oneself, rather than trying to overcome all external enemies. So if one thinks that, 'I can only be patient if all my enemies are overcome', then that is missing the point. If one wishes to overcome enemies then one needs to overcome anger within oneself. That is equivalent to overcoming all the external enemies and will be the mark of perfecting the practice of patience.

That completes the explanation on patience and how it is dependent on the mind. For the practice of patience to become a perfection of patience, again it would have to encompass the three essential conditions of bodhicitta: the altruistic motivation of bodhicitta; understanding the view on emptiness; and the dedication. This applies to all of the practices of the six perfections in order for them to become the actual perfections.

1.1.1.2.2.4. Enthusiasm depends on the mind

The definition of enthusiasm or joyous effort is the mind which takes joy in virtue.

The verse reads:

15. *The results of generating a clear mind
Is Brahma and so forth.
Results of inferior practice endowed
With body and speech are not like that.*

The first part of Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

The complete acquaintance of enthusiasm also depends upon the mind that has completed meditation. A clear mind of joy for meditating on an absorption of the first concentration brings about results contained within the grounds of absorption, such as rebirth in the place of Brahma.

This part of the commentary explains the reason why *the complete acquaintance of enthusiasm depends on the mind*. A clear mind of joy for meditating on an absorption of the first concentration which is a higher state, brings about results contained within the grounds of absorption, such as rebirth in the place of Brahma. This means that when even a moment of clear mind and joy arises from the absorption in the first concentration, because one applied joyous effort and achieved that state of mind, the result is to be born in the heavens of Brahma. Achieving this state also implies strength of the mind. The emphasis here is that when the mind is clear and strong, accompanied with the joy of practising such a meditation, then it can bring about a great result.

The next part of the commentary reads:

If one's actions are unrelated to such a strong mind, then one's mind is endowed with actions of body and speech, and such actions with lesser enthusiasm do not have the ability to produce a mind of the first concentration and so forth. Such a result depends on a strong mind.

When the mind lacks that strength and there is no joy in practices such as meditation, then one's physical and verbal actions will also carry less potency. So even if one were to attempt to meditate it will not bring about the results of

obtaining the first concentration and so forth. Thus, such results depend on joyous effort, which actually depends on the strength of one's mind.

1.1.1.2.2.5. Mental stabilisation depends on the mind

Mental stabilisation is the mind which in its own power has the ability to focus on an object for as long as one wishes.

16. *All recitations and austerities,
Even if practiced for a long time,
Done with a wandering mind
They are meaningless, the Knowledge teaches.*

This is indeed a direct reprimand for ourselves.

Gyalsab Je's commentary reads:

The completion of mental stabilisation gone beyond depends on a clear mind free from mental excitement and mental sinking and held by the mental application of renunciation.

Although one practices the recitation of mantras and austerities such as Nyung Nye for a long time, the mind is distracted to other objects.

We need to understand that in order for mental stabilisation to be an authentic mental stabilisation it has to be a clear mind that is free from mental excitement and mental sinking, or stupor. This can be helped by the mental application of renunciation.

From the Buddha's sutras,

Bhikhus, austerities, prayers and so forth that distract the mind to the desire realm do not have a result.

They are shown to be meaningless because of not giving the desired result.

We need to understand this quote in relation to recitation of mantras, austerities such as Nyung Nye, practices, retreats etc. which have been shown to be meaningless, because of not getting the desired result.

This explanation does not mean that there is no benefit at all in these practices; there is definitely a benefit even if one's mind is a little distracted. For example, there is still benefit in reciting mantras as you stop any other verbal negativities such as idle gossip etc. So to that extent there is definitely some benefit. However if one's mind is distracted, one will not reap the full benefit of the practice. This applies to any practice including the Nyung Nye practice. If one does a Nyung Nye of course one derives some benefit from merely engaging in the practice, but if the mind is distracted one will not reap the full benefit, just a minimal benefit.

The personal instruction here is that when we are doing any practice it is highly advisable to try and do it without a distracted mind. If one were to do one's practices in this way one will reap the actual intended benefit. Thus, it is good for us to prevent ourselves from being distracted.

1.1.1.2.2.6. Wisdom depends on the mind

- 17 *They who do not know the main supreme
Dharma,
This secret of the mind, although wishing
To attain happiness and destroy suffering,
They will wander meaninglessly in the hells
without respite.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary reads:

Wisdom also depends on the mind. A person that is not a vessel for the main dharma or the supreme meaning, and is thus not shown these, does not know the secret of mind, the ultimate truth.

Although they wish to attain highest happiness and destroy the sufferings of cyclic existence, they naturally wander to the realm without respite, where there is nothing of these things they wish for.

Therefore wisdom depends on the mind.

Again, the definition of wisdom is the mind which is able to clearly differentiate and discriminate between the subtleties of the objects to be examined.

The commentary clearly explains that wisdom depends on the mind, and that a person is not a vessel for the supreme meaning if they do not know the secret of the mind, the ultimate truth. This refers to the nature of the mind which is its non-inherent existence (or emptiness). To perfect wisdom, when the mind realises emptiness of all phenomena it also needs to realise the emptiness of one's own mind. For someone who does not know the ultimate truth of their mind, then although they wish to attain higher status and destroy the suffering of cyclic existence, they can actually wander in the samsaric realm without respite where there are none of the things they wish for. In other words, we could wander in the cycle of samsara, the nature of suffering for limitless time. However, by understanding the ultimate reality of all phenomena in relation to one's mind, one would free oneself from this, and attain liberation, or enlightenment.

Wisdom is perfected to the state of going beyond, to the state of enlightenment, when one understands the ultimate reality of one's mind. The commentary concludes *therefore wisdom depends on the mind.*

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

17 June 2014

Based on the motivation we have just generated we can now engage in our meditation practice. [meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment and so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

Generating this motivation to the best of our ability is really worthwhile.

1.1.3. Striving in guarding the mind

This section of the text is divided into two:

1.1.3.1. Showing, or the presentation

1.1.3.1. Explaining

1.1.3.1. SHOWING

18. *This mind of mine, therefore
I shall hold it well, I shall guard it well.
Apart from the discipline of guarding the mind
What shall one do with many disciplines?*

In his commentary Gyaltzab Je presents the meaning of this verse with the following:

Abandoning faults and achieving qualities depends on the mind. Therefore I shall hold this mind of mine well with mindfulness and introspection, and guard it well, so as to not let it degenerate.

Apart from the discipline of guarding the mind, what shall one do with the many other disciplines of prayers and so forth that don't guard the mind? They are unnecessary.

I have explained the meaning of the line, *abandoning faults and achieving qualities depends on the mind* many times over in the past. It's a point that I regularly emphasise in my teachings. Abandoning every fault and achieving all qualities depends on none other than one's own mind. Here, faults includes all non-virtues as well as all the delusions, and qualities can range from the simplest qualities up to the greatest qualities that can be achieved. That all of these faults and qualities are dependent on one's own mind is an incisive point, showing that the responsibility for overcoming faults lies with ourselves and that we cannot rely upon others to overcome them for us. Likewise, we cannot rely on someone else to develop qualities for us because they depend solely on our own mind, and thus we need to develop good qualities for ourselves.

Having presented that abandoning faults and achieving good qualities depends on the mind, the commentary goes on to say, *I shall hold this mind of mine well, with mindfulness and introspection*. This point indicates that the way to abandon faults and achieve qualities is to apply mindfulness and introspection. As mentioned previously, mindfulness in this context relates to constantly keeping in mind what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded. Introspection refers to keeping constant vigilance over the three doors of our body, speech and mind, checking whether one is adequately

adopting things that need to be adopted, and discarding what has to be discarded.

Guarding the mind *so that it does not degenerate* relates to not allowing the virtuous mind to degenerate. In order to protect the qualities of kindness, love and compassion and so forth, so that they don't degenerate, we need to always guard the mind with mindfulness and introspection. This also relates to whatever vows and commitments we have undertaken—we have to guard them so that they don't degenerate. To take that further, when the commentary asks, *apart from the discipline of guarding the mind what shall one do with other disciplines and prayers and so forth that don't guard the mind?*, it is saying that if one does not apply the discipline of guarding the mind, then practices such as doing prayers and so forth will have minimal effect. That is the main point.

What we need to derive as a personal instruction here is that the main discipline that one needs to apply is to guard the mind from non-virtue and negativities. If our practices such as reciting prayers and mantras are done with mindfulness as a way to create virtue, then they will have a positive effect. But if we don't apply mindfulness then they won't really have much positive effect. This explanation should encourage us to remember this crucial advice and to try to apply mindfulness whenever we engage in our regular commitments and practices. In this way our practice will be intact and we will gradually gain positive effects from it.

What we really need to understand from this presentation is that if we do our prayers and normal commitments with a mind that is distracted by the objects of delusions, then our practices will not have much effect. If we wonder why we are not obtaining any significant result from our practices, then we need to check whether we are applying mindfulness during those practices. We all know from experience that when we engage in practices with a distracted mind we don't derive many results from our practice.

So, as much as we can, we need to apply mindfulness while doing our practice. As I regularly emphasise, it is important to try to ensure that our practices are intact and that we fully utilise our time in practice. It is only by engaging in practices fully with mindfulness that they will bring about significant positive effects. This is exactly the point that is being emphasised here. It is a really significant point and it is appropriate to pay heed to it.

1.1.3.2. EXPLAINING

The previous verse showed that one needs to apply mindfulness. This section explains how to do that in four subdivisions.

1.1.3.2.1. The way of guarding the mind

1.1.3.2.2. The reason why it is necessary to guard the mind

1.1.3.2.3. The benefits of guarding it

1.1.3.2.4. Generating mindfulness to guard the mind wholeheartedly

¹The outline shows us how meticulously the text is presented. The logical and systematic presentation addresses the topic in a way that is suitable for those who wish to follow this practise. Gyaltzab Je's outlines highlight the

¹ Here there was a pause as the heating was adjusted. Geshe Doga then explained in English that the underfloor heating was installed over the concrete floor for health reasons, and that it was funded by a donation from a student called Radim, who had offered Geshe Doga two gold bars. Geshe Doga said that he could not accept them, so Radim gave them to Tara Institute. They were sold for around \$12,000, which paid for the underfloor heating. Later, when Radim became ill, the Centre paid for his trip back home.

systematic manner in which Shantideva composed his text. First it shows that it is necessary to guard the mind. We then naturally wonder how we do that, which he explains under these four headings. The way to guard the mind is presented first. That is followed by the reasons why it is necessary to guard the mind. Then, if one wonders what the benefits would be, the benefits are presented. Finally, there is a presentation of how to actually generate mindfulness to guard the mind wholeheartedly. So Gyaltsab Je's commentary shows us how Shantideva very meticulously, and very logically and systematically, presents advice for us to incorporate into our practice.

You can see the significance of this presentation by relating it to taking an interest in meditation. Do we really consider why we need to apply mindfulness? Do we know the manner of actually applying it and the benefits of applying it? Do we really contemplate these points? Probably not. These initiatives don't come about easily. We can see how Shantideva presents his material here in a very systematic way so that we can really understand the significance and take the practice to heart.

1.1.3.2.1. *The way of guarding the mind*

19. *If one is in the midst of a restless crowd,
One will focus and be conscientious of one's
wound.
Similarly, in the midst of unruly people,
One guards continuously the wound of the
mind.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

A person with a wound on his body who is in the midst of a restless crowd will apply himself very strongly to protect the wound. Similarly, if one is in the midst of unruly people, who could serve as a condition for afflictions to arise in one's mind, then one needs to continuously guard the wound of one's mind.

If one does not guard one's mind, then it will be the condition that cuts off the life of one's higher status and liberation.

This presentation is quite clear. The essential point is made with an analogy: when a person with a wound goes into a hustling, bustling crowd they would be very vigilant about protecting their wound, so that it isn't further damaged, thus causing more pain. *If one is in the midst of unruly people who could serve as a condition for afflictions to arise in one's mind*, refers to the way in which others can easily influence us in such a way that we generate delusions in our minds. In such an environment, one needs to continuously guard one's mind, just like the earlier analogy of protecting a wound in a crowd. One needs to pay particular attention to guarding the mind at such times.

Furthermore, *if one does not guard one's mind then that would be the condition that cuts off the life of one's higher status and liberation*. This means that not guarding the mind will prevent one from achieving one's higher goals. This is a very clear explanation that we really need to take to heart and carefully contemplate in our practice.

It is when one meets with the conditions for afflictions to arise that one needs to pay particular attention to guarding the mind. This is the essential point that is being presented here. Our minds are so easily influenced by the delusions, so we need to always be on guard. We need to guard our wound-like mind against any conditions that will cause delusions to be generated. If we find that delusions such as

anger and attachment arise from even the slightest conditions, then that is a sign that we need to pay particular attention to guarding the mind. These are significant points.

If we are easily influenced by objects of delusion, then even minor conditions will cause the delusions to arise. That is a clear sign of a mind that needs to be guarded well. Some people actually get very upset when they can't find an object of delusion, such as an object of attachment. They actively seek out objects of attachment and experience misery and suffering when they can't find them. Craving objects of delusion shows how habituated the mind actually is with the delusions.

On a further note, paying particular attention to guarding the mind applies in all forms of practice. Many of you would have heard the story of the person who was meditating and when asked what they were meditating on they responded, 'I am meditating on patience'. But when some critical remarks were made, they immediately became upset. That is a sign of not guarding the mind. While generally assuming that they were meditating on patience, they failed to guard their mind, lost their temper and were not able to practise patience in that moment. These are examples in the teachings that show how we need to be constantly vigilant. I also remember an instance where someone came up to me and said that he wanted to become a monk. I questioned whether he should consider it more deeply and he said, 'Oh no! I am really adamant about this! I am very sure that I really want to become a monk'. Then two weeks later he found a partner, and moved in with them!

The main point here is to be extremely careful about guarding one's mind when the conditions for the delusions to arise are present. The teachings tell us that when there are no apparent conditions for delusions to arise someone may look like a real Dharma practitioner, but as soon as particular conditions arise they may act as a very ordinary person.

1.1.3.2.2. *The reason why it is necessary to guard the mind*

This is again a very important point that we need to keep in mind. The reason is presented in the next verse along with an example.

20. *If one is afraid of even the small suffering
Of a wound and guards it,
Then why does one not guard, frightened by the
catcher
And crusher mountains, the wound of the mind?*

Again, this is explained quite clearly in the commentary, but the main point here is the need to take it to heart.

If it is suitable to guard a wound due to fearing slight physical pain, then why does one not guard the wound of the mind from negativity and downfalls due to fearing the sufferings of being crushed by the mountains of the Catcher Mountain Hell and the Crusher Mountain Hell? Both of these would be the result of mental degeneration.

One should guard one's mind with the thought: 'It would be a great mistake not to guard it'.

As presented in the commentary, because of the fear of *physical pain* from further injuring a wound, *it is* considered reasonable or *suitable to guard any wound* one may have so that it does not come into contact with anything that would cause physical pain. We pay so much attention to guarding a wound, because of fear about experiencing physical pain, so why do we not guard the wound of the mind from

negativity and downfalls out of fear of the suffering of the hells of mass destruction, where, some of you might recall from the teachings, beings are crushed between two giant masses of mountains? These hellish experiences and great suffering are none other than the result of not guarding the mind from negativities and downfalls. So they are the ultimate result of allowing the mind to degenerate. The conclusion, as explained in the commentary, is that *one should guard one's mind with the thought that it would be a great mistake not to guard it.*

Here it is good to relate this to our understanding of karma, knowing that when one creates negativity the result will be the undesirable result of experiencing suffering. Therefore, if one does not wish to experience suffering it is appropriate that we prevent the cause of suffering, which is guarding the mind from negativity and downfalls.

When we really contemplate the reasons why we need to guard the mind we will be encouraged to actually apply the methods to do so. So contemplating these reasons is a very significant point.

1.1.3.2.3. *The benefits of guarding it*

This is similar to the very reason why we practise Dharma—simply put, we want happiness and we don't want to experience suffering.

The verse relating to this heading is:

21. *If one lives by such a conduct
One is suitable to abide amongst unruly people
Or amongst women.
The stability of striving in the vows will not degenerate.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

If one continually practises stopping the afflictions, the stability of the mind striving in the vows will not degenerate, regardless of whether one abides in the midst of unruly people with much anger, or whether one abides in the vicinity of women with much attachment.

The point, *if one continually practises preventing the afflictions from arising*, is something that we can apply to ourselves. If we find that the afflictions are arising quite readily, then perhaps we are not applying the antidotes on a continuous basis. If we apply them sometimes, and relax at other times, then, of course, that will have little effect on the delusions. The point here is that we need to continuously practise preventing the afflictions from arising, and then *the stability of the mind striving in the vows will not degenerate.*

This is how we protect self-liberation vows, bodhisattva vows, tantric vows, and whatever other vows or commitments we may have made. The way to protect vows is, as mentioned previously, to apply the antidotes to the afflictions on a continuous basis. Then, regardless of whether one abides in the midst of unruly, angry people, or whether one abides in the vicinity of beautiful goddesses, it will not affect one's mind.

Here we need to recall that Shantideva was giving this advice to fully ordained monks, so we need to understand his examples and illustrations in this context. Nevertheless Shantideva's advice applies to all who are striving to guard their mind and practise the Dharma.

The point here concerns guarding the vows and commitments one has taken. Of course, if those who have taken ordination do not guard their minds against the afflictions, then the vows will be given up at a later stage—in

some cases very quickly. However, in a broader sense, the point relates to any vows; the layperson's vows, the self-ordination vows, the bodhisattva vows and the tantric vows many of you have taken. The best method to guard and protect these vows from degenerating is to continually practise mindfulness to stop the afflictions, and to apply antidotes to the afflictions when they arise. That will help to stabilise the mind so that the vows do not degenerate.

1.1.3.2.4. *Generating mindfulness to guard the mind wholeheartedly*

Having mentioned its benefits, we need to use mindfulness to guard the mind wholeheartedly. Therefore mindfulness is specifically presented as a very important element of our practice. The verse relating to that is:

22. *It is easy not to have gain, or praise,
A body, or livelihood.
It is also alright for other virtues to degenerate,
But do not let the mind degenerate at all.*

Here, Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Although one gains no food, clothing and the like, receives no praise such as veneration, and has no livelihood to support body and life, that is easy.

To lose virtue unprotected by the mind is easy as well, but the mind of the Great Vehicle should not be allowed to degenerate under any circumstances.

Again, this is not too difficult to understand. *Although one gains no food, clothing and the like, receives no praise such as veneration, and has no livelihood to support body and life, that is easy*, refers to the fact that these conditions are not really all that important.

When the commentary states that *to lose virtue unprotected by the mind is easy as well*, it is referring to virtues that are stained by worldly concerns. While on one hand they are classified as virtues, on the other hand they are stained because they are not protected from the stains of the worldly concerns, or self-interest. So if these virtues were to decline or degenerate, then that is not so important. This relative unimportance is measured in comparison to losing *the mind of the Great Vehicle*, which is bodhicitta, which *should not be allowed to degenerate under any circumstances.*

Compared with bodhicitta, virtues that are stained by worldly concerns or self-interest and other basic needs in relation to our immediate needs are quite insignificant. But the bodhicitta mind must be protected under all circumstances, and one should never allow it to degenerate.

While we may not yet have developed bodhicitta, any level of kindness, particularly the mind wishing to benefit others, is, as I regularly emphasise, a really precious mind. When that is further developed, we develop love and compassion, which serves as a cause to develop bodhicitta. The greater the wish to benefit others, the greater the conditions for bodhicitta will be. Once developed, of course, the bodhicitta attitude will be sustained by the continuing wish to benefit others. Therefore, one should not under any circumstances underestimate this state of mind of kindness and wishing to benefit others.

We can develop that wish to benefit others to a certain extent, and the instruction here is to always protect that mind and never lose that wish to benefit others, because that is the most valuable asset that we can ever have. It should be the centrepiece of our practice, like a fortress, and then all of the remaining practices will enhance that bodhicitta. That is the significance of this instruction.

As I have shared before, at our level a substitute for the actual bodhicitta attitude would be generating the attitude, 'I will not harm any living being, even slightly, and I will endeavour to benefit others to the best of my ability'. We can definitely manage to generate such a highly beneficial state of mind on a regular basis. As it is a substitute for bodhicitta for us, it is a highly significant state of mind.

1.2. Guarding mindfulness and introspection, which are the methods for guarding the mind

This section is explained in two subdivisions:

1.2.1. Showing, or the presentation

1.2.2. Explaining

1.2.1. Showing

The relevant verse is:

23. *You who wish to protect your mind,
Guard with wholehearted effort
Mindfulness and introspection,
I request with hands folded.*

The commentary explaining this verse reads.

You, who wish to guard your mind, since one cannot guard one's mind if one is separated from mindfulness and introspection, do not let the mindfulness that does not forget the virtuous object, and the introspection that analyses the situation of the three doors, degenerate, I, called Shantideva, request this with my hands folded.

What is being presented here very clearly is an exhortation. Shantideva is pleading with us, saying, 'You want to *guard your mind*, but it cannot be guarded without *mindfulness* or *introspection*. Therefore you must definitely *not let mindfulness*, which *does not forget the virtuous object*, and *introspection*, which *analyses the three doors, degenerate*. Having *folded hands* is a gesture showing that Shantideva is imploring us to adopt mindfulness and introspection. We can see this in everyday life. When we make a specific request to someone there are gestures like putting one's palms together and saying, 'Please do this'. Referring to this gesture is a way of showing the importance of mindfulness and introspection as a method of guarding the mind.

I have already explained the significance of mindfulness, and the actual explanations of what mindfulness is in detail, so we can leave the explanation of this verse at that.

1.2.2. Explaining

This is subdivided into two:

1.2.2.1. The faults of lacking introspection

1.2.2.2. Guarding mindfulness as the method for guarding introspection

1.2.2.1. THE FAULTS OF LACKING INTROSPECTION

This heading is further sub-divided into five:

1.2.2.1.1. Any action devoid of introspection lacks power

1.2.2.1.2. One does not generate pure wisdom

1.2.2.1.3. One does not generate pure morality

1.2.2.1.4. Earlier accumulated virtue is destroyed

1.2.2.1.5. It obstructs the achievement of virtue not accumulated earlier

1.2.2.1.1. Any action devoid of introspection lacks power

Here, *action* refers specifically to virtuous actions. What is explained under this heading is that when introspection is not applied to any virtuous action then the power of that virtuous action is reduced.

The verse that relates to this is:

24. *A person that is wracked by illness
Does not have energy for any work.
Similarly, a mind disturbed by ignorance
Does not have energy for any work.*

As clearly explained clearly in the commentary:

A person who is wracked by strong illness does not have the ability to work in the fields. Similarly, a mind that is wracked by the ignorance of not knowing what needs to be practised and what needs to be abandoned does not have strength for any type of virtuous action.

The analogy used here is that someone who is weighed down with heavy illness won't have the physical energy to be *able to work in the fields* of the farm, and so forth. *Similarly, a mind that is riddled or wracked with the ignorance of not knowing what needs to be practised and what is to be abandoned, will not have the strength for any virtuous actions.*

While wisdom is specifically emphasised in the next verse, this verse refers to the fact that a mind that is dominated by the ignorance of not knowing what is to be practised and what is to be abandoned will not have sufficient strength for any type of virtuous action. If, through ignorance, you don't know what is to be abandoned and what is to be adopted, you won't understand the significance of any virtuous action you may create. So your virtuous activities won't carry as much weight as they would if you understood their significance.

Basically, when the introspection that is particularly vigilant about one's actions of body, speech and mind, is not applied, then whatever virtuous actions one engages in, such as listening, will not have much effect. This even applies to listening to the Dharma. Further, the proper means to contemplate will be affected by the lack of introspection, and thus not carry much weight. As well as this, meditation will not carry much weight if introspection is lacking. That is the point being made in this verse.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett or Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བལྟགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

24 June 2014

Based on the motivation we have just generated, we can now engage in our meditation practice. [*meditation*]

To generate the motivation for receiving the teaching think, “For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well”.

1.2.2.1 THE FAULTS OF LACKING INTROSPECTION

1.2.2.1.2. One does not generate pure wisdom

If we lack mindfulness and introspection our ability to generate pure or perfect wisdom will be hindered. The following presentation will be relatively easy to comprehend as the meaning is not too difficult to grasp, but what we need to keep in mind is that it is advice we need to *apply* to ourselves, in relation to our own practice. All of us have already spent significant time listening to the Dharma, thinking about it and even trying to meditate. What is being presented here is that even though one has spent significant time engaging in this, if one does not continuously apply mindfulness and introspection then it is still possible for one's practice to degenerate. This is a really key point to keep in mind. As I emphasise regularly, we see cases where certain individuals may have spent quite a bit of time and energy studying and so forth, but then after some time they give up the Dharma. What causes them to give up their Dharma practice is not having applied mindfulness and introspection in their regular life.

The verse relating to this heading reads:

25. *Even the listening, contemplation and meditation
Of someone having a mind devoid of introspection,
Like water in a leaking vase,
Will not be kept in mind by memory.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the verse:

If one is separated from introspection, then one will not generate perfect wisdom. A person may even have the wisdoms of listening, contemplating and meditating from before, but if they lack introspection then, like water that does not remain in a broken vase, they do not abide in mindfulness and thus their wisdom degenerates. This is due to degenerated introspection.

The advice here is really succinct, but for us to incorporate its meaning into our life, we need to take this advice as a personal instruction. When we consider the fact that this advice is given by Shantideva—a bodhisattva himself—from his own insight and profound wisdom, illustrating that the most crucial point on the path to enlightenment is to maintain mindfulness and introspection. That should then encourage one to actually take this advice to heart.

The commentary starts with, *If one is separated from introspection*. Introspection here refers to the mind that is constantly vigilant of the way we conduct ourselves through our mind, through our physical actions, and through our speech. What is being presented here is the result of not applying introspection, which is something we need to recall

again and again, for example, ‘What are the thoughts occurring in my mind?’, ‘How am I conducting my physical actions?’, ‘What kind of speech am I uttering?’ One must check on the basis of distinguishing between what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded, then analyse how one is conducting oneself through one's body, speech and mind. In a meditation session, having applied mindfulness and identified the object and focused on it, after a while that which checks whether we are still keeping our focus on the chosen object is done by introspection. So if our mind has wandered off and we've become distracted, then it is through introspection that we will notice that, and then we need to reapply mindfulness. This approach is being explained here in terms of mindfulness with our body, speech and mind in our daily lives.

Thus, as the commentary explains, if one is separated from introspection then the consequence is that *one will not generate perfect wisdom*. The Tibetan term *te* implies that a reason is to follow, which is presented here with the example of a broken or cracked vase. In the regular offering prayer that we do here before tea and meals there is also the word *te*; however some teachers have said the meaning would be more profound if the word *nyi* (or sole) is used instead, which would reflect that the lama is the sole creator of all.

So, what is being explained is that even if a person has previously gained a certain amount of wisdom through *listening, contemplating and meditating, if they lack introspection*, then that would affect their mindfulness as well. A lack of mindfulness arises because of not applying introspection, they are mutually supportive of each other—to have good mindfulness one needs to have adequate introspection.

The example of a cracked vase presented here is similar to that given in Lam Rim teachings, in which the analogy extends to three types of vases describing the conditions from which one needs to be free in order to listen to the teachings: the upside down vase; the dirty vase and the leaky vase. As the Lam Rim explains, it is really important to be free from these conditions in order to be a good recipient for the teachings, so they can benefit one's mind. I have emphasised this point previously.

Using the first example, if one were like an upside down vase when listening to teachings, then, just as one cannot pour water into the vase, likewise when one listens one cannot pay attention, and no matter how many teachings are presented they will not go into one's mind. With a dirty vase, if clean food and drink are put into it, then it will spoil the food. In relation to listening to teachings, this analogy shows that one needs to be free from a negative motivation as this will spoil the teachings. Even if the teachings themselves are pure, one will completely misinterpret them and get the wrong meaning. Thirdly, a vase may be upright and clean, but if it has a leak then no matter what is put into it, it will all come out. Common sayings support this, e.g. ‘what goes in one ear comes out the other’. So whatever the teaching one has listened to, one needs to be able to retain it. The point is that we need mindfulness to retain whatever instructions or teachings we receive.

We need to understand the proper manner of listening to the teachings. The Lam Rim states one needs to be free from the three adverse conditions (the analogy of the three vases) and apply the six recognitions. These are important points. Just as water does not remain in a broken vase, someone who lacks introspection will not be able to abide in mindfulness. This again shows how mindfulness is supported by

introspection. If one lacks introspection that affects one's mindfulness, and also the wisdom of listening, contemplating and meditating, then whatever wisdom one has gained will degenerate. This is all due to the degeneration of introspection.

1.2.2.1.3. *One does not generate pure morality*

This indicates that someone who lacks introspection will not be able to generate pure morality.

The verse reads:

26. *A person listening, having faith
And striving strongly in many ways,
Because of having the fault of lacking
introspection,
Becomes sullied by the dirt of downfalls.*

Gyaltsab Je explains this verse as follows:

A person with faith who has listened to many teachings and strives strongly in many different ways to practise virtue, but who has the fault of not having introspection that knows what is right and what is wrong, will be sullied by the pollution of the dirt of the downfalls. Therefore one should strive in guarding introspection.

This explanation is very relevant at this time. If *a person* already has *faith, has listened to many teachings* and has striven *strongly in many ways to practise virtue* but has not maintained the introspection of knowing what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded, then their practice is *sullied by the pollution of the stains of the downfalls*.

We can see so many examples of this within the Tibetan community itself, with geshe and even lamas giving up their vows. Some have practised significantly for many years and later gave up their vows. We can also see many westerners who were once ordained Sangha, monks and nuns, who have now given up their vows. On a personal note, when I was in India many years ago I met a monk who was from Amdo. I recall I was really taken by his good composure, and apparently he had spent 12 years in retreat. He seemed like a very subdued monk, a very unique and genuine sort of monk at that time. However, at a later stage apparently he gave up being a monk and started living a lay life. This is quite astonishing to see.

I have heard many accounts of otherwise quite learned and good monks who have later disrobed. I recall another instance in the year 2000 at a Kalachakra initiation teaching in Bodhgaya. I was sitting up in front with Geshe Sonam and just in front was another youngish monk. As His Holiness passed by to the throne he would stop and pat me on the back and talk to me. The young monk in front recognised me and called me by name. I asked Geshe Sonam who he was and he told me he was quite a learned monk, actually a geshe from Sera Je who teaches the young monks in Namgyal Monastery, His Holiness' personal monastery in Dharamsala. Apparently His Holiness was fond of him because of his good knowledge and ability to teach other monks. This young geshe was fond of me and started to ask me questions on debate topics. The answers I gave him seemed to satisfy him. He said that if I needed any text books or anything from Dharamsala he could send them to me. He would even help me during the tea breaks to go to the private toilets inside, so I didn't have to go outside. So anyway, we had a good rapport. Then about a year later I heard that he had travelled to Canada, is no longer a monk and is now living a regular life as a lay person. This brought

to my awareness how pitiful it is to lose such great teachers to an ordinary life.

At the conclusion of this verse Gyaltsab Je mentions *Therefore one should strive in guarding introspection*. The implication here is that even if one is quite learned and has gained quite a lot of wisdom from listening to the teachings over many years, contemplating the meanings and even meditated to a certain degree, then, if all of this is not supported with continuous mindfulness and introspection there is still the chance for one to be sullied by stains of the downfall. Thus, introspection is presented as being essential to maintain one's practice.

A commitment that many of you are already doing regularly, called the *Six Session Guru Yoga*, is structured as a means to maintain mindfulness and introspection continuously. One meditates and reviews the vows and commitments three times in the morning and three times in the afternoon/evening which helps one maintain one's mindfulness and introspection throughout the day.

The *Six Session Guru Yoga* practice requires not just reciting the words, but recalling the meaning to the best of our ability. Again, we have all spent significant time hearing a lot of teachings, thinking and contemplating so it would be a great pity if we lost whatever wisdom we have gained now, or if it degenerated. So, in order to maintain the understanding we have gained we definitely need to apply mindfulness and introspection. I regularly encourage you by saying 'always protect your mind with mindfulness and introspection'. This includes myself too; I also need to be mindful and careful of my practice. There is a Tibetan expression which says that the teacher shouldn't be like a trumpet. This analogy is used as the opening of the trumpet is faced outward and the sound goes out loudly. So it is for mutual benefit that we need to be reminded of this point.

I acknowledge that you already spend a lot of time studying and paying attention to the teachings, which is great. Now the only thing is to remind you to maintain that by practising with mindfulness and introspection. The main point is to maintain a continuity of practice.

1.2.2.1.4. *Earlier accumulated virtue is destroyed*

This indicates that earlier accumulated virtue can be destroyed with the lack of introspection.

The verse reads:

27. *The thief of a lack of introspection
Follows degenerated mindfulness.
Although having accumulated merits
The thief steals them and one goes to the lower
realms.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning, along with an analogy:

A person without introspection will be robbed by the thief of the afflictions of their earlier accumulated wealth of merits due to degenerated introspection, which forgets the virtuous object.

When earlier accumulated wealth is stolen the person becomes a beggar. Similarly, when earlier accumulated merits are stolen the person becomes destitute of merits and goes to the lower realms.

When a person lacks introspection *the afflictions will rob them like a thief*. What they are being robbed of is their *accumulated merit*. Usually a thief would rob someone of their wealth and the analogy here relates to our accumulated merits. This explains that merits accumulated earlier can be taken away

due to a degenerated introspection which forgets the virtuous object. The connection here is that if one is not mindful of the virtuous object then one will forget it. Furthermore, with a lack of introspection one does not bring one's mind back to the virtuous object. Thus, because one does not bring one's focus back to the virtuous object, one's earlier accumulated merits will degenerate. Referring to the analogy, *when accumulated wealth is stolen a person becomes a beggar*, even when a wealthy person is robbed, because their wealth is gone they will be left with nothing and become a beggar. Using this same analogy, *when earlier accumulated merit is stolen, the person becomes destitute and goes to the lower realms*. The significant point here is that if one forgets the virtuous object, which is all the accumulated virtues that one has accumulated, (and the causes for one to obtain a fortunate rebirth) then, with a lack of introspection, all of those virtues can degenerate, which is the cause for one to go to the lower realms.

So we need to be really careful not to lose the virtues that we have put so much effort into accumulating earlier. In relation to ourselves, we have definitely listened to the teachings, accumulated knowledge and understanding and engaged in practices for accumulating merits. When all that we have acquired does not degenerate then they would be significant causes for a fortunate rebirth. However, if they were to degenerate through forgetting the virtuous object due to lack of mindfulness and introspection, then we actually lose the causes we have already accumulated. That is why we need to take this instruction to heart.

1.2.2.1.5. *It obstructs the achievement of virtue not accumulated earlier*

This means that lacking introspection will prevent one from accumulating further virtue which one may not have accumulated already.

If one maintains introspection then one's earlier accumulated virtue will not be destroyed, and one will not be obstructed from achieving virtue one has not yet accumulated. In contrast to that, if we were to lack introspection, then earlier accumulated virtue is destroyed and we are further obstructed from achieving virtues that we have not yet accumulated. This is how we need to incorporate the need to apply and always maintain introspection, as opposed to lacking it, and the consequences of that.

The verse relating to this heading reads:

28. *This gang of affliction robbers
Looks for an opportunity.
If they get a chance they steal virtue
And kill off the life of a happy rebirth.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning:

This gang of affliction robbers looks for an opportunity to steal the wealth of virtue. If one does not protect oneself with introspection, and they get a chance, they will steal one's virtue and also destroy the result, happy migrations and the life of liberation, in the progress.

Having contemplated the faults of not having introspection one should strive in introspection that checks the situation of the three doors

The commentary is quite clear and the analogy highlights the main point. Just as a gang of robbers look for an opportunity to steal others' wealth, as soon as there is an opportunity, they will not hesitate—they will rob immediately. Likewise the afflictions we have in our mind are like the gang of robbers who are waiting for an

opportunity to steal away our virtues. If one does not protect oneself with introspection and the afflictions get a chance, *they will steal one's virtue and also destroy the results of one's virtue, which is a happy migration and the life of liberation* which we are *in the process* of building. In conclusion, having contemplated the faults of not having introspection, one should strive in the introspection that investigates how we conduct ourselves through our three doors. Periodically we should check how we are conducting ourselves through our three doors of body, speech and mind. As mentioned earlier, the explanation here is quite clear: the main point is for one to actually take the advice to heart and put it into practice.

1.2.2.2. GUARDING MINDFULNESS AS THE METHOD FOR GUARDING INTROSPECTION

Mindfulness and introspection are presented as supportive of each other: in order to guard mindfulness one needs to apply introspection and vice versa. To have introspection we need to also apply mindfulness. This heading is divided into two:

1.2.2.2.1. Showing

1.2.2.2.2. Explaining

1.2.2.2.1. Showing

The verse reads:

29. *Therefore, do not send mindfulness
Away from the door of the mind.
Should it happen, place it closely
By recalling the sufferings of the lower realms.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning thus:

Because there are many faults if one does not have introspection, do not send the mindfulness of not forgetting the virtuous object away from the door of the house of the mind. In case mindfulness weakens and does leave, remind yourself of the sufferings of the lower realms, and immediately protect the house of the mind again.

Because of the many faults associated with losing introspection, using the analogy of mind as a house, one should not allow mindfulness (particularly forgetting the virtuous object), to leave from the door.

The commentary further explains '*in case mindfulness weakens*' and it does go (because a beginner's mindfulness is hard to maintain all the time), one needs to remind oneself again of the sufferings and the pitiful situation of the lower realms, and that this is the consequence of a lack of mindfulness. Then one will immediately protect the house of the mind again.

1.2.2.2.2. Explaining

Having thus presented how to guard mindfulness, next follows the various conditions for guarding mindfulness as a method of guarding introspection. These are subdivided into three.

1.2.2.2.2.1. Relying on the outer condition of a virtuous friend

1.2.2.2.2.2. How to generate the inner condition of correct mental application

1.2.2.2.2.3. How to generate the inner conditions of mindfulness and introspection

1.2.2.2.2.1. Relying on the outer condition of a virtuous friend

What are the various conditions for guarding mindfulness as a method of guarding introspection? The first is relying on the outer condition of a virtuous friend, or what we call a teacher or guru. The teacher is a virtuous friend, thus relying

on the lama is relying on a virtuous friend. This then becomes an external condition for one to be able to maintain one's introspection.

The verse reads:

30. *From following the lama,
Through to advice by the abbot,
Out of fear, the fortunate ones are respectful,
And generate mindfulness easily.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

The fortunate ones respect the trainings and will follow the advice of their abbot, preceptor, friends in pure training and the like out of a feeling of shame and consideration and fear of being degraded by others. These are methods for protecting mindfulness.

Since they generate easily the mindfulness that does not forget the virtuous object, regardless of whether they listen, contemplate or meditate, they base their practice on mastering mindfulness.

The method for protecting mindfulness presented here is that those who are *the fortunate ones* will respect the trainings and follow the advice of the abbot and the like out of a feeling of shame and consideration. For those in the ordained community the abbot is the one from whom vows are received. A preceptor gives precepts to the lay community who take lay precepts. Friends in pure training would be in the larger sangha community—those who help one accumulate virtue - friends in pure training. As one has taken vows and precepts from a prominent being and made promises to such a prominent being, it would be improper to breach them. It is said that the significance of receiving the vows and commitments from highly accomplished masters is that the mere recollection of them will help one to be more mindful of not breaching the vows. The hesitation to break those vows will be stronger because of the great respect one has for the lama (qualified virtuous friends—teacher, abbot etc.) *With the fear of being degraded by others*, means that when one has fear of being looked down upon, or where others may say something to put one in a bad light, then through consideration of this one will be able to apply mindfulness. These are the methods for protecting mindfulness since they generate easily the mindfulness that does not forget the virtuous object. The key point here is that since the mindfulness of not forgetting the virtuous object can easily lapse, regardless of whether one has listened, contemplated or meditated, you must base your practice on mastering mindfulness in order to protect your earlier merit and vows etc.

Shame and consideration are two very important virtues we need to maintain. The difference between shame and embarrassment is that the focus of shame is one's commitment to others, such as one's lamas and Buddha etc. If one avoids engaging in faults that would cause disgrace to those others, this is shame. Embarrassment arises because an action is not good for one's own reason i.e. it is not good for me to break these vows. This uses oneself as a reason to avoid faults in consideration of others.

In summary, take *relying on outer conditions* as a personal instruction to recall the importance of relying on qualified spiritual masters and virtuous friends who encourage us and to help us accumulate virtue. On a wider scale, one can rely on Dharma brothers and sisters in our life, like-minded people who help remind us of the Dharma. Having respect for them and relying upon them is meaningful for oneself as a method to protect one's mindfulness, and as a way to guard introspection.

1.2.2.2.2. How to generate the inner condition of correct mental application

Having explained the outer conditions next the method to generate the inner conditions of correct mental application is presented. This next verse serves as a proclamation, or what we should recall.

The verse reads:

31. *Buddhas and bodhisattvas
Are endowed with unobstructed sight of everything.
Say, 'I am always in the field of vision
Of their five eyes.'*
32ab. *By contemplating this, shame,
And likewise respect and fear are attained.*

As explained by Gyaltsab Je in the commentary:

Further, the buddhas and bodhisattvas can see all phenomena without obstruction, regardless of place or time. So one remains at all times clearly in the sight of their five eyes. Considering this generates shame, which takes oneself as the reason, and because one has respect for the teacher and the Dharma and fear of the fruition, one should take care and practise mindfulness.

The first line presents the extent of the buddhas' omniscient mind, and it is because the buddhas have five wisdom eyes that one is always in their presence. Bringing this to mind, along with the qualities of the buddhas' omniscience and the qualities of the bodhisattvas, one should always feel their presence, because they are in constant awareness of our being.

The way to envision shame is that if one recalls that one is always in the presence of the buddhas and bodhisattvas then one does not want to show disrespect, so one refrains from engaging in misdeeds. This is how one applies mindfulness and introspection in relation to shame.

As the commentary continues, *because one has respect for the teacher and the Dharma and fear of the fruition, one should take care and practise mindfulness.*

The next point, which is the consideration for others, comes because of the respect one has for the teacher and the Dharma and fear of the results of one's negative consequences (one's misdeeds). By recalling the reason of others, one again applies mindfulness, and it is in this way that one practises mindfulness on a continuous basis. Again, what is being explained is not obscure, it is quite clear. The main thing for one to take to heart as personal instruction is to apply this in our practice.

To summarise the main point: recall that the Buddhas are omniscient. This means that they know all existence completely and entirely; past, present and future. Think, 'I am always in their presence and so I dare not engage in misdeeds, lapse from my commitments etc.' This recollection is how our mindfulness is supported with introspection.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version © Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་པོ་འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷོ་ལ་འཇམ་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

1 July 2014

As usual we can spend some time in meditation practice.
[Meditation]

We can generate a positive motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the benefit of all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. Therefore I will listen to the teachings, and put them into practice well.

I regularly emphasise the importance of the motivation and this is exactly the point which is presented in the next verses. These verses are very poignant explanations about the significance of our state of mind and so forth, so we really need to pay attention to them.

1.2.2.2.3. How to generate the inner conditions of mindfulness and introspection

This has two subdivisions:

1.2.2.2.3.1. How to generate mindfulness

1.2.2.2.3.2. How to generate introspection from mindfulness

1.2.2.2.3.1. How to generate mindfulness

Here, there are two lines:

*32cd. They also repeatedly generate
Recollection of the Buddha.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on these lines reads

A person who thinks in this way will also recollect the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Because this happens repeatedly, they will easily generate mindfulness of the Three Jewels.

This explanation follows last week's presentation in that *a person who thinks in this way* refers to using shame and embarrassment to apply mindfulness. An individual who conducts themselves with shame and embarrassment in mind will recollect the qualities of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, which are three of the six recollections. In addition to the recollection of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, the six recollections also include recollection of the downfalls, recollection of morality and recollection of the deities.

As presented here, the qualities of the Three Jewels are interrelated in the sense that the more one reflects on the enlightened activities of the Buddha, the greater the admiration and faith in the Buddha's words, i.e. the Dharma. Generating strong faith in the Dharma will then naturally bring about a keen admiration and faith in those who actually practise the Dharma, i.e. the Sangha. So in this way one recollects the qualities of the Three Jewels, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

Furthermore the more one recollects the qualities of the Three Jewels, the more mindful one will be about not

creating the downfalls, and the recollection of morality and so forth will come about as well. Constantly bringing to mind an awareness that one is in the presence of the buddhas and the deities at all times will help one to generate a sense of shame about breaching any vows one has taken, and then through that shame there is a hesitation about incurring the negativities or the downfalls. The same applies to embarrassment with respect to others. So the recollection of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha helps to generate a sense of shame and embarrassment about incurring the downfalls and so forth.

1.2.2.2.3.2. How to generate introspection from mindfulness

Here again, we take note of the way mindfulness and introspection are interconnected. If one applies mindfulness well, then that will help to generate introspection as well. The verse relating to this is:

*33. When mindfulness remains at the door
Of the mind for the purpose of protection,
At that time introspection is born
And the one that left returns.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of this verse thus:

At the time when one, through mindfulness, remains alert to protect oneself from the afflictions, then introspection, which analyses which action is suitable and which is unsuitable, comes into existence, and that which has degenerated at a time will return.

Since the skill in practice depends on mindfulness and introspection, one should become adept in this.

As the commentary explains, by applying *mindfulness one remains alert to protect oneself from the afflictions*. Here mindfulness relates to being either mindful of a virtuous object, or mindful of what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded. So mindfulness means being alert to the possibility of afflictions arising and thus protecting oneself from them. This is really the most significant point about applying mindfulness.

Here we can recall one of the great Kadampa masters Geshe Byel Kunkyen who said, 'I always guard my three doors, lest I fall victim to the afflictions'. One really needs to apply mindfulness in this manner, as a means to guard the mind against the afflictions, and thus ensure that they do not take root. That is the positive outcome of applying mindfulness.

As the commentary further explains, the consequence of following the practice of maintaining mindfulness to protect oneself from the afflictions, is that introspection, which analyses *what actions are suitable and what are unsuitable*, comes into existence. This presentation is systematically showing us how introspection arises by virtue of applying mindfulness. When one applies mindfulness appropriately, and maintains it, then introspection will naturally arise, which in this context is a mind that vigilantly analyses and checks what actions are to be adopted and what actions need to be discarded.

I regularly stress the importance of maintaining mindfulness of one's virtuous object while in meditation. When we have mindfulness of the object, then the introspection that checks whether the mind has become distracted or not will arise naturally. The same applies to

mindfulness and introspection about what actions are to be adopted and what are to be abandoned. This is a very systematic explanation that clearly shows how mindfulness and introspection support each other.

When the commentary says, *that which is unsuitable comes into existence and that which has degenerated at a time will return*, it is referring to the fact that if mindfulness or introspection start to weaken, they can easily be restored. The more one maintains mindfulness about one's activities and actions, the more it will help the development of introspection. In the event that mindfulness or introspection start to degenerate or lapse, then, because of the earlier application, they will easily be able to return. So that is the point being explained here.

Furthermore, as the commentary explains, *since the skill in meditation and practice depends on mindfulness and introspection, one should become adept in this*. The point here is that becoming skilled in meditation and practice depends on how much mindfulness and introspection is being applied, and held without degeneration.

1.3. The practice of guarding the mind with mindfulness and introspection

Having explained the necessity of applying mindfulness and introspection, the next part of the text deals with the actual practice of guarding the mind with mindfulness.

This is subdivided into three:

- 1.3.1. Training in the morality of restraint
- 1.3.2. The way of training in the morality of accumulating virtuous dharmas
- 1.3.3. Training in the morality that accomplishes the welfare of sentient beings

1.3.1. Training in the morality of restraint

This has two subdivisions:

- 1.3.1.1. Striving to purify the actions of the three doors
- 1.3.1.2. Protecting the three doors from degeneration

1.3.1.1. STRIVING TO PURIFY THE ACTIONS OF THE THREE DOORS

Here there are three sub-headings

- 1.3.1.1.1. Investigating the actions of body and speech
- 1.3.1.1.2. Investigating the actions of the mind
- 1.3.1.1.3. Explaining the permitted and forbidden actions

1.3.1.1.1. Investigating the actions of body and speech

This is subdivided into four:

- 1.3.1.1.1.1. Investigating the motivation before a physical action
- 1.3.1.1.1.2. Advice related to looking and so forth
- 1.3.1.1.1.3. Relating it to other actions
- 1.3.1.1.1.4. Investigating the action of abiding

These are important points that I regularly emphasise. This part of the presentation is also very suitable for beginners, as they will find it systematic and very logical. They are able to relate to this explanation very well, because it relates to normal, everyday activities.

Investigating the motivation before a physical action relates to the fact that the mind is paramount in all our actions. The mind is the forerunner of all physical and verbal activities. Whether we conduct a positive physical activity, or whether it is harmful depends on our

motivation prior to engaging in that action. Likewise whatever speech we utter, whether it is positive and beneficial, or harmful or negative, is also dependent on the motivation that precedes the speech. This presentation shows how the mind is the forerunner of all activities.

1.3.1.1.1. Investigating the motivation before a physical action

The verse that relates to this heading is:

- 34. *Initially investigate
Whether this mind is flawed.
At the time I shall remain
Steady like wood.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains:

Before engaging in any physical action, such as walking, investigate this mind of yours to see whether the motivation for the action is flawed or not.

In case a flawed motivation has arisen, then, while remembering the antidote against the afflictions, remain steady like wood, and not be moved by the motivation.

As the commentary explains, *before engaging in any action such as walking*, first check or *investigate this mind of yours to see whether the motivation for the action is flawed or not*. As explained here, prior to engaging in any action such as walking or going about, one checks one's state of mind to see what is motivating this action. 'Is the motivation a positive one? Is it an appropriate motivation for the action I am about to engage in? Or is it tainted with some negativity?' This is how to check one's motivation prior to engaging in the action itself.

As the commentary further explains, if one finds that a *flawed motivation has arisen* or taken root, then, the moment one notices that the motivation is stained, by *remembering the antidote to the affliction*, one *remains steady like wood*.

To understand this analogy it is necessary to know that the Tibetan term *shing* applies to wood in general, and it is also the term for trees. In this case, as some other commentaries indicate, the example relates to a massive tree that remains steady during a storm and is not moved by gusts of wind. This example is used to illustrate how one needs to apply the antidote to remain steady and not be moved by the afflictions.

When one notices that one's motivation is tainted and applies the antidote to the afflictions, then one will be able to remain steady and not be moved by that tainted motivation or superstitious thoughts and so forth. So the mind itself remains steady and not moved by a faulty motivation or the afflictions.

As I regularly emphasise, whatever the practice we do, particularly with meditation, we need to be mindful that the practice serves its purpose of overcoming the afflictions in one's mind. As I have related to you in the past, I spent a significant amount of time in my youth attempting to meditate. As I have confided in you in the past, despite my earnest efforts to apply the meditation practice, trying to lead a modest life, being content with whatever I had and not concerned about nice clothing and food, these efforts could, at times, have been tainted with some worldly concern, wondering how others

would view me and so forth. Nevertheless the attempts I made at that time have definitely had a positive effect on my wellbeing now that I am older. Judging by the positive effects that I experience now, the earlier attempts to meditate and so forth have not been in vain, and may have been focused in the right direction. At this stage in my life I can confidently say that my meditation practice is pure, without the stains of worldly concerns.

Geshe-la in English: When I was 20 years old, 21 years old, 22 years old, 23 years old, at that time when there is good food and bad one, I chose bad one! If there is good cloth and not good one, I choose not good one. At time very, very good learning—now I no attach food, no attach cloth, no attach reputation! That time I learning, now beneficial for me! Normally I say I need small food, easy food, not need many different food; stomach full and good for health that is enough! Some people two hours cooking, eat ten minutes, finished! Important healthy food need, delicious or not delicious not really important, healthy need. Delicious only here [pointing to tongue]—afterwards gone! Some people eat rotten egg, rotten meat, not knowing, say 'yes, yes', then stomach pain and some dead. Most important health!

Coming back to the main point, our motivation is of paramount importance. Whatever activity we engage in we need to first check our motivation. Those of you who live with a partner know from experience how, if you do not check your state of mind and allow negative states of mind such as anger to become prevalent, you can easily engage in inappropriate gestures and behaviours that can upset your partner. Behaving in this way will not be received well, even by someone who is close to you. We see so many examples of the complications, harm and hostility that arise as a result of not having paid attention to one's state of mind, prior to engaging in the activities that affect your companion.

If you take this advice to heart, and really pay attention to your state of mind, then, having contemplated the faults of anger, when you notice anger arising you will know that it is not a really suitable state of mind with which to interact with others. By virtue of recognising that, you will be able to prevent yourselves from mishaps and harming others. This is the practical approach to protecting yourselves.

1.3.1.1.2. Advice related to looking and so forth

Here again we can notice the very practical advice Shantideva is giving to those listening to his teachings. His practical advice on how to conduct oneself and behave properly, just the same as the advice and care that a parent would give to their children.

Having mentioned the importance of checking the mind before engaging in physical actions, now comes advice about how to look with one's eyes.

This has four subdivisions:

- 1.3.1.1.2.1. The general conduct of looking with the eyes
- 1.3.1.1.2.2. How to look when tired
- 1.3.1.1.2.3. How to act when another person comes close
- 1.3.1.1.2.4. How to act after one has rested

1.3.1.1.2.1. The general conduct of looking with the eyes

The verse that relates to this is:

35. *I never allow myself to be distracted
And do not look around meaninglessly.
Rather, with a firm mind,
I always look with my eyes downcast.*

These are quite easy points to understand and the commentary is also quite clear.

I shall never allow myself to be distracted and look around meaninglessly, because this causes the mind to degenerate. With the virtuous object firmly in mind I shall always look with my eyes cast down the length of one yoke in front of me.

As the commentary explains one *should never allow oneself to be distracted and look around meaninglessly*. This means not looking around without any purpose. One should guard against that sort of conduct. If one were to look around meaninglessly then that would *cause the mind to degenerate*, through losing its focus on the virtuous object.

Then the commentary further explains that while maintaining *the virtuous object firmly in mind I shall always look with my eyes cast down the length of one yoke in front of me*. In some texts such as the *Vinaya Sutra*, the distance is described as the span of one arm's length.

The main point is that one maintains one's focus on the virtuous object, and that when one walks, one looks just at the space in front of oneself. That covers the general conduct of looking with the eyes.

1.3.1.1.2.2. How to look when tired

Next comes how to look when one is tired. This is covered in these two lines:

- 36ab. *To rest one's sight
One should occasionally look around.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

To refresh one's constitution, and if tired, one occasionally lifts one's gaze and looks around.

When one is tired or looking for a resting place, *one can occasionally lift one's gaze and look around*.

Holding one's gaze at a certain distance for too long might lead to physical discomfort, and mentally one may start to feel a bit tired. So, in order to refresh one's physical constitution, and to revive the mind, we are advised to occasionally lift up our gaze a bit and look around in order to refresh ourselves.

We know that whenever we are engaged in some sort of task, after a while we get a bit tired and we need to look up and stretch out our arms. This is how we normally refresh ourselves. However, this does not imply that we should forget the virtuous object and just look around meaninglessly. The purpose of looking up is just to refresh ourselves, and it should not be a means to become distracted again.

1.3.1.1.2.3. How to act when another person comes close

At this point we can again reflect upon the heart-warming nature of Shantideva's advice. I have heard people say, 'My parents never taught me how to receive guests and how to care for them!' Shantideva is showing us here how to relate to others in appropriate ways.

Some people become very shy when guests arrive, and are not really able to say much. This indicates that they are not really able to interact with and relate to people at a social level.

36cd. When someone appears in the field of your vision

Look up and say, "It is good you came".

37ab. To check whether there are dangers on the road

Look repeatedly in the four directions.

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning as follows:

If someone comes into one's field of vision, while we have our eyes downcast, once they are in front of us we smile at them and say 'How good you came'.

Also, while walking along a path one needs to repeatedly look around in the four directions to check whether there are any dangers or not.

As explained here in the commentary, if, while you are engaged in gazing downward, someone comes near you, then you look up and greet them with a smile. Even just a smile can make others feel at ease and comfortable. Following this pleasant facial gesture, one utters welcoming pleasant words. That is how to conduct oneself.

Furthermore *while walking along the path*, the conduct one needs to adopt *is to repeatedly look in the four directions*, to check whether there are any dangers or not. This is very practical advice. One should always be vigilant as one walks about, otherwise accidents will happen. We can see the very practical nature of this advice. It is also applicable to driving, isn't it? Basically, Shantideva is presenting, with reason and logic, the most suitable way to conduct ourselves virtuously in all our activities, much as parents give advice to their children.

1.3.1.1.2.4. How to act after one has rested

This of course is quite easy to understand. Having given advice on how to rest when one is tired, how does one conduct oneself after a rest?

The following four lines explain this:

37cd. Having directed your sight outwards during the break

Look behind your back.

38ab. Having checked in front and behind

Go or come.

The commentary explains the meaning as follows.

Further, after one has rested and set out again, direct your attention outwards and look also behind your back for your possessions. Having checked whether in front or behind are any cliffs and so forth, one either continues along one's path or goes back, as is appropriate.

Having applied the advice on resting, as one sets out again, we are next advised to *direct your attention outward, and also behind your back for your possessions*. This refers to making sure that there are no obstructions, or dangers, either behind or in front.

Having checked in front and behind that there aren't *any cliffs or so forth* refers to the fact that some routes can be treacherous, and very dangerous. So one needs to look carefully in front, to see if there are any cliffs or not, and

then, ensuring that there is no danger, one proceeds along the path.

Looking backward ensures that it is possible to turn back if needed, as well as ensuring one does not leave one's possessions behind. Again, this is very practical advice.

1.3.1.1.1.3. Relating it to other actions

The relevant two lines are:

38cd. Act in this way at all time

Upon understanding the purpose.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

Having understood the need for the benefit of self and others, act like this with all your physical and verbal actions.

In summary, whatever one's actions, whether verbal or physical, one needs to first check their purpose, whether they benefit oneself or others, and then, if there is a benefit, engage in those actions.

We will recite the *King of Prayers* for Kim Foon's father who has just passed away in Malaysia. Kim, her sister Kim Yoke, and William are three of our more dedicated students, and it is good for us to do prayers for them at this time.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Judy Mayne

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© *Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བལྟགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

8 July 2014

As usual we can spend some time in meditation practice. [meditation]

Aim to receive the teachings with a bodhicitta motivation such as:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, in order to free them from all sufferings and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. For that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

Such a motivation is crucial for ensuring that your approach is a proper practice.

We have explained the headings How To Act When One Rests and Relating It To Other Actions. Recall how those explanations gave very practical advice about how to conduct oneself in such situations. In relation to protecting oneself from dangers after resting, when one starts to move about, the advice was about how to be cautious: look behind to make sure no possessions have been left behind; ensure you are not in danger; look in front and make sure there is no precipice or danger points around and then move with caution. This was very practical advice.

This line from Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains what is meant by *relating it to other actions* and serves as a summary that relates to all of our actions.

Having understood the need for the benefit of self and others, act like this with all your physical and verbal actions.

Whatever actions we engage in, physical or verbal, in all instances first check whether there is a benefit for oneself or a benefit for others. Having thoroughly checked, if one finds there is a benefit for oneself and/or others then engage in the actions. Again, this is immaculate advice as it encourages us to use our own wisdom to assess our actions.

1.3.1.1.4. Investigating the action of abiding

The verse reads:

39. *Initiate your actions thinking:
'I shall abide with my body like this.'
From time to time check
How your body is abiding.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

After having had the thought, 'I shall remain in this position', stop the actions of the body and place it for the time being in the planned position.

Look in the explained way, from time to time to check how the body is abiding, and strive to act without fault.

When engaging in a virtuous deed on a physical level (it can relate to body, speech and mind but here it relates to the physical), and *after having the thought 'I shall remain in this position,'* an example of an action may be if you decided to engage in a focused meditation. You would think 'Now I will position myself in the seven-point posture of Buddha

Vairochana, and having taken this initiative you would adopt the appropriate posture. Then, having adopted the posture you would strive to maintain it for the duration. You would periodically check how your body is abiding, and whether you have adopted the correct posture or not. This applies to any physical action; sitting, standing or moving about—adopt the physical posture and strive to act without fault. The succinct advice here is to constantly be aware of one's actions, whether physical, verbal or mental state, and be vigilant in checking 'how am I conducting myself?' This ensures that you are conducting yourself without fault and in line with creating virtue. If you find yourself at fault, immediately try to overcome it. This is the main advice. Having given detailed advice on how to conduct oneself physically, next is investigating the state, or conduct, of the mind.

1.3.1.1.2. Investigating the mind

This is subdivided into two

1.3.1.1.2.1. Fastening the mind to the virtuous object

1.3.1.1.2.2. Analyse whether it is single-pointedly focused on virtue or not

1.3.1.1.2.1. Fastening the mind to the virtuous object

The verse reads:

40. *Check with all your effort
That the crazy elephant mind
Does not lose the great Dharma pillar
The way it was fastened to it.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Check with all your effort that the unsubdued and crazy elephant mind does not lose the great pillar of the Dharma object that one accepted to contemplate single-pointedly, the way one fastened the mind to it.

The main point of the explanation here is how to ensure that one's mind is fastened to a virtuous object. The mind here is likened to an unsubdued and crazy elephant which would cause havoc due to its completely wild nature. Firstly, it is untamed, and on top of that it is crazed, so an elephant like that would go on a rampage and cause huge destruction, unless it was secured tightly to a strong pillar.

This analogy illustrates our state of mind, which is untamed from the three poisons of attachment, anger and ignorance, and crazed with different delusions. Such an untamed and crazed mind, if it is not fastened to a pillar like a Dharma object, can cause so much damage and destruction. Therefore the advice here is, in order to prevent one's mind from causing so much damage and destruction, *check with all your effort that the unsubdued and crazy elephant mind does not lose the great pillar of the Dharma object.* For us, the pillar or object must be a virtuous object, and just as one would tie an elephant to a pillar, one ties the focus of one's mind to the virtuous object, or what the commentary calls *the Dharma object that one accepted to contemplate single-pointedly the way one fastened the mind to it.* This line indicates that as one has previously determined to contemplate on a chosen object, one needs to constantly ensure one does not lose focus on that virtuous object.

1.3.1.1.2.2. Analyse whether it is single-pointedly focused on virtue or not

After one has fastened one's mind to a virtuous Dharma object (pillar), next one needs to analyse whether it is single-pointedly focused on it or not. This is very succinct advice on how to conduct oneself on a mental level. One can derive

so much meaning from just going over the outline and relate to the significance of the meaning of the verse.

The verse reads:

41. *However I strive in concentration
I shall not let loose for even one moment.
'What does this mind of mine do?' I ask.
Analyse the mind in detail in this regard.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of this verse:

I shall not even for one moment lose my concentration on the virtuous object and be distracted to something else. Analyse your mind repeatedly, saying: 'This mind of mine does suitable and unsuitable actions.'

The significant point here is that while the advice is to focus one's mind single-pointedly on the virtuous object to develop concentration, at the same time, internally in one's mind, one should also analyse one's state of mind checking what kind of thoughts are occurring, what kind of actions are being initiated. The mind has the ability to constantly initiate either suitable or unsuitable actions. So there is a need to check what kinds of thoughts are being manifested in one's mind. Note that from the very onset it is extremely crucial to train oneself in meditation, to develop not only calm abiding, but also special insight, because calm abiding, a state of single-pointed concentration on an object for as long as one wishes, in itself is not sufficient to further enhance one's progress along the path to enlightenment. The teachings constantly emphasise this point. So in addition to calm abiding, one needs to develop special insight, and it is with this combination of concentration and special insight that one can start to really engage in an actual meditation practice capable of removing the subtle afflictions and delusions in the mind. This is a crucial point: while engaging in meditation we should not allow ourselves to feel comfortable just focusing single-pointedly on a chosen object, and maintaining just that. Rather we must also constantly investigate our state of mind, which serves as the basis to develop special insight.

The analysis one employs to check one's state of mind is one which is done while maintaining one's focus on the object, not wavering away from it. So while maintaining this single-pointed focus on the object, one must also employ an analysis that investigates one's state of mind, i.e. what thoughts are occurring and whether they are virtuous states of mind or negative states of mind. Employing this sort of analysis enhances one's intelligence and wisdom, and further develops that wisdom, which can later become special insight.

Lama Tsong Khapa advocates abandoning mere single-pointed concentration, and striving to develop the union of calm abiding and special insight. This is a significant and unique point which we really need to understand. We need to make attempts to develop this training now in our meditation so it will leave a positive imprint in our mind. When we apply this technique it becomes a means to sharpen the mind and further enhance wisdom. Otherwise if one only develops single-pointed concentration, and it is not done in an appropriate manner, then there is a danger of the mind becoming duller and duller rather than sharper, clearer and more intelligent. It is crucial that we apply the proper technique.

1.3.1.1.3. Explaining the permitted and forbidden actions

First, to give an idea about what this heading means in relation to explaining the meaning of the verse: the Buddha

presented certain actions as being permitted and certain actions which are forbidden. Within those which were forbidden there are certain actions which may be temporarily relaxed a bit, as a way of adopting another practice. This is the meaning of practicing equanimity in this context. Thus here, equanimity means that with certain forbidden actions one may temporarily relax the rules a bit, as the means to adopt another virtuous practice.

The verse reads:

42. *If, in the context of dangers or prayer
You are unable, be as comfortable as you can.
In the same vein, at the time of generosity
Morality is treated with equanimity, it is taught.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the verse:

If one is unable to perform certain extremely subtle actions of body and mind at the time of:

- Danger to one's life,
- Making offering to the Triple Gem with prayers,
- Actions for the superior purpose of others,

At such times it is permissible to relax one's state or being, even if one is not able to engage those subtle forbidden actions.

From the *Sutra Requested by Inexhaustible Wisdom*:

Thus, at the time of generosity, contain morality and practise equanimity.

The commentary explains that at a time when there is either danger to one's life, or when one is making extensive offerings to the Triple Gem, or particularly when one is engaging in superior actions of benefiting or helping other beings, if one is unable to perform certain extremely subtle actions of body and mind at that time, then '*one should practice equanimity and put one's mind at ease.*'

The citation to qualify this presentation is from the *Sutra Requested by Inexhaustible Wisdom*.

Thus, at the time of generosity, contain morality and practice equanimity.

This is saying that at a time when one is not able to practise both simultaneously, and it is the time for mainly practising generosity, then one should practice equanimity, and leave one's subtle practice of morality. The purpose is to be skilful in accomplishing the path sequentially.

Further down, the commentary explains:

This is to achieve the proper sequence of the path, because if one mistakes the sequence then one will not achieve the former or the latter.

The points of the path should be practised sequentially. In order to practise the points sequentially, first adopt those which are initially presented and relatively easy to practise before engaging in a more difficult practice. The quote from the sutra indicates this point.

The commentary presents a hypothetical doubt which may occur:

Query: How can one regard it with equanimity since morality is greater than generosity?

This is a reasonable doubt, for it is indeed a greater virtue to practise morality than generosity, because morality is harder to practise. Generosity can be practiced by lay as well as ordained practitioners, while certain practices of morality, like observing the self-liberation vows, can only be practised by ordained Sangha. Therefore morality is said to be harder to practise than generosity.

Thus, if we had to identify the main focus of the practice and who is appropriate to do those practices, lay people would focus mainly on generosity, and ordained Sangha would need to practise primarily on morality as their main practice.

So, as the query states, if morality is more virtuous, how can one leave that in equanimity, meaning how can one relax the practice of morality?

The next two verses serve as an answer to the query and read:

43. *After initiating the intended action
Do not think about anything else.
For the time being accomplish that very action
With your thoughts focused on it.*
44. *In this way all is accomplished well.
Otherwise neither will be accomplished.
The secondary afflictions, which are non-
introspection,
Will not increase in this way.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains exactly why:

One does not divert mentally from the first practice in a series that have to be practised sequentially. Generosity, which has to be practised first, is practised alone with a firm mind for the time being. This is to achieve the proper sequence of the path, because if one mistakes the sequence, then one will not achieve the former or the latter.

In relation to the first part - *One does not divert mentally from the first practice in a series that have to be practiced sequentially* - this highlights that some practices are presented in sequential order. When practices are presented in a sequential manner it is important to primarily focus on the first practice as a way to establish a firm basis to engage in the next practice of the sequence. As explained here, *This is to achieve the proper sequence of the path, because if one mistakes the sequence, then one will not achieve the former or the latter.*

Take the analogy of constructing a wall: the foundation must be firm and stable. If it is not stable, when you start building the wall and putting the next layer on top it can very easily topple over. The consequence is that you neither have a good foundation nor a wall which comes on top of it. With this analogy it is very clear that when a practice is presented sequentially one needs to focus on the first practice to serve as a basis to practise the rest.

Hence the commentary continues:

By knowing and following the stages of the path the secondary afflictions, which are not introspection and which do not know the sequence, will not increase. Hence, one should strive to become proficient in the sequence of the path.

So this is all very clear.

1.3.1.2. PROTECTING THE THREE DOORS FROM DEGENERATION

This is divided into two subdivisions:

1.3.1.2.1. Protecting the training of the body from degeneration

1.3.1.2.2. Protecting the training of the mind from degeneration

1.3.1.2.1. Protecting the training of the body from degeneration

This is further divided into three meticulously presented subdivisions:

1.3.1.2.1.1. Not letting the body fall under the control of distractions

1.3.1.2.1.2. Abandon meaningless activities

1.3.1.2.1.3. Analysing the motivation at the time of the action

1.3.1.2.1.1. Not letting the body fall under the control of distractions

45. *Various types of idle gossip
And many great plays,
If one becomes involved in any of these,
Abandon attachment to them.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the verse:

Do not engage in meaningless talk, such as gossip about kings or robbers, and also do not engage in dance or one of the many other kinds of spectacular performances. If there is a purpose or if it is to harmonise with someone, then one should abandon attachment for the action.

This succinct and practical advice is good for us, as it explains how to conduct ourselves in our daily life. The advice is that, whenever possible, one should not engage in meaningless talk such as idle gossip. The text cites gossip about kings or robbers, however for us it would be like gossiping about politics etc. There are sayings that express sentiments like, 'when one engages in gossip the whole day can just pass by', and one has just squandered a whole day gossiping. Engaging in gossip can increase delusions such as anger or attachment. According to the ten non-virtuous actions, by nature gossip is said to pose the least heavy negative karma. But if one is not mindful, it can end up being the worst as it wastes one's time. Because one may not perceive it to be very severe, one thinks it is OK to gossip. But if in fact one spends most of one's time just gossiping, then this will deprive you of your precious time to engage in other practices. So, while by nature gossiping is said to be the least heavy in negative karma, by doing it habitually we can actually waste our whole life. Furthermore, the advice extends to not engaging in dance or one of the many other kinds of spectacular performances, which would include watching movies etc. Again, such performances can cause delusions to arise in one's mind.

An exception is presented: *If there is a purpose or if it is to harmonise with someone one may engage in an action.* Here *harmonise* means 'if it is in accordance with someone else's wishes'. For example if someone said 'Please come to the movies with me. You definitely have to come with me', if you had a choice you would not go because you wouldn't want to waste your time. However, in order to please the other, and not to go against their wishes, you may find yourself sometimes having to comply and say, 'OK, I will go with you'. In situations like this, the advice is to do so without strong attachment—one should abandon attachment to the action.

There are certain categories within the Vinaya vows which are forbidden actions, but which are, under certain circumstances, permitted. For example, singing is actually a forbidden action for ordained Sangha because it can create attachment and distraction. However, if it seems necessary to sing to benefit others, then under those circumstances it is permitted. There are also other categories of actions which a Sangha member maybe permitted to engage in, if it is for the sole purpose of benefiting others. This shows the great kindness of the Buddha in presenting the vows in a way where, under certain circumstances, if it is beneficial to sentient beings, the actions are allowed. In summary, we can see how meticulously the Buddha presented vows which

say: 'avoid such actions normally but if there is a benefit for others then you can engage in it'.

1.3.1.2.1.2. Abandon meaningless activities

The next verse provides advice on how to conduct appropriate physical actions.

The verse reads:

46. *Meaningless digging, cutting of grass,
And drawing in dirt: if one does these,
Upon remembering the trainings of the
Tathagata,
Out of fear, abandon them immediately.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Even if one is not a bhikhu, when one is engaged in meaningless activities such as digging, cutting grass, drawing in the dirt etc., then one should remember the trainings of the Tathagata and, being afraid of the shortcomings of one's actions, stop them right there.

The definitions of meaningless activities are contained within the vows of a fully ordained monk, and they are not to engage in them. For example, digging, cutting grass and drawing in the dirt. However, the commentary indicates that even if you are not a bhikhu or a fully ordained monk—not all bodhisattva trainees are ordained—you should also avoid engaging in meaningless activities such as digging, cutting grass or drawing in the dirt. By remembering why the Buddha actually presented these activities as needing to be avoided, and being afraid of the shortcomings of one's actions, one needs to refrain from such activities. Activities are meaningless not just because they don't have any specific purpose. Some can harm other beings, such as cutting grass. At certain times of the year there are lots of bugs on the grass so by cutting grass, you would actually harm the lives of many insects.

1.3.1.2.1.3. Analysing the motivation at the time of the action

Similar advice was presented earlier. Basically, whatever action one engages in, really check and investigate one's motivation for engaging in the activity first.

This point has three subdivisions:

- 1.3.1.2.1.3.1. Showing
- 1.3.1.2.1.3.2. Explaining
- 1.3.1.2.1.3.4. Summary

1.3.1.2.1.3.1. Showing

The verse reads:

47 *If you wish to move
Or wish to speak
First analyse your mind
And then be smart through steadfastness.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

At the time when one wishes to move one's body or wishes to speak, one should first investigate one's mind to make sure it has not fallen under the control of the afflictions or self-cherishing, and then engage accordingly in what has to be practiced and what has to be abandoned.

While the explanation is quite clear, the commentary further explains that at all times *when one wishes to move one's body, or wishes to speak* (i.e. any physical or verbal actions), one should first check one's state of mind to ensure that it is not influenced by delusions, particularly the self-cherishing mind. Then when one is sure that it is not influenced by any of these negative states of mind, one can engage in the action

according to what is to be practised, and what is to be abandoned.

1.3.1.2.1.3.2. Explaining

This is subdivided into five categories:

- 1.3.1.2.1.3.2.1. What to do when one wishes to generate afflictions
- 1.3.1.2.1.3.2.2. What to do at the time of mental excitement
- 1.3.1.2.1.3.2.3. What to do at the time of praise and so forth
- 1.3.1.2.1.3.2.4. What to do when one thinks about the welfare of others
- 1.3.1.2.1.3.2.5. What to do when one wishes to generate anger or sadness

If there is a wish for anger to be generated, or if sadness occurs, then what can we do at that time? We can notice the manner of how to conduct oneself in such circumstances will be presented very meticulously and succinctly. So we can leave the explanations for our next session.

I would like to thank those who organised the lunch for His Holiness' birthday last Sunday again. Everyone really enjoyed and appreciated the lunch, and I feel that our requesting prayers for His Holiness' long life was fruitful. So, our efforts have been really worthwhile. On a personal note, that night I had a very auspicious dream with His Holiness. His Holiness was present at an offering ceremony, so after some conversations I took the initiative to go up to him to offer a *khatag*, but he indicated that it was not necessary. He then proceeded to consecrate a big jug full of inner-offering nectar, and afterwards indicated that I could have some. When I presented a small container in which I normally keep my inner-offering, he commented 'Oh, that is such a small container, while my jug is really big'. However, when he poured some nectar into my small container, miraculously a really tiny flow of nectar came down to fill my container just to the brim.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱུང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

15 July 2014

As usual we can spend some time in meditation.

[meditation]

Generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

1.3.1.2.1. Protecting the training of the body from degeneration

1.3.1.2.1.3. Analysing the motivation at the time of the action (cont.)

1.3.1.2.1.3.2. Explaining

This has five sub-divisions which we listed last week.

1.3.1.2.1.3.2.1. What to do when one wishes to generate afflictions

This heading refers to the actions to take when afflictions are about to be generated. The relevant verse reads:

48. *When one's mind wants to be attached
Or when it wants to be angry
Do not move and do not speak,
Abide like a tree.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary on the verse is quite clear:

When the mind wishes to get attached or wishes to become angry, do not engage in a physical action and do not speak. Rather, abide like a tree and be able to hold the antidote.

As the commentary explains, the moment the mind generates that thought of attachment or anger, one should avoid engaging in any physical or verbal actions. Rather, as the analogy explains, one should *abide like a tree*. The analogy is referring to a big tree, which cannot be moved by gusts of wind. Thus, one needs to remain unshakeable like a tree, being able to hold the antidote in the face of afflictions arising in the mind, not engaging in anything but remaining firm and stable.

The analogy of remaining unshakeable like a tree refers particularly to the times when afflictions such as attachment and anger are prevalent. One knows from one's own experience that when strong attachment or anger are prevalent any physical actions will be inappropriate actions. So at those times one's actions could not be virtuous actions. This is obviously the case with anger. We all know that any physical actions during a moment of anger cannot be a constructive or virtuous one. Likewise, we all know through experience that when our mind is influenced by strong anger our speech will not be appropriate. Likewise, any words uttered when strong attachment is arising will be flawed and inappropriate, and not virtuous speech. So, as presented here, the moment one notices the afflictions arising one should remain firm and steady, and temporarily not engage in any activity.

This is really very practical and personal advice that we need to take on board. From our own experiences, we know that whenever we have acted out of moments of intense anger our physical actions have not been appropriate; likewise, our speech has been hurtful and inappropriate. The consequence of acting either physically or verbally in moments of intense anger is clearly undesirable, and we can all easily relate to that. It may be a little bit harder for you to accept and understand that physical actions and verbal speech in moments of intense attachment are also inappropriate. Nevertheless the fact remains that when one acts out of strong attachment those actions also become tainted and faulty.

However, as indicated previously, some of the advice about avoiding some inappropriate actions out of attachment is intended for those who have ordination vows. So you also need to understand this advice in its proper context.

1.3.1.2.1.3.2.2. What to do at the time of mental excitement

The verses relating to this heading read:

49. *Having mental excitement or mocking,
Having pride or conceit,
Or thinking about criticising,
Being cunning or thinking about deceit,*
50. *When being ready to praise oneself
And belittle others,
Telling others off or being argumentative,
Then one should remain like a tree.*

[The English commentary we have presents the following explanation in point form, although it reads as straight text in the Tibetan version.]

- When there is mental excitement with an object;
- When mocking others in jest;
- When full of pride due to qualities;
- When being conceited due to youth and other reasons;
- When thinking about criticising others;
- When one is cunning, and wants profit out of discontentment;
- When one thinks about deceiving others with pretension and dishonesty;
- When one praises oneself wholeheartedly by expressing one's qualities, and puts others down by mentioning their faults;
- When scolding others and being argumentative and quarrelling.

At these times one should remain unshakeable like a tree while being self-supporting with the antidote.

First is *mental excitement with an object*. You will recall that one of the main obstacles during meditation is excitement, which is when the mind waivers away from the meditation object and starts to focus on another object. Thus, diverting one's focus from the object of meditation to another object is called excitement.

Next is *mocking others in jest*. This refers to ridiculing someone for the amusement of others. Putting down someone else in this form is a fault. Again we are being given practical advice about what to avoid.

Third is how to counteract *pride due to* being puffed up about certain *qualities* one may have. Such pride manifests itself in the form of feeling pompous, thinking 'I know better than others. I have more knowledge than they do'. With an attitude like that, one is putting down others while making

oneself seem more important. We have discussed this delusion in detail in the past.

As mentioned previously, we should be really careful that whatever knowledge we gain from the Dharma, or from the teachings we study, does not become a cause to further strengthen one's pride. One needs to remember that all of the Buddha's teachings were intended to overcome pride, and not strengthen it. Bearing that in mind, if one is feeling a bit pompous about knowing more than others, and has the tendency to look down upon others, one should immediately remember that the purpose of having knowledge of the Dharma is to overcome one's own pride.

We need to take these verses as personal advice, remembering that Shantideva is giving this kind of advice for our benefit. When excitement occurs we can remember his advice to apply an antidote for overcoming excitement. If one finds oneself mocking or making fun of others, one should again remember, 'Shantideva has cautioned me against this negative tendency, so I need to counteract it'. And it is the same with pride and so forth.

Fourth is *when being conceited due to youth and other reasons*. [Some translations use the word, *haughtiness*, for the translation of the Tibetan word *gyakpa*.]

There are five conditions that can lead to conceit or haughtiness. These are youth, having a good form or physique, wealth, status or a good lineage, and an abundance of hearing.

There is a distinction between haughtiness and pride. When we studied Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*¹, we went into detail about the different kinds of pride, so we won't go over that again. In relation to the earlier mentioned five conditions i.e. being youthful, having a good physique, having sufficient wealth, being from a good family and having good knowledge, pride is a state of mind that has the tendency to look down upon others because one has these conditions and they don't. Whereas conceit or haughtiness² entails a sense of satisfaction about having these good conditions. So conceit or haughtiness has an element of attachment to one's good conditions and feeling a sense of joy or satisfaction about that.

Nagarjuna also highlighted the significant point that haughtiness is the root of a lack of conscientiousness. Feeling conceit about having these good conditions can lead to a lack of conscientiousness about one's Dharma practice. Nagarjuna supported this significant point with a quote from the sutras.

The sense of conceit in relation to an abundance of hearing refers to the knowledge one may have gained from hearing, which can lead to thinking 'I have a significant amount of knowledge now'. In relation to wealth, there is both material wealth and the wealth of knowledge. So here it refers to being conceited about the wealth of knowledge one has. One must be wary about that.

So we can clearly see how being conceited over having these five conditions is related to attachment. It is because of strong attachment to these favourable conditions that one generates that sense of conceit about having obtained them. Hence the teachings say that conceit fits into the realm of attachment.

Fifth is *thinking about criticising others*. This may easily come about when we are dealing with others, so we need to be very mindful about that.

Next is *when one is cunning and wants profit out of discontentment*. This refers to being discontented and because of that discontentment seeking to profit from others. The advice here is to apply an antidote to overcome and counteract that discontentment, which basically means practising less desire and more contentment. As I mention regularly, I can personally vouch for the fact that anyone who practises less desire and has more contentment will not have any real worries. The person who practises having less desire and contentment is the person who has no worries!

This is really the prime practice for ordained Sangha. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama has indicated, monks from other traditions such as Christianity definitely adopt this practice, and show clear signs of their success with it.

If there is no contentment with whatever wealth one has, then that will naturally give rise to worry, being constantly anxious and wanting to acquire more profit and more gain. When one practises contentment with whatever one has, the mind will naturally be more subdued, and definitely less anxious. However, practising contentment needs to be understood in the proper way. It doesn't necessarily mean to avoid having possessions and wealth entirely, and that one should give away everything. Practising poverty and having nothing is not necessarily practising contentment.

The real meaning of practising contentment is to have less attachment to one's wealth and so forth. The main thing one needs to understand here is that being content, or not, is a mental state related to attachment to one's wealth.

Indeed, without strong attachment one can actually utilise one's wealth to better one's conditions, and really enjoy them. With strong attachment, on the other hand, there's always that thought of, 'oh I am spending too much!' so there is always that sense of unease. Despite using one's wealth in trying to improve one's conditions, there is always a little bit of unease. However, although such miserliness has many faults, one of its qualities could be that it does contribute to saving money.

Geshe-la speaks in English: People save money but not happy. Same job, same money, but always 'I no get money ... I no get money, I no get job... Money is hidden away.

There are similar stories among the Tibetans about people having hidden money somewhere!

Seventh is *when one thinks about deceiving others with pretention and dishonesty*. As the teachings explain, the two ways to deceive others are pretence and dishonesty. Pretence refers to pretending that one actually has certain qualities in order to impress others, when in fact one lacks those qualities. Dishonesty is trying to hide one's faults, so that one is not seen in a bad light by others. As I regularly emphasise, one needs to be really mindful of the danger that one's own Dharma practices, such as meditation and so forth, don't become a means for pretence and dishonesty.

Next is *praising oneself wholeheartedly by expressing one's qualities, and putting others down by mentioning their faults*. This immoral practice is a breach of one of the bodhisattvas' commitments, and counted as one of the downfalls. We need to really take this to heart and see how easily our actions can become tainted with our views about our qualities. Whenever one talks about one's practice, one needs to be constantly mindful that one is not boasting about it. We must also be just as mindful about not putting others down.

¹ See teaching of 26 June 2012.

² See teaching of 19 June 2012

There's a particular word in Tibetan *kurdep*, which has the connotation of uttering things that are not true, such as proclaiming that one has qualities when one does not have them. Another example of an untrue proclamation is to hide the qualities of others, ridiculing and finding fault in them.

Lastly, *scolding others and being argumentative and quarrelling*.

Gyaltsab Je concludes his commentary on this section of the text with:

At these times one should remain unshakeable like a tree, while being self-supporting with the antidotes

With respect to *at these times*, it is said that whenever one finds oneself engaging in one of these eight activities, then, in order to counteract them, one should remain firm and stable like a tree, *while applying the self-supporting antidotes*. Then one will not be influenced by these negative tendencies, and one will be able to remain steadfast.

1.3.1.2.1.3.2.3. What to do at the time of praise and so forth

The verse relating to this heading is:

51. *When wishing for gain, honour and fame
Wishing for servants and entourage,
If one's mind wishes for service,
At these times remain like a tree.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

- When wishing for gain of wealth and so forth.
- When seeking the honour for others to put down one's mat and so forth.
- Wishing for a good reputation.
- Wishing to acquire servants and entourage.
- If one's mind wishes for service such as treatments for the body and so forth.

Also at these times one should remain like a tree, while having the power of the antidote.

This is a clear presentation of what to do about wishes such as wanting material *gain* such as *wealth and so forth*. The Tibetan word *kurte* can read as either honour or service, indicated here with the example of *others putting down one's mat and so forth*. One might also wish *for a good reputation* so that others talk well about one and so forth, or *to acquire servants and entourage*.

Wishing for service such as treatments for the body and so forth includes massages and so forth. The advice here is to avoid seeking such treatments merely out of attachment. The *Vinaya* text indicates that with some physical ailments it is necessary to apply oil to the body and to massage it in order to restore one's vitality, in which case it is permissible and accepted. This advice also needs to be understood in its proper context.

We need to take this as practical advice. If one completely immerses oneself in wishing for gain or wealth, seeking honour and a good reputation and so forth, then one's whole life can be preoccupied with trying to achieve this. We can spend a whole lifetime being completely immersed just thinking about how to gain these things. We may not actually put much effort into really doing anything practical to achieve our wishes, but we just go around thinking about it over and over again. That sort of daydreaming can be a distraction that wastes your life. So the advice here is to *remain like a tree*, referring back to the earlier analogy of an unshakeable tree, *while having the power of the antidote*.

1.3.1.2.1.3.2.4. What to do when one thinks about the welfare of others

The verse relating to this is:

52. *When casting aside the welfare of others,
And desiring one's selfish aims,
And having a mind wishing to speak,
At these times remain like a tree.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

When one considers the welfare of self and others, ...

This refers to the bodhisattva training, the aspiration to benefit others. Having made that aspiration,

... if one casts aside the welfare of others, wishes to work only for one's own welfare, and has a mind wishing to speak, such a person should remain like a tree.

If one casts aside the welfare of others, and wishes to work only for one's own welfare, at that time if one has a mind wishing to speak, then it is better not to speak or act. Such a person should remain like a tree.

When someone who is committed to working for the welfare of others actually casts aside the welfare of others then that is, without doubt, a grave fault. While that aspiration to benefit others remains in one's mind, if the wish to work only for one's own welfare occurs, then whatever one says will be tainted with a desire to gain something for oneself. Thus, whatever words one utters will not have the effect of benefitting others. Therefore the advice here is that when one has selfish motives, or is thinking about only one's own welfare, then it is better not to speak and remain like a tree.

From the perspective of an ordinary person, the normal way of thinking is to cast aside the welfare of others and think only about one's own welfare. So this is what one needs to avoid. If we really think about how we normally conduct ourselves, and do a thorough self-evaluation of how we normally think, it will become quite apparent that we neglect others by default, because we think only about our own achievements and accomplishments. This is only apparent when we actually stop to think about it. This is how we begin to transform ourselves, noticing how our normal habituated mind thinks. Understanding that leaves room for real transformation, and then we can actually change.

1.3.1.2.1.3.2.5. What to do when one wishes to generate belligerence or despondency

The verse relating to that is as follows:

53. *When being impatient, lazy and afraid,
Likewise, when stubbornness, incoherence
And a partisan attitude arise,
At these times remain like a tree.*

This section relates counteracting belligerence and despondency when they occur.

The commentary reads:

- When being impatient due to belligerence or suffering;
- When being afraid of practising virtue and so forth, due to laziness that is not joyful about virtue;
- When one is stubborn because of being unrestrained or incoherent;
- When the mind favours one's own side, friends and so forth.

At these times one should remain like a tree while practising the antidote.

In Tibetan the words for anger and belligerence are similar. As presented previously, belligerence is one of the secondary mental factors. As you will recall, there is a difference between anger and belligerence. Anger is one of the root afflictions, while belligerence is listed as a proximate or secondary affliction. When anger targeted towards a living being becomes more intense, it then turns into belligerence. So belligerence is a more intense form of anger.

The object of belligerence, as presented previously, is an animate object, not inanimate objects, whereas anger can be focussed on any object. There are the three types of objects of anger: suffering, sentient beings and inanimate objects. You can generate anger towards all three objects, whereas belligerence is targeted only towards living beings.

Thus the first situation is *being impatient due to belligerence or suffering*.

Next is *being afraid of practising virtue and so forth due to laziness that is not joyful about virtue*. When the mind is in a heightened state, one is more prone to feeling belligerent. When the mind is feeling despondent then that is when laziness occurs. Therefore, as presented here in the commentary, *being impatient due to belligerence or suffering*, and *being afraid of practising virtue and so forth due to laziness that is not joyful about virtue* are at the opposite ends of the spectrum. At one end, if one's mind is feeling very heightened, then it is more likely that belligerence will arise, and at the other, laziness can occur when the mind is feeling despondent.

In relation to feeling despondent with a sense of, 'I can't do it, I can't manage', on a recent visit to the Drolkar centre, Carol came up to me and conveyed, 'I don't really have a strong inclination to go to the Kalachakra. I feel hesitant to taking a lot of commitments. If I am not able to observe them, then that will be a cause for me to go to the lower realms and I wouldn't wish that for myself. I would rather stay here with you Geshe Doga and be on a safer plain'. She was teary when she relayed that to me.

However she had already organised to travel with Geshe Sonam, who was encouraging her to go. Of course I wouldn't stop Carol from going—after all, she had decided to go anyway. Therefore I encouraged her to go and receive the blessing 'and take on as much as you can do'. However, her intention of taking the commitments seriously was a good sign.

Carol was expressing her hesitation even in taking the lay-person's vows, saying that 'I might not be able to keep them'. Of course, the way to take vows is to first establish the basis by taking the self-liberation vows. Then based on that, one can take the bodhisattva vows and later the tantric vows. That is the sequence of how one takes these vows.

The next situation is *when one is stubborn because of being unrestrained or incoherent*. The Tibetan term *chetol* has the connotation of someone who is not able to really think things out clearly, and just does things randomly. It is used to refer to someone who doesn't really have many values, and who does anything they want. Even in the everyday world such a person would not be considered as reliable or trustworthy, because they just do whatever they want. Incoherence refers to the lack of a relationship between what is said earlier and what is said later.

The final example is *when the mind favours one's own side, friends and so forth*, which means to favour taking the side of one's friends and colleagues and so forth, and abandoning all others.

In summary, the commentary states:

At these times one should remain like a tree, while practising the antidote.

1.3.1.2.1.2.4. Summary

The verse relating to the summary reads as follows:

54. *Having thus analysed the strong afflictions
And the mind striving in meaninglessness,
The brave person will then guard
The mind steadfastly with antidotes.*

Here Gyaltsab Je explains:

Thus, having investigated the mind that strives in the afflictions and meaninglessness, one should not allow this mind to engage in negative actions with the antidote that is like a powerful hero, but keep it steady.

Having presented all of the conditions where one needs to practice applying the antidotes appropriately, and having investigated the mind that wishes to engage in the afflictions and meaningless activities, *one should not allow this mind to engage in negative actions with the antidote that is like a powerful hero*. Here, the antidote is likened to a very powerful person, who is not easily overcome by foes and so forth. One applies powerful antidotes against the delusions or afflictions and thus *keeps it steady*.

This summary verse encapsulates all of the earlier points about afflictions, and summarises how to actually apply the antidotes.

At the conclusion of our regular prayers, we can do the *Eight Verses of Mind Training* which we also did last week. Mary-Lou's father passed away yesterday, so we can dedicate the practice for her late dad.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བལྟགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

22 July 2014

Based on the refuge and bodhicitta we have generated as a motivation for the practice we can now engage in the meditation.

[meditation]

We can set the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: for the purpose of benefiting all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will engage in this teaching and put it into practice well.

At this point please remember the verses we covered in our last session. Recall how meticulously that advice was presented and how really applicable it is to our daily situation. It is very important to keep that essential meaning in mind.

1.3.1.2.2. Protecting the training of the mind from degeneration

This is subdivided into three:

1.3.1.2.2.1. Protecting with the individual antidotes

1.3.1.2.2.2. The common antidote

1.3.1.2.2.3. The way of training in meditating on the antidote

1.3.1.2.2.1. Protecting with the individual antidotes

The verse reads as follows:

55. *Strong ascertainment and strong faith
Stability, respect and politeness,
Knowing shame and having fear,
Peaceful and striving to please others.*

There are two verses under this heading. Gyaltsab Je's commentary addresses verse 55 first. It reads:

If one were to ask 'how does one protect the mind'? Strongly ascertain the points of advice by abandoning doubt and wrong consciousnesses with regards to them; generate strong faith through belief in the Three Jewels and the points of advice, faith and aspiration; stable intent and practice; being polite by being respectful and humble with everybody; shame that is fearful of negativity by reason of oneself; being afraid of the ripened result by contemplating the shortcomings; having pacified senses and striving for the purpose of making others happy.

The five senses are normally engaged in objects of distraction, so to protect the mind is to protect it from being completely drawn into the objects of distraction through the five senses. Take note of the distinction between protection and restraint. The very term 'protection' infers that in the likelihood of the mind becoming distracted, it should withdraw from the object of distraction (withdrawal implying protection of the mind). However 'restraint', suggests not allowing the mind to become distracted with the objects of distraction from the very beginning.

The emphasis here is to protect the training of the mind from degeneration. If one does not protect the mind it is likely that degeneration from one's training or practices would occur. The heading of the verse is explicit here: 'Protecting with individual antidotes'. In relation to the degeneration

that occurs in the mind, the cause is distraction through the five senses. Primarily we need to be cautious of our eye sense, mental sense, the mind itself which generates thoughts, and the ear sense. As you can notice, these cause most distractions.

Our thoughts present distraction on a more continuous basis as the object of our mental faculty. One must be cautious and protect the mental faculty from engaging in distracting, discursive thoughts, because they can occur randomly at any time. The next main distraction comes through our eye sense, and because there are so many external objects, we naturally become influenced by them. Likewise we hear a lot of things through our ear sense, and are very easily influenced by them, and thus become distracted.

Indeed when the eye sense comes into contact with beautiful objects it causes the mind of attachment to arise. Conversely, when it comes into contact with unappealing visual objects, anger arises. Likewise jealousy can arise when we see with our eyes the prosperity and good things others have. It is similar with objects of the ear sense; when we hear praise etc. this easily provides the means for attachment and ego to arise. However when we hear unpleasant things, these can immediately cause distress, agitation and anger to arise in our mind. So we do know from experience that a lot of our emotions, particularly the delusions in our mind, are very much influenced by the objects we encounter through our senses.

Again, protection here means being able to withdraw our mind from our engagement with objects as soon as we notice distraction occurs. Protection is really important for us because we are easily influenced by our senses. Our eye sense sees a beautiful object and then grasping starts to develop. It is this grasping at beautiful objects that causes attachment to increase in our mind. That in turn can cause the sense of wanting to own or to possess the object, and if one is not able to possess it, distress arises in the mind due to strong grasping. As the term itself suggests, grasping is holding onto, and not being able to let go of certain objects, whether they be objects of attachment or objects of anger. When we come into contact with certain objects we immediately grasp onto them and don't let go, which causes the delusions in our mind to become intense and strong.

Whether it is our eye sense or other senses that come into contact with objects of distraction, if we protect our mind by not interacting with them, then the delusion and its consequences will not arise strongly and affect us in a negative way. So, we must sever the connection with that object. While this specifically applies in our meditation session, it also relates to our everyday life.

In explaining how to protect the mind the commentary says: *Strongly ascertain the points of advice.* Advice here means upholding the commitments or vows one may have taken. In relation to the practices, we need to apply the measures explained forcefully. If we do not protect our mind we will degenerate or lapse from the commitments and pledges we have taken and thus fail to engage in the advice or the practice. The commentary continues: *by abandoning doubt and wrong consciousnesses with regards to them.* This very clearly states that one needs to abandon doubt and the wrong consciousnesses which come to wrong conclusions about this advice. The way to do this is to engage in thorough investigation, gain a thorough understanding of the practices in the beginning, during the actual practice and at the end. You need to investigate and understand at all three times to remove doubts and wrong consciousnesses (leading

to mistaken understanding or conclusions) in relation to this advice.

Abandoning doubt refers to abandoning the mind that wavers in two directions. In this state one cannot confirm anything and one is unable to gain the necessary conviction.

In relation to the advice and instructions to be followed, if we have qualms about it, if we start to hesitate or become influenced by other possibilities that are maybe not valid and so forth, then as soon as this doubt arises in the mind, we are very vulnerable to giving up the practices or allowing them to degenerate. As mentioned earlier, thorough investigation needs to be employed to completely remove any doubt. This first requires hearing about the advice extensively, then we use the wisdom and understanding gained from hearing to contemplate or investigate what we have heard. Having thoroughly investigated and thought about it, we can apply the meditation, and once experience is gained from this, a firm conviction develops in the validity of the practices such that it will not degenerate.

This is how an intelligent trainee engages in the study of the practices: thorough investigation and analysis, again and again, then conviction is established. Engaging in one's practice then becomes very firm and stable. This is why the method employed by intelligent trainees is said to be the most suitable.

The commentary then explains: *generate strong faith through belief in the Three Jewels and the points of advice*. Generating strong faith in the Three Jewels indicates gaining an understanding that the Three Jewels are infallible in protecting you, thus they are suitable as your refuge and will not deceive you. The method of gaining conviction in the Three Jewels arises first from investigating the Dharma Jewel and understanding its qualities. When you develop a good understanding and see the qualities of the Dharma Jewel, you can then naturally generate admiration, faith and conviction in the one who taught it, which is the Buddha Jewel. Then having developed faith in the Buddha and Dharma Jewel, since the ones who follow these are the Sangha Jewels you naturally develop faith in them as well. This is how one generates conviction in the Three Jewels.

One needs to have *strong faith* and *aspiration* in the Three Jewels and the points of advice, and *stable intent*, which means developing a firm and stable intention toward the practices and advice. Furthermore, one needs to adopt a conduct where one is *polite by being respectful and humble with everybody*. These are all methods to protect one's training and adopt the advice.

Continuing with the commentary's explanation, the next part expands upon engaging in the practice by maintaining *shame that is fearful* (afraid of committing) *negativity by reason of oneself*. Shame was explained earlier. The commentary continues with: *being afraid of the ripened result by contemplating the shortcomings*, which refers to being afraid of the ripened results of the negativities by contemplating their shortcomings. It continues: *having pacified senses and striving for the purpose of making others happy*. A bodhisattva has intention only to benefit others, so for the purpose of benefitting others needs to engage in conduct which will inspire them, not cause them to lose faith or be critical etc. If a bodhisattva were to cause others to lose faith in the Dharma, or feel critical towards them that would cause the others to create huge negative karma. So, as a means to protect others from the negative mind of losing faith or criticising a bodhisattva, a bodhisattva needs to ensure that

they are engaging in the means and conduct of making others happy.

When others are made happy with your good conduct then there is no reason for them to criticise you, because they are happy and inspired with what you are doing, your behaviour etc. This is a very important point to take as personal instruction: when we have the means to make others happy, which we all do, why would we intentionally engage in behaviours and conduct that would make them unhappy? It would be totally inappropriate to intentionally engage in the means to make others unhappy or cause unnecessary discomfort and sorrow in their minds. This behaviour will make others unhappy with you, criticise you etc. Therefore, taking this on a personal level, we need to try to employ means for making others happy in all situations.

The next verse under this same heading:

56. *Do not be put off by the desires
Of the childish that strive with each other
And think with affection, "They have these
minds
Due to their generation of afflictions."*

Gyalsab Je's commentary reads:

Do not be put off by the contradicting desires of childish people where, having benefitted one, the other one gets angry. Have compassion for them thinking, 'this mind is generated within them due to afflictions and without them having any control over themselves. I will liberate them from their afflictions.'

In such a way do not fall under the control of the afflictions.

Again this is relevant advice for us in our daily lives as these sorts of occasions occur quite regularly. When in the commentary it explains, *do not be put off by contradicting desires of childish people where, having benefitted one, the other one gets angry*, relate it to when you take the measure of being kind to someone, then even without an intention to hurt them, the others get upset. We can see this happening readily in a circle of relatives: if you are nice to one relative then another might start feeling jealous about that and may start to complain.

In relation to beings who act childishly towards you, the advice says not to be put off by their behaviour. 'Put off' here means you should not be put off the intent of benefiting them nor generate a negative mind towards them. Instead you should have compassion towards them, thinking that *this mind is generated within them due to afflictions and without them having any control over themselves*. You can see the advice here is very true; that when certain beings are under the influence of the delusions e.g. intense anger, even one individual can create so much destruction and kill so many others out of an angry mind. We have examples right here. In Tasmania an individual killed 32 people, and in another coastal place again some other killings occurred, and many people were killed. This was done by one individual—out of his mind, the cause was being obsessed, or completely dominated by delusions such as anger. When we witness this sort of account our natural response might be to become appalled, condemn the person and become angry with them. But in fact when one thinks about what compelled them to engage in such grave negative acts, it is none other than the delusion in their own mind, mainly anger. And when one contemplates that, one sees reason to feel great compassion for them rather than condemning them, seeing how under the influence of the delusion they have no control over their own actions.

We can see too that there are certain individuals who, if they are at a trial say, 'I was given the order to kill so I had no control'. These are examples of how when one engages in negative actions such as the act of killing etc., one does not have control over oneself. Normally we would think that someone is independent and has control over whatever they want to do. If they had control they would not commit the act, but the implication of having no control over their actions is that they are compelled to do that act. Normally we would feel reason to condemn them if we thought they had control, like they had a choice and did it anyway, but the implication here is to feel compassion for them because they have no choice and control over their own actions. That is the main point.

With this understanding one should find oneself resolving to liberate them from their afflictions, rather than condemning them and becoming agitated with them. In understanding such situations, the next piece of advice says: '*In such a way do not fall under the control of the afflictions*' oneself. So when relating to others who have engaged in great misdeeds, one needs to protect oneself from the influence of the afflictions. If one doesn't protect oneself then we fall short and become agitated and angry towards the other. So therefore this is a direct instruction for oneself to be responsible for one's own state of mind.

In order to back up this explanation of how one needs to practice in such a way, the commentary presents a citation:

From the *Ornament of Mahayana Sutras*,

By thinking how they are without power due to constant faults,
Possessing the mind, do not hold it against beings.

As clearly presented in this quote, when someone is afflicted by the faults or the delusions, they don't have the power to control what they do. Thus, one should not hold their negative actions against them. It is really important to understand how every action one engages in, be it positive or negative, there is always a state of mind that compels one to engage in those actions.

The commentary then cites another text.

From the *Four Hundred Verses*:

Just as a physician is not upset with,
Someone who rages while possessed by a demon,
Subduers see disturbing emotions as the enemy,
Not the person who has them.

The verse from the *Four Hundred Verses* clearly explains with the analogy of a physician. A physician will not be upset with someone who is possessed by, for example, a demon, because when someone is possessed they might do things which a normal, rational person would not do, such as fighting back, doing wild things like hitting etc. However the physician knows they are affected by their ailments and will not be upset, rather they will be intent on treating them. Likewise the buddhas see disturbing emotions as the enemy. They do not consider the person who has anger as negative, rather it is the afflictions within them that need to be overcome. That is because it is the afflictions in the mind that cause them to engage in actions which are harmful.

As I regularly advise, when someone is really angry you should be cautious around them; they might do anything, they might hit you or hurt you because in intense moments of anger they are not able to act rationally. With the recent unfortunate circumstances of the Malaysian Airlines plane being shot down, my comment was, when the plane is in an area where rebels are carrying their weapons with an

agitated mind and angry, and just want to kill, then an accident on such a scale can occur. They would not analyse well and would see no reason to not to use their weapons to shoot anything down. This is an example of how we need to be very wary and cautions around people who are really agitated because we might get hurt ourselves. So if your partner is really upset and angry, you must be careful and cautious.

With this unfortunate event of the plane being shot down, why would the aeroplane go in that direction? Why would they take that route when it is so dangerous? Damien was looking at a map and said that it is actually the normal flight path. Even though I wasn't looking at any map, and I didn't exactly know the location, it was my assumption that the plane pathway shouldn't go that far off in the north of Europe. Apparently they are still investigating how it actually might have gone off route. The routes should be the same for Singapore Airlines and Malaysian Airlines.

Anyhow the main point is that when people are agitated and angry they will have no qualms, they will not hold back in using their weapons, and that is when disasters can occur.

1.3.1.2.2.2. The common antidote

What is being referred to here are common antidotes which could be applicable to all afflictions.

The verse reads:

57. *Objects free from the unutterable
Are for self and sentient beings.
Without ego, always protect this mind,
Like an emanation.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

The engagement in virtuous actions, which are free from forbidden and natural misdeeds, is for the purpose of oneself not degenerating and for the benefit of sentient beings. Engage in actions as if they are illusions or magical apparitions by holding them with the wisdom realising emptiness.

Thus always protect your mind without pride or exaggeration.

In *The engagement in virtuous actions which are free from forbidden and natural misdeeds*, the term used to reflect misdeeds is also translated as 'unutterable' and 'unmentionable'. We'll use 'unmentionable' as it refers to misdeeds of a certain kind where the consequences are so grave that they cannot even be mentioned by the supreme beings, let alone engaged in. We have discussed the forbidden and natural misdeeds earlier. Forbidden misdeeds specifically relates to the misdeeds laid down by decree, and natural misdeeds are negative regardless of context. So engaging in virtuous actions which are free from such misdeeds is done for the purpose of oneself, not to degenerate from that advice etc. and for the benefit of sentient beings. That being the case, the advice here is that one needs to engage in actions while remembering that they are like illusions or like magical apparitions, as a means to prevent the delusions from arising. That is how we need to view things, seeing them as not truly existent, by holding them with the realisation of emptiness, realising that they are empty of inherent existence, then that understanding will prevent strong negative minds of delusions such as anger and attachment etc. from arising. When one has an understanding of how things are not truly existent this serves as an antidote to overcome all afflictions and thus all misdeeds. In this way always protect your mind without pride or arrogance.

As explained in other texts, a being who has a realisation of emptiness during meditative equipoise will view all existence like the sky, empty like space, and when they are in a post-meditative state they will be able to see all phenomena as being like mere illusions. This is how one needs to maintain one's view of phenomena as a way of not being affected by the afflictions in the mind.

1.3.1.2.2.3. The way of training in meditating on the antidote

The verse reads:

*58. Having repeatedly contemplated one's attainment
Of supreme freedom after a long time,
Hold on to that mind
As immovable as Mount Meru.*

Think: After a great accumulation, which lasted for a long time, I have attained the precious human rebirth with freedoms and endowments. By contemplating repeatedly the great purpose and rarity of the precious human rebirth, generate the intent to definitely achieve the great purpose. Then firmly hold that mind, as immovable as Mount Meru.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary clearly explains here that having engaged in a great accumulation, incurred over a long period of time, as a result one attains a precious human rebirth with freedoms and endowments. Contemplating on the difficulty of obtaining a precious human rebirth, obtaining something which has been so difficult to obtain, repeatedly contemplating the great purpose and rarity of the precious human rebirth, one generates the intent to definitely achieve the great purpose. One needs to hold this intent firmly in the mind, as immovable as Mount Meru.

The main point of the advice is that one needs to repeatedly contemplate the precious human rebirth one has obtained. One aspect of this advice can be how we should not feel discouraged, even if it takes a long time to accumulate certain merits, the results are definitely achieved. So by relating to the good consequences we have obtained now, it can encourage us to further develop and engage in the practices to gain further good results in the future. This is how we need to maintain a mind which is free from despondency and have a courageous mind to continue with the practices and hold our mind firm and stable.

1.3.2. The way of training in the morality of accumulating virtuous dharmas

This is subdivided into two:

1.3.2.1. Abandoning attachment for the body which is the cause not to train in morality

1.3.2.2. To be skilful in practising virtue

1.3.2.1. ABANDONING ATTACHMENT FOR THE BODY WHICH IS THE CAUSE NOT TO TRAIN IN MORALITY

The meaning of morality here specifically refers to accumulating virtuous Dharma. Generally the definition of morality is the mind which employs restraint; restraint is presented as the definition of morality. However this refers mainly to restraint from a particular misdeed. In relating to this morality, accumulating virtuous Dharma, it is explained specifically in Lam Rim teachings how all virtues of a bodhisattva's conduct encompasses morality. In other words, all virtuous Dharma can be an aid to further enhancing a bodhisattva's morality. In a broader sense, all virtues engaged in by bodhisattvas are said to be morality.

The general definition of morality as the mind of restraint may be more suitable for that: for the morality of restraining from misdeeds.

Under the first subheading there are five subheadings.

We can leave this explanation for the next teaching session.

As you are aware the next session will be the discussion followed by the exam. So as usual it will be good to engage in the discussion with a proper motivation and proper conduct and also the exam as well.

And then also for the seminar which is coming up at the end of next month, you need to have a good discussion amongst yourselves as how to conduct that.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

12 August 2014

As usual we can spend some time in meditation.
[meditation]

Generate the positive motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings, and put them into practice well.

1.3.2. The way of training in the morality of accumulating virtuous dharmas

In our last session we identified what the morality of accumulating virtuous dharmas means.

This section of the text has two sub-headings:

1.3.2.1. Abandoning attachment to the body, which is the cause not to train in morality

1.3.2.2. To be skilful in practising virtue

1.3.2.1. ABANDONING ATTACHMENT TO THE BODY, WHICH IS THE CAUSE NOT TO TRAIN IN MORALITY

Here we need to understand that this refers to abandoning attachment to the body, and that it is not suggesting in any way that one should abandon caring for and looking after the body. This distinction will be explained in more detail later on.

What we need to understand here is that attachment to the body needs to be abandoned because it is a cause to prevent one from training in morality. In order to practise morality we need to overcome the obstacles that prevent us from training in morality. Here, the obstacle that needs to be overcome is attachment to the body. This text, as well as other teachings, tells us that the method for abandoning attachment to the body is to contemplate and meditate on the imperfections of the body.

First of all we need to understand how attachment to the body arises. One perceives the body as attractive or appealing, and when that perception is overlaid with attachment, it sees qualities superimposed on the body, which make it more appealing than it actually is.

We have presented this distinction many times in the past. If the question is whether there are some appealing features of the body, then of course the body does have attractive and appealing features. However the mind of attachment exaggerates those qualities and then superimposes those exaggerated qualities on the perception of the body. So the perception goes beyond the limits of the reality, and one becomes attached to the body. Hence we need to overcome the wrong perception that exaggerates the qualities of the body by focussing on its natural imperfections.

We need to reflect on the shortcomings of being attached to the body, because it can lead to a lot of unethical behaviour. Thus, being overly attached to the body

causes one to not practise morality. While this section presents the impurities of the body and how to overcome attachment, more detailed explanations will be given in the eighth chapter on concentration.

We have a very strong sense of cherishing our body due to our attachment to it, and the stronger the sense of cherishing and clinging to the body, the more likely it is that we will experience the shortcomings of this attachment. So training our mind in overcoming strong attachment to the body will reduce our clinging to and cherishing of the body, which will definitely have a significant impact on our practice, particularly at the time of death.

It is possible to experience great agony and suffering at the time of death—not so much on the physical level but mental suffering. Therefore, if we train our mind now so that we don't have strong attachment to the body, then that will really help at the time of death. Even though there might be some physical discomfort, there will definitely be less mental agony, because of our mental training and practice of reducing attachment to the body. Then one will not experience the intense sufferings of being separated from one's body.

As mentioned in the teachings, by training now to reduce strong attachment and cherishing of the body, at best one will experience great joy in discarding this body and moving on to the next existence. That of course occurs at the highest levels of this practice. But even at our level, if we can secure a mind where at least we have no regrets at the time of death, then that would be a significant achievement. These are really important points for us to consider—if we practise now we will definitely reap great results later on.

To the extent that we have trained our mind to reduce attachment to our body, then, at the time of death, fear and anxiety about having to leave the body will not be experienced. Otherwise there can be great suffering at the prospect of having to be separated from one's physical body. Through understanding the Dharma one develops the understanding that naturally the body will be discarded at the time of death, and that what continues on is the individual self, and the mind that accompanies that self or 'I'. Thus, whatever merits and virtues we have accumulated will accompany the mind and self.

Thus, as I emphasise regularly, our real protector is the positive state of mind of virtue, and it is this positive state of mind that will protect us at the time of death. So if at that time we recollect the Three Jewels, thinking about the essence of the Buddha's qualities of love, compassion, and wisdom, then there is no doubt that one will be saved from an unfortunate rebirth in the next lifetime.

We really need to contemplate and understand these essential points. The benefits of doing the *tong len* (giving and taking) practice now will also be reaped at that most crucial time. If, at the last stages of our life we experience any physical ailment or difficulties, or mental suffering at the prospect of having to discard our body, and we apply the *tong len* practice, taking in the sufferings of all beings, and giving our virtues and merits to them, then what a wonderful state of mind to be in at that time! That would be the best preparation for our transition to the next life.

As the teachings explain, at that time we leave behind everything that we are familiar with in this life. Our physical body will not protect us at that crucial time; whatever possessions we have will not be able to protect us at that time; even our relatives, close and dear ones will not be able to protect us at that time. The only thing that can help us at that time is, as explained in the teachings, Dharma practice. Therefore we need to identify the essence of the practice that will help us at that time.

This is important not just as preparation for the time of death, but the practice we engage in now will also be a great solace as we age. The best preparation for old age, as well as for the time of death, is to familiarise ourselves with these practices now.

As I regularly emphasise, if we were to boil all the teachings down to their essence, then it is love and compassion. That practice of generating love and compassion and trying to implement it in our daily lives is, as I regularly mention, our unfailing friend and companion, and our real protector. It helps to protect us in this life, it helps and protects us at the time of death, and it will help and protect us in our future lives. In all aspects of our existence—now, at the time of death, and in future lifetimes—kindness, love and compassion are our unfailing friend and protector.

We need to understand that, as the teachings mention, death can occur at any time. We have just heard the news that Robin Williams was found dead this morning. He was someone who brought a lot of laughter and joy to others by being humorous, and was really appreciated by many people. Apparently he was also a nice person too. He was not even very old, just sixty-three, but his life ended suddenly and abruptly. However he definitely had a worthwhile life because he made many people happy. He made people laugh and feel joyful, so he made a really significant contribution to the happiness of others. Even the American president seemed shocked and was struggling with words when he was giving his condolence speech. So, it would be appropriate that we repay Robin William's kindness by doing some prayers for him.

This is a reminder that age does not determine the time of death. The point here is that one cannot hold on to the body forever. Inevitably, we have to discard it. What we need to derive from the advice given here is that while we need to abandon attachment to the body, we still need to protect it and put it to good use by practicing the Dharma. This of course will be explained in more detail later on.

The presentation here is about how to contemplate the natural imperfections of the body. By following these methods of reason and logic one is able to overcome the mind of being overly attached to the body by seeing it as an overly appealing or attractive object.

There are five sub-divisions under this heading:

1.3.2.1.1. An example of why it is unsuitable to be attached to the body

1.3.2.1.2. Meditating on the impurity of the body

1.3.2.1.3. Contemplating the lack of essence of the body

1.3.2.1.4. The reason why it is unsuitable to be attached to the body

1.3.2.1.5. Because the body disintegrates quickly it is suitable to practise virtue

1.3.2.1.1. An example of why it is unsuitable to be attached to the body

*59. Vultures, out of their attachment for flesh,
Push and pull it back and forth amongst them.
If you do not have any dislike then,
Why do you cherish it now?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

When one is dead, although the vultures push and pull the body back and forth amongst them out of attachment to it, if you mind do not generate dislike at that time, then why are you attached to your body and cherish it now? It is unsuitable to be attached.

This explanation is, of course, quite clear. However, to reflect on some of the main points, what is being explained here is that when one is dead, the body becomes food for vultures, who tear it open and pull it around. It becomes quite repulsive, so nothing remains of the body that the mind could be attached to. If that is the case, then 'why do you have strong attachment and cherish your body now?' The conclusion is that it is not suitable to be strongly attached, because the nature of the body is the same as that of a corpse. The impermanence of our body is a really significant point to contemplate.

When we really think about it, the body that we seem so attached to now will, in the end, become a repulsive corpse. Contemplating that now will help to reduce attachment to our body.

Next comes the reason for that attachment, which is presented in these two lines:

*60ab. Having claimed the body as mine
Why mind do you guard it?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Hence, why mind do you guard it, having claimed the body as mine and cherishing it, since much that is unwanted arises from attachment to the body?

As presented here, it is through our strong familiarity with the body as being 'mine' that we have a strong sense of our body as being our prized possession. Amongst all our possessions we consider our body as being the most intimate and cherished possession. We have an instinctive notion of the body as being 'mine', and with that strong attachment the strong sense of clinging to the body arises.

This point is presented in the commentary as a dialogue with one's own mind:

Why mind are you so attached to this body when so many unwanted things arise out of that attachment?

The hypothetical response as presented in the commentary is:

Because I definitely require it.

Of course this response is not unreasonable, because we are attached to our body, and when that is challenged then we might instinctively feel 'but I really do need my body'. The rejoinder to that is contained in the next two lines of verse:

*60cd. Since both of you are distinct
What is it doing for you?*

The commentary presents a very logical point in its explanation of these two lines:

Answer: Since both you and this body are distinct from each other, you will leave this body behind very quickly, and the body will also abandon you. Hence, what is it doing for you? It is unsuitable to hold it as 'mine'.

Here, further reasons as to why it is not suitable to be attached to the body are presented. The fact is that the body and oneself are not the same; at death your mind leaves the body, and when you leave the body behind, it will disintegrate.

Since you will be abandoning the body, and the body will in effect be abandoning you, then what is it doing for you? As one has to eventually discard it, the body gives no real lasting benefit. So it is unsuitable to hold the body with a very strong mind of possession, viewing it as 'mine'. So the point of impermanence is being presented once again. It is inevitable that one will have to be separated from one's body, so reduce strong attachment to the body from now on.

We need to familiarise our mind with these significant points, and incorporate them into our practice.

1.3.1.1.2. *Meditating on the impurity of the body*

A further means to overcome attachment to the body is to contemplate the natural defects of the body. This particularly relates to attachment to the bodies of others, such as when men are attached to a woman's body or a woman to a man's body. This attachment seems to arise purely by focusing on attractiveness of the body itself. One needs to bear in mind however that it is possible to see the qualities and perfections of the person while also contemplating the natural imperfections of their body, as a way to overcome attachment to that body. In most cases the attachment to a member of the opposite sex seems mostly related to the appearance of their body. Some even make comments such as 'they don't really love me, they just like my body'. This can be very true! In this case there is no real concern about the individual, just attraction to the appearance of their body.

In this context one needs to understand that while one overcomes attachment to the body by seeing its natural defects and impurities, that does not in any way undermine seeing the person themselves as being warm-hearted and appealing, and feeling love and compassion for them. So here the training is to reduce attachment to the body, whilst still cherishing the person. This is important to understand.

As I regularly relate, when two people come together and wish to live together, their initial reason may well be out of attachment. In fact, it is attachment that causes the initial attraction to one another and then a feeling of fondness for each other develops. Having decided to live together in a committed relationship, if they start to practise genuine love and compassion for each other, then this is the key to a genuine relationship.

Even in the event that attachment for each other ceases or differences in opinions arise, and a couple consider to live separately, if genuine love and compassion was practised mutually, then a good relationship can still be maintained. While the intimate physical relationship

ceases, they can still have a mutual fondness for each other. In fact, some have confided in me that their relationship had improved after separation took place and they were better friends.

As lay Dharma practitioners, you really need to take this important point into consideration. When you have a relationship with another you really need to go beyond mutual attraction and attachment, and develop a genuine sense of love and compassion for each other. That will then be a significant relationship.

These are really important points that you need to take into consideration. As many of you are in committed relationships it is really important to have a genuine harmonious relationship with your partners. If, as mentioned previously, one takes initiative to really base the relationship on genuine concern, love and compassion for each other, then that will definitely contribute to less arguments, and fewer reasons to become angry and upset with one another. The fewer the occasions of anger, the more it helps to protect the virtue in one's mind. A relationship maintained with a virtuous frame of mind, where one does not have to become angry, argue, bicker and so forth, will be a worthwhile relationship.

[Geshe Doga says in English, 'If I'm happy, with love and kindness, then angry less and argue less. Together less angry, then more happy! More angry, more arguments, then lose all happiness'.]

Gyaltsab Je begins his commentary on this section with a hypothetical argument:

Argument: It is unsuitable to give it up because I have held it to me as 'mine' for a long time.

The argument is that it is unsuitable to give the body up because it has been 'mine' for a long time. This is another significant point. Because we have had this body for as long as we remember, it is our prized possession. So giving up our body seems to be quite unthinkable. It's hard to even contemplate that one can give up attachment to the body.

61. *Deluded mind, why do you
Not grasp at the clean form of wood?
This machine that is an accumulation of filth,
These bones, to guard this now, how is it
appropriate?*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

Answer: If you, the deluded mind that holds that which lacks a self as having a self, holds the impure as 'mine' then why do you not hold a clean piece of wood as 'I' as well?

Instead you guard this machine, which is an accumulation of filth and bones. How can this be suitable?

It is unsuitable to be attached.

The point here is that it is a *deluded mind that holds something that lacks a self as having a self*. Similarly, it is also a deluded mind that holds something as pure when in fact it is impure. So if the mind were to hold something that is impure by nature as pure or clean, *then why do you not hold a clean piece of wood as 'I' as well?* This is the significant point being made here.

Then as further explained, *instead you guard this machine of the body, which is an accumulation of filth and bones. How can this be suitable?* This implies that it is not suitable.

Our bodies are, in effect, like a machine that produces filth. We can understand this when we think about the clean substances going in, and how what comes out is foul, putrid, and rotten. As this is the natural condition of the body, how can we consider it as being pure? Therefore it is not suitable to be attached to it.

1.3.1.1.3. *Contemplating the lack of essence of the body*

This has two sub-headings

1.3.1.1.3.1. If one separates the different parts of the body and analyses them one will not find any essence

1.3.1.1.3.2. It is unsuitable to be attached to that without essence.

What we need to derive from this explanation is that it is a logical presentation of the way to contemplate the natural defects and imperfections of the body. Rather than giving a general instruction to meditate on the impurities of the body, the instruction is to analyse the natural circumstances of the body. Then through that analysis one comes to understand and accept that the body is indeed impure. By meditating on the natural defects and imperfections of the body in this way one will be able to implement it into one's practice.

1.3.1.1.3.1. *If one separates the different parts of the body and analyses them one will not find any essence*

Here essence refers to the essence of purity. The relevant verse is:

62. *First peel off this sheath of skin
With your awareness.
Then also separate the flesh from the grid of bones
And place it apart with the scalpel of wisdom.*

Gyaltsab Je's explanation of the meaning of this verse is:

First of all, if you mentally peel off this sheath of skin from the rest of the body, then it does not have any essence. Then remove the flesh from the grid of bones with the scalpel of wisdom, and analyse whether there is any essence.

This is another very logical and systematic presentation of the way of looking into the body. Where is its essence?

What is being suggested is that the analysis begins with first peeling off the skin that covers the body and then looking at what is beneath that. In most cases attachment arises through being attracted to a beautiful face, in which case you would start the analysis by removing the skin from the face, and then look beyond that.

The way to investigate the essence of an appealing nature is to begin with the attraction to the skin, which is indeed what you are looking at when you are attracted to the body. However the skin is of course not the body. So when one goes beyond the skin one looks at the flesh. If one feels there might be some essence beyond that, one goes further and takes the flesh away, leaving the grid of the bones. Then, when one goes further into the bones, there is marrow.

This analysis is done with the scalpel of wisdom. Just as a scalpel is able to dissect these layers of the body, one uses the wisdom of analysis like a scalpel to look through

these layers to find whether there is any essence. Then one will find that there is no essence at all.

The next verse shows how to further analyse with the scalpel of wisdom. It reads:

63. *Then divide the bones as well
And scan all the way down to your feet.
Analyse and ask yourself,
'Where is the essence in this?'*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Then divide up the bones as well, scan all the parts down to your feet and ask yourself, 'Where is there the essence that could bear analysis?'

Analyse like this with your own wisdom. There is not the slightest essence that can be relied upon.

This second verse is also quite clear. Even when the bones have been divided and one looks into the inner parts of the body from the feet upwards then one asks *where is the essence that could bear the analysis?*, which implies that there is no real essence to be found. So as the commentary says *analyse like this with your own wisdom. There is not the slightest essence that can be found and relied upon.*

This meditation is a means to contemplate the natural impurities and defects of the body. The fundamentally unclean nature of the body will help one to reduce attachment to one's own body. And, when one applies this to others who appear attractive and thus an object of attachment, this is a way to reduce attachment to the bodies of others as well. So it is more practical to train our mind by first looking into our own body and accept its natural defects, and then we will understand that it's the same with the bodies of others. If one trains the mind in this way, it will definitely help to reduce strong attachment.

These verses present an analysis that can be used to look for the essence of the body, leading to the conclusion that there is no essence to be found.

1.3.1.1.3.2. *It is unsuitable to be attached to that without essence*

The verse relating to this reads:

64. *If, even when looking with effort
You cannot find any essence in this,
Then why do you persist
In guarding this body with attachment?*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

If, even when looking for any essence with effort, you mind, do not see any essence, then for what reason do you mind, continue to guard this body due to being attached to it and grasping at it?

This excessive grasping is unsuitable.

This reflects on the fact that if one has not given up the object of attachment from the depth of one's heart, then attachment will continue to exist despite employing these methods of analysis. Having a theoretical understanding that, 'Yes, it is obvious that the nature of the body is impure', is not enough if one does not actually give up attachment to the body. Even with that analysis and understanding, one could still be holding on to the object of attachment. That is because deep inside, one still holds the object of attachment and sees it as appealing and having essence.

These points are quite clear.

1.3.2.1.4. The reason why it is unsuitable to be attached to the body

Again, this heading begins with a hypothetical argument.

Argument: However, if you say that it is suitable to be slightly attached to this body?

One may question, 'Is it OK to have a little bit of attachment to the body?' So as a way to overcome this doubt the next one and a half verses say:

*65. You are unable to eat filth
As well as unable to drink blood,
And unable to suck the innards.
What is the body doing for you?*

*66ab. At second best, it is suitable to be guarded
As food for foxes and vultures.*

The commentary to these lines reads:

Answer: It is unsuitable to be attached to the body because the body is an impure aggregate. You cannot eat the impure substances of the body and you can also not drink the blood. Likewise you cannot suck the innards, so what action is the body doing for you that is of use? If you were to protect it then at second best the body is only suitable to be guarded as food for foxes and vultures.

As the commentary explains, *it is unsuitable to be attached to the body because it is an impure aggregate*. Further reasons for the body's impurity are that we do not have any use of this body for ourselves: we cannot consume our own body to nourish ourselves; we cannot drink our blood; and we cannot suck our innards. So what real benefit does the body give us?

As one would not consider consuming one's own body, the only other good reason to protect it would be that the body is suitable as food for foxes and vultures. This means that if our body can help other beings such as foxes, vultures and so forth, then it might be worthwhile to protect it. Otherwise it has no personal benefit.

A significant point being made here is, while it is inappropriate to protect one's body merely out of attachment to it, if it can be used for the benefit of others then it is worthwhile to protect the body.

We conclude here for the evening. Let us recite the *Eight Verses of Mind Training*, and dedicate it to the late Robin Williams. I have seen some of his shows which were very funny; they made me laugh and laugh. Some people have that natural gift of being amusing and funny just by the virtue of being seen. Whatever the circumstances of his death, it is sad to lose a person who has benefited others. So it is appropriate that we dedicate some prayers for him.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མཉམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

19 August 2014

If, prior to taking refuge, you generate the following motivation, 'in order to liberate all beings from all sufferings and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness I need to achieve enlightenment myself, so for this purpose I take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha', this then becomes what is called 'special refuge'.

When we add to this special refuge the intention to achieve enlightenment quickly, very quickly, then it becomes what is called a 'special bodhicitta' intention.

I convey this to you now so that when you come across practices where it indicates taking special refuge and generating special bodhicitta, you will know what it means.

So, based on the refuge and bodhicitta motivation we generated earlier, along with this profound understanding, we can now engage in the practice of meditation.

[meditation]

We can now generate the following motivation for receiving the teachings: In order to free all sentient beings from all sufferings and lead to them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So, for this purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

The very meditation practice that we engaged in earlier is a practice to further enhance and develop the love and compassion within ourselves. If we were to really take the initiative to put this into practice rather than leave it as a mere wish, and really develop practising love and compassion within ourselves, the benefit would be unimaginable. It is incredible benefit for oneself as well as for others. There is only a positive result to be gained from developing love and compassion in one's heart.

You might find it hard to detect how extending love and compassion to all living beings actually directly benefits them or yourself. The positive effects take place over a long period of time, so the benefits are experienced more in an indirect way. However we can relate to the more direct experiences with our immediate relations, who we deal with on a daily basis. If one has really taken the initiative to cultivate genuine love and compassion, then due to familiarity with the practice, and the positive impact it has on one's mind, it will definitely contribute to less agitation and less anger—particularly with our close relationships.

In relation to close relationships we have now, or from the past, we are easily affected by what they say and what they do. As such, anger can arise if we have not taken the initiative to develop a genuine sense of love and compassion towards them. The way to develop love and compassion towards them is to really understand that

when they express inappropriate gestures or words etc. it is because they are influenced by the delusions, and thus affected by a troubled state of mind. When one understands that they don't have control over what they are saying and doing, and that their mind is completely confused (which is why they are expressing inappropriate gestures and so forth), one doesn't take it too personally. Instead one can feel a sense of love and compassion towards them.

We can notice that when inappropriate gestures are laid upon oneself, or *vice versa*, it is because of the fact that we have a close relationship with the other, now or from the past. It would be quite unlikely that we would express our feelings openly, especially feelings of agitation etc., to strangers. If we were to approach strangers and start relating what we have on our mind, we might even get punched and start a fight. So we usually express what's on our mind to those with whom we are closest, which at times may be agitation and unease, and this can create discomfort between oneself and the other.

Knowing that it is because we have a close relationship with the other, it is most appropriate that one generates genuine understanding based on a sense of love and compassion. If one practises in this way then it becomes a supreme method to transform agitation and anger into love and compassion. If one takes the initiative to practise love and compassion then, if the other was to utter inappropriate words or make inappropriate gestures, one would not take it personally and it would be able to express even more understanding and concern for them. This is how their negative attitudes or gestures can be transformed into something more positive due to the love and compassion in our heart.

As we know from the Buddha's life story, when the Buddha was in the indestructible concentrated state of meditation, and evil forces such as demons attempted to harm the Buddha out of jealousy, their arrows and spears transformed into flowers. The deep concentration and love and compassion in the Buddha's heart overpowered the destructive weapons, and transformed them into something beautiful. We need to understand the significance of the Buddha's great feats, and be encouraged to practise similarly oneself.

When we really take the initiative to practise in this way, with the understanding that inappropriate gestures and words are due to the negative emotions or delusions in the other's mind, one should not take it personally but rather think of the other as an object of compassion, because of the afflictions in their mind. When we practise in this way, what would otherwise be a very uncomfortable situation can be transformed into something more meaningful, and becomes a means to enhance our love and compassion towards them. So turning unwanted things, such as difficulties and problems into the path means precisely this practice. Otherwise what other practice would there be? Beginning with the hardships and unwanted things we experience now, we can learn to transform anger into love and compassion. This is the practice: in a situation where one would have otherwise reacted out of anger, one feels love and compassion instead. Doing that shows how our mind has been transformed.

We need to understand that this is the very foundation of the mind training teachings. The main emphasis here is turning unwanted situations, difficulties and problems into the path. So we need to understand that.

It is as presented in this verse from the *Guru Puja* practice:

Should even the environment and the beings therein
Be filled with the fruits of their negative actions
And unwished-for sufferings pour down on me like
rain,
I seek your blessings to take these miserable
conditions as a path
By seeing them as causes to exhaust the results of my
negative karma.

So when one next recites these lines from *the Guru Puja*, it is good to reflect on the meaning.

1.3.2.1.5. Because the body disintegrates quickly it is suitable to practise virtue

From the heading itself we can derive a sense of the profound advice being presented here. Since death is inevitable, and our body disintegrates and nothing is left behind, then while we have this body, it is suitable to employ it in order to accumulate virtue as much as possible.

The practice here is to contemplate the certainty of death. The time of death is uncertain, and that time our body can't help us, as it will be destroyed. The Lam Rim teachings explain in detail that when death occurs none of the things we cherish now can protect us, e.g. our body, our possessions and relatives. None of that can help us at that time. So if we can really contemplate on death and impermanence, and take it to heart, then the practical benefit will be that our attachment to our body, possessions and relatives will reduce to the point of having no attachment to them at all. If one has not even the slightest attachment to these cherished objects, then this will be a cause for so much relief and ease in our mind—not only at the time of death but even in our daily lives now. If we don't take the initiative to let go of the attachment to our body, possessions and relatives, then this can cause a lot of mental agony. When one has strong attachment to close and dear ones in particular, and if they let go of us first, prior to us having trained our own mind to let go of the attachment to them, then that will cause so much agony in one's mind. So to prevent a painful situation like this from happening, you need to take the initiative to train your mind to let go of attachment to these objects. Then you will have great solace.

Most of you would have the experience of being abandoned at one time or another by someone who is close and dear to you. If you can recall the pain and hurt you felt at that time this will be a good impetus to practice the Dharma.

Apparently psychologists have stated that one of the greatest sufferings someone can undergo is the suffering of being abandoned by loved ones. This suffering can be so great that someone who is experiencing that kind of hurt would even consider taking their own life, because they are not able to bear it. Many of you might already be familiar with psychology, and may have heard those explanations. I would say that it is definitely true. The

suffering of being abandoned and unloved is a great suffering. So if situations like this were to occur, then the best way to avoid experiencing the sufferings is to train our mind now to let go of the attachment to others. It is in this way that we can see how we can derive practical benefit from these practices: letting go of the attachment to these objects and possessions (particularly other beings) will be of benefit even in this very life.

The point of this subheading is that the body disintegrates quickly and death occurs quickly. Reflecting on the inevitability of death is something which really becomes a strong impetus for one's practice of Dharma. As the teachings and some of the great masters have mentioned, we need to practise to the extent that we generate fear of death now as a way to prevent fear of death at the actual time of death. In other words, cultivating a fear of death now can become the impetus for us to practise the Dharma in a way that actively prepares us for the actual time of death. When there is no fear at that time then there is no hesitation in our mind, and we will be able to joyfully or peacefully go on to the next existence. The fact and reality is that none of us will survive forever—death will definitely occur. The longest one could possibly hope to live for would be 120. Apparently in the past some have lived up to 140. I am not sure of this, but no-one could live much longer than that.

We might aspire to live up to 100, but even that is not a very long time. In terms of the number of years we live, no matter whatever significant older age we might hope to live for, the reality is that the years go by very quickly. In relation to my own experience, it doesn't seem long since I arrived in Australia. When I look back, the time seems to have gone quite quickly, but it is over 30 years. As a reminder of that, someone came to a Geelong teaching last month and showed me pictures saying 'Remember this picture?' It was a picture of this individual taken with me 30 years ago. He told me that the photo was taken in his kitchen, and he has it with him all the time. When he showed the picture, I actually couldn't even recognise the person right away, and that was a reminder of how much time has passed since then.

He had lived in Japan for many years and that is why he was not around here. Apparently he had come to His Holiness' event last year at the Quang Minh temple and he said that he noticed me from a distance, and immediately remembered 'Oh, that is Geshe Doga'. He said he could recognize me right away from a distance.

Referring back to the point about generating fear of death as an impetus to practise the Dharma, if we can really improve our Dharma practice so that we are prepared for the time of death, then this will be of great benefit at the inevitable time of death. In the number of years that I have associated with others here, there have been a few examples of individuals who have faced death with great ease and peace of mind. So there is real significance in this point that we need to pay attention to.

Under this heading *Because the body disintegrates quickly it is suitable to practise virtue* there are four subheadings.

1.3.2.1.5.1. A body that will soon be destroyed by death is suitable to be ordered to practise virtue

1.3.2.1.5.2. An example of how it is inappropriate to do nothing and procrastinate due to grasping

1.3.2.1.5.3. Having given a wage one should get what one wants

1.3.2.1.5.4. It is appropriate to work for sentient beings by adapting the recognition of a boat

1.3.2.1.5.1. A body that will soon be destroyed by death is suitable to be ordered to practise virtue

The verse reads:

*66cd. This human body
Is only to be used.*

*67. Even if you protect it,
The lord of death, without any mercy,
Will take it away and give it to the birds and
dogs.
At that time what can you do?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of the verse.

There is no real purpose of the body from the point of view of its nature. This human body that is intact with its freedoms and endowments is only suitable to be put to work to accumulate virtuous karma.

Although you protect it without achieving this purpose, the merciless lord of death will take it from you and, having separated it from life, will offer it to the birds and dogs. Mind, at such a time what will you do, as you do not have the slightest power to prevent that separation.

The main point the commentary expresses is that there is no real purpose for the body from the point of view of its nature. Its actual composition is a contaminated aggregate so there is no real, substantial pure nature. However the human bodies that we have obtained are intact with the freedoms and endowments, enabling one to pursue the Dharma. Only this kind of body is suitable to put to work to accumulate virtuous karma. This is the only purpose of having obtained a precious human body.

Verse 67 explains that if we were to try to protect our body, without trying to achieve a virtuous purpose, the reality is that the Lord of Death, (which is a mythological being used as a euphemism for death) is merciless and will separate our consciousness from our body. One has to experience death, and once our bodies are separated from this life, it will be offered to the birds and dogs. The point is that our bodies will naturally decompose and be of no use for oneself. So, if we don't reflect on this now, then at the time of death we won't have the power to do anything.

We put great measures into protecting our body by feeding and clothing it etc. If the body didn't age, decay and eventually disintegrate, then perhaps there would be some point to protect it in such a way. However the reality is that our body naturally starts to decay no matter how much we protect it. It will gradually fail us and eventually completely disintegrate, and we will have to separate from it. Taking this natural decay of our body into account, putting in all that time and energy just to protect it, without using it for any great purpose, would be meaningless.

The personal instruction to derive here is to contemplate the inevitability of death and really take the initiative to engage in a greater purpose. The mind, or the individual

self will go on, while the body will be left behind at the time of death. This is something that will definitely occur and trying to ignore it will not prevent it. It is better to acknowledge it and actually prepare for the time when it occurs by practising to the best of our ability. Then, when the actual event takes place, it will definitely lessen unnecessary anxiety and fears and benefit us at that time.

1.3.2.1.5.2. An example of how it is inappropriate to do nothing and procrastinate due to grasping

It is natural that we experience birth, aging, sickness and death. This is part and parcel of our existence. Ignoring this and not acknowledging it will not prevent it from happening. The very fact that we are born means that we have to experience death. This is part of our natural existence of suffering.

We can derive the meaning from the heading itself: *An example of how it is inappropriate to do nothing and to procrastinate due to grasping.* Doing nothing here refers to doing nothing to practice the Dharma, not doing nothing in general. This can be misunderstood if people think 'I am not just doing nothing and sitting around, I am actually very busy, I have a job and so forth, so I am really busy – this advice does not apply to me'. So to clarify, here, doing nothing means doing nothing to generate the causes for one's liberation and enlightenment, or more immediately, doing nothing to prepare for our future life. At the very least, Dharma practice involves practices to prepare oneself for one's next life. If we don't engage in any practice towards achieving the goals of our future lives, ultimately liberation and full enlightenment, then this would be referred to as doing nothing from the Dharma point of view, and this is inappropriate.

The verse reads:

*68. You would not give cloth and so forth
To servants that cannot be ordered around.
Hence, if this body leaves you despite your care,
Why do you build up your flesh to make it firm?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary quite clearly explains the meaning of this verse.

If in the world, for example, slaves and entourage are not able to do the work or if they do not serve food, clothing and so forth to their master, then they are punished.

As this body will leave you, without your control, despite having nourished and cared for it with effort, then why do you build up its flesh to make it firm?

It is unsuitable.

The example presented here refers back to ancient times when great kings or masters had slaves and an entourage of people (for example a king would have an entourage of ministers and so forth). If slaves who worked for the lords were not actually able to do the work, such as serving food or making clothing etc., then they would be punished or even expelled. Similarly if the ministers didn't do the work required of them, they could be punished or even expelled from their position. Even these days we can see people fired from their jobs if they don't work properly, so we can relate to this example.

The commentary further explains that: *as this body will leave you, without your control, despite having nourished and*

cared for it with effort, then why do you build up its flesh to make it firm?, implying this is unsuitable. What is being explained here again reflects the reality that we have to discard this body. No matter how much we nourish it and care for it, it will have to be discarded and left behind. With no intention to achieve a greater purpose with this body, merely eating and consuming as a way of protecting its flesh is futile and of no real benefit. The personal instruction here is that while we do need to protect our body by consuming, eating, clothing it, drinking and finding shelter for it etc., we should do it with the intention that the very purpose of feeding and clothing our bodies etc. is so that we can engage in the practice of the Dharma to benefit other sentient beings. With a sense of love and compassion in one's heart, one can perform the numerous normal daily activities as a practice of Dharma, by remembering to make appropriate offerings each time one eats or drinks. After that one should generate the mind that thinks, 'May consuming this now become a means to nourish my body so that I can use it to engage in Dharma practices to benefit other sentient beings'.

With this intention in our mind, our normal activities of drinking and eating become a great means to accumulate merit to further enhance love and compassion. In this way you can see that by just changing one's attitude towards normal activities, it can turn them into a great practice. These are the instructions for those who really want to take the initiative to try and engage in the practice of Dharma. Make it part of your life: turn whatever you do into a Dharma practice. This instruction is very, very valuable. I personally definitely try to remind myself of this point each time I drink and eat. I don't eat mindlessly, I try and use it for this purpose.

If we can remind ourselves of these points, then whatever activity we engage in to sustain ourselves will become an activity that acquires the conditions for the practice of Dharma. When we talk about the conditions for Dharma practice, we might think of something grand, or something which is beyond our normal activities, but if we can understand that the appropriate conditions for practising Dharma begins with a sound body, then whatever helps to nourish a healthy body definitely becomes the conditions for practising Dharma.

1.3.2.1.5.3. Having given a wage one should get what one wants

Again, using the example of work and wages, if you give a wage to someone to work for you then you expect them to do their service.

The verse reads:

69. *After giving the body its wage,
Put it to work for your purpose.
Without any return
Do not offer everything to it.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary clarifies the meaning.

Having given the body its wage of food, clothing and so forth one should put it to work now for one's purpose of creating virtuous karma. Without the slightest benefit one should not offer the body all this food, clothing and so forth, without getting any benefit in return.

The commentary explains that when we feed and clothe our body it is as if we are giving it its wage. For example, when you pay workers a wage you expect the work to be completed. Similarly, feeding one's body with food and clothing it, the body should then work for one's intended purpose—to create virtuous karma. Creating virtuous karma is in direct contrast to creating non-virtuous karma. Non-virtues of the physical body include killing, stealing and sexual misconduct, and if one used one's body to create non-virtue, then that would definitely have defeated the purpose of having such a body.

However, if one can refrain from these negative deeds and employ the body to create virtuous karma as a means to obtain a good rebirth next life, or better still, to become a cause to obtain liberation and ultimately enlightenment for the purpose of all living beings, then the benefit ranges from a temporary benefit to the ultimate benefit that one can use one's body to achieve. *Without the slightest benefit one should not offer the body all this food and clothing without getting any benefit in return* means if we were not to get anything in return, then it is meaningless to serve this body. There is another connotation here too. If, instead of benefit, one generates harm with one's body then there is no point supporting it. In this case it would be better not to feed it and give it care. A contemporary example of this may be individuals who have fed their body to the point where it becomes so obese that they can't even stand up or walk around. What benefit is the body in this situation? This is an implication that one needs to also understand.

1.3.2.1.5.4. It is appropriate to work for sentient beings by adapting the recognition of a boat

This heading presents the example of a boat as a means of ferrying passengers from one side of a river to the other. Similarly, we need to use our perfect conditions to bring ourselves from the shore of samsara across to the other shore, which is the state of liberation and ultimately enlightenment—just like the boat.

The verse reads:

70. *Regard the body as a boat
Merely for coming and going.
Transform it into a wish fulfilling body
To accomplish the welfare of sentient beings.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the concept further.

This body is here, in this life, merely as a basis for striving in virtue as it is the basis for coming and going. In such a way, view it with the recognition of it being a like boat for crossing the ocean of cyclic existence, and transform it into the precious wish-fulfilling jewel of a Buddha's body, so as to achieve the welfare of all sentient beings.

The point explained here is to regard our body as the basis for striving in virtue. We use our body to come and go, but it should be the basis for actually striving in virtue. The analogy presented here: *In such a way, view it with the recognition of it being like a boat for crossing the ocean of cyclic existence*, which uses the boat as an example. Just as a boat is used to ferry passengers from one side of a river to the other, so we should use our body to cross the ocean of samsara, from cyclic existence to the shore of enlightenment.

As the commentary highlights, by using our body like a boat to cross the ocean of cyclic existence, having crossed to the other shore of enlightenment, we need to transform our body into the precious wish-fulfilling body of a buddha's body. By engaging in the practice and having generated the altruistic mind of bodhicitta, then the practice one engages in is the six perfections. So, through the combination of the altruistic mind of bodhicitta and the actions of the six perfections, we engage in the practices on the path to reach enlightenment. Thus we need to use our body now as a means to achieve a complete transformed state, where one achieves the two bodies of a buddha: the wisdom truth body and the form body of a buddha. This becomes the means to fulfil one's aspiration to benefit all sentient beings.

1.3.2.2. TO BE SKILFUL IN PRACTISING VIRTUE

The presentations under this heading are very practical and applicable advice for our everyday life, which we really need to take on board. There are three subheadings:

1.3.2.2.1. Making ordinary actions beautiful

1.3.2.2.2. Skilfully interacting with others in a virtuous way. The literal explanation is being skilled about engaging with others as a way to be free from misdeeds.

1.3.2.2.3. Being skilful in the actions of the three doors

1.3.2.2.1. Making ordinary actions beautiful

This is subdivided into three:

1.3.2.2.1.1. How to act when meeting others

1.3.2.2.1.2. How to handle one's possessions

1.3.2.2.1.3. Always perform actions in a courteous manner

1.3.2.2.1.1. How to act when meeting others

This addresses how to act when you encounter others. It reflects on what kind of gestures to express and so forth.

The verse reads:

71. *Thus those possessing control
Should always wear a smile,
Clear away wrathful grimaces and frowns,
Be migrators' friend and be honest.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary expands upon this:

Thus one should take control of one's body and mind and always smile at others. Clear away wrathful grimaces and frowns and be a good friend to migrators. When talking be gentle and truthful.

The line from the verse which says: *Thus those possessing control*, means having control over one's body and mind, particularly one's own mind. When one encounters others one should always have a smiling face and a pleasant gesture, and refrain from wrathful grimaces, like a dark face or frowns. By taking the initiative to be a good friend to migrators, one will always be close to others and have affection towards others. Further, the advice when talking is to be gentle and truthful. The Tibetan word translated here as *gentle* has the connotation of using words which are likeable and suitable for the others to hear. How to act when meeting others is something we need to take on board and try to put into practice.

1.3.2.2.1.2. How to handle one's possessions

This relates to handling things in our area, in our room, in our surroundings. It is very practical advice about how to

take things out from somewhere and how to put them back in an appropriate way. This affects immediate neighbours or people that live next to you. The main point is that we need to be considerate and not to disturb them in any way.

The verse reads:

- 72ab. *Do not throw beds and so forth
Around noisily without consideration.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary adds:

Do not throw possessions like beds and so forth noisily around because this harms others.

While the explanation here is quite clear, the verse relates to being considerate to others who are living with you, next to you, or close by, such as neighbours,. When the commentary says *do not throw* it means do not handle possessions roughly. For example, when you are opening doors, or when you are taking things out, be considerate. One might unintentionally have no consideration, but apparently there are those who actually do things noisily, like banging the doors or taking things noisily, as a way to annoy their neighbours or roommates. If you see them also showing a dark or sullen face, these are inappropriate gestures in relation to the handling of things.

1.3.2.2.1.3. Always perform actions in a courteous manner

The third subdivision refers to always being mindful not to disturb others when engaging in any activity. This means to be considerate of others' needs and acting appropriately in any given situation.

The verse reads:

- 72cd. *Also, do not open the door roughly
And always delight in being quiet.*
73. *Water fowl, cats and thieves
Go quietly and are inconspicuous
Thus achieving their goals.
The able ones always act in such a way.*

While this is quite clear we can go into a little bit more detail in our next session. Here we need to reflect on how Shantideva is presenting really practical ways of being considerate, and how to behave appropriately in accordance with others' needs and space and time. This is very appropriate practical advice that we need to apply in our daily life.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke.

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

26 August 2014

Based on the motivation that has been generated during the recitation of the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, let us now engage in the practice of meditation.

[meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings, and put them into practice well.

1.3.2.2. BEING SKILFUL IN PRACTISING VIRTUE

1.3.2.2.1. Making ordinary actions beautiful

1.3.2.2.1.3. Always perform actions in a courteous manner (cont.)¹

73cd. *Also, do not open the door roughly
And always delight in being quiet.*

74. *Water fowl, cats and thieves
Go quietly and are inconspicuous
Thus achieving their goals.*

The able ones always act in such a way.

These lines give us examples showing how, when we engage in any kind of activities we need to be courteous and mindful of the needs and space of others. Basically, the advice comes down to how to be polite with others.

In this and the following verses, Shantideva exhorts us to practise in a manner that is courteous and pleasing to others, and which will bring them joy. I regularly emphasise the importance of being considerate to others and the need to relate to others in a proper way. We can see here that Shantideva is presenting the very points that I regularly emphasise, so I have very good support from him.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the last two lines of verse 72 in this way:

Because it harms those that are also at home, do not open doors roughly. Always delight in being quiet and in actions that make others happy.

As presented here, when you come in or leave a room be mindful about not shutting the door loudly, as it will disturb the person inside. This is particularly important when there are lamas, such as our own teachers and so forth, meditating and doing their practices. And, of course, shutting the door noisily will definitely upset ordinary people who are easily irritated. Therefore we need to be mindful about not disturbing others in this way.

When Gyaltsab Je states *Always delight in being quiet and in actions that make others happy*, he is exhorting us to have a

quiet demeanour, and to engage in actions that always make others happy.

Thus far the presentation has been on how to engage in actions out of consideration for others. Next comes a presentation of how acting in a gentle manner becomes a means to achieve one's own purpose. Gyaltsab Je gives us these examples:

Examples for achieving one's purpose with gentle actions: water fowl, cats and thieves go quietly and inconspicuously and in such a way achieve what they desire. The Able One, or otherwise the disciplined bodhisattvas always conduct themselves in this manner.

The literal translation uses the term 'water birds', referring to birds that rely on rivers and lakes to catch fish, such as storks. When they are hunting for fish they stand in the water very quietly and still so that they don't disturb the surroundings and frighten the fish. In this way they are able to catch any fish that come close to them.

Likewise when cats go about catching mice they are quietly inconspicuous and move in a very, very gentle and quiet manner. And, of course, in order to be successful, thieves have to move about quietly if they are to achieve their purpose.

Furthermore, the commentary explains, the Able One or bodhisattvas following the discipline always act in this way. When bodhisattvas engage in actions to benefit others they always do it in a very quiet, dignified manner. They are always gentle with their speech and actions, engaging with others in a very gentle and pleasing way.

This is how bodhisattvas, with their intention to benefit sentient beings, act in ways that are completely in accordance with the wishes of others, in order to please them and give them joy. By reflecting upon this, we need to be inspired to always act in the same manner. Even as an aspiration we need to generate thoughts such as, 'May I also be able to practise just like the bodhisattvas'. Thus, by appreciating the gentle ways and manners of bodhisattvas, we should aspire to be like them.

On a personal level we need to reflect upon the great significance of engaging in our everyday actions so that they don't affect others in a negative way. Of course there are times when we have a bad day, where we might act or speak in a less than courteous manner. While we might not have immediate control over our behaviour, in hindsight we can think, 'Oh, that was not proper'. Then, in order to prevent them from escalating further, we can remind ourselves, 'I have listened to Shantideva's advice from this precious text, so acting in this way is not at all appropriate for me now. As there is no benefit for me and it definitely harms others, I shall definitely overcome such behaviour'. When you remind yourself in this way, it will help to prevent negative behaviour from escalating

¹ Last week 'Achieve all in a quiet way' was used as the heading.
Chapter 5

1.3.2.2.2. *Be skilled in interacting with others, free of misdeeds*²

This refers to ensuring that, when we interact with others, we are not engaging in negative deeds. There are five sub-divisions:

1.3.2.2.2.1. How to act in relation to well-meant advice

1.3.2.2.2.2. How to act in relation to speaking the truth

1.3.2.2.2.3. How to act in relation to creating merit

1.3.2.2.2.4. How to act when the qualities of others are praised

1.3.2.2.2.5. The benefit of making others happy

Here we can see how Shantideva is presenting very practical advice relating to our normal, everyday actions. We often encounter others who offer well-meant advice with the best intentions, and we need to know how to respond to that. Likewise, when others speak the truth, we also need to know how to act in that situation. Another situation is how to react when one sees others creating merit. Then there is the situation of knowing how to act when the qualities of others are praised. This section of the text concludes with a discussion of the actual benefit of making others happy. These are very practical points of advice that we really need to take on-board and implement in our lives.

1.3.2.2.2.1 How to act in relation to well-meant advice

74. *Skilful in inducing others and,
Through placing unsought beneficial
Words respectfully on your crown
Become the student of all.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

Be skilful in inducing others to practising virtue.

Although one didn't ask for it, if someone gives well-meant unsolicited advice, one should place that advice joyfully and respectfully on one's crown. Without pride one should always become the student of all that have provided good advice.

The first point is to *be skilful in inducing others to practise virtue*. This has two elements.

- When one intends to present advice to others about accumulating virtue one should be skilled in knowing what is right and wrong. Then, based on that clear understanding, one should encourage others to practise virtue.
- The second element relates to receiving advice from others about engaging in virtue. One should have the discriminating wisdom to analyse what is correct and right, and then apply the advice according to that understanding. As the commentary clearly presents, when well-meant unsought advice is presented by others, one should take that *advice* joyfully and *respectfully place it on one's crown*. This means that when the advice is presented in accordance to the Dharma then, *without pride one should always become the student of all who have provided good advice*.

There might be situations where some may feel, 'I have much more knowledge than you. Who are you to give me that kind of advice?' Rather than accepting that advice one may be offended, thinking, with a sense of pride, 'I

know better than you'. That would be an inappropriate response to well-meant advice.

Here we are being presented with some very, very practical advice. As a matter of fact, advice may come from any of these three sources: someone who has greater knowledge than oneself, someone who one considers one's equal, or from someone normally considered to have less knowledge than oneself, such as a youngster. In any of these situations, the bodhisattva's practice is to really welcome well-meant advice, receiving it very graciously and without a sense of pride, generating the attitude of seeing all as one's teachers. Although these are specific instructions relating to receiving Dharma advice, we can also apply this to worldly affairs as well.

Normally the instruction is to really check and investigate whether the advice one receives is appropriate and whether one should accept it. This section, however, refers to well-meant advice, where the practice is to take and appreciate such advice. The implication is that one should willingly appreciate advice that is meaningful and useful and place it on top of one's crown with respect, and thus regard oneself as a student of all.

1.3.2.2.2.2. How to act in relation to speaking the truth

The first two lines from the next verse are presented here:

*75ab. Everything that is said well
Should be commented on as virtue.*

Here the commentary states:

Everything well said as the truth should be commented on as virtuous speech.

Of course the meaning of these lines and the following verses is quite clear. *Everything well said as the truth should be commented on as virtuous speech* refers particularly to all speech on the Dharma, which is of course based on truth and reality. Whenever others speak about the Dharma one should comment on that as being really wonderful and virtuous speech. So one should praise the well-spoken truth of Dharma words, and, in that way show appreciation, rather than scorn or ridicule. This also prevents jealousy from arising.

When others are presenting the Dharma, or sharing advice with others, we should rejoice, and praise them, saying, 'That is really wonderful virtuous speech'. Such comments are the opposite of comments one might make out of jealousy. If one's mind is affected by jealousy then one could not make such nice comments. So we need to take this advice on-board, and when others are presenting the words of truth of the Dharma, comment on that as being virtuous. It is said that when we praise others without any sense of jealousy, it is a really meritorious deed. So conducting ourselves in this manner is a way to accumulate virtue or merit.

We need to relate this point about speaking the truth without jealousy to the earlier heading which is to Being Skilled in Interacting With Others, Free Of Misdeeds.

² This subdivision was first mentioned on 22 July 2014, as Skillfully Acting with Others in a Virtuous Way.

1.3.2.2.3. How to act in relation to creating merit

This relates to witnessing others creating merit. The next two lines read:

*75cd. When seeing somebody being meritorious
Inspire joy through praise.*

Here Gyaltsab Je explains:

When seeing somebody being meritorious, making offerings and so forth to the Triple Gem, inspire joy and happiness in their minds by directly praising them.

Of course these points were explained extensively in the third chapter on the virtue that is accumulated from rejoicing in the deeds of others.

These lines of verse make the same point. When one sees others engaging in meritorious deeds, such as making offerings and so forth to the Three Jewels, then, if appropriate, one comments on what great deeds they are doing. And if it is not possible to do that, the main thing is to rejoice, and mentally praise them. That will prevent negative minds such as jealousy, pride and so forth from arising.

As presented earlier, when one rejoices in the good deeds of someone who has greater realisations than oneself, then one gets nearly half of that merit oneself. If the one who is generating that virtue and merit is of lower status than oneself, then one gains even more merit. This is how the teachings present the great benefits of rejoicing.

1.3.2.2.4. How to act when the qualities of others are praised

The verse from the text reads:

*76. Comment on qualities secretly,
When qualities are mentioned, agree.
If one's qualities are mentioned,
Check whether there are qualities.*

Here Gyaltsab Je explains:

As it may cause doubts of flattery if one expresses them directly, secretly praise the qualities of others. When others praise the qualities of a third then agree by saying, 'It is like that'.

If your qualities are praised, then without conceit analyse whether the mind really has these qualities or not. If you have, then simply recognise that you have that quality without becoming proud.

The first part of the explanation in the commentary is that if there is a doubt that one's praise might be perceived as flattery, then in order to prevent that possibility, one should practise praising others in secret. If one were to praise others just to flatter them, then that wouldn't be genuine praise, because one is expecting something in return.

If you are not mindful when you praise someone, it may cause them to feel, 'Oh, I wonder why they are praising me. Maybe they want something from me and are just saying that to make me think well of them'. Because of this danger the safest practice is to praise others in secret.

The next point presented in the commentary is also very, very significant and relevant to our normal dealings with others. When others praise the qualities of another person, then we should agree with that praise by saying, 'Yes, it is like that, just as you say'.

The reason why this practice is emphasised here is that if the person being praised is someone who is likeable, then, even if it is not fitting praise, we might say, 'Yes, that is true. They have a lot of qualities'. Whereas if it is someone one doesn't like, then even though they are being rightly praised, we might say, 'Oh, I'm not sure about them'. The main point here is that whether the person to whom the praises are offered is agreeable to oneself or not, the best practice is to acknowledge that praise and say, 'It is like that'. Adopting such conduct not only prevents one from engaging in misdeeds, but we also accumulate great merit by acknowledging the qualities of others.

Furthermore, agreeing in that way also makes the one who is offering the praise joyful too.

The next point in the commentary is also very relevant and significant advice. It relates to when others praise your qualities: *If your qualities are praised, then without conceit analyse whether the mind really has these qualities or not.*

If someone were to talk about qualities they may see in you and so forth, then reacting with a sense of, 'Oh, I might be great. Oh, they have mentioned my qualities so I might be someone special', would be only increasing one's pride. To assess whether what they say is true, one should first check as to whether one does actually have those qualities, and that the praise is fitting. If one does have those qualities, accept that praise but without any conceit or pride.

1.3.2.2.5. The benefit of making others happy

What are the benefits of making others happy?

*77. Because all efforts are to bring joy,
It is so precious that it is priceless.
Thus, enjoy the blissful happiness
That comes from the virtue of working for
others.*

*78. In this life one will be peerless
And also on the other side will be great
happiness.
Faults cause unhappiness and suffering
And also on the other side will be great
suffering.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

All the actions of the three doors of bodhisattvas are to make others happy. Because this happiness of others is so precious, it is priceless, like a rare object that cannot be bought even with great wealth.

As presented in the commentary, *all the actions of the bodhisattvas through their three doors—physical, speech and mental intentions—are performed as a means to make others happy and bring them joy.* Bodhisattvas are always engaged in actions that make others happy, because they are aware that the *happiness others experience is priceless, like a rare object that cannot be bought.* No matter how much money or wealth you may have, you cannot use it to purchase the happiness of others.

Thus, bodhisattvas always use the most appropriate ways and means to make others joyful. As mentioned here, that is because the joy and happiness of others is priceless. I regularly emphasise that we need to engage in actions that will make others joyful and happy. We all have that

potential, so it is worthwhile to actually utilise it to bring about joy and happiness to others.

As much as possible, we need to minimise, and try to rid ourselves of any gestures, mannerisms, and behaviours that cause misery to others. If we notice our actions are bringing about misery and agony, then we need to definitely refrain from those actions. Conversely, we need to engage in actions that bring joy to others.

The second paragraph of the commentary reads:

Therefore, with the quality of making others happy, others will not be jealous of one in this life. By practising making others happy, joy in this life will not decline, and one will without doubt also receive possessions and so forth, and in the life beyond one will also attain great happiness.

There are unintentional benefits from making others happy.

- The commentary explains that *with the quality of making others happy, others will not be jealous of one in this life*. When, from one's own side, one sincerely engages in making others joyful and happy, then that will prevent others from being jealous. That is because one is actively engaged in making them happy.
- One also creates the causes for *possessions* and wealth to increase.
- *The happiness and so forth of this life will not decline*, rather it will be restored and established well.
- As a positive consequence of making others happy, one will also attain *great happiness in the life beyond*, meaning the next life. Here, happiness can range from attaining the happiness of the humans or gods, to obtaining the happiness of liberation and the ultimate happiness of full enlightenment.

So these are the great benefits of making others happy.

Next, Gyalsab Je explains a very significant point:

Otherwise, [meaning if we practise contrary to the aforementioned conduct] as the shortcomings of being angry at the qualities of others, one will experience in this life mental unhappiness and physical suffering, and also in the next life one will experience great suffering.

Having mentioned the benefits of making others happy, if one were to practise the opposite, which is being angry at others' qualities, then, rather than rejoicing in them then, *one will immediately experience mental unhappiness and physical suffering in this life*.

Generally, being unhappy is the basis on which one generates anger. Anger and mental unhappiness usually support each other. If you check, you will notice that anger usually arises when the mind is unhappy. So when one is not happy with someone else's qualities, then that is the basis for starting to become upset and angry. The main point here is if we generate anger about qualities of others, then that will cause further mental agony, as well as physical suffering. So, here again we find some very pertinent advice, which is that being angry affects our mental health, as well as causing us physical harm.

Through their investigations, scientists have come to the conclusion that those with a very temperamental nature, who are always irritated and angry, are more likely to

have physical ailments such as strokes. Apparently anger can induce the blood clots that cause strokes. I have also heard that a perpetually angry attitude suppresses the immune system, making the person much more prone to illness and disease.

The main point mentioned in the text is that if we adopt a mind of joy, make others happy, and praise the qualities of others and so forth, we will receive benefits both in this life and the lives to come.

Conversely, if we practise being angry and upset with the qualities of others, then it will cause mental agony as well as physical suffering in this life and future lives.

That is really the main point. We are being encouraged to practise in accordance with the benefits for oneself.

1.3.2.2.3. *Being skilful in the actions of the three doors*

The three subdivisions under this heading are:

- 1.3.2.2.3.1. How to act while one speaks
- 1.3.2.2.3.2. How to act while one looks
- 1.3.2.2.3.3. Relating oneself only to virtuous actions

1.3.2.2.3.1. How to act while one speaks

79. *When speaking it should be agreeable and coherent,
Clear and pleasant.
Without attachment or anger,
One should speak gently and appropriately.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains:

As it is explained in the *Sutra of the Ten Grounds*, when speaking with others it should be agreeable from the heart, coherent, easily understandable, clear and pleasant, in order to be acceptable to their mind.

Having abandoned the motivations of attachment and anger, one should speak gently and appropriately in regard to time and amount.

As explained in the commentary, *when speaking with others*, one should speak *from the heart*. One should use only truthful words and say them in an *agreeable* way.

In the Tibetan version the word translated in the commentary as *coherent* has the meaning of there being a consistent connection between the first and second parts, making it easily understandable. The point about being clear and consistent in what you are saying is so that others can trust your words.

Next, speech should be *clear and pleasant*, and *acceptable* to the minds of others. Here *clear* has the significance of serving to clear away doubts that others might have. If one is not clear, then even after explanation people will still have doubts about what you said. If you are clear in your speech then that will remove any potential doubts from their mind.

Furthermore, the *motivation* of one's words or speech to others should be one that is removed from attachment and anger, thus ensuring that whatever words one relays to others are not based on attachment or anger.

One should speak gently as opposed to speaking harshly. Speaking *appropriately in regard to time and amount* refers to making the length of the presentation in accordance to what is acceptable to others.

As the commentary states, *this is as explained in 'The Sutra of the Ten Grounds'*.

1.3.2.2.3.2. How to act while one looks

This explains how to look at others and how to act in such a way.

80. *When looking at sentient beings say,
"In dependence on this very sentient being
I will become a buddha",
And look at them honestly and lovingly.*

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Here, Gyaltsab Je explains:

When we look at sentient beings then, similar to the happiness we receive from drinking a refreshing drink after having been thirsty, we think, 'In dependence on this very sentient being I will attain enlightenment', and look at them with a clear mind in a loving manner.

*Transcript prepared by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

As explained in the commentary, the analogy is that if one is really thirsty any drink that quenches our thirst will be really refreshing and rejuvenating.

The point of the illustration is that being thirsty is an unpleasant experience and that the suffering of thirst is removed when one quenches one's thirst with water. Similarly, that which relieves the overall suffering in our life is, of course, reaching the state of enlightenment. So when we encounter sentient beings, we can remind ourselves, 'Through this very sentient being I will achieve enlightenment'.

From the accounts in the Buddha's life stories and so forth, the very first stage in the generation of bodhicitta is in relation to developing love and compassion for sentient beings. And of course all the practices in which the bodhisattvas engage in the middle are also in relation to sentient beings. Finally, the ultimate state of enlightenment is attained in relation to sentient beings. Therefore, all the stages, from the beginning to the end result of enlightenment, relate to sentient beings.

The thought to generate in our mind as soon as we encounter any sentient being is, *in dependence on this very sentient being I will attain enlightenment*. With that thought in mind we look at others with a clear mind and a loving attitude, thus generating love and compassion toward the sentient being. If, when we encounter sentient beings we can adopt this advice then we will only have a positive state of mind, free from judgement and prejudice and so forth. Having such a clear state of mind recognises this person in front of us as the very sentient being who will help us to become enlightened.

1.3.2.2.3.3. Relating oneself only to virtuous actions

This is subdivided into three. The three subdivisions under this heading are:

- 1.3.2.2.3.3.1. Practising generosity to the special field of offering
- 1.3.2.2.3.3.2. Creating virtue out of one's own power
- 1.3.2.2.3.3.3. Increasing one's virtue evermore and thinking about the purpose.

We can go through the explanations of these subheadings in the next session.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་ཀྱི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

2 September 2014

As usual we can spend some time in meditation.

(pause for meditation)

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines—in order to benefit all sentient beings I will strive to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

1.3.2.2.3.3. Relating oneself only to virtuous actions (cont.)

This has three subheadings:

1.3.2.2.3.3.1. Practising generosity to the special field of offering

1.3.2.2.3.3.2. Creating virtue out of one's own power

1.3.2.2.3.3.3. Virtues are progressively superior, therefore think about the purpose before the action

1.3.2.2.3.3.1. Practising generosity to the special field of offering

This is similar to the explanation we covered in *Precious Garland* by Nagarjuna.

The verse reads:

81. *Whether arising continually through a clear wish
Or through the antidote itself, in dependence
On the fields of qualities, benefit and suffering,
Great virtue is generated.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of the verse as follows:

Engaging in virtue on a continual basis motivated by a clear wish, i.e. a strong aspiration; and an antidote against the opposing side—such as attachment and so forth; in relation to the three supreme fields:

- Field of qualities: The Triple Gem and so forth.
- Field of benefit: One's parents and so forth.
- Field of misery: The destitute, sick, disenfranchised and so forth.

Making offerings to these objects in this manner creates great virtue, thus one should strive in it.

As the commentary explains, accumulating virtue is not to be done sporadically, but rather on a continual basis. There shouldn't be times when one accumulates virtue and other times where one leaves it out. If one wonders when the appropriate time to engage in virtue is, the answer presented here is, at all times, on a continual basis.

Furthermore, engaging in virtue must be accompanied with a clear wish, which is a strong aspiration, and serve as an antidote against the opposing side i.e. the delusions such as attachment and so forth. Thus, the accumulation of virtue has to be accompanied with a strong aspiration,

and ensure that it serves as an antidote to overcome the opposing side. For example, when one engages in practising the virtue of generosity, one needs to ensure that it becomes an antidote for overcoming miserliness, and when practising morality ensure that it serves as an antidote to overcome corrupt ethics and so forth. The emphasis here is that when one accumulates virtue, one needs to ensure that it actually becomes an antidote to overcome an opposing non-virtuous state of mind, specifically the delusions. If you do not apply the practice in this way, you will find that there is not much transformation taking place in your mind. As the great Kadampa master advised: one needs to engage continuously in practising virtue and ensure that it serves as a means to subdue one's mind, by overcoming the delusions in one's mind. So that should be the main purpose of accumulating virtue.

In this explanation three particulars are being pointed out:

- The particular of time or duration for accumulating virtue—which is on a continual basis;
- The particular of an antidote—which is to overcome delusions in one's mind; and
- The particular of relying on the three supreme fields—which are the fields of qualities i.e. the objects of refuge; the fields of benefit i.e. one's parents; and the fields of misery i.e. the destitute, sick, disenfranchised.

One should strive to make offerings to these objects in the manner described, thus accumulating great virtue. You need to also understand that in relation to the three supreme fields the opposite is also true; that if you create negativity in relation to any of these objects then it will be a grave negativity. You need to be mindful when relating to the three supreme fields, so that you protect yourself from creating heavy negativities.

As you have noticed, I regularly emphasise the need to be kind to one's parents, particularly one's aging parents. So, you can see that this presentation is supporting me.

1.3.2.2.3.3.2. Creating virtue out of one's own power

This indicates that engaging in virtue should occur from one's own side. In other words, one needs to take the initiative to create virtue oneself and not rely on others to create virtue for you.

The root text and commentary both present the meaning for this heading, which is quite clear and easy to understand. However the emphasis is that we need to take the initiative—to try and put this into practice by being mindful in our daily life.

The verse reads:

82. *Having become proficient and faithful
I will continuously engage in the actions.
In all my actions I will not
Depend on anyone.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Having become proficient in what has to be adopted and what has to be abandoned, and in what one should engage in and what one should not, as well as having generated faith in virtue, I shall now continuously practise virtue.

I shall not depend on anybody in my actions of virtue in the sense that I will not order others to do them.

In relation to *having to become proficient in what has to be adopted and what has to be abandoned*, one needs to know the clear distinction between what is to be adopted and what is to be abandoned. Without a clear understanding, one will not be able to adopt certain necessary qualities and abandon certain detrimental faults. This would be a drawback to our spiritual progress. Although on the one hand one may be putting some effort into adopting virtues, on the other hand one could be failing to discard certain faults detrimental to our progress (e.g. negative behaviours and so forth). If one fails to recognise what the faults are from the very beginning, then it will be hard to take the initiative to overcome them. While adopting positive qualities ensures progress in one's Dharma practice, this can only happen when the opposing faults and negativities within oneself begin to decrease. When, by adopting qualities the faults naturally decrease, then that is a true mark of one's Dharma progress, and a sign that a real transformation is taking place.

Again, a clear distinction between what one should engage in (virtues), and the negativities one should avoid should be clearly understood. This, along with generating faith in virtue, becomes a proper way to engage in the practice of accumulating virtue. Generating faith in virtue specifically means having faith in the infallibility of virtue; that by engaging in virtue positive consequences are definitely experienced. In contrast, if one were to engage in non-virtue, then the infallibility of the consequences of an unwanted result, such as various types of sufferings, also occur. Basically the infallibility of karma is applied here. So, when one has faith and a strong conviction in the infallibility of virtue, then one will develop a natural, keen wish to generate virtue. One will actually be motivated to create virtue, because one has a strong conviction in the positive consequences, so one is inspired to continuously engage in virtue.

The essential points here are twofold: to become proficient, that is to gain a good, clear understanding of what is to be adopted and what is to be abandoned; and on top of that, generating strong faith in the very virtue that one wishes to engage in. When sound faith and conviction are developed, one will develop a strong, keen initiative to continuously practise virtue. The commentary states the resolve one needs to develop: *I shall now continuously practise virtue*. Again this is not a casual approach, but rather taking the personal responsibility and resolving to accumulate virtue at all times. These points are really pertinent guides for our practice. I find these verses very helpful for my mind. When you read these verses and pay attention to their meaning, not just to gain an intellectual understanding, but with the intention to implement them in one's practice, then they will be very helpful for your mind.

The commentary emphasises: *I shall not depend on anybody in my actions of virtue*. This implies that one will not order others to accumulate the virtue for oneself; rather, accumulating virtue is dependent on one's own resolve. This is similar to other sutra teachings where Buddha says that liberation is dependent entirely upon oneself.

That means attaining liberation is not dependent on someone else but entirely dependent on oneself.

1.3.2.2.3.3.3. *Virtues are progressively superior, therefore think about the purpose before the action*

In relation to the six perfections, the later practices are progressively superior than the earlier, which means the later practices are of greater virtue than the earlier ones. However when engaging in the practices, one needs to be mindful to adopt practices of greater purpose in accordance to the time and need to benefit other sentient beings. The verse reads:

83. *The perfections of giving and so forth
Increase them one after the other.
Do not abandon the big for the small,
Mainly think towards the purpose of others.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

The perfections of generosity and so forth up to the perfection of wisdom, are progressively developed and increased.

Do not give up the practices of generosity, morality and so forth that are smaller from the point of view of purpose and virtue, to the generosity and so forth that are bigger. Strive in the bigger.

This shows implicitly that if we cannot practice both together and have to choose, then we should abandon the smaller for the bigger.

Query: How does one posit small and big?

Answer: For example, if in this life, out of the purpose of self and the purpose of other, practising one affects the other to decline, then one should make the purpose of other the main practice.

In relation to the six perfections, Gyaltsab Je states that the practice of morality for example, would be of higher virtue than the practice of generosity. With this explanation, one would create far more virtue practising morality for one day, than practising generosity for many days or weeks.

Those who have done the *nyung nye* practice would have noticed the description of the merit for keeping the eight Mahayana precepts even for one day or 24 hours, is incredibly high.

The commentary explains: *Do not give up the practices of generosity, morality and so forth that are smaller from the point of view of purpose and virtue to the generosity and so forth that are bigger. Strive in the bigger.*

Practising morality in the sequence of the six perfections would generally be considered a greater virtue than generosity. However, when there is a greater purpose for practising generosity to benefit others, then one should not pass up this opportunity in favour of the practice of morality. To understand it in its proper context, if one were to practise morality with a strong self-interest, then if an opportunity arose to practice generosity with total dedication to the benefit for others, then the practice of generosity would be greater than the practice of morality which is contrived or stained with mere personal interest.

The commentary explains that *if we cannot practise both together and have to choose, then we should abandon the smaller for the bigger*. The emphasis is that one should abandon the smaller practice and adopt a bigger practice. The hypothetical query is *How does one posit small and big?*

The answer asks you to consider two choices: engaging in the practice merely for one's own purpose and concern for this life, and engaging in the practice for the purpose of others. If by practising one the other declines because they oppose each other, then one should make the purpose of others the main practice. The emphasis here is that if one engages in practices with the intention to benefit just oneself, such as benefit for this life, compared to a practice where the main focus is for the purpose of other beings, then the practice focusing on other beings is the greater practice. One needs to make the distinction between the two, and adopt the practice which is for the purpose of others. As other teachings have emphasised, when one fully dedicates a practice for the purpose of others, then one's own purpose will be fulfilled naturally.

What is being emphasised here is that one needs to ensure that the practice one does is really for the purpose of others. Otherwise, if it is done merely for one's own interest or short-term goal, it will not ultimately fulfil even one's own purpose. One needs to have a clear understanding to derive the main point here. We can see how skilful the advice is here in making the clear distinction between what is a great practice and what is a small practice. And of course, when there is a choice, we would naturally want to choose something which is of greater benefit.

We need to think about our own practice; we might be in the category of those who are choosing small practices instead of bigger ones. Practices that involve mere self-interest for this life's benefit, and practices where the sole intention is to benefit others, are mutually exclusive, and cannot be practised at the same time. If these two practices were presented to you, which one would you choose? As they cannot be practised together, which one would you choose? If one has a bodhisattva motivation one needs to choose the practice which is for the purpose of others. This is also in the motivation for tantric practices.

1.3.3. Training in the morality that accomplishes the welfare of sentient beings

This subdivision has three subcategories:

1.3.3.1. Diligence in the welfare of others

1.3.3.2. The action of gathering others without incurring a fault

1.3.3.3. Protecting sentient beings' minds and training in the action of not incurring fault

1.3.3.1. DILIGENCE IN THE WELFARE OF OTHERS

The two first lines of the next verse relate to this heading.

The verse reads:

*84ab. Having understood this, they abide always
Striving for the welfare of others.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary presents the meaning by beginning with a query:

Query: Bodhisattvas strive to always abide in working for others, on the basis of having understood what needs to be practised and what needs to be abandoned. But since they need to engage into a variety of actions to achieve the welfare of others, do they not receive faults?

This reflects a question raised previously in a Wednesday night teaching which asked whether bodhisattvas incur faults or not. This is exactly the same point.

The query is a reasonable doubt which comes when one witnesses a bodhisattva engage in various different kinds of actions. The question raised a few weeks ago by Vanessa was about the example of when a bodhisattva had to kill someone in order to save the other four hundred and ninety-nine people.

An answer is presented in the next two lines of the verse:

*84cd. Those with compassion have the long view
and allow them the forbidden*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Answer: The compassionate buddhas also see directly the phenomena hidden very far in the future. Out of this knowledge they permit the seven non-virtuous actions of body and speech, which they prohibited for hearers and self-liberators who work primarily for their own purpose, for bodhisattvas when necessary. As a result, bodhisattvas do not only not incur a fault, but for them it becomes a great accumulation when they engage in these actions.

Within the ten non-virtues, the first seven, i.e. the three of the physical and four of the speech, were completely forbidden for hearers and solitary realisers. Under no circumstances were practitioners of the Lower Vehicle permitted to do these actions. However, bodhisattvas are permitted to do these actions when it is deemed necessary for the benefit of other sentient beings. What will be presented next is a story where, if it were necessary to benefit a greater number of sentient beings, even engaging in an action of killing does not incur negativity, but in fact becomes a means to accumulate large amounts of merit.

As an example the commentary quotes from the *Sutra of Being Proficient in the Great Secret*, which reads:

From the *Sutra of Being Proficient in the Great Secret* it is taught that because the captain killed the evildoer, his time in cyclic existence was reduced by many eons. It is also like it was taught to the Brahmin's son Karma'i Jungwa.

This refers to the bodhisattvas who were permitted the seven of body and speech by those with great compassion, who see far ahead.

This story is from ancient times when merchants had to travel on ships for long distances. The earlier part of the story tells that a ship was carrying 500 traders and merchants with an evil person amongst them, referred to here as an evildoer who had the intention of taking the lives of the rest of the merchants as a way to gain the profits for himself. The captain of the ship, who happened to be a practising bodhisattva, understood the evildoer's intention. So out of great compassion, as a way to protect the evildoer, and out of great compassion for the rest of the merchants whose lives would be taken, the captain of the boat took upon himself the action of taking the life of the evildoer. This protected the evildoer himself from committing a negative act, which would result in him being reborn in the hell realms, as well as saving the lives of the rest of the merchants. It was said that instead of creating negative karma, the Captain's act became a means for him to accumulate a great amount of merit, to

lessen his time in samsara by many aeons. The benefit was to protect the four hundred and ninety-nine merchants from imminent death and protect the evildoer person from incurring negative karma.

One should note that while this is one example of where the seven non-virtues forbidden for practitioners of the Lesser Vehicle whose main practice is for self-liberation are permitted for practitioners of the Great Vehicle, who only have the intention to benefit other sentient beings. So whatever activity they engage in is solely for the benefit of other sentient beings; even acts such as killing—otherwise a great misdeed—are permitted and become a means to accumulate great virtue. However, bodhisattvas with the ability to engage in such negativity only with the intention to benefit other beings with understanding and clairvoyance, would only be high-level bodhisattvas, not lower-level bodhisattvas.

Another example is an account of the Brahmin's son Karma'i Jungwa. In this story the Brahmin's son had adopted the practice of abstaining completely from sexual intercourse. For 12 years he had practised chastity, but there was a young maiden whose life was endangered because of a condition which could be cured only by sexual intercourse. Apparently, with this condition if sexual intercourse was not done the lady would have died. So out of great compassion for this young maiden, he broke his vow of chastity to save her life.

So the example of misdeeds such as killing, forbidden for practitioners of lower vehicles, becomes a means for accumulating great merit when done with the sole intention to benefit other sentient beings. For a lower-vehicle practitioner, sexual activity would be a misdeed, but when engaged in by a bodhisattva with the intention to protect someone from imminent death, it becomes a means to accumulate great merit. These are particular examples from accounts in the past and there are likely other accounts of stealing and lying etc. done solely for the benefit of others, out of compassion.

These accounts are presented in answer to the query as examples of acts actually becoming a means for them to accumulate great amounts of merit, rather than incur negativity.

Gyalsab Je's commentary highlights that:

This refers to the bodhisattvas who were permitted the seven of body and speech by those with great compassion, who see far ahead.

It explains that permission to act on *the seven of body and speech* are only to bodhisattvas who are practising great compassion and who have farsightedness.

One needs to understand committing these acts in the proper context. Non-virtues are permitted to bodhisattvas with the ability to practice extensive benefit for other sentient beings, but beginner bodhisattvas who do not yet have the ability to engage in such extensive benefits for others would not be permitted to do them.

1.3.3.2. THE ACTION OF GATHERING OTHERS WITHOUT INCURRING A FAULT

This is divided into two subcategories.

1.3.3.2.1. Gathering with the mundane

1.3.3.2.2. Gathering with the Dharma

1.3.3.2.1. Gathering with the mundane

This in turn is subdivided into three:

1.3.3.2.1.1. The difference between offering food and not offering food

1.3.3.2.1.2. Do not harm the body for small actions

1.3.3.2.1.3. Explaining the time and necessity for offering the body

1.3.3.2.1.1. The difference between offering food and not offering food

The verse reads:

*85. Share with those fallen into the wrong direction,
With the protectorless and those abiding within austerities.
Eat only in a measured fashion and
Offer everything apart from the three robes.*

In response, Gyalsab Je's commentary reads:

Whilst using food, share with those fallen into the wrong direction, i.e. animals and hungry ghosts, with the protectorless sick, and with those that practice pure action and abide in austerities, if they are there as well.

As it is said, *It is appropriate for oneself to measure everything*, oneself should eat just enough according to the correct portion, without incurring faults in relation to food, and with the motivation for eating that is explained in the *Letter to a Friend*.

An ordained bodhisattva should offer everything apart from the three robes or *nam-jar, la-go* and *tang-go*. If one has more of the three robes then one should also offer these, but if one has only one set, then one should not offer one's robes. It becomes an obstacle to the practice of pure action.

The literal translation of *the distinction between when to offer food and not to offer* might relate more to sharing food with those falling into the wrong directions i.e. animals and hungry ghosts etc. In the normal practice of eating, a fully ordained monk separates some of their food, offers it to the objects of refuge, then a portion to the hungry ghost, and a portion to the animals, and dedicates it. In this way one actually divides the food to be consumed with the intention to offer it to others as well.

Having presented how to divide one's food with others such as animals and those who abide in austerities, in relation to oneself, the text quotes *Precious Garland*:

It is appropriate for oneself to measure everything,

The right measure of what one can consume should be likened to prescription medicine: if one takes too much, then rather than curing one's disease it could actually aggravate it and create harm. But if one does not take enough of the medicine, it will not help to cure the disease. Likewise, when consuming food, if one eats too much one can make one's body feel heavy and bring about a feeling of slothfulness and the onset of sleep, thus not being productive for one's practice. Whereas if one eats too little, and the body is not well nourished, it can become weak and one will not be able to engage in it properly.

Gyalsab Je's commentary further explains that:

...oneself should eat just enough according to the correct portion without incurring faults in relation to food,

Without incurring faults means ensuring that one does not incur misdeeds in relation to food, e.g. eating food just for the sake of vanity, of beautifying oneself (e.g. I might look beautiful if I eat this kind of food), or just for the sake of filling oneself up for the pleasure of feeling full with food etc. In accordance with the explanation from the *Letter to a Friend*, one should avoid such motivations when eating and consuming food, and eat the correct portion: not too much, not too little and for the purpose of sustaining one's body to practise the Dharma.

Gyaltshab Je's commentary provides more explanation in relation to knowing the distinction between what is to be given and what is not to be given:

An ordained bodhisattva should offer everything apart from the three robes or *nam-jar*, *da-go* and *tang-go*. [which are particular robes for the fully ordained] If one has more of the three robes then one should also offer these, but if one has only one set, [that means if one has like two or three sets then one could offer the extra set to others] however if one has only one set then one should not offer one's robes. It becomes an obstacle to the practice of pure action.

It becomes an obstacle to practice pure action or pure conduct would be in relation to e.g. an ordained monk who has these robes intact. If one gave away everything there would be a fault from a fully ordained monk's perspective, as they should not be separated from one particular robe, even for a day, as being separated from it incurs a fault. But in terms of maintaining oneself e.g. if one is too cold etc. then it would harm one's practice as one would not be able to continue to practise. So it is important to know the distinction between what to give and what portion, how much to give and when not to give. Of course, how to offer the food was also explained clearly in the *Letter to the King* or *Precious Garland* as well by Nagarjuna. So it would be good for you to familiarise yourselves with this explanation, and read other commentaries as well. It is not too obscure and hard to understand, but to get a better understanding it is good to refer to other commentaries as well.

As presented earlier, there were particular ways of offering the food, and the intention held when offering it. These you can also revise. You also need to be mindful of ensuring that you are free from misdeeds in relation to consuming food, because if one is not mindful, the very process of consuming and acquiring food to sustain oneself, one may incur misdeeds. One needs to be mindful of that as well.

We can see how the advice presented here is very practical. In terms of consuming food, how to consume it when sharing with others. When consuming by oneself: how to consume it; knowing the right portion; not having too much or too little as it can harm oneself. This advice is given like a parent would give their child; very detailed advice on how to conduct oneself properly. Here, this advice is given to us by Shantideva.

In summary, the presentation is about how to engage in normal daily activities such as eating and drinking, and use them to serve as a means to accumulate virtue, and not become a cause for non-virtue, and incurring misdeeds. This is the value of the advice that we need to take in.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་པོ་འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷོ་ལྷན་པ་ལ་འཇམ་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

9 September 2014

As usual, we can spend some time in meditation.

(pause for meditation)

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings I will strive to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings, and put them into practice well.

1.3.3.2.1. Gathering with the mundane (cont.)

1.3.3.2.1.2. Do not harm the body for small actions

The verse relating to this heading is:

86. *Do not harm for insignificant actions
This body that practises the supreme Dharma.
If one acts in this way, the wishes of sentient beings
Will be accomplished swiftly.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

One's body, which is the basis for practice of the holy Dharma that accomplishes extensive benefit for self and others, if it is guarded well, should not be harmed for a small benefit of others. Rather it should be guarded like a wound.

If one does this, then by way of completing the three higher trainings on the basis of the precious human rebirth, one will be able to quickly accomplish the wish of sentient beings.

From the *Four Hundred Stanzas*,

Although one of course views the body as enemy
One still protects it.
If one lives for a long time with discipline
Great merit will arise from it.

In this context, the precious human *body, which is the basis for the practice of the holy Dharma that accomplishes extensive benefit for self and others*, refers to a bodhisattva's body with all those conditions intact. However we can also relate this to the good conditions that we have now, such as having access to the Dharma teachings and so forth.

Here we are being advised that guarding the body means that we should not harm this precious human body, which accomplishes the ultimate wish of sentient beings, for the sake of small gains or benefits for others. The commentary uses the analogy of guarding a wound to illustrate how the body should be protected; just as one would *guard a wound* from further damage and harm, likewise we need to protect and guard our body at all times. This analogy was presented in earlier teachings and I also explained the meaning at that time.

As the commentary explains, if one protects one's body well, then because of having all the right conditions for one's practice *by way of completing the three higher trainings*

on the basis of this precious human rebirth, one will be able to quickly accomplish the wishes of sentient beings. When one fulfils one's ultimate goal of the practice of the three higher trainings, which is to achieve enlightenment, then one will naturally be able to fulfil the wish of other sentient beings as well.

In the first two lines of the *Four Hundred Stanzas* verse, *Although one of course views the body as enemy, One still protects it*, one refers to the one who sees reality, such as the noble bodhisattvas who understand ultimate truth. They see this contaminated body, which is the basis for external and internal harms and so much suffering, as an enemy. Even so, one still needs to protect this body.

The next two lines of the quote from the *Four Hundred Stanzas*, *If one lives for a long time with discipline Great merit will arise from it*, indicate that if one lives for a long time by protecting one's body with the discipline of observing morality, then one will accumulate great merit. Here, *great merit* refers to both the accumulation of wisdom as well as the accumulation of merit.

If I recall correctly, this verse is presented as a response to this doubt: if the body is to be seen as an enemy, then why would one want to protect it? You can also check the commentary on the explanation of this verse.

While the earlier explanations are quite clear it is good for us to reflect on their meaning and try to implement it in our practice.

1.3.3.2.1.3. Explaining the time and necessity for offering the body

When practising generosity with one's body one needs to know the appropriate time and necessity or purpose. This explanation follows the earlier indication that one shouldn't harm one's body, such as giving one's arms or legs to others, for a very minor purpose. Now the text explains the right time and purpose for offering one's body.

87. *Do not offer this body with
Impure thoughts of compassion.
Offer it in any way to accomplish
Great purpose here and yonder.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Although from the very beginning bodhisattvas have offered everything including their body, to sentient beings from the depth of their mind.

However, if one feels despondent with the prospect of being asked for the flesh of one's body and the like, and generates feelings of regret afterwards and so forth, then until the pure mind of compassion that cherishes others more than oneself has been developed, one should not give this body.

Although from the very beginning refers to the time when a trainee first becomes a bodhisattva by entering the path of accumulation. Although bodhisattvas on the preliminary stages of the path of accumulation and preparation have developed the courageous mind of offering everything for the sake of sentient beings, which would include their body and so forth, they are nevertheless still on the preliminary stages of the practices. Because there is a probability that bodhisattvas at the initial levels of practice could feel *despondent* at the prospect of having others ask for their flesh or body parts

and so forth, the practice of offering one's body parts is not advised. Furthermore, it is possible that one will later feel regret, rather than rejoice in giving one's body.

Until the pure mind of compassion which cherishes others more than oneself has been fully developed refers to the development of ultimate bodhicitta, which is within the mental continuum of those who have reached the first of the ten grounds and above. Thus, what is being explained here is that until bodhicitta has been fully developed *one should not give this body*.

The text backs this up with reference to the *Compendium of Trainings*.

This is extensively explained in the *Compendium of Trainings*, where the untimely offering of one's body is described as an action of *mara*.

As explained here, giving one's body before one has fully developed bodhicitta is considered an action influenced by *mara* or demons, which indicates that it is not a completely pure practice.

Next the commentary explains the appropriate time, which is:

One should offer it when one is really free from the obstacles to generosity, such as miserliness and so forth, and the offering becomes a faultless completion of great accumulation, and most certainly when it becomes a cause to achieve a great purpose in this life and beyond.

Thus, the appropriate time to offer this body is when the bodhisattva develops ultimate bodhicitta from the first ground onwards, when they are completely *free from the obstacles to generosity* and so forth. The necessity or purpose of offering one's body is *when it becomes a cause to achieve a great purpose in this and future lives*.

This encompasses the two main points of the appropriate time, and the necessity or purpose.

1.3.3.2.2. *Gathering with the Dharma*

The previous section referred to gathering others as disciples and so forth, through being generous with material aid and so forth. Now comes the explanation on gathering others through offering the Dharma.

This section is subdivided into three:

1.3.3.2.2.1. The physical behaviour of an audience that one should not teach

1.3.3.2.2.2. Analysing the distinction of the motivation of a vessel

1.3.3.2.2.3. Do not lead those with the wish for the great to the small

1.3.3.2.2.1. **The physical behaviour of an audience that one should not teach**

The physical behaviour of an audience that one should not teach refers to the inappropriate physical gestures of those who are not suitable to receive the Dharma teachings.

So as the verse reflects here:

88. *Do not teach the Dharma to the disrespectful.
Not to those who, while healthy, wear
headbands,
Umbrellas, sticks, carry weapons,
Or cover their heads.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

One should not explain the Dharma to those that do not have respect for the Dharma and the teacher, or to those whose behaviour is unsuitable, such as wearing headbands when not sick, carrying umbrellas, sticks, weapons or covering their heads with cloth and so forth.

The first part of the commentary is that *one should not explain the Dharma to those who don't show respect for the Dharma and the teacher*. This refers to not respecting the qualities of the Dharma. Because the Dharma has such highly esteemed qualities, it would be inappropriate to present the profound and sacred Dharma to someone who does not respect it. Those who do not have respect for the Dharma are by default not suitable vessels to receive the Dharma. Furthermore, teaching the Dharma to those who do not respect the teacher or the Dharma would cause them to incur the negativity of disrespecting the Dharma. In this way, rather than bestowing benefit it becomes the cause for them to experience harm from the negative consequences. So, the first part of the explanation, *one should not explain the Dharma to those that do not have respect for the Dharma and the teacher*, refers to those whose minds are not pure enough to receive the Dharma.

The second part of the explanation refers to those whose physical behaviours are unsuitable. They might have a pure intention to receive the Dharma, respecting both the Dharma and the teacher, but it would be inappropriate to present the Dharma to them because of their inappropriate behaviour. The text lists some examples.

Unsuitable behaviours include *wearing headbands when not sick*. This implies that while it is permitted to wear a headband because one is not well, wearing a headband for no particular reason would be a sign of disrespect. Likewise, *carrying umbrellas*, or *sticks*, or *weapons*, or *covering their heads with cloth and so forth* are examples of disrespectful conduct when listening to a Dharma teaching.

For example, as monks we are not allowed to put our *zen* (upper robe) over our heads while listening to the teachings. During His Holiness' teachings, when there is no roof and it is quite hot and sunny, he gives the Sangha permission by saying, 'Put your *zens* on top of your head to protect yourself from the hot sun'. The usual practice however is not to cover the head, out of respect for the teachings.

1.3.3.2.2.2. **Analysing the distinction of the motivation of a vessel**

This refers to further checking the intention or motivation of those who are coming to listen to a teaching. The relevant verse is:

89. *To those holding the lesser to be great and
profound,
To women without their spouse,
Hold equal respect for the lesser and supreme
Dharma
And practise it all.*

Here, Gyaltsab Je explains:

One does not teach the profound and extensive Dharma to those who are not a vessel due to a lesser

motivation and also not to women alone, without their spouse.

It is taught that if one discriminates between the superior Mahayana and the lesser Hinayana on the basis of being wholesome or bad, suitable or unsuitable, becoming the method for enlightenment or not and so forth, is abandoning the Dharma.

One should therefore have equal respect for all paths and practice them all.

This explanation mentions that one should not *teach the profound and extensive Dharma to those who are not a suitable vessel, due to a lesser motivation*. Another way of explaining this is that it would not be suitable to teach the profound and extensive Dharma to those who have the motivation of the Lesser Vehicle. Because of their intention or motivation they are not ready to hear the profound and extensive Dharma, so one should not teach it to them.

With respect to *women alone without their spouse* we need to understand the specific context of the advice, which applies to those who are presenting the Dharma. For example, it is said to be very dangerous for their vows for a fully ordained monk to teach a woman while they are alone; others might also form negative views about the propriety of that. Likewise, if the teacher is a nun then it would be inappropriate if they were to teach a man alone, without their spouse being present. We need to understand that while one gender is mentioned here it refers equally to the other gender. It is important to understand these points in their proper context.

Furthermore, as mentioned here, one will incur the fault of abandoning the Dharma if one discriminates between the superior Mahayana and the Lesser Vehicle, on the basis that one is wholesome and the other is not wholesome; that one is suitable and the other is not; that one has the method to become enlightened and the other does not. It is said that the karma of abandoning the Dharma is a heavy negative karma.

Therefore, as Gyaltsab Je emphasises, one should have equal respect for all paths and practise them all. So Gyaltsab Rinpoche is definitely sharing some really profound advice with us.

1.3.3.2.3. Do not lead those with the wish for the great to the small

This heading indicates that it would be totally inappropriate to suggest to those who have a genuine, keen interest in practising the Great Mahayana Vehicle, would be better practising the Lesser Vehicle.

The verse that relates this is:

90. *Do not bring those that are a vessel
For the extensive Dharma to the lesser Dharma.
Do not cause them to give up the training,
Do not mislead with sutra and mantra.*

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

Do not lead someone with Mahayana lineage that is a suitable vessel for the extensive Dharma to a lesser Dharma, such as the hearer's path. It is taught that this becomes a downfall.

One should *not lead someone with a Mahayana lineage*, meaning someone who has the actual capacity of mind to practise the Mahayana, and who is *a suitable vessel*, from

the extensive Dharma to the lesser Dharma, such as the *hearer's path*. As such that would be a *downfall*.

The next part of the commentary reads:

Also do not cause someone that is a suitable vessel for the morality of restraint to give up their practice of morality while they are suitable vessels, through misleading them with sutra and mantra, saying that they will become pure merely by reading sutras and mantras.

In this way do not mislead others with sutra and mantra.

The point being emphasised here is that while someone may be a suitable vessel to study and practice morality, telling them that to become liberated it will be sufficient for them to purify their mind by merely reading sutras and mantras would be very misleading advice.

This reminds me of the comments made by someone I met from Singapore who was one of the co-founders of an institute in the Kagyu tradition. He commented to me that while the advice to recite, for example, 100,000 Vajrasattva mantras, or do 100,000 prostrations without any further explanation and saying that it will lead one to reach enlightenment, may have some significant purpose, he was not really sure about the actual benefit. I felt that his comments on how doing extensive practices without the basis of a proper understanding could be misleading were valid.

The emphasis here is that misleading suitable vessels who are capable of understanding the teachings by saying that they will become pure just by reading sutras and reciting mantras, is inappropriate. If they are not suitable vessels and lack the capacity and intelligence to understand the teachings and fully grasp their meaning, then it would be skilful to present practices for them to do at their level. However, if trainees who have the intelligence and capacity and are thus suitable vessels were to be given tasks of merely reciting mantras or reading sutras, then that would be misleading them.

Those who have that approach may be presenting it in that way because they don't have much knowledge of the teachings themselves, and cannot present them thoroughly. Saying, 'You don't need to study much; you don't need to understand much. That's OK, just do these mantras and recite these practices and everything will be fine' would be the act of misleading others.

1.3.3.3. PROTECTING SENTIENT BEING'S MINDS BY TRAINING IN THE ACTION OF NOT INCURRING FAULTS

This is definitely a very important point for bodhisattvas. Because they are such noble beings, engaging in inappropriate actions could cause others to generate a negative mind, and if they were to cause others to be critical of the bodhisattva, then that would be a cause for them to create really heavy negative karma. Therefore bodhisattvas have a great responsibility to engage in appropriate conduct and behaviour to protect the minds of other beings from the faults of criticism and so forth. This is an important point for us also to keep in mind.

This heading has two sections

1.3.3.3.1. Extensive explanation

1.3.3.3.2. Summary

1.3.3.3.1. Extensive explanation

The extensive explanation is subdivided into three:

1.3.3.3.1.1. Abandoning faulty behaviour that causes others to lose faith

1.3.3.3.1.2. How to act when showing the path

1.3.3.3.1.3. How to do the action of sleeping

1.3.3.3.1.1. Abandoning faulty behaviour that causes others to lose faith

Gyaltsab Je begins his commentary on this section of the text with these words:

Ordained bodhisattvas must apply restraint, which is explained in the general basket of teachings on morality, unless there is an exemption that permits them otherwise. As it will cause a loss of faith in the minds of others, even lay bodhisattvas must apply this restraint.

As mentioned here, there are certain forms of conduct that are specifically prescribed for the ordained. There are some circumstances where there are exemptions, but otherwise ordained bodhisattvas have to abide by all of those vows, because not doing so can cause others to lose faith. For the same reason, even lay bodhisattvas have to abide by certain forms of conduct. This was also explained in *Precious Garland*, which we have previously studied.

Then comes the verse relating to this:

91. *If one leaves behind tooth woods and spittle
Then they should be covered.
To urinate and the like, on water and ground
Used by all is inferior.*

92ab. *Do not eat with a full mouth noisily,
Or with an open mouth*

Then the commentary continues:

If one leaves behind the wood used to clean the teeth and leaves one's spittle on the ground, then these should be covered up with earth and the like. One should also not pollute commonly used water or land with faeces, urine, and mucus as this is frowned upon by the gods and others.

Traditionally in India they use wood from a nim tree as a substitute for toothbrushes. They chew on a piece of the wood to make it like a bristle, which they use to clean their teeth. Having cleaned the teeth in such a way, the advice is that one should not just throw the piece of wood down on the ground for it to be seen by others; likewise one should not just spit onto the ground. Both should be covered up. This of course doesn't really apply in Australia where there is a good tradition of putting the garbage into the garbage can, and you don't see people spitting on the street at all. This is an excellent system.

In general however, one needs to be careful not to cause others to feel disgust, or a bit uncomfortable, when they see behaviour such as spitting out food after one has eaten it. That would be considered as very disgusting. At the moment someone sees that, and thinks it is disgusting, then they become critical of the person who has done that. So if a bodhisattva were to engage in such behaviour, it would cause disgust in others, and if, out of that disgust, they are critical of the bodhisattva, then that will be the cause to create the negative karma of being critical of bodhisattvas. Therefore the advice is that the

bodhisattva always needs to engage in conduct and behaviour that protects the minds of others.

Likewise, *one should also not pollute commonly used water or land with faeces, urine and mucus as this is frowned upon by the gods and others*. This is not only a cause of disgust, but is also a cause of harm for others.

Furthermore:

Do not eat with a full mouth, making noises like chag-chag and so forth while eating, or eat with an open mouth.

Again, these explanations are for monks with vows. When eating one should not eat with one's mouth open, or make sounds such as indicated here, or have too much food in one's mouth, or eat noisily, or with an open mouth. This sort of behaviour will disgust others and is inappropriate.

The next six lines of verse are:

92cd. *Do not sit with the legs stretched out,
Do not rub your hands together.*

93. *When riding or sitting on a mattress or place,
Do not be together with another woman.
Abandon anything that causes worldly beings
to lose faith,
That observed and that to enquire about.*

The explanation in the commentary is quite clear.

While sitting on a bed or the like, do not sit with both legs stretched out on the ground. One does not rub both hands together at the same time, but there is no fault if one rubs them sequentially.

One does not ride together with someone else's women on a horse and so forth, or sit together with them on the same seat or place. Lay bodhisattvas also should not sit together with another woman who is not a relative.

In short, one should abandon any inappropriate behaviour that causes the worldly to lose faith, either by observing directly what is done or not done, or through informing oneself by enquiring what is appropriate and inappropriate according to that place and time.

In some cultures and traditions it is considered disrespectful to point your feet out towards others. It is also seemingly disrespectful to rub your hands in front of others, although *there is no fault if one rubs them sequentially*.

One does not ride together with someone else's women on a horse and so forth, or sit together with them on the same seat or place. Lay bodhisattvas also should not sit together with another woman who is not a relative. These are quite clear instructions.

In summary, as explained by Gyaltsab Je, *one should abandon inappropriate behaviour that causes worldly beings to lose faith*. One does this *either by observing directly what is done or not done, or through informing oneself by enquiring what is appropriate and inappropriate according to that place and time*. This means that if you are in a place where you don't know the traditions, and you don't know what is appropriate and what is inappropriate, you should ask about the proper ways to act.

This reminds me that prior to coming to Australia Pam, one of the teachers who taught English to the young

monks at Kopan, gave me some instructions on things such as how to use cutlery and so forth. She said that in the West if you are invited to a place, there are different types of cutlery for different parts of the meal. Indeed, whenever we go to a new place, it is appropriate to know the traditions and customs of that place so that we act appropriately.

1.3.3.3.1.2. How to act while showing the path

This refers to acting in the appropriate way when you are showing the path to others. This is very pertinent and practical advice for our daily lives. The relevant verses read:

94. *Do not point with a finger,
But respectfully, with your
Full right hand,
Show the way.*
95. *Do not move your hand excessively
But only just enough, with some words.
Snap your fingers and so forth,
Otherwise it becomes unrestrained.*

The explanation in Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

When indicating the way for somebody, do not do so with individual fingers from the left hand because this is regarded as insulting. One respectfully points in the right direction with the full right hand outstretched.

One does not wave unnecessarily with one's hand, as this would become excitement and be unconscientious. Instead wave with your hand a little bit, say something and snap your fingers. Otherwise, if one is too loud, then it becomes unrestrained.

This explanation is also quite relevant to our tradition here, where raising your fingers inappropriately is a very bad, even dangerous thing!

When pointing out the path to others in India, it is considered rude and disrespectful to the other when you point with one finger, or just a few fingers. The proper way is to stretch out your full palm and show the way with your right hand. That is the gesture to adopt.

The next part of the explanation is that *one does not wave unnecessarily with one's hand, as this would become excitement and be unconscientious*. Instead wave your hand slightly. If one has to call someone, instead of shouting out loud or waving one's hand wildly, one should slightly snap one's finger, which will gain their attention. *Otherwise one is too loud and becomes unrestrained*.

1.3.3.3.1.3. How to do the action of sleeping

This explanation is precisely in accordance with the presentation in the Lam Rim teachings, but we can leave this for the next session. When done in a proper way sleeping is referred to as the yoga of sleeping, so even the act of sleeping can become a practice.

*Transcript prepared by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

16 September 2014

As usual we can spend some time in the regular meditation practice.

[Meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teaching, and put it into practice well.

1.3.3.3. PROTECTING SENTIENT BEING'S MINDS BY TRAINING IN THE ACTION OF NOT INCURRING FAULTS

1.3.3.3.1. Extensive explanation (cont.)

1.3.3.3.1.3. How to engage in the action of sleeping

The verse relating to this heading is:

96. *Sleep like the Protector, when he passed
Into parinirvana, in the desired direction.
Make sure from the start, with introspection
about
The thought of getting up quickly.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je gives this explanation of the meaning of the verse:

For sleeping, assume the position of the protector when he passed into parinirvana. Lie down on your right side, with your head in the desired direction, putting your left leg on your right leg, and your head into your right hand, and then sleep well covered with the *cho-go*.

At the time of sleep put your mind onto a virtuous object with mindfulness and introspection and adopt the recognition of brightness. Adopt from the start the mind that thinks, 'I shall rise quickly', and sleep with the thought, 'Tomorrow I shall practise the Dharma with the newly regenerated body'."

As the commentary explains, when we sleep our body should be in a position that is similar to that of protector, Lord Buddha Shakyamuni, in the aspect of passing into nirvana.

Depending on the direction that you wish to face (such as holy images on your altar), you lie down on your right side with your head in that direction and placed on top of your right hand. This lying position is also referred to as the sleeping lion position. The Lam Rim teachings give detailed explanations on the significance of adopting this sleeping posture, which emulates the fearlessness of a sleeping lion.

The commentary continues with the description, *putting your left leg on your right leg*, which is quite clear. Then, having positioned oneself in this manner, one sleeps covered with the *cho-go*, which is the upper yellow robe of the Sangha.

The main significance of placing oneself in this position, which is the position the Buddha adopted when he showed the aspect of passing into nirvana, is to remember death and impermanence. Of course, in actuality the Buddha is

immortal, however he showed the aspect of passing into nirvana for the purpose of teaching death and impermanence to his disciples. So sleeping in this position is a reminder for us of death and impermanence. That is what we need to understand here. As *Praise to Buddha Shakyamuni by Way of the Twelve Deeds*, states:

To exhort the lazy to be quicker,
At the pure site of Kushinagar
You destroyed your deathless, vajra-like body
Entering nirvana—Homage to this deed.

This shows that entering this aspect of passing into nirvana was a way to exhort his disciples to enter into the Dharma. That is why the Buddha's sleeping position is described in this text.

When the commentary states *At the time of sleep put your mind onto a virtuous object with mindfulness and introspection*, it is advising us to recall the practice we have done during the day, as a way of not forgetting the virtuous object.

Next the commentary states that before going to sleep one makes that determination, '*I shall rise quickly*'. Due to that determination one will be able to wake up at whatever time one has set. Indeed, when we develop the strong determination to wake up at a certain time in the morning, then we really don't require any alarm and will naturally wake up at that time. Following that determination to wake up early, one sets the motivation for the next day: 'After I wake up I will continue to engage in the practice of Dharma as a way to benefit sentient beings'. So in this way, prior to going to sleep one sets one's motivation for the next day.

If one goes to sleep with a virtuous mind and love and compassion in one's heart, and determines to wake up with an attitude of love and compassion, then it is most likely that one will wake up in that state of mind. Waking in a virtuous frame of mind would really be a wonderful way to start the next day. So sleeping, in itself, can be a virtuous activity. That is why, among the fifty-two mental factors, sleep is specifically included in the category of the changeable mental factors. If one has a virtuous mind prior to going to sleep then the whole period of sleep will be virtuous. Whereas if one has a negative mind prior going to sleep then that period will be a non-virtuous or negative state, and if the mind is neutral then sleep will be in a neutral state. Thus it is possible to turn sleep into a virtuous deed.

This is very practical advice. By remembering love and compassion before going to bed, if one sleeps for six hours for example, then during those six hours one will have gained the benefit of leaving the imprint of love and compassion on one's mind. It is quite unlikely that we will find the time during the day to spend six hours meditating just on love and compassion, so if we go to sleep with love and compassion on our mind, then that will ensure that our sleep becomes a really virtuous deed.

We can see how this advice ensures that even normal activities become a means to accumulate merit and virtue, and further develop our mind of love and compassion. As Shantideva advised earlier in the text, with the proper motivation we can turn normal activities such as eating and drinking into virtuous deeds. We can see that this advice is very pertinent for our practice in daily life. Other teachings give further explanations on the different states of sleep.

As indicated in the commentary, prior to going to sleep one should develop the intention: *Tomorrow I shall practise the Dharma with a newly regenerated body*. This indicates that one engages in the act of sleeping as a way to rejuvenate the

body. When one goes to sleep with that intention it ensures that the sleep itself will be free from attachment. As indicated earlier, one of the offering prayers with the practice of eating is, 'I consume this food not merely for myself, but in order to sustain my body for the practice of Dharma'. Here sleep is being presented in the same way—with the proper motivation it actually becomes an aid to the practice of Dharma.

Thus we can see how, as indicated in the teachings, whatever actions the bodhisattva engages in are only a means to accumulate virtue. From the preliminary motivation, every aspect of normal activity is turned into the practice of Dharma as a means to accumulate virtue. This can inspire us to try to follow this example with our own motivations and intentions in daily life.

1.3.3.3.2. Summary

The verse relating to this is:

97. *Out of the immeasurable actions
Of bodhisattvas, that are taught,
Until you can definitely practise them,
Take up the trainings of the mind.*

Here Shantideva sums up the practices that have been presented under the heading, Protecting Sentient Being's Minds by Training in the Action of Not Incurring Faults.

Gyalsab Je's commentary reads:

If one is not able to practise all the immeasurable divisions of the bodhisattva actions of generosity and so forth that are taught in the sutras and their commentaries, then one should first only engage in the practices of training one's mind that were explained earlier, until one is definitely able to carry out all the infinite bodhisattva actions.

As explained here, the practices of generosity and the rest of the perfections as well as the practices of the four means of gathering disciples have *immeasurable divisions*, meaning that there are incredibly extensive ways of engaging in these practices. Thus they have immeasurable divisions, and these immeasurable divisions are extensively explained in the sutras and the commentaries.

The Tibetan word *jong* can either refer to training in virtue or purification. As I have explained previously, when the word *jong* is used in context of virtue then it means to train one's mind to increase virtue. When it is used in the context of negativity then it means training one's mind to purify negativities by applying the antidotes so as not to experience the negative results of negativity. In this context it refers to training one's mind to generate bodhicitta. The earlier chapters presented very detailed and particular advice on how to train one's mind to generate bodhicitta. Therefore as the commentary explains, *one should first only engage in the practices of training one's mind, until one is definitely able to carry out all the infinite bodhisattva's actions*. Once one has trained one's mind well and generated bodhicitta, and that has been developed thoroughly and firmly, then one will be able to carry out all the extensive bodhisattva practices prescribed in the teachings.

Again, this is very pertinent advice about how to first train one's mind to generate bodhicitta, and then gradually engage in the practices. If one were to attempt to engage in all the extensive practices explained in the teachings, before having established a thorough basis, then one would not be able to follow any particular practice through. This is very relevant to our state of mind now as well.

So this summarising verse is very significant. If the teachings explain the many different aspects of the practices and so forth, they may not seem personally relevant if they are not subsumed into succinct practical advice that one can apply now. The most practical approach is to distil it down to something that is manageable for beginners so that they can use it as a basis to further develop their mind, and then later be able to engage in further practices.

1.4. The method for perfecting the trainings

The actual training of how to actually perfect the practices that were described earlier has two subdivisions:

1.4.1. The extended explanation

1.4.2. Concluding summary

1.4.1. The extended explanation

This is subdivided into four

1.4.1.1. The methods for purifying the training

1.4.1.2. The basis for training

1.4.1.3. The purpose of the trainings

1.4.1.4. The basis for engaging into listening and contemplating

1.4.1.1. THE METHODS FOR PURIFYING THE TRAINING

If one were to transgress some of the commitments, then this section provides advice on the method for purifying these downfalls.

In explaining the meaning of the verse Gyalsab Je raises this doubt:

Query: What should one do if one incurs faults despite practising the trainings?

To explain the meaning of the verse, he first says:

If one has received a root downfall, then, as it is explained in the *Compendium of Trainings*,

Recall the bodhisattva Akasgarbha in front and engage in purification.

If one receives the small or medium contaminations, the forty-six faults and other faults explained in the *Compendium of Trainings* then,

98. *Recite the Sutra of the Three Heaps,
Three times in the morning and in the evening.
Pacify the remainders of downfalls
In dependence on conquerors and bodhisattvas.*

So this verse is explaining how to purify the faults of the small and medium contaminations in one's training.

Those of you who recite the *Six Session Yoga* will recall after listing the eighteen root downfalls of the bodhisattva vows, there is a list of the four conditions that are necessary to incur a breach of those vows. What are they?

Student: Not regarding these as detrimental; not forsaking the wish to repeat such behaviour; delighting and taking pleasure in them; having no shame or consideration.

What are the two that do not need any of these conditions in order to breach that commitment?

Student: Giving up bodhicitta and holding distorted views

So, if all four conditions are intact then any breach of the vows will be a **great contamination**. Here, the small or medium contaminations refers to breaches of the vows that do not have all four conditions intact. Thus *if one receives the small or medium contamination* refers to breaching any of the bodhisattva vows, but without all four conditions intact. If one has the mind of not regarding the transgression as detrimental, then, regardless of whether some of the other

conditions are intact or not, it becomes a **medium contamination**, which is, in fact, quite a severe contamination. A **small contamination** is when either of the other three conditions are present, except for not regarding them as detrimental.

As I have mentioned previously the *forty-six faults* refers to breaches or downfalls of the bodhisattva vows. If there are either small or medium contaminations of those forty-six faults, or other faults as explained in the *Compendium of Trainings*, then one needs to engage in the purification as presented in the verse.

Gyaltsab Je presents the meaning of the verse:

...then one should confess three times in the day and three times at night, accumulate merits and recite the method to increase virtue and prevent it from being exhausted, i.e. the *Sutra of the Three Heaps*.

By taking refuge and in dependence on bodhicitta one pacifies the remaining downfalls with the four powers.

As the commentary explains, the way to purify these faults is by confessing them *three times in the day and three times at night*, and also engage in the means *to accumulate merit*. So this practice encompasses both confession and the means of accumulating merit. The way *to increase virtue and prevent it from being exhausted* is by engaging in the practice such as *The Sutra of the Three Heaps*, which is basically the *Thirty-Five Buddhas' Confession Prayer*.

As explained previously, the three heaps encompasses the heap of negativities, the heap of dedication and heap of rejoicing. By engaging in these practices one purifies both small and medium contaminations. This means that if one has not breached a commitment to the degree that it is a root downfall, then one can purify it through this practice. So this is a practice to purify minor breaches of the vows.

If one has actually broken the vows and incurred a root downfall, then one will have to apply the method of actually taking the vows again. Here, the text explains that *by taking refuge and in dependence on bodhicitta, one pacifies the remaining downfalls with the four powers*.

The first power, the power of reliance, is explicitly indicated here with taking refuge and generating bodhicitta. Then one applies the remaining three powers of the practice. This is the supreme method for purifying negativities. The four opponent powers were mentioned in detail in chapter two, so you can refer back to that. The main point presented here is that one needs to rely on these methods to purify the faults one has incurred through the breaches of one's commitments

1.4.1.2. BASIS FOR TRAINING

Here there are two verses, the first of which is:

99. *Whether from the point of view of self or other.
Whatever you do, on whatever occasion,
As taught, make it with effort
An occasion for the trainings.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

Regardless of whether it is for the purpose of self or others, whatever action of body, speech and mind one engages in, and during whatever occasion, the Conqueror taught all of these as opportunities for practice.

One should always make an effort not to receive a fault of the trainings while using these different occasions for one's practice.

As the commentary explains, the Buddha taught that whatever the occasion may be, regardless of whether it is to accomplish one's own purpose or the purpose of others, and whatever actions one engages in through one's three doors of body, speech and mind, they are to be treated as an opportunity for practice. Using these different occasions for practice is really the basis of all the trainings one engages in.

In stating *one should always make effort to not to incur a fault of the trainings*, the commentary is saying that in order to make the training pure, one should ensure that one does not incur any faults when engaging in that training. Thus one should always make an effort not to incur any fault while engaging in the trainings. More specifically, the time when one engages in practice is the time when one needs to ensure that one does not incur a fault.

The second verse in relation to this heading reads:

100. *There is nothing the children of
The conquerors do not practise.
For those proficient who abide in this manner
There is nothing that does not become
meritorious.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

There is no object of knowledge the bodhisattva children of the conquerors do not use for practice. For those that are proficient in training in all objects, there is no action that does not become meritorious. Therefore, one should never allow the generation of faithlessness.

As explained here, *there is no object of knowledge the bodhisattva children of the conquerors do not use for practice*, which is a point that was emphasised earlier. For the purpose of benefiting others, bodhisattvas may engage in various forms of practice, or acquire skills such as the five major sciences of arts and crafts, medicine, grammar, logic, and philosophy as a means to benefit other sentient beings. To some, these may appear as mundane practices, making it very easy to be critical of a bodhisattva who is engaged in these. As you will recall, Nagarjuna presented all of these five sciences, emphasising that they are needed for the purpose of helping others. The point being raised here is that for those *that are proficient in training in all objects, there is no action that does not become meritorious. Therefore, one should never allow the generation of faithlessness*, which causes one to lose faith in a bodhisattva.

Gyaltsab Je is emphasising the need to protect one's mind from losing faith in a bodhisattva's deeds, in the belief that they are engaging in some sort of mundane activity. We need to take this as a personal instruction. As it is hard for us to know who is actually a bodhisattva it is possible that we might generate a critical mind if we see someone engaging in some mundane activity, and thus incur the heavy negativity of criticising a bodhisattva. The author of the commentary, Gyaltsab Je, emphasises this point in many of his other teachings. We need to be very careful about being critical of others, particularly of those who are engaging in various activities to benefit other beings.

1.4.1.3. THE PURPOSE OF THE TRAININGS

Here there are two sub-headings

1.4.1.3.1. Dedicating the virtue for the welfare of all sentient beings

1.4.1.3.2. Never give up the Mahayana spiritual friend and the training

1.4.1.3.1. *Dedicating the virtue for the welfare of all sentient beings*

The verse relating to this reads:

101. *Regardless of whether it is directly or indirectly
Do nothing but work for the purpose of sentient
beings.
Solely for the purpose of sentient beings
I dedicate all to enlightenment.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

Whether it is directly or indirectly for the welfare of sentient beings, always act for their welfare, and in no other way. Dedicate all virtues towards enlightenment, solely for the purpose of sentient beings.

As explained in the commentary, whether engaged directly or indirectly, bodhisattvas are always engaged in acts of benefiting other sentient beings. Whatever activities they engage in are for the benefit of other sentient beings, and they do not engage in any activity other than that. That summarises the activities of bodhisattvas—they are always for the benefit of other sentient beings. They then dedicate the virtues of those deeds towards enlightenment, solely for the purpose of sentient beings.

The very beginning of generating the altruistic mind of bodhicitta itself is for the benefit of sentient beings; the middle of engaging in the practices such as the six perfections is for the benefit of sentient beings; and then the ultimate goal of achieving enlightenment is also for the benefit of sentient beings. Therefore whatever activities bodhisattvas engage in are dedicated towards achieving ultimate enlightenment for the purpose of benefiting sentient beings.

Reflecting upon the bodhisattvas' deeds as being solely for the benefit of sentient beings—at the beginning, in the middle and at the end, the very achievement of enlightenment—inspires us to practise similarly. Setting the right motivation at the very beginning of the practice, engaging in the practice itself, and dedicating it at the end, making sure that it is intact, is a fruitful and purposeful practice. It is good to recall the example of the bodhisattvas' deeds to ensure that our actions are meaningful and purposeful.

1.4.1.3.2. *Never give up the Mahayana spiritual friend and the training*

The first section encompasses the qualities of a virtuous spiritual friend. The verse relating to this is:

102. *The constant virtuous friend is one who
Is proficient in the meaning of the Mahayana,
And never gives up even at the cost of their life,
The supreme bodhisattva disciplines.*

Here the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* is presenting the qualities of the Mahayana guru or spiritual friend.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

The constant Mahayana virtuous friend is one who is an expert in all of the great Mahayana teachings as well as those who abide in the Mahayana vows, and the supreme Mahayana austerities and do not give them up even at the cost of their life.

The main point is that the qualities of the Mahayana virtuous friend are that they are skilled in all of the Mahayana treatises, as well as abiding in the Mahayana vows, the supreme Mahayana austerities, and do not give

them up at the cost of their life. Such are the qualities of the Mahayana spiritual friend, presented here in brief.

1.4.1.4. THE BASIS FOR ENGAGING IN LISTENING AND CONTEMPLATING

There are two subdivisions:

1.4.1.4.1. Training in dependence on sutras

1.4.1.4.2. Training in dependence on the commentaries

1.4.1.4.1. *Training in dependence on sutras*

Here there are two lines of verse

103ab. *Emulate the biography of Shrisambava
In the training of relying on the guru.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

From the life story of Shrisambava in the *Array of Stalks Sutra*,

The way of relying on the teacher: Child of good family, the bodhisattvas who are perfectly guided by virtuous friends will not fall into the lower realms.

One should train according to how it is explained extensively in this sutra.

This explains that the sutras confirm that *bodhisattvas who are perfectly guided by virtuous friends will not fall into the lower realms*.

This indicates that those who rely on a virtuous friend without breaking their commitments will not fall into the lower realms. So the advice here is one should train as explained extensively in the sutras.

Of course, there are more extensive explanations on the ten different ways of relying on a spiritual friend in the Lam Rim teachings.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་པའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

23 September 2014

As usual we can spend some time in our meditation practice. [meditation]

You can generate the motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching, and put it into practise well.

1.4.1.4. THE BASIS FOR ENGAGING IN LISTENING AND CONTEMPLATING

Having presented the qualities of a Mahayana spiritual friend, the text then presents the basis on which to engage in perfecting the trainings in two subdivisions:

1.4.1.4.1. Training in dependence on sutras

1.4.1.4.2. Training in dependence on the commentaries

1.4.1.4.1. Training in dependence on sutras

This section is covered two verses:

103. *Emulate the biography of Shrisambava
In the training of relying on the guru
Understanding this and other advice by the
buddhas,
Through reading the sutras.*

104. *The sutras generate understanding of the
trainings
Therefore read the sutras.
First, read the
Sutra of the Essence of Space.*

We covered the meaning of the first two lines last week. In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning of the remaining six lines thus:

Furthermore, the points of advice from this treatise and other advice taught by the Buddha should be understood by reading the Mahayana sutras.

One should read the sutras because in them the trainings are explained extensively. Specifically, those that have generated the engaging vows should read first of all the *Sutra of the Superior Essence of Space*.

When the commentary states *the points of advice from this treatise*, it is referring to the *biography of Shrisambava*, which gives advice on how to rely on a spiritual friend. We covered that last week. Relying on *other advices taught by the Buddha*, refers to the advice given in the sutras on the bodhisattva trainings, which *should be understood by reading the Mahayana sutras*. So one needs to read and familiarise oneself with the Mahayana sutras in order to understand the advice on how to train in the bodhisattva practices.

The commentary then explains, *one should read the sutras because in them the trainings are explained extensively*. This is also very clear so I don't think it needs any further clarification.

As further explained, *specifically, those that have generated the engaging vows should read first of all the Sutra of the Superior Essence of Space*, which has extensive explanations of the bodhisattva vows. This sutra identifies the eighteen root downfalls of the bodhisattva vows, and how transgressions of those vows are incurred. It also explains very extensively how to purify each of those transgressions. As indicated in the commentary, one should refer to these explanations from the very beginning so as to avoid transgressing these vows, and also to learn how to purify any transgressions of those vows if they were to incur.

Those of us who have taken the bodhisattva vows need to take this as personal advice. It is not sufficient to take the vows and then just sit back and relax. Rather, one needs to endeavour to really understand the eighteen root downfalls, and how to purify them if one were to transgress them. It is very important that we really familiarise ourselves with the bodhisattva vows and the advice on how to avoid any transgressions. While you may not have access to a translation of the *Sutra of the Superior Essence of Space*, you do have access to the many texts and commentaries that explain the bodhisattva vows, what the transgressions are and so forth. So it is important to become familiar with them. Also, as presented earlier, if the transgression is a small or medium contamination, then one purifies it by reciting the *Thirty-five Buddhas Confession Prayer* with the four powers intact.

1.4.1.4.2. Training in dependence on the commentaries

There are two verses relating to this heading, the first of which reads:

105. *Since that which one practises continuously
Is shown even more extensively
In the Compendium of Trainings, one must
Read it repeatedly as well.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

Those that train and practise should also study repeatedly the *Compendium of Trainings*, where it explains extensively in thirty-two aspects how to give, protect, purify and increase one's body, possessions, and roots of virtue.

When the commentary explains *those that train and practice should also study repeatedly the Compendium of Trainings* it is referring to another text by Shantideva, in which he explains very extensively the ways and means of engaging in the bodhisattva trainings. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has presented teachings on the *Compendium of Trainings* on a number of occasions. If you have access to any translations of it in English, it would be good to read them.

The *Compendium of Trainings* has an extensive explanation of the *thirty-two aspects of how to give, protect, purify and increase one's body, possessions and roots of virtue*.

One engages in the practice of *giving* one's **body** at the appropriate time, and as well as engaging in mental training on giving one's body for the benefit of others. One also has to engage in the practice of *protecting* it, as we need our body for achieving higher purposes. Thus we need to understand the proper contexts for both giving and protecting one's body. We need to *purify* our

body to ensure our generosity is not soiled with negativities, or by any physical defects that would hinder our practice. Then we need to *increase* our virtue, by accumulating the appropriate causes to continuously obtain a body that is endowed with the eight ripened qualities in future lifetimes.

Just as there are the four practices of giving, protecting, purifying and increasing with respect to one's body, the same practices are applied to giving one's **possessions**.

The practice of being *generous* with one's **virtue** refers, for example, to dedicating one's virtue to the welfare of others. *Protecting* virtue refers to protecting whatever virtue one has accumulated from being destroyed by anger. *Purifying* means ensuring that the virtue is not soiled or stained with self-interest for the sake of this life, or even a future life. If one were to accumulate virtue just for the mere intention of protecting oneself from the lower realms, then that would be accumulating virtue out of self-interest. Rejoicing in one's virtues is the way to *increase* one's virtue.

With reference to the thirty-two aspects of giving, protecting, purifying, and increasing, there are four aspects of giving the body, four aspects of giving possessions and four aspects of giving virtue, making up twelve aspects of the perfection of generosity. We can also apply these four aspects to the remaining perfections of morality, patience, joyous effort and so forth. That makes twenty aspects, making thirty-two aspects in all.

The four aspects of giving are specifically explained in *Liberation in the Palm of your Hand*, and you can relate that to all the perfections. As you have easy access to the English translation it would be good for you to take the initiative to read it for yourselves. Next time I might quiz you on whether you've checked it out or not.

This also applies to any explanations in texts that have been translated in English; you need to take the initiative to actually refer to those texts and read their presentation. That is how you will benefit from my reference to them. If I mention a text and you think "OK, it must have been mentioned there" and just leave it at that, then you will not derive the benefit of understanding the topic in greater detail.

As a personal instruction, it is good to try to recall these four aspects of giving, protecting, purifying and increasing whenever we engage in any practice. For example, whenever we accumulate virtue or purify negative karma, it is good to relate that practice to these four aspects.

The next verse in this section of the text reads:

*106. Or, read at least the Compendium of Sutras
Which summarises, and
Put also effort into reading the second one
Composed by Nagarjuna.*

As Gyalsab Je explains in his commentary:

If one is not able to do this, then one should read at least the *Compendium of Sutras*, composed by the master himself, and the second one composed by Nagarjuna, which summarise the sutras.

If one is not able to do this, refers to not being able to relate to the extensive explanations presented in the *Compendium of Trainings*. That being the case, *one should at*

least read the Compendium of Sutras, which is also composed by the master himself, indicating Shantideva. *And the second one composed by Nagarjuna*, refers to another commentary of same name, *Compendium of Sutras*, which was composed by Nagarjuna, in which the meaning of the sutras is summarised.

Basically the advice is to refer to these texts on the bodhisattva vows: the *Compendium of Trainings*, or if that is too extensive, the *Compendium of Sutras*, or the text with the same name that was composed by Nagarjuna.

1.4.2. Concluding summary

The verse relating to this reads:

*107. That which has not been prohibited
Should be practised.
To protect the minds of worldly beings,
Practise correctly upon seeing the trainings.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary reads:

One should abandon that which has been prohibited in the sutras and commentaries and one should practise that which has not been prohibited. The purpose is to protect the minds of the worldly beings and prevent the generation of faithlessness. To this end one should, upon recognising the trainings of a bodhisattva, practise them and train in them.

This is a very clear presentation of the distinction between what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded. Put succinctly, one should abandon that which is prohibited or forbidden in the sutras and commentaries.

If one is uncertain as to what one should abandon, then refer to the sutras and the commentaries that explain what is forbidden, and which therefore should be abandoned. If the text states 'This act is forbidden', then the practice is to avoid engaging in that forbidden action. The teachings also present the practices that one should engage in, or adopt. This is how, by relying on the sutras and the commentaries, one makes the distinction between what is to be abandoned, and what is to be adopted.

Yet all too often we seem to adopt what has been forbidden in the sutras, and abandon what has not been forbidden! Out of confusion we ordinary beings actually adopt the opposite of what the sutras and commentaries advise. Here we are being advised to change our approach, and to gain a clear understanding of what is to be abandoned and what is to be adopted.

Furthermore, as explained here in the commentary, *the purpose of engaging in this practice is to protect the minds of the worldly beings as a way to prevent the generation of faithlessness* in ordinary or worldly beings, which means to protect their mind from losing faith in the Dharma.

2. CONCLUDING SUMMARY SHOWING THAT ONE HAS TO PRACTISE THE MEANING AND NOT JUST THE WORDS

This is subdivided into two:

- 2.1. Guard always with mindfulness and introspection
- 2.2. The actual meaning

2.1. Guard always with mindfulness and introspection

The relevant verse reads:

*108. Investigate repeatedly during
Actions of body and mind.*

*Merely this, in brief,
Is the definition of introspection.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Investigate repeatedly, while engaging in the actions of body, speech and mind, with the wisdom that can distinguish between having transgressed the training or not and neutral actions, and whether or not one has fallen under the control of the afflictions.

This alone is in brief the definition of not degenerating introspection.

This is very pertinent advice, which, of course, I also emphasise regularly in my teachings. Its relevance for our daily life and practice cannot be underestimated. As presented here very clearly, we need to *investigate our actions of body, speech and mind repeatedly* at the time of those actions. In other words, we need to maintain constant mindfulness throughout all our actions.

Check whether any physical action is virtuous, non-virtuous or neutral, and whether it is in line with the trainings or not. Likewise, check whether your speech is virtuous, non-virtuous or neutral and whether one is transgressing the trainings. Do the same with the mind. We need to conduct a constant dialogue with our mind, always being vigilant of our actions of body, speech and mind.

This, in brief, is the definition of not degenerating introspection, which means maintaining our introspection, and not allowing it to degenerate. This act of investigating our body, speech and mind throughout all activities is called introspection, and we should not allow it to degenerate.

In summary, the main point being presented here is that we need to be constantly vigilant about our state of mind in all our actions and activities. As presented earlier, one way to check whether one's physical, verbal or mental actions are virtuous or not is by acquainting oneself with the explanations in the teachings. If we are engaging in something that is forbidden then it is a non-virtuous action; if we are engaging in something that is not forbidden, or something that is encouraged, then that is a virtuous action; if actions are not specified in the teachings as needing to be adopted or to be discarded, then they are considered to be neutral.

2.2. The actual meaning

The relevant verse is:

109. *They all have to be practised with the body.
What is accomplished by only talking about it?
Is the sick person cured
Merely by studying medicine?*

The first part of the explanation in the commentary reads:

Having understood these points and the need for them to be practised, one needs to put them into practise accordingly with this body. Without practice, merely by reciting many lists, what purpose will one achieve? None whatsoever! For example, is a person cured merely by studying the instructions on the medicine? No, they are not.

As explained in the commentary, *they all have to be practised with the body*, means that these points actually have to be put into practice. It is not enough to merely

know about them—one should actually engage in practising them.

As further explained in the commentary, if *one merely recites many lists* or quotes from many texts and so forth, but without practising what they advise, then *what purpose will one achieve?* This is a rhetorical question, and the answer '*none whatsoever*' indicates that there is no purpose at all.

In response to the lines from the root verse, *What is accomplished by only talking about it? Is the sick person cured merely by studying medicine?* the commentary explains that when a patient is prescribed a medication, they have to actually take the medication in order to be cured. It is not sufficient for them to merely read the instructions on how to take the medicine—that won't help to cure them.

Gyaltsab Rinpoche goes on to say:

In brief, although there are the three types of morality, it is important to initially train in the morality of restraint, either by actually adopting the rules of individual liberation or those which are in common with them ...

As presented here, *there are the three types of morality*, and *it is important to initially train in the morality of restraint*, which means not committing misdeeds. One practises the morality of restraint *by adopting the rules of individual liberation*, or those which are *in common with those vows*. As I have indicated many times in previous teachings, morality serves as the basis of all other practices. Without sound morality, one will not be able to accomplish any other more advanced practices. So the self-liberation vows are the very foundation on which to take and observe the bodhisattva vows, as well as the tantric vows. Refraining from the ten non-virtuous deeds is common to all three sets of vows. As I have indicated previously, protecting oneself from the seven misdeeds of body and speech is the basis for refraining from many other misdeeds. In other words, when you apply the practice of refraining from the seven non-virtuous deeds of body and speech, you will naturally refrain from many other misdeeds. Thus the morality of restraint serves as the basis for other practices.

Next the commentary presents the reason why it is essential to practise the morality of restraint:

...for if one protects them, then the others will also be protected, if one does not protect them then the others will also not be protected. If the morality of restraint degenerates, then all vows degenerate, as explained in the *Compendium*.

This directly relates to our own practice, and so it is a personal instruction.

As Gyaltsab Je further mentions:

If one thinks that the vows of individual liberation belong to the hearers and practises the trainings of bodhisattvas apart from them, then that is a great fault. One should train in the morality of restraint that abandons the natural non-virtues and is the basis for the morality of accumulating virtue and benefiting sentient beings. One should rely repeatedly on restraint to the opposing conditions of morality, and practise it in conjunction with the six perfections.

This is all quite clear. The morality of restraint should be practised in conjunction with the six perfections.

Moreover, each of the perfections can be practised in conjunction with the rest of the six perfections. Thus there is the generosity of generosity, the generosity of ethics, the generosity which is practised in conjunction with patience, joyous effort and so forth. Of course I have presented this many, many times previously but I'm not sure if you have retained it. I'm not implying that you don't have the understanding, rather I say this as a way to refresh your memory, to remind you that you do have the knowledge of these topics presented in earlier teachings.

Summarising Verse

Gyalsab Je ends his commentary on this particular chapter with this summarising verse, in which he very succinctly mentions the essence of this whole practice.

The person taking the essence
Of practising the sequence of the path of the three
kinds of beings,
Depends on protecting mindfulness and
introspection.
Hence they should always endeavour to be proficient
in these.

As mentioned very clearly, taking *the essence of practising the sequence of the path of the three kinds of beings*—which are the practices in conjunction with the small scope; practices in conjunction with the medium scope and the great scope—*depends upon protecting mindfulness and introspection* at all times. Therefore one should endeavour to completely understand, be proficient, and have full knowledge of introspection and mindfulness.

II THE NAME OF THE CHAPTER

The final outline that concludes the chapter is a presentation of the name of the chapter. The root text reads:

This is the fifth chapter of Introduction to the Action of Bodhisattvas called Protecting Introspection.

Gyalsab Je's commentary concludes:

This is the commentary on the fifth chapter called Protecting Introspection from the commentary on the *Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas*, called *The Entrance for the Children of the Conquerors*.

That concludes the fifth chapter.

To explain the context of the next chapter we need to return to the subdivisions introduced in chapter 1.¹

2. The actual explanation of the stages of the path

2.2. The method for taking the essence

2.2.2. Explaining the individual meanings²

2.2.2.2. THE WAY OF TRAINING IN THE PRACTICES OF GENERATING THE TWO MINDS

2.2.2.2.2. The Way of Training in the Actions, the Perfections

2.2.2.2.2.1. The way of meditating on conscientiousness, the limb preventing the degeneration of the training in the mind of enlightenment³

2.2.2.2.2.2. Explaining the way of training in morality, by relating it to introspection and mindfulness, the methods for keeping virtuous dharmas pure⁴

2.2.2.2.2.3. Explaining the way of training in the remaining four perfections:

This is subdivided into four:

2.2.2.2.2.3.1. The way of training in patience

2.2.2.2.2.3.2. The way of training in enthusiasm

2.2.2.2.2.3.3. The way of training in the common and uncommon mental stabilisations that are contained in calm abiding

2.2.2.2.2.3.4. Training in the nature of superior insight—wisdom

CHAPTER 6: THE WAY OF TRAINING IN PATIENCE⁵

There are two parts to the chapter.

I. Explaining the text of the chapter

II. The name of the chapter

I. EXPLAINING THE TEXT OF THE CHAPTER

There are two main subdivisions of the explanation:

1. Meditating on patience earnestly by eliminating the obstacles to establishment and abiding

2. Applying to the mind the methods to establish patience

1. Meditating on patience earnestly by eliminating the obstacles to establishment and abiding

This has two subdivisions:

1.1. The faults of anger

1.2. The benefits of patience

1.1. The faults of anger

This is subdivided into three:

1.1.1. The unobservable faults

1.1.2. The observable faults

1.1.3. A summary of the faults

1.1.1. The unobservable faults

Here there are two subdivisions:

1.1.1.1. Anger destroys one's roots of virtue

1.1.1.2. Discerning the faults of anger and the benefits of patience and making an effort to meditate on patience.

1.1.1.1. ANGER DESTROYS ONE'S ROOTS OF VIRTUE.

In our next sessions we can go through the first verse under this heading.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© Tara Institute

¹ See the teaching of 26 March 2013.

² Introduced in the teaching of 2 July 2013.

³ Covered in chapter 4, introduced on 25 February 2014.

⁴ Covered in chapter 5, introduced on 20 May 2014.

⁵ The numbering recommences with the new chapter.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེད་མཁའ་མཁའ་ལྷན་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

30 September 2014

As usual we can spend some time in meditation

[meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings, and put them into practice well.

The sixth chapter, which we are about to start, explains the antidote to anger, beginning with:

1.1. The faults of anger

1.1.1. The unobservable faults

1.1.1.1. ANGER DESTROYS ONE'S ROOTS OF VIRTUE

Generally, understanding the relevance of practising patience is said to be developed when one contemplates the disadvantages of anger. So the more we contemplate the disadvantages of anger, the more we will see the need to practise patience. I have presented the definition of anger previously, so I need not go into it again as you can refer to that earlier explanation.¹ It may also be presented later in the chapter.

Anger destroys the roots of virtue is to be understood as explaining that basically, anger obstructs that which brings about a pleasant result, which is virtue.

The first verse of the chapter reads:

1. *All the wholesome actions
Of generosity and offerings to the tathagatas,
Built up over a thousand eons,
Are destroyed by anger.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads as follows:

Since anger is the ultimate obstacle to the generation and abiding of virtuous dharmas in one's continuum, one should initially meditate on the faults of anger, and then consequently strive to abandon anger.

One instance of anger at a bodhisattva destroys from the root all the virtues arising from generosity accumulated over one hundred and one thousand eons, as well as all the wholesome actions of having made offerings to the Three Jewels such as the tathagatas, wholesome actions of meditating and morality.

As presented here, *anger is the ultimate obstacle to the generation and abiding of virtuous dharmas in one's continuum*. This is a significant point. The ultimate obstacle for the initial generation of virtue is anger, which means that when anger arises it obstructs the ability to actually generate virtue. Moreover, if one has already accumulated some virtue, then anger will prevent that virtue from abiding and remaining in our mental continuum. So anger is really the main obstacle to both accumulating and retaining virtue. We need to regard these significant points as a personal instruction.

Indeed, no-one is happy when they are angry. The more anger someone has in their mind, the less peace they will experience. So the more we reflect on the disadvantages of anger, the more likely it is that we will be able to prevent anger from taking root in our mind. In the event that we do become angry, then reflecting on the disadvantages of anger will help to reduce the intensity of that anger. So the advice presented here is really great personal advice for us.

The commentary then explains that *one should initially meditate on the faults of anger, and strive to abandon anger*. This means contemplating again and again the faults of anger. From our own experience we know that from the moment anger arises in our mind we feel unhappy and unsettled. We really need to reflect on these experiences and understand how anger actually affects us.

As further explained in the commentary, *one instance of anger at a bodhisattva destroys all virtues*. It is explained in other teachings that this relates mainly to an intense form of anger. Thus, even an instant of such intense anger *will destroy all the virtues arising from generosity accumulated over one hundred and one thousand eons, as well as the wholesome actions of having made offerings to the Three Jewels, such as tathagatas*. This means that whatever virtues one has accumulated from wholesome actions of offerings to the Three Jewels, or from taking refuge in the Three Jewels and so forth, as well as the *wholesome actions of meditating and practising morality*, is destroyed in a moment of intense anger. Thus the virtues that arise from these three main actions of positive deeds such as making offerings, meditating and morality, will be destroyed in an instant of intense anger. When the commentary refers to destroying virtue from its *root*, it is to be understood that this does not mean that anger completely destroys the actual root of virtue itself. Rather, it significantly postpones the pleasant results of virtue, which will be experienced much later in the future. This is explained in other teachings.

Then Gyaltsab Je goes on to say:

Not only this, but in a quote used by the Sarvastivadin², and which is cited in the *Compendium of Trainings*, it says that if a fully ordained monk humiliates a companion in the pure trainings, then he has destroyed the merit equalling the merit of being reborn as a thousandfold wheel-turning king for as many times as the particles one covers, down to the golden wheel, with one's body when prostrating. This merit is accumulated when one makes a prostration to a stupa that contains the hair or nails of the Buddha.

As explained in the commentary, the merits that one accumulates from prostrations is *to be reborn as a thousandfold wheel-turning king for as many times as the particles one covers, down to the golden wheel, with one's body when prostrating*. This is a description of the depth and breadth, from the surface down, of the particles that are covered when one prostrates. As explained in the treatises, the golden wheel marks the end of the earth. Of course, that is something that cannot be seen or proven scientifically.

But then again, have there not been cases in recent times showing that not being seen, even with scientific means, doesn't necessarily mean that there is nothing there? We can take the recent example of the disappearance of the Malaysian Airlines plane. Despite all the searching by so many countries they were not able to find the plane or debris anywhere. But not being able to find it doesn't mean that it

¹ See, for example the teaching of 27 February 2007.

² Those That Assert That All Exists—a school of Buddhism.

doesn't exist. Despite all the modern instruments it has not yet been found, so it seems that scientists are not able to find everything that exists.

In any case, the main point here is that the merit one obtains from doing prostrations is that one will create the cause to be reborn as a thousandfold wheel-turning king—a universal monarch—as many times as the particles that one's body covers when prostrating. However this merit can be destroyed when one humiliates, criticises or becomes angry with *a companion in the pure training*. A companion in pure training doesn't necessarily have to be a bodhisattva, so becoming angry with pure practitioners can also destroy one's accumulated virtues.

What we can derive here as a personal instruction is that even though we put an effort into accumulating virtues with practices such as prostrations and meditating, that merit can be destroyed in a moment of anger. There are those who have commented that while they can adopt a seemingly calm and composed mind during meditation, the moment they go out into the world again they soon become upset and angry once more. That is the point being addressed here: we need to be very mindful and careful to ensure that we don't destroy the merit from our positive deeds by becoming angry.

At this point we can also recall the great benefits of dedication. As explained in the teachings, if, after we have accumulated a certain amount of virtue, we immediately dedicate it to the ultimate goal of enlightenment, then that will protect one's virtues from being destroyed by anger. The analogy that is presented to illustrate this is that when a drop of water falls into an ocean it merges with that ocean, and we cannot say that it has evaporated until the whole ocean has evaporated. Similarly, when one dedicates one's virtues to the ultimate goal of enlightenment for the benefit of other sentient beings, then that merit will not be exhausted. It is also explained that one can partake of the benefits of that virtue. The more we experience the positive virtues, the more we will continue to experience their positive benefits. I have explained this in detail previously. So dedicating one's virtues is also another means of protection.

Also, as presented previously, one of the most powerful antidotes for anger is, of course, meditating on emptiness. The realisation of emptiness is the ultimate antidote that protects one from anger.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

It is taught that the anger that destroys the virtue of one hundred or one thousand eons has to be directed at a bodhisattva, which is also taught in the *Introduction to the Middle Way*. The statement in the beginning of the chapter on the four resting places in the *Great Commentary on the Vinaya*, says that anger destroys one's vows, clearly refers to the fact that strong anger destroys one's roots of virtue.

This is quite clear. The commentary then states:

Further, since it is also stated in the *Blaze of Reasoning* that wrong views and harmful intent destroy one's roots of virtue, one should strive, among other things, to contain one's anger.

Blaze of Reasoning, composed by Bhavaviveka, states that it is not only anger that destroys one's root of virtue, but wrong views can do the same. Holding onto wrong views can also destroy one's roots of virtue. This is explained very clearly in that treatise.

The main point here is that one should strive to contain or control one's anger for these reasons. Of course more detailed explanations about the faults of anger and benefits of patience and so forth can be found in the Lam Rim teachings. So you can also refer to those explanations.

1.1.1.2. DISCERNING THE FAULTS OF ANGER AND THE BENEFITS OF PATIENCE, MAKE AN EFFORT TO MEDITATE ON PATIENCE

As presented here, the supreme means to overcome anger is to discern the faults of anger and contemplate the benefits of patience.

The sequence of this presentation is really very practical because without seeing its faults there will be no initiative to overcome anger. Furthermore, if one does not see the benefit of practising patience, then there will be no impetus to develop patience. So discerning the faults of anger and meditating on patience are crucial.

The verse relating to this outline is:

2. *There is no negativity like hatred,
There is no austerity like patience,
Therefore meditate on patience
In earnest in various ways!*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

There is no negativity like anger for obstructing the generation of the path and destroying virtue, and there is no austerity like patience for destroying the painful heat of the afflictions. Therefore meditate on patience in earnest in a variety of ways and methods!

This presentation is similar to that in the Lam Rim. In saying, *There is no negativity like anger for obstructing the generation of the path and destroying virtue*, the commentary is indicating that anger has two fundamental disadvantages.

The first is that it will hinder the ripening of the positive consequences of virtue. We all want to experience the positive consequences of the virtue that we have accumulated, and anger prevents the actualisation of those positive consequence.

The second is that the moment anger arises, it generates the causes to experience negative ripened consequences, such as being reborn in the hell realm, or one of the other unfortunate realms. Just as we want to experience happiness, we don't want to experience any kind of negative consequences. However, the moment anger arises it establishes the causes for unwanted experiences.

When we contemplate these two disadvantages then we can begin to get a sense of the gravity of the consequences of anger. Of course, there are many different kinds of negativities, but there is no greater negativity than hatred or anger.

Further, as explained in the commentary, *there is no austerity like patience for destroying the painful heat of the afflictions*. Here the misery of the afflictions is likened to the physical pain of experiencing extreme heat. This analogy illustrates the extent of the mental misery and anguish that one experiences from the afflictions.

This misery is overcome by the practice of patience, and as the commentary states, there is no austerity like patience. This is a very significant point. As you will recall, patience is classified into the patience of willingly enduring difficulties and hardships, and the patience of not retaliating when harm is inflicted by others. Hardships can arise from external problems and difficulties, and more particularly

from one's practices. So willingly enduring and accepting hardships and harm is indeed a great practice of austerity.

Therefore, as the commentary states, *meditate on patience* as a prelude to all the different methods of applying patience that will be presented later on in this chapter using logical reasons and so forth. So having contemplated these points one must strive to meditate in earnest to practise patience. *Earnest in a variety of ways and methods* includes the different classifications of patience mentioned earlier, as well as the various techniques and reasons and so forth.

1.1.2. The observable faults

Having considered the unobservable faults of anger, we now turn to the observable faults of anger. These are faults which we can immediately relate to, as we can see them in our life right now.

Observable faults are subdivided into two:

1.1.2.1. Anger takes away the opportunity for physical and mental wellbeing

1.1.2.2. It turns away friends and so forth

We have all experienced the effects of intense anger on our physical health and mental wellbeing, and we also know how anger turns away friends and so forth.

1.1.2.1. ANGER TAKES AWAY THE OPPORTUNITY FOR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING

Basically this heading is stating that anger robs us of opportunity for either physical or mental wellbeing. The verse relating to this outline reads:

3. *If one holds the painful mind of hatred
Then one's mind will not experience peace.
One will not attain joy or bliss,
Sleep will be elusive and there will be no stability.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

Since it generates intense suffering, if one holds the pain-like mind of anger, one cannot experience the joy of having pacified mental suffering. One will also not attain mental joy or physical bliss, sleep will be elusive and the stability of a mind abiding in its natural state will be non-existent.

Pain-like mind of anger indicates that while anger does not produce actual physical suffering, the mental anguish generated by anger is equated to intense physical suffering. So, *if one holds the pain-like mind of anger one cannot experience the joy of having pacified mental suffering*. Because of the anguish of anger, one cannot experience the joy of having overcome mental suffering.

As indicated earlier, anger robs us of any sense of joy or happiness, meaning that we will not have the opportunity to have a mind that has pacified mental suffering. This means that when we experience mental anguish and suffering there is a lack of joy and happiness in our mind. As a consequence, *one will also not attain mental joy or physical bliss*. The point here is that because of the lack of mental happiness, one will not experience any physical wellbeing as well, and thus *sleep* and so forth *will be elusive*.

Furthermore, *the stability of the mind abiding in its natural state will be non-existent*.

1.1.2.2. IT TURNS AWAY FRIENDS AND SO FORTH

This heading refers to the fact that intense anger turns away friends and so forth, and is covered in the next one and a half verses.

4. *Even those who became dependent on
The offerings of wealth and honour
Will rise up and kill
The malevolent lord.*
- 5ab. *Friends will get disgusted,
Even those gathered with generosity will leave.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of these verses thus:

Even those that have become dependent on the extended offerings of wealth and honour will rise up and kill the malevolent lord. Anger will also exasperate friends and cause them to be disgusted. It will also disrupt the affection of those who were gathered with generosity. Therefore one should abandon anger.

The commentary explains that even *those dependent on the extended offerings of wealth and honour will rise up and kill a lord* who is infested with hatred or anger. Those who are dependent on a lord or master who provides them with all their basic needs will, in the event that the master or lord harbours ill-will and anger, rise up and kill him. The kindness of the lord towards his subjects in some cases could be similar to that of parents who meet all the needs of their children, who are completely dependent on their parents to feed and clothe them. Even though the subjects have similarly depended on and received benefits from their lord, it is possible that they will rise up and kill him if he treats them with a negative mind of anger.

Even these days we see so much destruction caused through anger, even between very close relations. There are those who kill their employer, and in the worst case, we even see children killing their own parents and parents taking the life of their own child, or a wife killing her husband, or a husband killing his wife and so forth. We can see so many destructive behaviours that are all initiated out of anger.

As explained in the commentary, *anger will also exasperate friends and cause them to be disgusted*. If a subject can kill their own lord or master out of anger, there is no need to mention that friends and so forth will be exasperated and disgusted by anger. This point is definitely relevant. We can see so many situations where it only takes a frown, or some unpleasant remark to separate good friends. We can become really disgusted with others out of anger. How often do we hear remarks such as, 'Oh, I will never go out with them again'? Inappropriate gestures expressed with anger, such as foul remarks, a frowning face and so forth can definitely destroy relationships.

The main point is that anger turns away friends, relatives or partners and so forth. We can definitely relate to this significant point, and we need to be really mindful of it. One can also understand that if anger disrupts relationships of all kinds, then the opposite of anger, which is patience, will bring one closer to others, and lead to more harmonious relationships. So this contrast between anger and patience needs to be understood.

Furthermore, *anger will also disrupt the affection of those gathered with generosity*. Some may have gathered friends or subjects and so forth through being generous. While on one hand being generous brings people closer to you, on the other hand anger will destroy that relationship.

Thus the conclusion is that having contemplated these obvious disadvantages and faults of anger *one should abandon anger*. The way to contemplate this point is to reflect upon how anger can lead to forgetting the kindness of others, and

actually turn them against us. Anger can also create a distance between otherwise close friends or companions. This is how one needs to contemplate again and again the many great faults of anger.

1.1.3. A summary of the faults

The next four lines of verse summarise the faults of anger.

- 5cd. *In short, there is nobody
That abides in happiness through anger.*
- 6ab. *The enemy that is anger creates suffering
In the here and the thereafter.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

In short, due to anger there is no abiding in happiness. The enemy of anger is the supreme cause for the shortcomings explained earlier, such as suffering in the present and later.

As the commentary explains, *due to anger there is no abiding in happiness*, which relates to the very pertinent point that when anger is present in the mind there is no opportunity for the mind to abide in happiness and peace. So it is anger that causes the lack of a sense of joy and happiness in the mind. His Holiness the Dalai Lama also stresses this point and mentions it often in his teachings. He says that you can't find anyone who says that they are happy because they are angry! Anger gives no opportunity for any sense of joy or happiness in one's mind. That, in brief, is the main disadvantage of anger.

The commentary concludes, *therefore, the enemy of anger is the supreme cause for the shortcomings explained earlier, such as suffering in the present and later*, i.e. future lives.

1.2. The benefits of patience

I have, of course, presented this topic many times in the past. The relevant lines of verse read:

- 6cd. *Those who destroyed anger by focusing,
Will be happy here and thereafter.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Should a person, after having contemplated well the shortcomings of anger, focus their mind and destroy anger, then this will be the cause for their very happiness in this life and future lives.

As clearly explained in the commentary, when one has seen and fully acknowledged the faults of anger through contemplating and meditating, and taken the initiative to cultivate patience, then that *act of destroying anger will be the cause for happiness* to be experienced *in this life* right now, as well as *in future lives*.

This point was also explained by Lama Tsong Khapa. When the cause of the mental anguish that arises from anger has been removed, then what remains is happiness. What obstructs happiness is mental anguish and once that unhappiness has been removed, we find happiness. So, as Lama Tsong Khapa points out, when one takes the initiative to destroy anger, one will experience continuous happiness in this life. The happiness we experience now in this life will, as explained here, also be a cause for further happiness, as it will be a cause to obtain the high status of being reborn as a human or in the god realms, and ultimately to become a cause for definite goodness.

When one obtains such high status, it will be with perfect conditions, e.g. a human body with all the perfect conditions intact. That too causes happiness in future lives. Then the commentary continues:

Therefore one should strive in abandoning anger. If one does not abandon anger, then there are very great shortcomings, as explained in the *Sutra of the Great Play of Manjushri*.

On one hand one should contemplate the great advantages of abandoning anger, and on the other hand one should contemplate the great disadvantages of not abandoning anger. Even though it is not specified in the outline, what we can also understand here is that there can also be unobserved future benefits of practising patience, as well as the observable practical benefits we will experience in this life, where we will abide continuously in joy and happiness. So we can extract this further meaning from this section of the text.

2. BRINGING TO MIND THE METHOD TO ESTABLISH PATIENCE

This has two sub-divisions:

- 2.1. Eliminating the cause of anger
- 2.2. Meditating on the benefits of patience

2.1. Eliminating the cause of anger

Here there are four sub-headings:

- 2.1.1. The nature of the cause, including the shortcomings
- 2.1.2. Advice to strive in the method to oppose anger
- 2.1.3. The actual method to oppose anger
- 2.1.4. Striving in abandoning anger after having analysed the cause for anger in detail

We can conclude here for this evening.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

7 October 2014

As usual, we will spend some time in our meditation practice. [meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings on these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings, and put them into practice well.

2.1. Eliminating the cause for anger

2.1.1. The nature of the cause, including the shortcomings

This is a presentation of the nature of the cause of anger, as well as its shortcomings. The relevant verse reads:

7. *Finding the nourishment of mental unhappiness,
Which arises from the undesired and
From obstructions to the desired,
Hatred grows stronger and destroys self.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary opens with a hypothetical query:

Query: How does anger generate suffering?

Answer: Mental unhappiness, which comes either from that which causes the undesired or obstructs that which is desired by the self and that which is close to the self, is the nourishment which increases anger. Having found the nourishment of mental unhappiness, the body of hatred grows stronger and destroys self in this life and future lives.

This is a presentation of how anger arises within us. On a personal level, this understanding is really very helpful as it enables us to detect what causes us to feel angry in the first place. Recognising this process can help us to prevent anger from spiralling out of control.

How does anger generate suffering? The commentary begins by explaining that *mental unhappiness comes either from that which causes the undesired or obstructs that which is desired by the self and that which is close to the self*, i.e. relatives and so forth. As presented here, mental unhappiness arises due to undesired events affecting either oneself or those close to one, or an obstruction to what one desires. It is that mental unhappiness that is the *nourishment* or fuel for anger.

When we relate this to ourselves, we can see how true it is that we become really unhappy when we get what we don't want to experience, or when there is an obstruction to what we do desire to experience for ourselves and our close ones. As soon as our mind becomes unhappy we are prone to becoming angry. That is because, as presented here, mental unhappiness serves as a fuel to anger. Unhappiness nourishes and sustains anger just like food nourishes and sustains the body as it develops and

matures. Using this analogy the commentary says that, *having found the nourishment of mental unhappiness, the body of hatred grows stronger, and thus destroys our happiness in this life and in future lives*. These are really significant points about the underlying cause of anger.

We need to see the relationship between unhappiness and anger. We become unhappy when our desires are thwarted, or if we have to experience what we don't want. Then, because of that unhappiness, we focus on what we think has caused us pain and unhappiness, and anger arises. If it is an individual then our anger is directed at that person, and the more we think about how they have obstructed us, or caused us to experience something that we don't want, the more our anger increases. That is when we begin to regard the other person as an arch enemy.

We really need to understand how the process unfolds within our mind. We generate anger because we are unhappy. When we don't investigate thoroughly, we immediately blame the person who we consider has caused our unhappiness. However, if we investigate carefully, then we have to acknowledge that it is our own unhappiness that has caused the anger and which is creating so much mental agony and pain. When we use this sort of analysis we come to understand that it is that anger which is the real enemy, not the person.

Normally of course, we don't do that investigation, so we perceive external causes, such as a person or a particular situation, as the cause of our pain and unhappiness. When our mind is unhappy then, as presented here, that unhappiness fuels anger and nourishes it. As will be explained later, joy is the opposite of unhappiness, so being joyful will prevent unhappiness, which in turn prevents anger from arising. So, for example, if someone hits us with a stick, we start to feel unhappy as soon as we feel pain, and then, in a flash, we become angry with the person who inflicted that pain. But if we are not fazed by that one hit of a stick, and actually remain joyful, then there is no place for anger to arise.

The point made in the commentary is that as anger becomes stronger and stronger it destroys our happiness in this life and in future lives. Thus the exhortation, even though it is not mentioned specifically here, is that we must assiduously overcome anger.

When we consider the logic of the process by which we become angry we realise there is a state of mind between the event and the emotion of anger, which is our feeling of unhappiness. We are the owners of that unhappiness, so if we don't generate unhappiness then we will prevent the generation of anger. These are significant points that we really need to consider.

When we really embody this approach then we are practising the real meaning of patience. Many people comment on how amazing it is that His Holiness the Dalai Lama is so patient with the Communist Chinese. That is because His Holiness embodies this practice of patience so that what seems to be unimaginable becomes possible. If we really think about these significant points we will gain a very deep understanding. More details about this will be presented later on.

2.1.2. Advice to strive in the method to oppose anger

8. *Therefore I need to destroy the food
Of this enemy of mine,
An enemy who has no other function
Aside from harming me.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Therefore I should destroy mental unhappiness, the nourishment of this enemy of mine. There is nothing that harms me more than this enemy of anger, and I should strive in destroying this arch enemy of mine.

As has just been explained, our mental unhappiness serves as a fuel for anger, *therefore I should destroy mental unhappiness which is nourishment of this enemy of mine*, i.e. anger. Furthermore, because *there is nothing that harms me more than this enemy of anger I should strive in destroying this enemy of mine*. In other words, one needs to make an effort to overcome the real enemy that causes distress and agony. This is another significant point. When anger arises it not only harms others, but it also harms oneself. When one recognises that anger has no other function than to harm oneself, then one can recognise it as being the real enemy that needs to be overcome. Anger has no redeeming features. From our own experience we know that the moment anger arises we immediately feel unsettled and uncomfortable. Not only does it cause mental agony now, but anger also affects future lives as well.

The virtues of patience were presented earlier. The direct opposites of the virtues of patience are the faults of anger. Recognising that, we need to really embrace this on a personal level and do our best to overcome anger. Of course, our ultimate goal is to completely abandon anger. Meanwhile, we should, as much as possible, try to resort to these reasons and think about the disadvantages of anger when it does arise. This will help to lessen the intensity of our anger and prevent it from escalating. So we can definitely take measures now to prevent anger from taking root and increasing in intensity.

As personal practice, we need to put the most effort into protecting our own mind from anger, rather than finding excuses, like thinking, 'Oh well, they're angry so I have the right to get angry too'. If one uses that as a reason then there will be no end to one's anger. Even if one cannot stop the other person from becoming angry, one can at least make an attempt to control one's own mind and prevent anger from arising. To that extent it will benefit oneself, as well as defusing the conflict with the other.

Indeed, it is fuelling anger that causes more and more trouble in any situation. There are so many wars going on, and when we look at the situation we can see that those who are rising up are so fuelled up and angry, for whatever reason, that they will do anything to fight back. If, rather than trying to appease that anger and settle them down, one adds further causes for them to become upset, they will naturally rise up and fight with an even more intense anger. With these kinds of situations how can there really be world peace? We can never expect world peace when more fuel is added to already tense situations, with people who are already feeling unsettled.

In fact the patience practised by the stronger towards the weak is, as the teachings explain, the most supreme

practice of patience. The *Thirty-seven Practices of a Bodhisattva* mentions that the practice of patience by the mighty against those who are weaker is a really supreme practice. As the mighty can very easily crush those who are less powerful, they have no need to practise patience. In contrast, the weaker have no choice at all. They often have to take whatever harm is inflicted on them because they don't dare to fight back with someone who is mightier. So practising patience in those circumstances is said to be not as great as the powerful being patient with the weaker. At a global level, a mightier nation should be able to tolerate those who are causing some disturbance and so forth. Then peace will be possible. However, I suppose that mighty nations would not find that reasonable.

When animosity or anger between two nations or groups of people is appeased, then there is room for negotiation and peace is possible, and when anger is not appeased, there is no possibility for negotiation and peace and so forth. That is really how it is. At a personal level it is exactly the same—when there is anger there is conflict.

In fact, when a really powerful enemy crushes you, you are so afraid that there is really no time to be angry. That was my response when the Chinese came into Tibet. Someone once asked me, 'When you had to flee, did you feel any anger towards the Chinese' and my response was, 'I didn't even have time to feel angry as I was so afraid. The only thing that came to my mind at that time was that my life was in danger, and so I had to flee'. When there are guns being fired, and heavy artillery being used, the constant fear leaves no time to feel angry.

The point is that when the stronger overpower the weaker, then the weaker ones have to accept that. We can see this also with parents and their children; if parents scold or spank a young child then, of course, the child cannot do anything in return as it is so small. So when the powerful practise patience, and do not inflict harm on the weaker ones, then that is indeed a supreme act of patience.

The current conflict in Syria and Iraq is a case in point. Syria is a small country, and it seems very easy for America and Australia to decide to go there. I'm not sure about that. America has a very big population. Australia is smaller so Australia has to be very careful, otherwise the conflict will come closer to home.

In the fourth chapter Shantideva used the example of an external enemy to show the danger of befriending the delusions. When you befriend an external foe it is possible that they will turn around and become your friend if you are kind to them. In contrast, if you are kind and nice to the delusions within, they will just become more powerful and cause you more harm. These are all significant points.

Another significant verse concerning overcoming the real enemy within explained that it is easier to cover one's feet to protect them against sharp objects than trying to cover the whole earth with leather.¹ Likewise, overcoming the inner enemy of the delusions is equivalent to overcoming

¹ *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, chapter 5 verse 13.

all enemies. Some have confided in me that they have found this advice gives their practice real meaning and purpose. When we really contemplate these points they give us every reason to practise patience.

As we are inclined to engage in Dharma practice we need to derive the real essence of what is being presented here, and try to put it into practice. As presented in the teachings, we need to regard our internal afflictions and delusions as our real enemy, and use all our energy to combat and overcome them. Conversely, we need to practise love for our external enemies. So, in short, extend love towards external enemies, and don't be patient with internal enemies. Try to use every means to overcome those inner delusions. That is, in essence, the practice we need to adopt if we are to consider ourselves Dharma practitioners.

2.1.3. The actual method to oppose anger

Once again we can take note of the sequence of outlines, although, of course, Gyalsab Je's commentary only reflects what is presented in the actual text. We have just covered the reasons why it is necessary to apply the method to oppose anger. Now we are presented with the actual methods that oppose anger. Gyalsab Je's meticulous outlines really bring out the logical presentation of Shantideva's text, and it is good for us to really relate to this text in a systemic way, as a way of integrating it in our practice. Rather than just thinking, 'Oh, this is just an outline', we can see that the outlines, just by themselves, have great purpose.

The actual method to oppose anger is subdivided into two:

2.1.3.1. It is unsuitable to generate mental unhappiness

2.1.3.2. The reason for that

2.1.3.1. IT IS UNSUITABLE TO GENERATE MENTAL UNHAPPINESS

The commentary on the verse begins this query:

Query: How then does one abandon mental unhappiness?

Here we can see the elegant simplicity of the presentation. The verse that relates to this reads:

9. *Whatever happens, I should never
Let this mind of joy be disturbed.
Though disliking, one will not attain one's
desire,
And virtue will degenerate.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary goes on to explain:

Having contemplated the benefits of accepting suffering think: "I shall under no circumstances let my mental joy be disturbed." Contemplate this point well.

Mental joy is the antidote to mental unhappiness. Therefore, if one generates dislike upon meeting something undesired, then, though one generates dislike, one will not achieve one's wishes, and the virtue that bestows the desired result degenerates. In this way all sufferings are generated.

Having contemplated the benefits of accepting suffering, refers to the benefits of willingly accepting suffering, which will be presented in more detail later on in the text. The point here is that suffering does have some advantages and should not be viewed in a completely negative light. There are in fact many *benefits* in *accepting suffering*, and

contemplating this one should think, '*I shall under no circumstances let my mental joy be disturbed*'. This is a point I also make in my own teachings. I often remind people that preserving and protecting one's joy is of the utmost importance for one's wellbeing.

Having contemplated this point thoroughly, we need to make the personal commitment, 'Regardless of whether the circumstances are good or bad, and especially when things are not going well, I will not allow my sense of joy to be disturbed or diminished', and in that way maintain that feeling of joy and happiness.

As presented in the commentary, joy is the antidote to mental unhappiness. *If upon meeting something that is undesired*, e.g. being harmed, *one generates dislike*, however that dislike *will not achieve one's wishes*. In other words, developing a dislike for someone who harms us won't affect that person at all. Furthermore, rather than accomplishing one's wishes, developing dislike actually destroys the virtue within oneself, obstructing the desired result of happiness.

In summary, as the commentary states, *In this way all sufferings are generated*. The point here is that whatever the unfavourable circumstance, generating dislike will not help to accomplish our wish for our own wellbeing. Indeed, rather than accomplishing anything, generating dislike actually harms our future experience of joy and happiness, because it results in the degeneration of the virtue within us. Because it is a negativity, the moment anger is generated it destroys the virtue that we have accumulated, which is the cause of our future happiness. That is how, as explained in the commentary, all sufferings are generated.

2.1.3.2. THE REASON FOR THAT

This refers to the reason why it is unsuitable to generate unhappiness. The verse in relation to this outline is one that many have found to be extremely useful and beneficial. It is a verse that is often quoted, and you will all have come across it many times.

10. *If one can do something
What is there to dislike?
If one can do nothing,
What use is dislike?*

Gyalsab Je explains the meaning of the verse thus:

If one can do something about the object that generates mental unhappiness, then what reason is there to generate dislike? Right away one acts and the mental unhappiness vanishes. In case one cannot do something then what is the use to generate unhappiness? One can dislike that space lacks obstructions, but what is the benefit in that?

As so clearly presented here, *if one can do something about an object that generates mental unhappiness then what reason is there to generate dislike?* To take a contemporary example, if a car breaks down and the problem can be fixed then taking it to a mechanic to be fixed will solve the problem. There is no real need for dislike or an unhappy state of mind, because it is fixable. In the event that it can't be fixed and has to be written off then, again, there is no purpose in generating dislike. If it can be fixed then there is no need to worry; if it cannot be fixed then there is no purpose in worrying about that either. We can

use other examples such as someone dropping a ceramic cup. If it is cracked it can be fixed, so you fix it and then you can use it again. So there is no need to generate dislike and an unhappy mind. Whereas if it is broken into pieces and cannot be fixed, then generating dislike and worrying about it will not help to solve the situation. It will just cause more mental distress.

This advice is particularly relevant with physical illnesses. When we are ill and there is a remedy or cure then there is no need to really worry and generate a mind of dislike, as it can be cured. In the event that it is a disease that is difficult to cure then one has to accept that. The mental anguish generated from worrying will just add mental suffering to our physical suffering.

As the commentary states, if it can be fixed, *then right away one acts and the mental unhappiness vanishes. In the case one cannot do something then what is the use to generate unhappiness?* So again we are being reminded that if a situation cannot be remedied, or cannot be fixed, then there is no use in generating unhappiness. A further analogy presented in the commentary is that *one can dislike that space lacks obstruction but what is the benefit in that?* If someone were to be really upset with space because it lacks obstruction, saying, 'Oh, this space is useless. It's empty and doesn't have any function', then what purpose would that serve? None at all.

2.1.4. Striving in abandoning anger after having analysed the cause for anger in detail

This has three subdivisions:

2.1.4.1. Showing the general division of objects for generating anger

2.1.4.2. Stopping anger at undesired actions

2.1.4.3. Stopping anger at obstructions to one's wishes

2.1.4.1. SHOWING THE GENERAL DIVISION OF OBJECTS FOR GENERATING ANGER

Here we are being presented with the different kinds of objects or situations that generate anger. Some use these same objects as objects for generating patience. In fact the objects of anger and the objects of patience are basically the same, aren't they? The objects of our anger are the very objects with which one needs to generate patience with.

Here Gyaltsab Je uses these objects in the context of anger. The relevant verse reads:

11. *I do not wish for myself or my friends
Suffering, criticism, harsh words
And unpleasant talk.
For the enemy it is the opposite*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

For myself and my friends I do not want these four: feelings of suffering, criticism, harsh words spoken to one's face and the spreading of unpleasant derogatory rumours. These I do not wish for, and wish to reverse them, but in relation to the enemy these likes and dislikes are the opposite. In short, they are the eight worldly dharmas.

In relation to ourselves and those closest to us we don't want to experience any kind of *feelings of suffering*, any kind of *criticism*, or *harsh words* spoken directly to us, or *the spreading of any unpleasant or derogatory rumours*.

In fact we wish to experience their *reverse*, meaning that we want to experience the opposite of what we don't want. We do not want to feel any suffering and we want to feel happiness; we do not wish for criticism and we wish for praise; we do not wish for harsh words but wish only for pleasant words to be spoken to us; and we do not wish for unpleasant or derogatory rumours to be spread about us, but wish to have a good reputation.

But in relation to our enemies we wish the opposite. We want them to feel suffering and be the object of criticism, harsh words and unpleasant, derogatory rumours. Meanwhile we don't want them to experience the opposite of these negative experiences.

Basically, with these eight worldly concerns we want to experience the positives, but don't want to experience the negatives, whereas we want enemies to experience the negatives and not the positives. When we see how true this is for ourselves, we can see how these objects are the basis for all anger. When we are experiencing the negative side anger arises, and we also feel anger when the enemy experiences the positive side. So basically these eight worldly concerns or dharmas serve as the basis of so many unwholesome actions and non-virtuous states of mind.

Maybe we can go into a little bit more detail about these eight worldly dharmas in our next session. In the meantime it would be good for you to really look into these and understand how you actually experience them: the four that I do not wish for, and their opposites which I do wish for, whilst for my enemies I wish the reverse.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མཁས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

14 October 2014

As usual we can devote some time to our meditation practice.

[meditation]

Now we generate the most positive motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

I need to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all mother sentient beings, so for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

2.1.4.1. SHOWING THE GENERAL DIVISION OF OBJECTS FOR GENERATING ANGER (CONT.)

In short, one should refrain from the eight worldly dharmas, which are the causes of anger. As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

For myself and my friends I do not want these four: feelings of suffering, criticism, harsh words spoken to one's face and the spreading of unpleasant derogatory rumours.

When we, or our close and dear ones, experience these four unpleasant situations, then anger arises. Conversely we wish for their opposites: wanting to experience happiness rather than suffering; wanting to experience praise rather than criticism; wanting to hear pleasant words rather than harsh words; and wanting to have fame rather than experience derogatory rumours. We don't want to experience the four unpleasant situations and we do want to experience the four pleasant ones.

It is the complete opposite for our enemies—we are happy when they experience suffering, but unhappy and angry when they experience happiness. We don't want them to receive any praise, and are happy when they are criticised; we are unhappy when they have pleasant words spoken to them, but glad when harsh words are used towards them. If our enemies have fame, then that makes us uncomfortable and unhappy, and thus angry, and when there are unpleasant rumours about them, we are glad.

Those, in brief, are the eight worldly concerns: one wishes to avoid four unfavourable conditions, but wishes them upon one's enemies; one wishes to enjoy four favourable conditions, but hopes one's enemies will not encounter them. As I have said, it's important for us to really look into how we get caught up in the eight worldly concerns.

In short, we basically want to experience the happiness of the contaminated samsaric pleasures. Of course, there is nothing wrong with wishing to have a higher level of happiness, but here we are talking about a strong clinging and attachment to the happiness derived from samsaric pleasures, and an aversion to any unpleasant experiences. We want to be praised and not criticised. We cling to worldly fame, and are unhappy if we are the object of any

derogatory rumours. Fame itself is not a bad thing if it is based on actual good qualities. For example, amongst sentient beings no-one could be more famous than a bodhisattva. Bodhisattvas are renowned for their deeds of benefiting other sentient beings, so a bodhisattva's fame only enables them to further benefit sentient beings, rather than being a source of harm to themselves. Thus, as the term itself indicates, we need to understand that the eight worldly dharmas refer to worldly concerns.

I have explained the means to counteract the eight worldly dharmas in detail previously, however as it is important to have a good understanding of them, I will go over it again now. So, as explained earlier, one wishes for the happiness that is derived from being attached to the contaminated worldly pleasures, and it is this happiness derived from worldly pleasures, fame, praise and pleasant remarks which are related to worldly views that we need to overcome. Whereas the happiness that one would experience from obtaining liberation or ultimate enlightenment is a happiness that we need to pursue, for it is a worthy goal. Wishing for the happiness of liberation or enlightenment will inspire us to achieve that great goal.

As explained in Nagarjuna's *Letter to the King*, as well as in the Lam Rim teachings, one needs to equalise the eight worldly concerns or dharmas. This means we need to adopt an attitude which is the opposite of our normal attitudes. Instead of wishing for happiness, one willingly wishes to endure suffering and hardship, and so forth. The way to understand this in its proper context is that the experience of even temporary happiness is the result of good karma, or the virtue that one has accumulated in the past. Thus, when we experience that wellbeing and happiness, we are actually using up our good karma. When we reflect upon this fact, then we won't feel too keen about wishing to experience samsaric pleasures, because we know that we will be using up our own good karma.

Suffering, on the other hand is the result of negative karma, and whenever one experiences suffering it is exhausting the negative karma that one has accumulated in the past. By contemplating in this way we realise that since suffering exhausts our negative karma, it is actually good for us, and the sooner our negative karma is expended, the better it is for us. By thinking in this way, we realise that it is quite reasonable to change our attitude from wishing to experience happiness and avoid suffering, to one of willingly wishing to experience suffering, and being very wary of experiencing the happiness arising from worldly pleasures. By adopting this attitude, one will not be daunted by suffering, because of the knowledge that it is expending one's negative karma. With this attitude one will also be practising the patience of willingly tolerating sufferings.

Another way to look at the significance of the practice of equalising the eight worldly dharmas is that by not engaging in this equalising practice and exchanging our attitudes, we are, in effect, longing to experience the happiness of worldly samsaric pleasures. Such a longing will increase our attachment, which will then hinder our practice. When our attachment to the happiness of samsaric pleasures increases, it further intensifies our

anger when we experience its opposite, which is suffering.

Furthermore, when we anticipate the joy of experiencing samsaric pleasures, we are ignorant of the fact that such happiness is in the nature of contaminated pleasure, rather than long-lasting happiness. Holding onto this view increases our ignorance. Thus the three poisons are increased if one does not practise equalising the eight worldly concerns.

Taking up this practice of equalising the eight worldly concerns will strengthen our *tong len* (giving and taking) practice, which we attempt to practise in our regular meditation. As I have mentioned previously, someone who doesn't wish to experience happiness, and who willingly wishes to experience suffering, can really take the *tong len* practice to heart. If one does not want to experience suffering and wants to experience only happiness, it wouldn't be possible to even think of taking on the suffering of other sentient beings. Furthermore if one is really attached to happiness, one would not want to be parted from it, so giving one's happiness away to other sentient beings would not be possible. As I have mentioned previously, the *tong len* practice would be an appropriate practice for those who have taken up the practice of equalising the eight worldly dharmas.

To summarise the main points, the 'taking' part of the *tong len* practice is when one willingly wishes to take the suffering of others upon oneself. When one is wary about experiencing happiness, one will easily be able to give it to other sentient beings, which covers the 'giving' part of the practice. As mentioned previously, being able to practise the patience of enduring suffering will prevent anger from arising when one experiences hardships and difficulties. Rather than being unhappy when our enemies experience happiness, we will be glad about that, which will also prevent anger from arising when we see our enemies experiencing good conditions. This is really a great and profound practice, so it shouldn't be taken lightly. Indeed this practice has great meaning and purpose. This should be apparent when one sees the extent to which it transforms our mind. Further details about this will be presented later on.

2.1.4.2. STOPPING ANGER AT UNDESIRED ACTIONS

This section covers how to prevent anger from arising. There are three subdivisions:

2.1.4.1.1. Stopping anger at wrongdoings directed at oneself

2.1.4.1.2. Stopping anger at wrongdoings directed at one's friends

2.1.4.1.3. Stopping anger at those who benefit one's enemies

We can see how these three types of anger definitely relate to our immediate experiences in everyday life. The moment one experiences some wrongdoing directed at oneself or one's friends, one immediately becomes upset and angry. How wonderful it would be if we could actually prevent anger from arising when we face such situations! How gentle and calm our mind would be!

STOPPING ANGER AT WRONGDOINGS DIRECTED AT ONESELF¹

This has two main sections:

1. Tolerating the generation of suffering
2. Being patient with contempt and so forth

1. TOLERATING THE GENERATION OF SUFFERING

This section is subdivided into three:

- 1.1. Meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering
- 1.2. Meditating on the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma
- 1.3. Meditating on the patience that does not think anything of harm.

This is where the three divisions of patience are presented:

- Meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering
- Meditating on the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma
- Meditating on the patience that does not think of anything of harm.

As presented many times, the definition of patience is a mind that does not become disturbed in the face of harm and suffering. So this means if our mind is not disturbed when we experience harm from external conditions, or from our own experiences of suffering, then we are practising patience.

The opposite of patience is anger. The Lam Rim teachings specifically mention an opposite to each of the three types of patience listed here. However, in general, anger is the opposite of patience. The definition of anger is the malicious mind that intends to harm, which is focused on the three objects that cause one suffering.

The patience of willingly tolerating suffering is really a paramount practice for everyday life. Anger is mostly related to lacking the patience to tolerate suffering. So whenever we experience suffering we can contemplate, 'This is the result of my non-virtuous actions in the past, and therefore it is befitting that I experience this now, as a way to eradicate the results of my past negativities'. By contemplating in this way, suffering becomes more acceptable, and we will not become despondent when we experience it.

As I said earlier, the Lam Rim explains the opposites of these three kinds of patience. As I recall, the opposite to the patience of *meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering*, is a despondent mind that feels weighed down and worthless. The opposite to *meditating on the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma*, is a lack of interest in the Dharma, and no aspiration to practise it. The opposite of *meditating on the patience that does not think of anything of harm*, is basically anger. You can check the Lam Rim as well, but these are, as I recall, the opposite of the three kinds of patience.

1.1. Meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering

This is subdivided into five:

- 1.1.1. Contemplating that one is not beyond the nature of contaminated suffering

¹ To keep them manageable the heading numbers and styles start again at this point.

1.1.2. Contemplating the benefits of meditating on suffering

1.1.3. Contemplating how they are not difficult once habituated

1.1.4. The benefits of striving to abandoning afflictions

1.1.5. Extensive explanation of the benefits of suffering

1.1.1. Contemplating that one is not beyond the nature of contaminated suffering

One is not beyond the nature of contaminated suffering means that one definitely has to experience contaminated sufferings. Because one is still in samsara, one still has a samsaric nature.

The relevant lines of verse from the root text read:

*12ab. Causes for happiness come adventitiously,
Causes for suffering abound.*

In his commentary on these two lines Gyaltsab Je explains:

In cyclic existence the causes for happiness arise only occasionally and the causes for suffering abound. Since one is not beyond the nature of cyclic existence it is appropriate to tolerate sufferings.

As explained in the commentary, *in cyclic existence the causes for happiness arise only occasionally*. One needs to understand that the cause for happiness is virtue. Thus, for example, if you were to reflect upon whether you have accumulated virtue or non-virtue today, it may be quite evident that you have created more non-virtuous deeds than virtuous ones. If that is the case, you would have been creating more causes for suffering than causes for happiness. So, as indicated in the commentary, when the causes to experience happiness are generated only occasionally, then naturally, the result of happiness is also only occasional, and instead of happiness, one experiences more suffering. This can also relate to the fact that the immediate causes for our happiness are also scarce. Even on a daily basis there are far more occasions where things go wrong, which cause us suffering, than conditions for happiness.

Since one is not beyond the nature of cyclic existence the causes for suffering abound, relates to non-virtuous activities or negativities. If the delusions are prevalent in our mind, then it is more likely that we will be creating more non-virtues or negativities on a regular basis. If we find that this is true for ourselves now, then it would also have to have been true in past lives. Through having created abundant causes for suffering in the past, one naturally experiences more suffering now. Likewise, if we failed to create the cause of happiness, which is virtue, in previous lives, we will naturally experience the result of a lack of happiness now.

These are really significant points about karma. When one creates non-virtuous deeds and negativity, the result will be suffering. Whereas if one creates virtuous deeds, the result will be happiness. As the great Kadampa masters advised, on a regular basis one should, at the end of the day, count up how many deeds were influenced by the delusions, and were thus negative deeds, and how much virtue was accrued during the day. The results of this analysis show us our progress. Then we can slowly transform our lives by creating more virtues and shunning more negativities. This is a personal instruction

on how to adopt virtue and abandon negativity. If we do that then we will then secure a better life right now, as well as preparing for our experiences in future lifetimes. This is very succinct advice that is being presented here.

In very simple terms, if we wish to experience real happiness in life, then we need to accumulate virtue. If you want to experience real happiness, then you must accumulate the causes for that, which is virtue. If you do not wish to experience suffering, then you need to abandon negativity which will eradicate the causes for suffering. One becomes a real practitioner when one abides by this code of training. When we really contemplate and think about how our experiences now are related to specific causes and conditions that were created in the past, we generate a real confidence in the importance of adopting virtue and abandoning negativity. We really need to take this on board.

1.1.2. Contemplating the benefits of meditating on suffering

One should understand that we don't need to be completely afraid of suffering, as there are actually benefits in experiencing it.

The following six lines explain this:

*12cd. Without suffering there is no renunciation
Therefore, mind be firm!*

*13. If the faithful of Durga and the Kanapa
Tolerate the meaningless feelings of
Being burned and cut, then why
Do I not have courage for liberation?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on these lines reads as follows:

It is appropriate to contemplate cyclic existence to be in the nature of suffering because without contemplating the suffering of samsara the mind definitely wishing to be free from samsara will not arise. Hence, "Mind be firm!"

It is appropriate to tolerate suffering. The faithful of the goddess Uma, in order to reverse and lessen the austerities of Ishvara, on the ninth of the middle month of autumn, fast and cut and burn themselves for one or three days in order to please her.

The people of Kanapa and so forth in the south, in order to compete with each other, endure the sufferings of cutting their bodies and the like. If one can tolerate sufferings for such meaningless purposes, then why do I fear the experiences of suffering for the great purpose of liberating all sentient beings from their sufferings? It is appropriate to tolerate them.

As explained here in the commentary, *it is appropriate to contemplate cyclic existence to be in the nature of suffering, otherwise the mind wishing to definitely be free from samsara will not arise*. As one of the great lamas, Drakha Rinpoche, who was from the same area in Tibet where I come from mentioned, there are no accounts of practitioners entering the path and gaining realisations by experiencing pleasures.

How this previously unknown booklet by Drakha Rinpoche came to be published was that there was an occasion when His Holiness the Dalai Lama was delayed in Patna for some time. In order to pass the time he said, "I'd like to check out what's in the library here, as I've heard it holds some rare texts in its collection". So

Dzongsar Rinpoche went to the Patna Library and found a collection of Drakha Rinpoche's works. When this was brought to His Holiness' attention, His Holiness was interested and wanted to see them. When he came across this particular text he was so impressed that he said "Oh, this should be made more available!" That was when this booklet was published. Apparently there is also a collection of Drakha Rinpoche's works in a library in America. It is quite amazing to think that a library in Patna and a library in America had held copies of his works, but this was not widely known.

After this text was published it remained relatively unknown until His Holiness the Dalai Lama mentioned in a teaching how he had found the advice given by Drakha Rinpoche to have been very beneficial for his own mind. The booklet was being distributed freely during a teaching, and so people quickly rushed to acquire a copy for themselves! Having gained access to this book, we can see its great significance.

Of course if we had ample time I would be referring to some of the appropriate passages in this book, along with the Lam Rim teachings. But because we don't have much time, we won't do that. In his text, Drakha Rinpoche says that there are many accounts of delusions increasing and negativities not being purified, as a result of enjoying the pleasures and happiness of samsara, and no accounts of practitioners who have lessened their delusions and purified their negativities through the experience of pleasures. However there are many accounts of practitioners who, having contemplated suffering, have lessened their delusions, purified their negativities, and accumulated extensive merit.

Then he quotes the great Kadampa master Chen-ngawa, who says one should cherish suffering, for it is through sufferings and hardships that the lamas and Sangha perform their great virtuous deeds. The great extensive deeds of the lamas are indeed the result of enduring a great amount of suffering and hardship in their practice. The sangha also endure the hardships of practising morality, and endure discomforts whilst engaging in virtues of the three doors of body, speech and mind. Thus, by willingly experiencing sufferings they are able to purify extensive negativities and accumulate very extensive merit to achieve the higher realisations of liberation and enlightenment. This is why, as explained, it is appropriate to cherish suffering.

The great lama Drakha Rinpoche was also known, amongst those who revered him, as a manifestation of Chenrezig. On a personal note, I had a classmate who came from the same town as Drakha Rinpoche. So he had an unequivocal faith in Drakha Rinpoche and he used to say to me, "Oh, there's really no lama like Drakha Rinpoche. He's a really incredible practitioner and a great being".

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains that *it is appropriate to contemplate cyclic existence to be in the nature of suffering*. As mentioned before, without contemplating the nature of samsara the wish to definitely be free from samsara will not arise. When one sees the great benefits from contemplating suffering, one will see the appropriateness of enduring suffering.

Furthermore, as explained in the commentary *it is appropriate to tolerate suffering*. Examples of such suffering include *the faithful of the goddess Uma, who, in order to reverse and lessen the austerities of Ishvara, on the ninth of the middle month of autumn, fast and cut and burn themselves for one or three days in order to please her*. So just to please this goddess, the devotees of Uma endure extreme pain and suffering.

Furthermore, *the people of Kanapa and so forth in the south, in order to compete with each other, endure the sufferings of cutting their bodies and the like. If one can tolerate sufferings for such meaningless purposes, then why do I fear the experiences of suffering for the great purpose of liberating all sentient beings from their sufferings?* So in comparison to such meaningless sufferings without much purpose, one's own sufferings, which arise from engaging in practices for the purpose of liberating all sentient beings from their sufferings, are worthwhile. By contemplating this we will not fear suffering. The implication here is that, as explained in the commentary, it is appropriate to tolerate suffering. More extensive benefits will be explained later.

There are many accounts of people enduring extremely painful acts such as putting fire on their heads and inflicting harm on their body in various other ways, for meaningless reasons.

1.1.3. Contemplating how they are not difficult once habituated

As indicated, tolerating suffering will not be difficult once one becomes acquainted with it.

That is subdivided into two:

1.1.3.1. Extensive explanation

1.1.3.2. Summary

1.1.3.1. EXTENSIVE EXPLANATION

This has four subdivisions:

1.1.3.1.1. It becomes easier with familiarisation

1.1.3.1.2. Establishing this with an example

1.1.3.1.3. The object to tolerate

1.1.3.1.4. Example of how, through familiarity the strength of patience increases

We can go over these in our next session. The main thing for you to do is to familiarise yourselves with the explanations, and try to understand them in relation to your own practice. As one of our real enemies is anger, finding ways of how to oppose this enemy is really worthwhile.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་པོ་འཇམ་དཔལ་གྱི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

21 October 2014

As usual we can spend some time in our meditation practice.

[meditation]

Now we generate a positive motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings, and put them into practice well.

1.1. Meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering (cont.)

1.1.3. Contemplating how they are not difficult once habituated

1.1.3.1. EXTENSIVE EXPLANATION

1.1.3.1.1. It becomes easier with familiarisation

This section of the text shows how, through becoming familiar with suffering, we are able to endure things that we may not have been able to endure previously. For example, suffering due to relatively minor ailments might be hard to endure initially, but if we familiarise ourselves with them, we will actually be able to tolerate them later on. Likewise, we may initially view harms inflicted upon us as unbearable or intolerable, but through familiarity with them we will come to tolerate them. The verse under this heading is a verse that is often cited to show that one of the characteristics of our mind is that it is possible to train it to manage things that we might previously have been unable to do. This is what *it becomes easier with familiarisation* means.

We really need to contemplate this point in relation to every aspect of our life. For example, even mundane tasks like work, or engaging in any kind of training, require some effort. If we don't develop the mind of being able to bear hardships and difficulties then we might easily give up because we think, "Oh this is too hard". All too often we see people give up their assignments, training and even their studies, saying, "Oh, this is too difficult". Thinking in that way can easily become a habit, leading some to give up as soon as there is some difficulty or hardship.

Developing a courageous mind that willingly accepts difficulties and hardships is part of the patience of willingly accepting hardship, as well as the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma. The patience of willingly tolerating harm is related to the harm that others may inflict upon us, whereas the patience of definitely relying on the Dharma can be applied to a range of different circumstances.

As the definition of patience suggests, a mind that does not become disturbed in the face of adversity or harm is definitely a calm and stable mind that is not prone to

agitation. When the mind is not disturbed then that prevents anger from arising. That is how we need to see patience as being a direct opponent to anger. When the mind is not disturbed we will be able to accomplish whatever we need to accomplish. Conversely, when the mind is disturbed then it hinders whatever one is trying to achieve, and creates many negativities as well. When we really think about what patience really means, its benefits and how it is essential for our wellbeing, then we come to the natural conclusion, "I must definitely develop patience—I cannot afford to be without it".

Just as developing patience is essential for one's own wellbeing and relationships with others, it is also true for all the practices of the six perfections. Each one of the six perfections is essential for both our personal development and as a means of benefitting others. That is why the six perfections are the core practices of the bodhisattvas. As they practise the six perfections, bodhisattvas willingly undergo hardships and difficulties with joy, rather than any sense of suffering. That is how we need to understand the significance of these practices.

The practice of patience also strengthens the capacity of the mind to face hardships and difficulties. Whenever there is an occasion where harm is inflicted, practising patience will further increase the level of our tolerance. So the harm actually becomes an impetus to further develop patience, and make it even stronger. So, once one is committed to practise patience, experiencing harm only helps to increase and further strengthen our patience, rather than decreasing it.

The verse relating to this section of the text reads:

14. *There is nothing that does not become Easier through familiarisation. Therefore, by meditating on small harm One will be able to tolerate great harm.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this oft-quoted verse begins with:

If one meditates on patience, then one will also tolerate suffering. All ways of apprehending arise through familiarisation, and therefore there is no object of the mind that does not become easier through familiarisation.

As the commentary explains, *if one meditates on patience then one will also tolerate suffering*. This is very succinctly pointing out that if one practises patience, then that will naturally enable one to also tolerate suffering. Conversely, one is unable to tolerate any kind of suffering when one lacks patience. These are very important points because as ordinary beings we are bound to experience some form of suffering or hardship at different times in our life. So if we don't develop a mind of being patient and tolerating suffering our minds will constantly be in a disturbed and agitated state. Then there will be no room in our minds to actually practise anything in depth. Indeed it is almost impossible to accomplish anything of significance when our mind is constantly in an agitated and disturbed state.

When we think about this we will come to the conclusion that patience is essential, and that we cannot function effectively without it. As the heading itself suggests, it is not beyond our capacity to practise patience because it is a matter of familiarising our mind with accepting and

tolerating suffering and harm. As we train our mind in this way it becomes possible for us to tolerate even greater hardship and suffering, because the nature of the mind is such that there is nothing that cannot be developed through familiarisation.

The commentary explains that *if one meditates on patience then one will be able to tolerate suffering*, because *all ways of apprehending arise through familiarisation*. The very basis of the mind is that whatever is apprehended by the mind is based on familiarity with it. So whatever the mind apprehends now is possible due to that familiarisation. For that reason, *there is no object of the mind that does not become easier through familiarisation*. The very basis, and hence potential of the mind is that it knows and apprehends things through familiarisation. This implies that, through familiarisation with an object, it becomes easier and easier for the mind to apprehend that object. This point supports the earlier reasons.

The main point can be summarised in this way: If one were to ask whether an ordinary mind has faults, then of course the answer is that yes, an ordinary mind does have various faults. But it also carries the inborn ability to familiarise itself with good qualities, and is thus able to develop those good qualities. In other words, while the mind possesses many faults, it also possesses the ability to develop qualities, and thus carries the ability to remove those faults.

These are essential points. We often feel despondent, thinking, "Oh, I am riddled with faults, and therefore I cannot achieve anything; I am good for nothing". All too often we just focus on our faults and feel despondent and discouraged. We give up things easily and don't really consider going further to improve ourselves. When we experience these feelings, we need to remind ourselves, "Yes, we might have faults as ordinary beings. But the very nature of the mind is that it naturally carries the potential to develop qualities, and that is done through familiarisation".

Then Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

For this reason, having meditated on tolerating small harms such as hot or cold, or harsh speech by others and so forth, know that one can also be patient with great harms such as the fires of the hell realms.

The commentary indicates that because one can learn to tolerate *small harms such as hot and cold, or harsh speech by others and so forth*, one is therefore able to train one's mind to tolerate greater sufferings. Before we can even attempt to think of tolerating greater suffering, we need to train our mind in being able to tolerate small suffering. Compared to the sufferings of hell realms, the suffering of feeling hot and cold, or being the recipient of harsh speech—which, as mere words, do not physically harm us—is really quite insignificant. However if we don't train our mind to tolerate minor suffering such as feeling a bit hot or cold, and hearing harsh words, then the mind becomes habituated with not being able to tolerate any kind of suffering, no matter how small. Whereas if we can train our mind to tolerate natural suffering like being a bit hot, or a bit cold, or occasionally hearing some unpleasant words, then it is possible to be patient with greater harms, specifically the sufferings of fire in hell realms.

This explanation is, of course, in the context of the great deeds of bodhisattvas. There are many accounts of bodhisattvas willingly accepting great sufferings - even going to the hell realms - in order to benefit sentient beings. This shows the great courage of the bodhisattvas and the extent to which they have developed their tolerance and patience in order to benefit sentient beings. They initially developed that level of patience and tolerance through familiarisation with smaller sufferings. So the point here is that if we familiarise ourselves with tolerating small harms such as heat and cold and harsh words and so forth, then it is possible for us to slowly, slowly be able to tolerate greater harms.

The main point is that developing the practice of patience is a matter of going through stages from being able to tolerate and endure small sufferings, and then slowly, slowly increasing the level of our tolerance and patience so that we are able to endure great sufferings. As mentioned here, if it is possible for bodhisattvas to endure the sufferings of the hell realms, then it is possible for us as well.

As a way to back this up, the commentary quotes from the sutra called the *Sutra of the Meeting of Father and Son*. This sutra is an account of the Buddha's life, and *meeting the father* is a symbolic expression that indicates reaching enlightenment. The quote reads:

The Bhagavan possesses the concentration called *All Phenomena Become Happiness*. Whoever attains this concentration will experience all objects of bodhisattvas only as happiness and will not experience suffering ... should they receive the harm of the hell beings they will still abide in the recognition of happiness.

The sutra is quite clear, so we don't need to explain it much more. The point is that *should they receive the harm of the hell realms, bodhisattvas will still abide in happiness*. As the sutra clearly states, due to practising patience, bodhisattvas are not troubled when they encounter suffering. Rather than experiencing suffering and unhappiness, they experience joy and happiness.

1.1.3.1.2. Establishing this with an example

This section presents an example of how patience becomes easier through familiarisation.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins with a hypothetical qualm.

Qualm: If we meditate on small sufferings, the patience will not have power.

This hypothetical qualm is to remove any doubt that the patience developed through meditating on small sufferings will not have much power. In response to that, the next verse is presented.

15. *Snakes and insects,
The feelings of hunger and thirst,
Rashes and so forth,
Who has not seen it with these meaningless sufferings?*

The commentary goes on to say:

Answer: Why do you not see that if one meditates on patience for small and absolutely meaningless sufferings, such as the feelings of hunger and thirst, skin diseases, rashes and the like, that they then

become tolerable, and if one does not meditate, they become difficult to bear. This is directly observable and it is therefore appropriate to meditate on patience.

This explanation is quite clear. The main point is *why would you not see that if one meditates on patience for small and absolutely meaningless sufferings, that they will become tolerable*. The commentary says that being hungry or thirsty or having rashes and the like are quite small inconveniences. They become tolerable if one practises patience, and they become difficult to bear if one does not practise patience. We can see how true this statement is from our own experience. If, when we are confronted with being hungry or a bit too hot, we allow our mind to become obsessed by that, and see that as a problem, then we start to become more and more uncomfortable. Whereas the moment we accept the discomfort and think, "Oh well, it's OK, I will tolerate it, and just deal with it", then it doesn't appear to be a big problem anymore. This reminds me that when we first went to India there were some who complained about the heat all the time. Other monks would say, "If you keep complaining about the heat, it will only get worse. Just forget about it. It is there anyway and you won't make it go away by complaining about it. Better to just accept it". When you accept something you don't think too much about it, and it doesn't bother you so much.

The main point is that if we develop a mind of accepting everyday difficulties and problems, and practise patience with them, then they become tolerable and not so much of a problem. Whereas if we don't practise the patience of tolerating them, then they always appear as problems, and the discomfort will become greater and greater. Think about today, which was a bit warm. If we have allowed our mind to accept it, then it will actually be quite pleasant. There are some who actually like the heat and don't see it as a problem. If we have accepted a warm day today and another warm day comes up tomorrow, then it will not be too difficult to bear, because you have already accepted it today. Whereas if you haven't accepted it today, and tomorrow is also a hot day, it will seem to be an even greater problem. We can definitely understand this from our own experience.

If we train our mind to accept a bit of heat, then, through that familiarisation, we will be able to tolerate heat, and it will not be a hindrance as we carry on with our lives. We will be able to do whatever we need to do, because we have trained our mind to accept it. Likewise, if we accept the cold then, through that familiarity, we will not be hindered when it is continuously cold. We will be able to carry on doing whatever we need to do. When we train our mind to accept things, then external conditions will not be a hindrance or an obstruction to our activities.

This reminds me of one time when I went to New Zealand. When I come out of the plane, the hostesses seemed very concerned that one of my arms was bare, but that's normal for me. It comes back to the practice of patience, particularly the patience of willingly accepting hardship. When one willingly accepts hardship, then through familiarity with accepting that hardship, it becomes easier to tolerate, and we will not experience any

mental suffering. So we need to reflect the great benefit of tolerating suffering.

1.3.1.3. THE OBJECT TO TOLERATE

This basically refers to the object of patience that is to be tolerated, and the relevant verse is:

16. *I should not be impatient with
Heat, cold, rain, wind and so forth,
Sickness, bondage and beatings,
If I do so the harm will increase.*

Here Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning of the verse as:

One should not be impatient with heat or cold, rain and wind, sickness, being bound by ropes or being beaten with a stick and so forth, because if one is impatient with small harms, this will only further increase the harm, as patience decreases.

We often experience heat, cold, rain, and wind, and there are definitely occasions where we feel too hot or too cold, and times when there is torrential rain or strong winds. And, of course, to different degrees we all have experienced some ailments and felt physical discomfort. Of course most of us would not have experienced being bound by a rope or beaten, but that does happen to others. These are some examples of the sufferings that occur on a regular basis.

It is because they occur so regularly that we should be patient with these relatively small discomforts. If we are not patient with them then our suffering will only increase. It won't be because the intensity of the actual harm increases, but because our mind does not accept it, and does not apply any patience or tolerance to the suffering. Then the suffering actually increases, by virtue of the sheer fact that our patience itself decreases. As we become less patient with the suffering, our discomfort seems to increase in our mind. Indeed, if we don't begin to practise patience with the small harms that we encounter regularly, then what else are we planning to be patient with? How else are we going to practise patience if we can't be patient with the regular suffering that we experience in our daily lives? We need to begin to develop a mind of tolerance and patience towards the regular discomforts we experience, which will then prevent our mind from becoming impatient with greater sufferings later on.

Of course there are many stories of how, through familiarity, things which may otherwise have been completely intolerable, are tolerated and accepted.

Recently I heard of a monk from the same province in Tibet that I come from, who was recently imprisoned because he had recited the *Prayer for the Long Life of the Dalai Lama*. While in prison he started to recite it even more, for which he earned more beatings. But the more they beat him the louder he shouted the long life prayer. It came to the point where the guards themselves were nonplussed. Rather than struggling and screaming, and begging the guards to stop the beatings, he increased the volume of his recitation of the verses of the prayer. The guards were amazed and came to a point where they didn't know what to do with him!

Willingly tolerating hardship and suffering is indispensable to our practice and wellbeing. If we don't tolerate them, it is as if the hardships and sufferings

become our master and we, like slaves, are dominated by them. Once we willingly accept the hardships and difficulties, then we become the master rather than the slave. These are important points for us to consider.

1.3.1.4. AN EXAMPLE OF HOW, THROUGH FAMILIARITY, THE STRENGTH OF PATIENCE INCREASES

The relevant lines of verse are:

17. *For some, seeing their own blood,
Will increase their steadfastness and courage.
Some, when seeing the blood of others,
Faint and become unconscious.*

18ab. *This comes about due to natural
Firmness of the mind and fear.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads

For some brave person, seeing their own blood upon being injured by a weapon will only increase their steadfastness and courage. Some cowards will faint and become unconscious even when they see the blood of someone else. This does not come about through the force of the external object, whether it is large or small, nor does it come about due to a soft or hard body. It comes about solely through the mind being either firm or timid.

Therefore, one should strive in meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering.

Some brave people, even seeing their own blood upon being injured by a weapon will only increase their steadfastness and courage. When, out of bravery, people go into combat and see blood, then that further intensifies their eagerness to overcome their foe. Rather than becoming discouraged, seeing blood actually gives them even more courage. There are also some cowards who, let alone not being able to tolerate the sight of their own blood, become despondent and lose courage and actually faint when they see the blood of others.

You might also have come across people who faint when they see blood, because they have a mind that is not able to tolerate that. As explained in the commentary, this is not dependent on external conditions and objects. For some, blood makes their mind even more courageous, while others become discouraged, and faint. The difference is solely in the mind that interprets the situation. *Therefore*, as the commentary explains, *one should strive in meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering.* As the illustrations in the verse and commentary indicate, the benefit of tolerating suffering is that it makes the mind much more courageous.

As illustrated in the commentary, bravery is very much related to the intensity of the mind wishing to go into combat. This reminds me of an account that was related to me by someone from my home town. When the Red Guards came in, one man, who was known for his bravery, showed great courage. Using his simple gun he tried to fight the Chinese. At one point he was shot and fatally wounded, but he didn't drop dead right away. He kept on trying, unsuccessfully, to stand up and face the Chinese. Those around him saw his condition, and knew that he couldn't do anything, but they could also see his determination to try to overcome the person who shot him. After a while they were able to tell him that the

person who shot him had been killed. Only then did the wounded man relax and pass on.

This story really shows the power of the mind. With intense determination it can even prevent immediate death and hold on to life. However, the moment someone lets go of such a mind then they pass on.

Then there is the situation of extreme fear. I heard another account of someone who was normally quite a skilled horseman, but in the face of the enemy coming, was so afraid that he was not even able to get onto his horse properly. In his haste, rather than putting his foot in the stirrup, he was trying to mount his horse by putting his knee into the stirrup! So, being really fearful can be a real disadvantage!

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcribed by Su Lan Foo

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© *Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བལྟགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

28 October 2014

As usual, let us spend some time in meditation.

[meditation]

As we have just attempted in our short meditation, it is definitely highly worthwhile to familiarise yourself with the practice of *tong len*, i.e. giving and taking.

This should not be restricted just to this short session of meditation but is something you need to train yourself in in your everyday life, at every occasion and in any circumstance you find yourself in. In particular, this relates to any happiness you may experience in your daily activities e.g. the joys of eating and drinking etc. As soon as you experience these normal enjoyments, remind yourself to give that joy and happiness to other sentient beings. Then, whenever you encounter some difficulties or hardships, in whatever form, the moment you feel discomfort at any level, immediately try and use that as a way of taking the suffering of other sentient beings upon yourself. Remind yourself: "Since I'm experiencing this hardship now, may it become a means to take the suffering of other sentient beings upon myself." When you train yourself in this way you become more familiar with the actual practice of *tong len*. Then due to that regular familiarity, your meditation practice will become more profound.

The practical benefit you get from this practice is that it helps to reduce the negativity of generating attachment and anger when facing everyday life situations. When you experience joys and pleasures, if you are not mindful, these can cause increased attachment. But if you give that joy and happiness away to other sentient beings, there will be less attachment involved, which will reduce attachment to the pleasures and joys regularly experienced. Likewise, when you experience difficulties, willingly taking on the suffering of other sentient beings prevents anger from arising in your mind. In this way, *tong len* is a highly significant practice.

In this way we can see and relate to the effect of this practice outside of the formal meditation session. It would be a little strange if the practice is restricted to a few minutes of sitting in some formal meditation. If that were the case, then when you come out of the meditation, it may appear that the practice is not relevant and unnecessary. But that shouldn't be the case—that is the complete opposite of the significance of that practice. Whatever practice you attempt to do in a formal sitting, you need to ensure that the effects of it are carried through to your everyday lives, and then the real benefits of the practice will be felt. You will then have a constant 'guide' with you, reminding you of what is appropriate to engage in, and what is inappropriate and to be avoided.

Now you may set your motivation for receiving the teachings. As usual, generate the motivation along these lines: For the sake of all mother sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will engage in the teaching and put it into practice well.

1.1. Meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering

1.1.3. Contemplating how they are not different once habituated (cont.)

1.1.3.2. SUMMARY

The verse reads:

18cd. *Therefore one should disregard harms
And not be influenced by sufferings.*

19ab. *The skilled, although receiving sufferings,
Remain with the clarity of their mind
unpolluted.*

The commentary then reads:

Therefore one should make one's mind stable, disregard any harm received and not be influenced by the suffering. Those who are skilled in meditating on the Mahayana path, although receiving sufferings, through meditating on patience remain with their mind clear and not polluted by anger.

Based on the reasons presented earlier, relating to the need to tolerate the sufferings etc. one should make one's mind stable or firm. 'Firm' in this context means not allowing the mind to become agitated or troubled, particularly in the face of harm or suffering that one may experience.

In *disregard any harm received and not be influenced by the suffering*, 'disregarding harm' means that while one may experience the difficulties of the harm, do not allow this to disturb one's mind and become influenced by the sufferings one experiences. What is particularly highlighted here is the way one needs to be able to willingly accept and tolerate the sufferings, which is the real mark of practising patience. As explained further on, those *who are skilled in meditating on the Mahayana path, although receiving sufferings, through meditating on patience remain with their mind clear and not polluted by anger*. This sentence explains that those who earnestly follow the Mahayana path are the ones who voluntarily accept the sufferings. Those *who are skilled* particularly refers to the bodhisattvas who are engaging in the Mahayana path. And while they experience suffering, by meditating on patience their minds remain clear and unpolluted by the faults of anger.

In summary, what is being presented here is that if one engages in the practice of willingly accepting suffering, then the mind will not be affected and become unhappy. Then, if the mind is not unhappy, there is no room for the pollution of anger to take effect. This is how one protects one's mind from the pollution of anger. In this way (with a clear state of mind) one's mind is undisturbed and protected from the negativity of anger. We need to understand that these are highly profound levels of practice, see their significance, and incorporate this approach into our lives now. If you relate to these passages and think, 'Oh it does make sense!', but then regularly leave it aside, you will never benefit from it. Whereas if you implement it into your daily life, you will see the real benefit and significance. These verses are actually speaking to us personally—they are a personal instruction. This is how we need to derive the benefit.

1.1.4. The benefits of striving to abandon afflictions

The relevant verses here are the second two lines of the previous verse:

19cd. *One wages war with the afflictions
And while waging war there is much harm.*

20. *Disregard all sufferings
And destroy the enemies of anger and so forth.
They who win thus are heroes,
The rest kill corpses.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary clearly presents the meaning of these verses:

The objects of abandonment, such as the affliction of anger, and their antidotes are at war, and during the time of waging war many sufferings arise. If in worldly terms someone who disregards the harm inflicted by weapons and kills the enemy is called a hero, then someone who disregards all physical and mental sufferings, destroys the enemy of anger and conquers the afflictions, should be definitely called a hero. The rest kill the ones who die anyway by themselves, which is just like killing corpses. They should not be called heroes.

As the commentary explains, *the objects of abandonment, such as the affliction of anger, and their antidotes are at war*. Using some examples, the antidote for attachment would be meditating on the imperfections of the objects of attachment. Therefore within one's mind, meditating on the imperfections of the object would be like a war (or battle) between the antidote and the affliction. Likewise, a mind meditating on the various categories of phenomena, and ultimately emptiness, would be at war with ignorance.

It is useful to use the analogy of an external battle to illustrate the internal battle of the antidotes overcoming the afflictions. Just as a lot of suffering (wounds and even death) is experienced with external wars, internal conflict also brings difficulties and hardships. What is being presented here is that it is worthwhile to endure those sufferings and difficulties when combating the inner enemies of the afflictions.

A further analogy given here is that *in worldly terms someone who disregards the harm inflicted by weapons and kills the enemy is called a hero*. This illustrates that if someone goes to war and vanquishes the enemy, they will be honoured as a hero upon their return, as they have willingly endured pain and suffering during the war. We can see for ourselves that elderly war veterans are proud to wear their medals! Using my own experience, I know that even when there is some suffering, it is easily disregarded during the time of conflict or fighting. When I was young and got into fights with another young monk, even when I had wounds on my head and was bleeding, I was still able to go forward and fight with him. So I can definitely say that it is true that one is able to disregard wounds and pain when fiercely attempting to overcome the enemy.

You need to derive an understanding of how this illustration fits the meaning of what is being explained. When ordinary beings go to war to overcome an enemy, there is a lot of hardship and harm inflicted upon them, but this is endured because of the willingness to do so. If one does not willingly accept the harms, one cannot go forth and overcome the enemy (and later be renowned as a hero). Being known as a hero is due to having endured the hardships and harms inflicted during combat. So it is not in spite of, but despite of the harms that one is later renowned as a hero. If it is the case that one who disregards the harm inflicted by weapons and kills the enemy should definitely be called a hero, then someone *who disregards all physical and mental sufferings, destroys the enemy of anger and conquers the afflictions, should definitely be called a hero*.

What is being explained here is that when in combat with the inner enemies i.e. the afflictions, applying antidotes such as meditating on imperfections to overcome attachment, and meditating on compassion to overcome anger, and meditating on emptiness to overcome ignorance, all require

repeated meditation, again and again. It is not something that is quick and easy to apply. One cannot meditate once on the imperfections of attachment, and then attachment is suddenly overcome! In fact, sometimes the more we try to overcome attachment, the stronger it seems to become, and the more difficult it is to deal with.

In a worldly sense, someone can destroy the enemy and return from combat as a hero. The commentary states that this is similar to *killing corpses* as the external enemies will die naturally anyway, even without being killed. However inner afflictions are the complete opposite. If you leave inner afflictions and don't do anything about overcoming them, they will only become stronger and stronger. For example, if you don't apply antidotes to overcome attachment, and allow it to remain in your mind, indulging it, it only becomes stronger, even to the point of becoming seemingly impossible to overcome. This is also true for anger, ignorance and all other afflictions. So, unlike the external enemies, the inner enemies of the afflictions will only become stronger.

If ordinary beings who destroy external enemies are regarded as heroes, then someone engaged in the combat of overcoming the inner enemy of the afflictions should definitely be worthy of being called a real hero, as it is much more difficult to overcome the inner enemies. The commentary concludes by saying those who destroy their external foes *should not be called heroes*.

To reiterate the main point: having recognised the inner afflictions as the real enemies that destroy one's happiness and peace, one must destroy the afflictions by engaging in combat, which means applying the antidotes. Without this the afflictions cannot be naturally overcome. In addressing the afflictions one will be faced with hardships, but the hardships are worthwhile, because one has applied the antidotes, and so will definitely be able to overcome them. Once overcome, one will be a hero in the true sense, and worthy of veneration.

1.1.5. Extensive explanation of the benefits of suffering

The literal translation 'the benefits of suffering' may seem awkward so it can be understood as 'the benefits of seeing the *faults* of the suffering.'

21. *Further, the qualities of suffering are:
Through despondence it destroys pride,
It generates compassion for those circling in
samsara,
Fearing negativities and joy for virtue.*

Four benefits which are defined. The commentary reads:

Further, meditating on suffering is a great summary of the key points of practice. As the benefits of contemplating the shortcomings of sufferings are:

Seeing that one is controlled by suffering one becomes disheartened, which destroys the haughtiness of pride and arrogance.

Seeing that others are under the control of suffering one generates the compassion that thinks: How wonderful it would be if sentient beings were free from suffering.

Seeing that the suffering is the result of non-virtue and since one does not want suffering, one refrains from negativity.

Since one does not wish suffering and desires happiness, and seeing happiness to be the result of virtue one generates joy in virtue.

As Gyaltsab Je mentions in the opening line, *Further meditating on suffering is a great summary of the key points of practice*. Earlier I related that meditating, thinking, contemplating on the sufferings, really embracing them and seeing their benefits as a way to overcome them, is actually the main point of the practice. It really is a highly significant practice.

Then Gyaltsab Je elaborates on benefits of contemplating the shortcomings of sufferings.

As one experiences the sufferings one will be able to reflect upon the reality that one is still under their control and not completely free. Because of this one *becomes disheartened* and experiences a little sadness due to the suffering, and by being confronted with the fact that one is still controlled by the sufferings. That in itself helps to destroy any sense of *haughtiness* or sense that everything is fine for oneself; also pride and arrogance can be overcome.

Seeing others suffering refers to other ordinary beings who are still under the control of suffering. So seeing those in a pitiful state, one generates compassion thinking, "How wonderful it would be if they were free from suffering."

Understanding *suffering as the result of non-virtue*, and seeing that *one does not want suffering*, one will refrain from non-virtue. This, again, is a highly significant point in relation to our own practice. When one experiences suffering, one should immediately try and see that, "the suffering I am experiencing now is none other than the results of the non-virtue that I have created in the past." Since one does not wish for any kind of suffering, seeing it as a result of one's non-virtue can become an impetus to refrain from creating more negativity. In this way, experiencing suffering can help to prevent one from creating negativities such as killing and stealing etc. Thus, one refrains from the ten non-virtuous deeds.

The significant point here is that for those of us who already have a conviction in karma—this will not really make much sense if one doesn't already believe in karma—one can immediately relate to the unpleasant experience of suffering as being the results of non-virtue. One can take the suffering itself as caution not to create further non-virtues, shunning negativity and non-virtue, because one does not wish to prolong the unpleasant experience of suffering in the future. This then becomes the impetus. Since one does not wish for suffering, but desires happiness, and seeing happiness as the result of virtue, one will aim to generate virtue. The commentary specifically mentions how all are equal in wanting happiness and not wanting any kind of suffering: *since one does not wish suffering and desires happiness, and seeing that happiness then is to be the result of virtue one generates joy or enthusiasm in creating virtue*. So from the presentation here we can incorporate an understanding of karma as well as refuge. By contemplating this one has a way to overcome the sufferings.

These few lines really carry great depth in meaning and are an impetus for practice. The words *one does not wish suffering and desires happiness* are simple words. When we contemplate them and incorporate them into a broad understanding of the teachings, then because one does not wish for suffering, one thinks "I need to avoid non-virtues and stop creating negativity", and because one desires happiness one thinks "I must create virtue" and so adopt virtues to create positive karma. Take the line *one does not wish for suffering and desired happiness* as an impetus for your own personal practice. Shun non-virtue and adopt virtue. It also becomes a strong motivator to generate compassion for others. When one sees

others experiencing suffering and deprived of happiness, this becomes a reason to generate strong compassion for them.

Thus one reflects, "just as I do not wish for any suffering and wish for every kind of happiness, it is exactly the same for others as well". When others are experiencing great suffering, one relates to that as being really unfortunate, and wishes that they experience happiness. When others are deprived of happiness, wishing them happiness becomes a strong motivator. So begin with yourself, relating to your personal experience, and then you can relate that to others. We can all immediately relate to the truth of these factors. Because of the great points presented in these few lines of verse Gyaltsab Je mentions they are *a great summary of the key points of the practice*.

As mentioned in recent sessions, there are many accounts of practitioners who, by having contemplated on suffering, and by experiencing it, have accumulated great amounts of merit and engaged in great practices of purification to achieve great goals. However there are no accounts of practitioners who have achieved these goals, or even engaged in these practices, by experiencing pleasures. When considering the benefits of contemplating sufferings, taken in the context of the entire path, it is definitely the case that practitioners of all three scopes—small, medium and great—experience significant results through not wanting to experience suffering due to seeing its disadvantages and faults. Therefore contemplating the faults of samsara is what leads you to liberation. Conversely, if one seeks the pleasures of samsara, then this is what keeps one in samsara, rather than being freed from it. If one voluntarily and intentionally seeks the pleasures of samsara, there is no way that one will be free from it. How can one possibly achieve liberation if one intentionally seeks the means to remain in samsara?

This is how we need to think in a broader sense: contemplating the sufferings is a highly significant impetus for the practices. If one can see that this is a way to ultimately become free from suffering, one can willingly take it on as a practice. Sometimes there are comments about people who feel a bit overwhelmed hearing about suffering again and again, who say "There is too much focus on suffering. I don't want to hear about suffering." This occurs when one does not see the benefits, or cannot relate to the purpose and real reason for meditating on suffering. While it may seem that hearing about suffering is unpleasant, when one thoroughly contemplates the disadvantages of suffering, such as remaining in samsara to experience birth, sickness, ageing and death, then one contemplates reality. That becomes the impetus to really generate a strong wish to be free from samsara, and then suffering has served its purpose. So if one does not want to think about the sufferings of samsara, and only seeks the pleasures of samsara, then the wish to be free from it will never arise in one's mind. If we don't see the benefits of being free from samsara then why do people long to be free? And why would we want to develop an aspiration for liberation?

This is how we need to understand the significance of meditating on the various types of suffering in samsara, as presented in the teachings in great detail. At the moment we may not immediately be able to relate to the various types of sufferings in different realms. But if we take the initiative to meditate on them, imagining we are experiencing those sufferings, then, through familiarity we can gain a real sense of what the sufferings would be like, even though we are not experiencing them now. One can imagine what it would be

like, how unbearable it would be, if one were to actually experience such suffering. When one reaches that level in one's meditation it has become a personal experience. In time, a strong longing to be free from such suffering, and to be free from samsara, will definitely arise. One does not just feel the conviction to be free from the suffering of samsara in theory.

While it is true that without experience, it is hard for us to immediately relate to the sufferings, with familiarity we can gain that experience. This reminds me of a remark made by a lama some time ago. He was an ordained monk and a good student for many years, but later disrobed. Then he led a normal life, had a relationship, got engaged and went through the normal ups and downs of life. Later on, he related to some of his students, "Now I can understand what your suffering is all about". So he was able to relate the sufferings of relationships and so forth through his own personal experience.

Another account that I have mentioned previously is about a German lady who received teachings from Geshe Ngawang Dhargay when he was at Atisha Centre. She related to me that it was very meaningful, and that she got a lot out of teaching, but she confessed, "He talked a lot about suffering, and I am not too sure about all of that, but nevertheless, the teachings were very meaningful." She wasn't refuting the validity of those sufferings, but said "I am not too sure about that". Then, a couple of years later, when I met her again, she said, "Now I can definitely relate to the sufferings and I totally understand the significance of them. That is exactly true." Just as Geshe Ngawang Dhargay had related, she found it to be true for herself. This shows that when we have some experience or a deeper understanding, then we will gain a real conviction.

The significance of contemplating on the various types of sufferings, particularly thinking of death and impermanence, is that with a certain amount of familiarity it will become an integral part of one's practice. Furthermore, one will be able to maintain a constant impetus to be consistent with one's practice. In particular, meditating on the certainty of death, and the uncertainty of the time of death, one reaches the point where one recognises the truth in this. When one has a personal experience of it, rather than it just being a theory, it generates a conviction in one's mind and one will always be mindful of what one is doing—whether eating, walking or sitting. Whatever we may be engaged with, one will always try to incorporate that activity into one's practice, knowing that death can happen at any time, and that one should not waste time with meaningless activities. To that extent, the practice becomes authentic and one's purpose becomes that of a real practitioner. Without this sort of personal experience and conviction, it is very hard to claim to be a true practitioner. It is hard to regularly implement the practice in one's daily life, so we need to strive to generate some conviction in whatever practice it may be. Even if it is only a few points, to try to make an attempt to generate that conviction, whatever the practice may be.

Even though it might seem as though I am side-tracking from the actual topic, these are really important points for your practice, particularly in relation to recalling death and impermanence, which is really essential for one's practice to become more pure. Without familiarity with meditating on death and impermanence, cherishing this life and grasping at it will arise very easily. Then, whatever practice we do while clinging to this life will be mostly a worldly dharma.

Even if we meditated, the practice would only be a worldly concern rather than a real practice.

1.2. Meditating on the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma

This is subdivided into two:

1.2.1. Extensive

1.2.2. Summary

Maybe we can cover this in our next session. So you can prepare yourselves by familiarising yourselves with the commentary, and also refer to the Lam Rim teachings.

Also it might be a little bit hard to read it all, and I don't know if you have access to it, but the *Compendium of Practices* by Shantideva himself is also a very good text to study. The chapter on patience also has a lot of information, and there are a lot of quotations from the sutras as a way to show the source of these teachings.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcribed by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་པའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

4 November 2014

As usual let us spend some time in our meditation practice.

Meditation

We can set our motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will receive the teachings and put them into practice well.

Indeed, generating the bodhicitta motivation is of utmost importance. We have already established the basis of bodhicitta in our mind through our understanding of how to generate bodhicitta with either the seven-point cause and effect sequence, or the exchanging self with other technique. We need to further develop that basis by familiarising our mind with the bodhicitta motivation in every Dharma activity in which we engage. As mentioned regularly, the process of developing bodhicitta involves first generating the bodhicitta mind which has not yet been generated; once generated, to firmly establish it; and then further increase it to higher and higher levels. This is how we need to accustom our mind with bodhicitta at all levels of our practice.

Bodhicitta is the essence of the Mahayana teachings, with which we already have some familiarity. If we don't work on developing what we have already understood, and grasp on to some other form of practice, then we have entirely missed the point! Until we achieve enlightenment, we need to be continuously developing and perfecting the bodhicitta attitude, beginning with generating a contrived bodhicitta motivation, through to actually generating bodhicitta, and then engaging in the practice of the six perfections.

Although we have not yet actually generated bodhicitta, we can definitely generate a contrived bodhicitta attitude, which we can then further develop on the basis of that positive motivation. Furthermore, even though we are not yet able to practise the perfection of generosity we can definitely practise a similitude of that in the form of engaging in charitable activities. By familiarising ourselves with similitudes of both bodhicitta and the practices of the six perfections, we will gradually develop them within our mental continuum until we reach enlightenment.

1.2. Meditating on the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma

This section shows us how to meditate on the patience that definitely relies on Dharma, which is one the three types of patience.

The previous section of the text explained how to rely on the patience that tolerates the suffering that we experience. As mentioned previously, this is the core practice that allows us to engage in the practice of the Dharma itself. This tolerance of suffering is developed by contemplating the benefits of suffering, rather than seeing it as an obstacle. As mentioned previously, it was only by enduring hardships and difficulties that the great practitioners of the past were able to engage in their practices. In fact, becoming a real practitioner can only be achieved by enduring hardships and difficulties—there is no other way to become a real Dharma practitioner. I could be wrong, but this is what I personally understand from these explanations.

Meditating on the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma relate to the core Dharma of contemplating the two selflessnesses. Understanding selflessness and emptiness requires a lot of study, investigation and contemplation, and thus it involves hardship and difficulties. Although Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti elucidated the two selflessnesses very clearly, we still have difficulty in gaining a really good understanding of selflessness and emptiness. Thus we need to develop the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma.

The two subdivisions of this section of the text are:

1.2.1. Extensive

1.2.2. Summary

1.2.1. Extensive

The extensive explanation has three parts:

1.2.1.1. Anger and those getting angry depend on causes, and therefore lack independence

1.2.1.2. Refuting the existence of independent causes

1.2.1.3. The need for reversing anger

1.2.1.1. ANGER AND THOSE GETTING ANGRY DEPEND ON CAUSES, AND THEREFORE LACK INDEPENDENCE

This outline indicates that anger and the angry person are not independent; basically because things are dependent on causes and conditions. So what is presented here, in essence, is the dependent arising nature of all phenomena. Since everything is dependent on causes and conditions, neither anger nor the angry person can be independent.

If the angry person were to be independent, then it would not be possible for them to transform. It is because the angry person does not exist independently that it is possible for them to change and become a less angry person. Likewise, anger itself is also not an independent entity but arises due to causes and conditions. Therefore, by causing the cessation of the causes of anger, it is possible to overcome anger. We really need to understand this very profound point. In simple terms, what I derive from the explanation here is that we don't need to be slaves of anger, rather we need to be in control over our own mind, and abandon anger.

This section has two subdivisions:

1.2.1.1.1. Anger and the angry person are not independent

1.2.1.1.2. Their causes and conditions are not independent

1.2.1.1.1. Anger and the angry person are not independent

This in turn is subdivided into three:

1.2.1.1.1.1. The reason why it is unsuitable to be angry at an afflicted person

1.2.1.1.1.2. Anger is not generated volitionally

1.2.1.1.1.3. Since all faults are generated in dependence on conditions, they lack independence.

1.2.1.1.1.1. The reason why it is unsuitable to be angry at an afflicted person

This is a significant point that we really need to understand.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins with a hypothetical argument.

Argument: Since the other person harms me, it is suitable to get angry at them.

The point of this hypothetical argument is that it is suitable to be angry with any person who harms us. The reasoning here is that the cause of anger is the person who inflicts the harm, and not the actual harm itself. Even though the actual cause of the pain is the harm, one does not use that as a reason to generate anger. Rather, the anger is directed at the person who inflicts the harm.

In answer to that hypothetical argument, these three lines of verse are presented.

*22abc. If one is not angry at bile disease and
Other great sources of suffering,
Then why be angry at the ones with mind,*

As an explanation of these lines, the commentary begins with a response to the original hypothetical argument.

Answer: It is unsuitable.

Then the commentary explains the reason:

One does not get angry at bile disease and the like, which are a great source for the suffering of the disturbance of imbalance. Why would one then get angry at a sentient being, i.e. a being with mind?

Basically, when we experience great suffering from diseases such as bile and so forth, we do not consider becoming angry with the disease that is the cause for that suffering. So why then does one find it reasonable to become angry with an individual being who has a mind, and consider them to be the cause of our suffering?

The irrationality of our response is that while we don't become angry with a disease, for example, we find reason to become angry with an individual, when in fact, as we perceive it, both have equally caused us suffering.

Then Gyaltsab Je presents another hypothetical argument:

Argument: Since bile disease and so forth arise without control one does not get angry at them.

In answer to that a counter argument is presented:

Answer: Then it follows it is also unsuitable to be angry at the person ...

Then the following lines from the root text are presented:

*22d. Which are also all induced by conditions.
23. For example, although one does not desire it,
The sickness arises anyway.
Similarly, although one does not desire it,
The afflictions are generated powerfully.*

One needs to relate this to our understanding of interdependence and emptiness. If there is no cause of suffering, then there cannot be a result. So suffering cannot be experienced as an independent result, because the cause lacks independent existence, and is, itself, dependent on causes and conditions. Therefore the results are also interdependent, as they only arise when the causes and conditions are intact.

When one relates this understanding of interdependent origination to the lack of independent existence, then that really contributes to an understanding of how everything is empty of independent existence. We should apply our understanding of interdependence and emptiness to derive a more profound understanding of why it is unsuitable to be angry with an afflicted person. Then one can really make progress.

The commentary concludes with:

... because afflicted beings are ordered around by the condition of their afflictions and hence do not have control of their actions.

For example, similar to this sickness arising against one's wish when the conditions are complete, this person does not desire to be angry, but due to the cause of mental unhappiness and the like, the afflictions arise strongly. Therefore, if one were to get angry, then one should get angry at the afflictions and not at the person.

As presented here, *because afflicted beings are ordered around by the condition of the afflictions they do not have control of their actions.* Everything is dependent on its own particular causes and conditions. Being under the control of the delusions, beings do not have control over their actions, and are compelled to engage in actions that cause harm. And these delusions are themselves also dependent on many causes and conditions.

So the individual who causes us harm is not really an appropriate object for our anger, because they are not engaging in those harmful actions voluntarily. Rather, they are engaging in harmful actions because they are under the control of the delusions.

As mentioned previously, people engage in harmful actions because their mind is unhappy. When the mind is afflicted by delusions it is not a happy mind. We know from our personal experience that when our mind is affected by any of the delusions it is in a state of turmoil, and it is a troubled, unhappy mind. And, as we have seen, an unhappy mind is the basis for anger.

When one contemplates these points then, rather than finding reason to become angry at the individual causing harm, one feels compassion. That is because they are completely under the control of delusions that are causing them agony and unhappiness, which is the cause of their harmful actions. Therefore they are actually an object of compassion, rather than an object of anger.

Then the commentary goes on to present the analogy that the delusions are *similar to this sickness arising against one's wish when the conditions are complete.* The analogy is that when all the causes and conditions for sickness are intact, then the inevitable effect is sickness. As presented in other texts, when all the causes and conditions are intact then there is nothing that can avert the consequences. So

when all the conditions for sickness are present then the result of illness will definitely be experienced.

When the commentary says, *this person does not desire to be angry, but due to the cause of mental unhappiness and the like the afflictions arise strongly*, it is indicating that although people don't want to be angry, because they know that is not a desirable state to be in, anger will nevertheless arise when all the causes and conditions, particularly the cause of mental unhappiness and the like, are intact. Because of their unhappiness the afflictions arise strongly, resulting in harmful actions.

So the individual person is not really to blame. Being completely under the control of the delusions, they become angry when the causes and conditions are intact, and are compelled to engage in harmful actions. So the cause of their behaviour is ultimately the afflictions. If one is to become angry, then one should be angry with the afflictions and not the person. This is really the crux of the presentation: if one is to become upset, then it should be with the afflictions themselves, which are harboured within one's own mind.

On a personal level we can understand that just as afflictions cause other people to become angry and create harmful actions, our own afflictions cause us to become upset and angry. 'Just as those who cause me harm are affected by the afflictions, I too am afflicted by the delusions, so that is what I need to target, not the individual person.' By contemplating this point, one develops patience with other people through understanding how they are affected by causes and conditions.

However, we should not be patient with the afflictions themselves because that will only cause us further harm. So one applies measures to completely overcome and destroy the afflictions.

1.2.1.1.2. Anger is not generated volitionally

Gyaltsab Je begins his commentary on this section with another hypothetical argument:

Argument: Since the other person thinks 'I shall harm', it is not the same as with the afflictions.

We will be familiar with this hypothetical argument. We might reason that although the afflictions don't have an intention to harm us, the person definitely does. Using that reasoning, one might think it reasonable to become upset with the person.

The next verse presents the means to overcome such doubts:

24. *Although not thinking, 'I should get angry',
Beings become angry naturally.
Although not thinking, 'I shall generate',
Anger generates likewise.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of this verse in the following manner:

Answer: Although the causes do not think 'I shall generate anger', when the conditions are complete then beings generate anger without any choice. Although afflictions do not think 'I shall generate', anger is generated likewise. They do not have any freedom of action.

Otherwise, the first half can be related to the person and the second to the condition of the afflictions.

When anger arises due to *causes and conditions*, it is not as though the *causes* themselves think, 'I shall generate anger', and then generate anger. Rather, when the conditions are complete, beings generate anger without any choice. So it is not a voluntary act, where the causes think, 'Now I will cause anger'. Rather, when all the conditions are complete, then, even without a prior intention, one becomes angry. In that very instant, without even thinking about the conditions being intact, anger is generated spontaneously, without any choice.

Although afflictions do not think, 'I shall generate', anger generates likewise, indicates that it is not as if the afflictions themselves are demanding that anger should arise. Rather, the anger just naturally arises when the conditions are intact. Therefore there is no freedom of action.

In saying, *Otherwise, the first half can be related to the person and the second to the condition of the afflictions*, Gyaltsab Je is indicating how on a practical level we may adopt the understanding that both the person and the afflictions have some role in the generation of anger. This explanation may sound a bit fairer to us.

1.2.1.1.3. Since all faults are dependent on conditions, they lack independence

25. *All the faults that are found,
And the variety of negativities,
They all arise through the force of condition,
They do not have independence.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

All the faults of afflictions that are found, and the variety of negativities that arise from them, also arise through the force of conditions, and do not have independence. Similar to it not being suitable to get angry at water flowing downhill, thinking about these reasons stops anger.

All the faults of afflictions that are found, and the variety of negativities that arise from them, also arise through the force of conditions, and do not have independence, refers to the fact that while we do not wish to be influenced by the afflictions and create negativities, it is as if we have no control over them. When the conditions for the afflictions to arise are intact, then one does not have any control. This is also true for others. By contemplating this reality, particularly in relation to those who inflict harm, we will understand that they are completely under the control of the afflictions, and therefore have no control over their own actions.

The analogy—*it is similar to not becoming angry about water flowing downhill*—uses an illustration from the reasoning of nature, which is one of the four types of reasonings.¹ One would not become upset and angry about water flowing downhill, because that is its nature. Likewise, when others have the conditions for afflictions to arise, then the natural consequence is that they will engage in harm. Thus we should not become angry with them, but instead blame the afflictions.

¹ There are six different modes of research or investigation, and the sixth is the research of reasoning, which in turn is subdivided into four: 1. The reasoning of dependence, 2. the reasoning of the performance of function, 3. The reasoning of nature 4. The reasoning of valid establishment.

Source: *The Dalai Lama at Harvard*, Snow Lion publications

1.2.1.1.2. *Their causes and conditions are not independent*

Here we should take note of the meticulous presentation of the teaching, which is designed to rule out the possibility of any independent existence.

First of all, to overcome any notion that the faults and afflictions are independent, the faults were presented as being dependent on causes and conditions. Thus they lack independence.

One may then wonder whether the causes and conditions themselves are independent. So, to rule out that possibility, this presentation shows that the causes and conditions themselves are also not independent.

In our system, no matter how far you take it back, you cannot come to a point where you can find an entity that is an independent cause for other things to be produced. When other traditions trace the causes back, they come to the point where they have no choice but to accept an independent creator who is the primordial cause of all existence. These views will be presented in the next few verses.

What is being refuted under the heading Anger and the Angry Person Are Not Independent, is that an independent cause can produce other dependent phenomena. This will be presented in more detail later on.

The verse that is presented under this heading reads:

26. *The accumulation of conditions also Does not have the thought 'I shall generate'. That generated by them also does not Possess the thought 'Why was I generated?'*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

Also the accumulation of conditions that generates the sufferings does not have the thought 'I shall generate these sufferings', and the generated sufferings also do not possess the thought, 'I was generated by them'.

Therefore it is unsuitable to be angry at the other person based on the reason that the other person thinks 'I shall inflict harm'.

The commentary quite clearly explains that it is not as though the accumulated conditions themselves have the voluntary thought, 'I will generate these sufferings'. Nor do the sufferings themselves have the thought, 'I was generated by them'. So therefore, it is unsuitable to be angry at the other person based on the faulty reasoning that the other person thinks 'I shall inflict harm'.

The afflictions themselves, and that which causes anger to arise, are all dependent on many other factors, i.e. the causes and conditions. In other words, they are not generated independently or voluntarily. Therefore one should not find reason to be angry with the person, thinking that they were actually in control, and saying, 'I shall inflict harm'.

1.2.1.2. REFUTING THE EXISTENCE OF INDEPENDENT CAUSES

Here there are three subdivisions.

1.2.1.2.1. Refuting the independent self and primary principle of the Enumerators

1.2.1.2.2. Refuting the independent self of the Logicians

1.2.1.2.3. It is unsuitable to become angry upon understanding all beings to be like an emanation.

1.2.1.2.1. *Refuting the independent self and primary principle of the Enumerators*

This is further subdivided into:

1.2.1.2.1.1. Refuting the generation of independent expressions by the principle

1.2.1.2.1.2. Refuting that the knowledge-being engages objects independently

The Enumerators are also known as the Samkhya school, which presents five characteristics of the self. We went over this in detail when we studied the *Madhyamaka* text.² In brief, the Samkhya school assert a permanent, unitary and independent self. They say that because the self is not momentary it is permanent; because the self lacks parts it is unitary; and because the self does not depend on causes and conditions it is independent. However this is all refuted in our system.

Next Tuesday there will be a teaching, the following Tuesday will be the discussion, followed by the exam, and there will be two more teachings in December. Tuesday, December 16, will be the Lama Tsong Khapa puja, which will conclude the sessions for the year.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcribed by Judy Mayne

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© *Tara Institute*

² See teachings of 22 April 2003, and 29 April 2003

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

11 November 2014

As usual let us spend some time in our meditation practice.
[meditation]

We can now set the motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines—for the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will engage in the activity of listening to the teachings and put them into practice well.

The key factor of our motivation is the purpose of doing the activity, and the ultimate purpose here is that 'I must benefit other sentient beings'. So one has to put that at the forefront of one's aim in life and engage in virtuous activity for that purpose. Then our life becomes most meaningful.

1.2.1.2.1. Refuting the existence of independent causes

1.2.1.2.1.1. Refuting the generation of independent expressions by the principle

It was explained previously that the Samkhya school assert an independent entity called 'principle', or 'nature'. This is an entity which, while in itself is independent, causes other phenomena to arise from it.

The verses read:

27. *Whatever is accepted as that called principle,
And any imputation that is called self,
They do not arise volitionally, thinking
"I shall arise."*

28ab. *If the non-generated does not exist
How can one then posit generation?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of this verse in the form of a syllogism.

Consider the dual subject—'The primary principle possessing five characteristics, which is an equilibrium of particle, darkness and courage¹, as well as the harms that are contained in its expressions' and 'the self that is imputed on the knowledge person'—it follows it is unsuitable to say that they are generated independently—because this very principle is like the horns of a rabbit that cannot perform actions. It does not arise volitionally thinking, "I shall arise to generate an independent expression" or "an independent experience of the object".

It follows it is unsuitable to assert that at the time of the generation of the result, a result is generated from the principle—because the principle itself is not generated. There is a pervasion because—if oneself is not generated, then one cannot generate a result. There is then a pervasion that one cannot generate a result.

So what is being presented here is the assertion of the primary principle (also known as nature or expression) by the Enumerators (the Samkhya non-Buddhist school), which possesses five characteristics that are the equilibrium of the

three qualities: particle, darkness and courage. The five characteristics are:

1. It is the creator of all actions and so forth.
2. Since it is unproduced it is permanent.
3. Being partless it is a single entity
4. As it lacks consciousness it is merely an object.
5. It pervades the entire environment and all beings.

Some other texts present six characteristics, by combining the three qualities of particle, darkness and courage into one, and adding that to the five characteristics.

Some texts present the meaning of particle, or motility, as suffering, darkness as ignorance, and courage or lightness as happiness.

Detailed explanations have been presented numerous times in previous teachings, such as when we studied the *Madhyamakavatara* text² and also when we studied the ninth chapter of *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*³. It has also come up in the *400 Verses* teaching⁴, in Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*⁵ and of course in *Tenets* which I have taught twice. So when we come to a topic which presents these subjects it is good for you to refer back to those teachings, where I explained it in detail, as way to refresh your mind, and become more familiar with it. By referring to the texts again and again, eventually it will be implanted into our memory so that we won't forget it. This is what is meant by really putting an effort into understanding the Dharma texts and teachings.

According to Samkhya school, the primary principle possessing the five characteristics, which is equilibrium of the qualities of particle, darkness and courage, as well as all harms contained in its expression, arise independently. We need to reflect on whether this holds true. Is this explanation in accordance with the reality of how things exist? Do things exist independently as an expression of the primary principle? Would it be reasonable to accept that? This is how you need to reflect on their presentation.

The Samkhyas assert that what they call a knowledge-being, or conscious principle, is an independent entity. They consider the primary principle itself (with its five characteristics) as arising independently. They assert this, because they believe that the experiences of suffering and happiness arise independently. Thus, because feelings arise independently, the knowledge-being (or self), who experiences these feelings, also has to be independent. This is their assertion. By understanding this we will know what is being refuted. They believe the knowledge-being or self is a solitary, independent entity, which has only one consciousness, but which functions through the five senses. For example, if there is a person looking out of five different windows in a building, they assert that it is the same consciousness that functions through the five different senses. This is how they assert a single consciousness that functions through the five senses.

The *Madhyamakavatara* text presents the Samkhya's assertion of a self in this verse:

A self that is a consumer, permanent, not a creator,
Lacking qualities and activity is imputed by the Forders.
In dependence on very slight distinctions of that;
There are the different systems of the Forders.

² See the teachings of 22 April 2003, 29 April 2003, and 18 May 2004.

³ See the teachings 31 May 2005 (which contains a complete list of the twenty-five categories of objects asserted by the Samkhyas, 23 August 2005, and 13 September).

⁴ See the teaching of 9 September 2007.

⁵ See the teaching of 6 July 2010.

¹ Jeffery Hopkins translates these terms as motility, darkness and lightness

So, according to the Folders or the Samkhyas, there are five characteristics of the self:

1. It is a consumer of pleasant and unpleasant objects.
2. It is a functional permanent phenomena.
3. It is not a creator.
4. It lacks qualities.
5. It lacks activity.

When we understand their assertion of the self, and what the five characteristics are, then we can assess whether such a self is reasonable or not. With some slight variations, all the non-Buddhist schools, in general, assert a self as being a single, permanent, and independent entity. It is this self that is being refuted here.

As the commentary explains, the principle itself cannot be generated independently to begin with, as it is non-existent like the horns of a rabbit. So it follows that the result cannot be generated independently. The absurdity, which is highlighted here, is that if the cause itself is not generated, then how can the result be generated? So the syllogism used here refutes the assertion of a primary principle that is the cause of all existence.

What is being refuted here is the manifestation of a primary principle. When that is refuted, then the next step is to refute the knowledge-being (or conscious principle) that experiences objects independently, by showing that this cannot be independently existent either.

1.2.1.2.1.2. Refuting that the knowledge-being engages objects independently

The next two lines of the verse read:

*28cd. Since it would always be distracted by objects
It will also not cease.*

While you have some understanding of the basis of what is being presented here, it is good to know how the actual logic works. Once you understand this, you can then relate it to all other instances using the same line of logic, using syllogisms and so forth. To summarise the sequence: first the generation of independent expression by the principle is refuted, and then the individual being (the conscious principle or knowledge-being), who engages with the objects that they have caused, is refuted.

The commentary explains the meaning of these two lines:

Does the knowledge-person cease when it does not engage objects? It follows it does not because it is accepted to be a permanent functionality and if it is that, then it will always be distracted by objects, because there will be no time when it is not apprehending objects.

This refutation is based on pointing out the absurdity of a knowledge-being with this rhetorical question, *Does a knowledge-being cease when it does not engage objects?* According to this assertion, the absurdity is that engagement with an object is by a self that is a permanent functionality. As such it would perpetually apprehend objects. A simple example to illustrate this absurdity is that when a self is engaged in, for example, hearing sound, it would be perpetually engaged in apprehending sound. The same would apply for the other four senses: taste, sight, tactile sensations and smell. It would be difficult for the Samkhyas to accept this, as it goes beyond the bounds of obvious reality. So the refutation is based on the absurdity of their assertion.

1.2.1.2.2. Refuting the independent self of the Logicians

This has three subdivisions:

- 1.2.1.2.2.1. It is impossible for something permanent to produce a result
- 1.2.1.2.2.2. It is impossible for such a self to depend on conditions
- 1.2.1.2.2.3. Such a self cannot be related to conditions

The assertions of another non-Buddhist school are being presented here. It is similar to the earlier one, but with slight variations, which is why it is included separately.

1.2.1.2.2.1. It is impossible for something permanent to produce a result

The non-Buddhist Naiyayika school asserts a self that is by nature a permanent entity, but which temporarily becomes impermanent due to certain conditions.

The commentary first presents their assertion:

The Naiyayika assert a self that has form and is a permanent functionality, and they say it creates harm.

The next verse reads:

*29ab. It is clear that if the self is permanent
Then, like space, it cannot act*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary then refutes their assertion:

However, it is very clear that if such a self is a permanent functionality then, similar to non-compounded space, it cannot produce a result.

The commentary presents a refutation that points out the absurdity of their assertion. *It is very clear that if such a self is a permanent functionality then, it will be similar to a non-compounded space.* This means that like empty space the self is a permanent phenomenon, and so cannot produce anything. Like space, such a self cannot produce a result. This should be clear.

1.2.1.2.2.2. It is impossible for such a self to depend on conditions

Next they say that the self depends on conditions, but it is impossible for such a self to depend on conditions.

First, their argument is presented:

Argument: Although its nature is permanent, if this self meets with conditions then it can produce a result.

The lines that serve as an answer to the assertion read:

*29cd Although conditions meet
How can they affect the unchanging?
30ab. If it is like before during the action
What did the action do to it?*

As an answer the commentary states:

It is impossible for a permanent phenomenon to meet with conditions. Although the conditions of striving and so forth meet with other conditions, how could these conditions affect the self?

What is being highlighted here is that as they have already asserted the nature of the self as permanent, how then could it possibly change when it meets certain conditions? How can conditions affect the self so it can be temporarily impermanent, when its very nature is permanent? The very definition of permanent indicates that it does not change. This again points out the absurdity of the assertion.

The non-Buddhist schools such as the Samkhyas and the Naiyayika (or Logicians) assert a permanent self, based on their acceptance of past and future lives. According to their reasoning the self has to be permanent in order to have come

from a past life to this life, and to be able to go from this life to the next life. They think that if the self was impermanent then it could not come from a past life to this, and from this life to the next? So while they accept past lives and future lives, and understand that some effects arise due to the past causes etc., the self, they say, has to be permanent, because if it changes or degenerates, then what would be left to go on to the next life? This is the reason for their assertion that the self is permanent.

We can readily relate to their limited reasoning, because we are not able to see the subtle momentary changes that occur in functional phenomena ourselves. The actual definition of impermanence implies that change occurs from moment to moment, and it is this momentary nature of change that we do not readily perceive. Thus we carry the perception of ourselves as being more or less the same self as yesterday, or the day before, etc.

Actually, the real understanding, and thus the realisation of impermanence, is actually quite difficult to obtain. While selflessness or emptiness are more profound than impermanence, and thus more difficult to realise, it seems that it is easier to understand the meaning of emptiness, rather than the subtle changes that occur from moment to moment. I definitely feel that understanding impermanence in terms of the momentariness of the existence is not easy to grasp. When we talk about impermanence it is usually in relation to the gross impermanence of phenomena, such as when a glass breaks. Because we see it break, we feel the impermanence of the glass is presented. In this way we can perceive and relate to the gross level of impermanence, whereas the actual impermanence of functional phenomena, the change which occurs from moment to moment, is subtle and difficult for us to realise.

While some of the non-Buddhist schools like the Samkhyas and the Naiyayika assert past and future lives, others do not. The self asserted by the non-Buddhist schools who don't believe in past and future lives is a self related to the body, i.e. the physical aggregate. Therefore, when the physical aggregate disintegrates, the self, which is dependent on that, also disintegrates. The analogy they use is that it is like drawings on a wall. When the wall falls down, the drawings that are dependent on the wall also disintegrate, because their very support has disintegrated.

The Christian faith, for example, does not assert past and future lives, or more specifically, reincarnation, but they do accept an individual being, which, in essence, seems to be called the soul, which doesn't disintegrate at the time of death. There is a continuity of the soul, as they present it. So, this is accepted in their religion.

His Holiness compares the Christian soul with what we call the self that goes on from past life to future lives. The common ground here is that both traditions posit a continuity that goes from the past to the future.

It is interesting to note that although there are differences between religions, there are also similarities. For example, when His Holiness speaks to other religions, he relates to them on the basis of commonality. That is something for us to also consider.

2.1.2.2.3. Such a self cannot be related to conditions

The commentary first presents the Naiyayika argument:

Argument: Although the self does not facilitate an action due to its own nature, actions are performed in relation to other factors.

30cd "These are its actions," you say.
How do they become related?

What they are saying is basically that, although the self itself does not facilitate an action by its own nature, it does perform actions in relation to other factors. So, this is what is being refuted here. The commentary presents:

Answer: This is also not valid—because if one says that the action which creates the result of this self is of a different entity, then how does it become related to the self? It could not be related to the self by nature or cause.

The assertion being refuted here is that of a self, which is permanent, but which can perform actions, and produce results in relation to other factors. What the commentary highlights is how these other factors are related to the self. If it is not related to the self by nature, or by cause (i.e. as a cause and effect), then there is no third option, and no other way to relate them. An example of something that is related through nature would be function and impermanence. Wherever there is a function, it is naturally related to impermanence through nature. Everything that functions is by nature also impermanent; so that is the relationship. Whereas the relationship between smoke and fire is that of cause and effect; fire being the cause and smoke the effect. If you assert that there is an independent, permanent self which produces some result, then there would have to be some relationship there. Any relationship has to have a relation either by nature, or by cause and effect. But that is not tenable here.

1.2.1.2.3. Understanding all beings to resemble emanations, anger is unsuitable

We can clearly see that interdependent origination is really the basis of the presentation here.

The verse reads:

31. Thus, everything is other-powered,
Through the power of this they are powerless.
Having understood this, do not become angry
At emanation-like phenomena.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Thus, all actions that produce a result are other-powered, and these conditions are again powered by earlier causes and conditions. Therefore, the result does not have any say in whether it arises or not, and hence is like an illusion or emanation.

When one understands that all functionalities perform actions while being empty of existence from their own side, one does not become angry at these emanation-like functionalities. Therefore one should train in realising the dependent arising that is the lack of existence from its own side, which destroys the seed of the afflictions.

The commentary presents the meaning of this verse. *All actions that produce a result are other-powered* implies that an action doesn't have control over itself, therefore actions are other-powered, meaning they are dependent on their previous causes and conditions. The point here is that *the result does not have any say in whether it arises or not, and hence is like an illusion or emanation.*

The commentary further explains that *When one understands all functionalities perform actions while being empty of existence from their own side, one does not become angry at these emanations like functionalities. Therefore one should train in realising the dependent arising that is the lack of existence from its own side, which destroys the seed of afflictions.*

The crux of the Prasangika view is presented here: that all things lack independent and inherent existence; that things are empty of inherent existence or they do not exist from their own side. If one understands these key points, then one really destroys the seed of the afflictions.

The very definition of illusion, or emanation, is something that is unreal or untrue, like a trick conjured up by a magician, and one should understand that phenomena arise like this, completely empty of existing from their own side. When one incorporates that understanding in one's perception of phenomena, then there is no room for one to become angry, because the very object which appears to exist from its own side as an independent entity harming us, does not actually exist in that way. Therefore there is no room for one to become angry towards it. Basically this is the crux of the explanation.

As I have presented many times before, when strong afflictions such as anger arise, it is because we relate to the object that is causing us harm, as if it were an independent object, completely arising from its own side. This is how it appears to us, so anger arises, and we feel justified in becoming angry. When one trains oneself to see that this appearance is false, that it is beyond reality, that the object one perceives is not inherently and independently existent, then that definitely helps to reduce the afflictions that arise in relation to the object of anger etc. This is hard for us initially, because we are habituated to perceiving things as independent and inherently existent. So overcoming that seemingly natural perception is not an easy task. However, to reduce the intensity of the negativities in one's mind, and eventually overcome the seeds of afflictions, we need to understand these points, and train our mind so that we can gain that realisation.

Having refuted some of the non-Buddhist schools in earlier verses, this verse is refuting the views held by all the Buddhist schools below the Prasangika, which assert inherent existence.

When one understands that all functionalities perform actions while being empty of existence from their own side, one does not become angry at these emanation-like functionalities. Therefore one should train in realising the dependent arising that is the lack of existence from its own side, which destroys the seed of the afflictions

The commentary implies the lack of inherent existence, which is the main point of the Prasangika presentation, and this refutes the earlier Buddhist schools.

1.2.1.3. THE NEED FOR REVERSING ANGER

The verse reads:

32. *If it is said: What is supposed to oppose what? Also, opposing is unsuitable. There is nothing unsuitable about asserting That in dependence on that the continuity of suffering is severed.*

Argument: If there is not even the slightest particle of inherent existence, then what antidote is supposed to oppose what object of abandonment? Since action and activity are invalid, even the action of opposing is unsuitable.

The argument is presented in the first two lines of the verse: *If it is said: What is supposed to oppose what? Also, opposing is unsuitable.* Then the counter argument, or answer, is presented in the next two lines *There is nothing unsuitable*

about asserting that in dependence on that the continuity of suffering is severed.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary expands upon the meaning:

There is nothing unsuitable about the lack of inherent existence of the conception that grasps at the two truths as mutually exclusive, and due to which one cannot posit action and activity of something that lacks inherent existence; i.e., there is nothing unsuitable about the lack of inherent existence of the object of abandonment and the antidote.

It follows it is like that—because in dependence on realising the lack of inherent existence of the object of abandonment, and the antidote all afflictions of anger and so forth become extinct and the continuum of suffering is severed.

What is being presented here is the validity of the realisation of the lack of inherent existence. Thus, gaining the understanding that inherent existence is the object of abandonment, and its antidote is the realisation of emptiness, is valid. That is so because by abandoning the grasping at inherent existence, one will overcome all afflictions, as this is the very root of samsara. So when grasping at a truly and inherently existent self is completely abandoned, the consequence of afflictions such as anger and so forth, will also be completely severed. Thus the continuum of one's suffering is completely severed, and samsara will cease.

1.2.2. Summary

33. *Therefore, whether it is friend or enemy, If one sees them acting unsuitably, Say 'it came due to those conditions'. Keeping this in mind be firm in happiness.*

Under the first verse the commentary explains that:

For those reasons, if one sees someone, whether it is friend or enemy, doing something unsuitable that harms, think "this person has only become like this due to their afflictions. They do not have any freedom". Keeping this in mind, stop anger and make your mental happiness firm by not letting it degenerate. Be patient in such a way.

What is being presented here, in relation to one's practice, is that you will reach a point where, whenever you see someone—be it friend or enemy—engaging in an activity which seems inappropriate or harmful, you will immediately recognise they are doing this only due to the afflictions in their own minds. They do not have control over their own mind, and thus do not have control or real freedom over their actions, because they are dominated by the afflictions. When you hold this in your mind at all times, you will naturally not immediately react with anger. It will stop the anger and you will maintain your mental happiness. Because you are not getting angry, your mental happiness will not degenerate, and will be maintained. This is the way you tolerate harm and engage in the practice of patience. Within the different categories of patience this relates more to the patience of willingly accepting harm and suffering from others.

The main point here is that in order to protect the happiness in one's mind, the practice of patience is indispensable—one cannot do without it. As we all wish to have a happy state of mind—no-one voluntarily wants to have a sad or despondent state of mind—protecting it, by engaging in the practice of patience, becomes essential.

You need to take these points on board, and practise them regularly in your everyday life, particularly with close relations, associates or companions. As you have daily contact with them, you are prone to becoming upset or angry with them. Rather than immediately reacting, you can recognise that they don't have control over what they are doing and saying, because they are under the control of the afflictions, and that they are not in a happy state of mind themselves.

Use your own experience as a basis to understand how others act. When you are affected by the afflictions, and when you get upset and angry, you are not in a happy state of mind. In that sense, rather than taking it personally and retaliating, this approach gives you the distance to not react immediately, and allows your anger to subside.

An analogy I have given previously, demonstrating how those afflicted by afflictions do not have control over their own mind and actions, is when a car bumps your car from behind. When you look back, your immediate reaction might be to become upset with the car behind you. But when you see that the car behind you had no control, because it was pushed by the car behind it, then you realise there is no point getting upset with the car behind you, because they had no control at all about running into you. The afflictions are the one behind you, and they, themselves are also dependent on causes and conditions. If we understand that there is no independent entity that is voluntarily causing us harm, then our reasons for becoming angry will definitely subside.

These illustrations are effective in relation to our mind. Using the car example, we are in the first car, the one in the car behind is the individual that we perceive to be harming us. Whether it is our friend or companion or enemy, the only reason they would harm us is because they themselves are affected by delusions such as anger. Therefore the afflictions are like the third car. Just as we don't blame the person who crashes into us, we cannot blame the person who harms us, because they are affected by their afflictions. Therefore it is the afflictions which we need to overcome. This is how we protect our mind.

These ways of reasoning are supreme methods to protect our own mind so that our happiness does not degenerate. If we react with our normal perceptions and reasoning we will find every reason to become upset and angry in response to those who perpetrate harm. Blaming them only causes our own mind to become agitated and disturbed. When we become angry, the happiness in our mind completely degenerates, and we actually allow the conditions for our own happiness to degenerate, and our mind to become despondent and agitated etc. So the optimum protection is using these methods and reasoning as the way to actually protect oneself from harm.

Some make comments like, 'I could not give up the Buddhist principles or path because it is based on reasoning that gives me the freedom to use my own intelligence and reasoning. Why would I want to give up that? It gives me the freedom to rule my own life with reasoning and logic, rather than being completely dominated by others. Why would I want to give that up? I could never give it up.' These are actually very good points.

As you are aware, the next session is the discussion night. I have confidence that you will do the discussions well. Keep in mind that what is being discussed is a form of revision to make the topics we have covered a little clearer. Doing the exam fulfils the same purpose. Studying serves the purpose

of revision, and discussion needs to be done with the same approach.

If one sees someone, be it friend or enemy, acting in an unsuitable way, think along the lines of the points of the teaching tonight. Who could disagree with them? No-one in a rational state of mind would disagree that practising in this way is beneficial.

One needs to understand from these presentations that the very reason that one is applying these protective measures is because not doing so is uncomfortable. We do not like to experience harm and we find ways to prevent ourselves from being affected by it. If it is our experience that the harms, inappropriate gestures etc. inflicted by others are uncomfortable, then we need to find the ways and means to protect ourselves. Applying these principles will do that. As much as they protect oneself from the harms of others, they are also a means of protecting oneself from harming others. That is how we need to understand it. These are really profound ways to understand the main points being presented here.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcribed by Su Lan Foo

Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

2 December 2014

As usual let us spend some time in our meditation practice.

[Meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching, and put it into practice well.

1.2. Meditating on the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma

1.2.2. Summary (cont.)

The second verse of the summary reads:

34. *In case they acted independently,
Since nobody desires suffering,
None of all the embodied beings,
Would receive any suffering.*

Some other commentaries place this verse under the next heading, *Meditating on the Patience That Does Not Think Anything of Harm*. This commentary relates it to the summary of the section, *Meditating on the Patience That Definitely Relies Upon the Dharma*.

Gyalsab Je's commentary on the verse explains:

If the result would be independently created out of their own wish, without the power of other conditions then, since not one sentient being desires suffering, none of all the embodied beings should have any suffering. Since we see that they receive suffering, and they do not have freedom, it is unsuitable to be angry at them. The mental afflictions are behind them.

What is being emphasised here is that results are not independently created. If suffering were to be created independently out of one's own wish or accord, then, since no beings would ever want to experience any suffering, they would not voluntarily or independently create that suffering for themselves.

If suffering were to be generated independently then, since no being would want to experience suffering, suffering would not be generated. However we all know that beings do experience suffering and that they do not have any control over that suffering. Thus *it is unsuitable to be angry with them* for their reaction to that suffering. *The mental afflictions are behind them* indicates that the cause of their suffering is the mental afflictions, and that is what has to be targeted, not the beings themselves.

1.3. Meditating on the patience that does not think anything of harm

This is subdivided into three:

1.3.1. Bringing to mind the method of compassion

1.3.2. Stopping the cause of anger

1.3.3. Considering it one's own fault if something undesired is received

1.3.1. Bringing to mind the method of compassion

This has three further sub-divisions:

1.3.1.1. Some harm themselves out of ignorance

1.3.1.2. If they commit suicide due to ignorance, it is no great surprise that they harm others

1.3.1.3. It is suitable to be compassionate with that person

1.3.1.1. SOME HARM THEMSELVES OUT OF IGNORANCE

Out of ignorance, some sentient beings actually harm themselves. Thinking about that should be a cause to generate compassion for them.

If we experience harm from others, then we need to remember that the harm is done out of ignorance. In fact, out of ignorance others cause harm to themselves. So if they are capable of harming themselves out of ignorance, then there is no question that they would harm others. Thinking about this factor gives reason not to react out of anger when others cause one harm.

The first verse under this heading is:

35. *The reckless harm themselves
With thorns and so forth.
In order to attain women and so forth.
They become obsessed and starve themselves
and so forth.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary reads:

These people that harm others through the power of the afflictions and a lack of conscientiousness also harm themselves. To attain liberation they roll on thorns, or jump from great heights. Some become obsessed with attaining wealth and women, and out of anger starve themselves and so forth.

As clearly explained in the commentary, *those who harm others through the power of the afflictions and a lack of conscientiousness, also harm themselves*. Thus, due to a lack of conscientiousness and the influence of the afflictions some people not only harm others, but they also harm themselves.

Furthermore, with their intention to be free from suffering, gain happiness and attain liberation, they are misled about the appropriate methods to reach liberation. They engage in actions such as walking on thorns, or jumping from a high cliff, and harm themselves, under the illusion that they are creating the cause of happiness, and freedom from suffering.

Others *become obsessed with attaining wealth and women and out of anger starve themselves and so forth*. We have all seen how some people become enraged, and even starve themselves to attain wealth, or for the sake of obtaining women and so forth. This is the extent of the harm that people are capable of inflicting upon themselves, due to the afflictions and a lack of conscientiousness.

What we can learn from this on a personal level is how incredibly fortunate we are in having obtained unmistakable methods for attaining liberation. There are so many who, in their quest for liberation, are presented with and follow incorrect or erroneous methods. This presentation of how some people harm themselves due to the afflictions, and an incorrect understanding, indirectly

shows us how extremely fortunate we are to have been presented with unmistakable methods. Thus we need to really cherish these unmistakable methods, acknowledge them and put them into practice.

The next verse under this heading is:

36. *Some are obstructed and jump from heights,
Eat poison and other unbecoming things;
With unmeritorious actions
They harm themselves.*

These unthinkable things actually do happen—we see so much harm arising from drastic actions done out of ignorance. So we really need to be cautious and wary of the afflictions.

As Gyaltsab Je states in his commentary:

Some are obstructed by the afflictions and jump from great heights, eat poison and other disagreeable things. Through non-meritorious negative actions that are the cause for the lower realms they harm themselves in this and in future lives. How can it be appropriate to be angry when one is harmed by others?

Here, *obstruction* indicates an obstruction to one's life. Due to being weighed down by great suffering, and a longing to be free from that suffering, there are those who, out of ignorance, take their own life by hanging themselves, or, as mentioned here, by jumping off a cliff or bridges. Others take poison and other harmful substances and they do this out of ignorance, with the intention of ending their suffering. They want to be free from their suffering but because they don't have the correct method they have no choice but to resort to such actions.

These, as mentioned earlier, are everyday occurrences. So we can see the relevance of Shantideva's presentation even in our modern times: we see so many ignorant people taking drastic measures, thinking that they can free themselves from suffering.

Many ignorant beings, which includes ourselves, regularly create *non-meritorious negative actions that are the cause for the lower realms*. With the intention to either gain some happiness or remove some suffering we regularly engage in non-virtuous actions, such as the ten non-virtuous actions of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and so forth. I have mentioned previously that there are some who feel uncomfortable when they don't have an opportunity to create negativity, and glad when they have an opportunity to create some negativity. So you can see I was not making this up—this is indeed exactly what Shantideva is presenting here. We willingly create so many negativities, which are actually the cause for rebirth in the lower realms.

So if there are those who create harm for themselves in this and future lives, then *how can it be appropriate to be angry when one is harmed by others?* This rhetorical question implies that it is inappropriate to be angry with those who are constantly engaged in harming themselves in this and future lives. Rather than anger, one should develop compassion for them.

So the main emphasis here is that those who act in this way are an object of our compassion rather than anger.

This, in essence, is the meaning of the heading, *Bringing to Mind the Method for Compassion*.

1.3.1.2. IF THEY COMMIT SUICIDE DUE TO IGNORANCE, IT IS NO GREAT SURPRISE THAT THEY HARM OTHERS

This heading emphasises the point that if, out of ignorance and other afflictions, people can take their own life—one's most cherished and prized possession—then it is no great surprise that they would harm others. The verse under this heading reads:

37. *When under the control of the afflictions
Suffering sentient beings even kill themselves.
How could it be that at such time
They do not harm the body of others?*

We need to see how the practices, such as patience, that are being presented in this text and others are the profound practices of the great noble beings, the bodhisattvas. First of all, we need to see how profound these presentations are. Secondly, we need to recognise that the methods and means to actually practice are really profound. Thirdly, we can also acknowledge the fact that those who actually engaged in these practices, the bodhisattvas, are indeed great noble beings. Then a deep sense of veneration and genuine respect and admiration for bodhisattvas will arise. This is how we need to relate to the advice being presented here.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

When one falls under the control of the afflictions one will suffer at heart, and be despondent and even kill oneself. At this time, how could it come that one does not harm the body of other sentient beings? By thinking that it is impossible not to be harmed it is unsuitable to get angry.

What is clearly explained in the commentary is that any being who *falls under the control of the afflictions* will experience much mental agony. Then they become *despondent*, feeling completely hopeless and worthless. Under such circumstances some people will not hesitate to take their own life, and thus destroy their most prized possession. So if, under the influence and dominance of the afflictions, an individual is capable of taking such drastic measures as taking their own life, then it is no wonder that they are capable of harming others.

In the commentary this is presented as a rhetorical question, *At this time, how could it come that one does not harm the body of other sentient beings?*, which indicates that harming others is more likely, as it is a much easier task. Therefore *by thinking that it is impossible not to be harmed, it is unsuitable to get angry*.

By contemplating this point one understands how beings who become angry and harm themselves are an object of compassion rather than scorn.

1.3.1.3. IT IS SUITABLE TO BE COMPASSIONATE WITH THAT PERSON

Because of the examples given earlier, it is suitable to be compassionate towards such beings. This is the point where the emphasis is placed on those who engage in harming themselves. These of course are very important points, and this is an unmistakable presentation of how to engage in these practices. When we reflect on what we hear and study, we need to try to implement it as much

as possible in our lives. If we just leave it to a mere act of listening out of curiosity, then while there might be some benefit in hearing these sacred words, our minds are not likely to change much. If we don't actually put it into practice, it won't have the benefit of transforming our mind.

We are, of course, under the influence of the afflictions, but if we take this advice to heart and try, at the very least, to aspire to these practices by emulating them, then it will definitely help to transform our minds. Even though anger still arises, we won't be completely dominated or influenced by it. The intensity of anger can definitely be reduced; this is how we begin to become a genuinely gentler and calmer person.

That transformation will definitely happen when we try to implement these points into our practice. On the next occasion when someone harms us, or wrongly accuses us, then instead of immediately reacting with anger and finding every reason to justify being angry with them, if we can just remember the points that Shantideva presents here, then it is most likely that we can protect our mind. Rather than becoming angry with this person, it is possible to develop some compassion for them.

The verse relating to this heading is:

38. *Even if one cannot generate compassion
For those that, due to generation of afflictions,
Commit suicide and so forth,
Why should anger have the last word?*

Gyalsab Je's commentary on this verse is not too obscure for us to understand.

It is suitable to practise compassion towards such a person that, upon having generated afflictions, harms others as explained above and even kills themselves. Even if compassion is not generated then how can anger be the final word? It is extremely unsuitable to get angry.

The main emphasis is that when one sees the condition of others, who *upon having generated afflictions harm others, and even kill themselves*, it is suitable to practise compassion for such individuals.

Even if one is not able to generate great compassion for them, then, at the very least *how can anger be the final word?* In response to this rhetorical question, the final point presented here is that *it is extremely unsuitable to become angry* with such individual beings who are driven by afflictions.

1.3.2. Stopping the Cause of Anger

This heading is sub-divided into three:

1.3.2.1. If childishness is their nature, then anger is unsuitable

1.3.2.2. Although the fault of harming is adventitious, anger is unsuitable

1.3.2.3. Anger is unsuitable when the direct causes are analysed

Of course the term *childishness* is not to be taken literally. It is a translation of a Tibetan word meaning 'like a child'. It refers to ordinary beings, as opposed to the supreme beings, the bodhisattvas.

In another text there is an indication of how, just as it is extremely difficult for a child to see a hair in the palm of

the hand, all pervasive suffering is extremely profound and hard to comprehend. This is an analogy illustrating the meaning of the term meaning 'like a child'.

1.3.2.1. IF CHILDISHNESS IS THEIR NATURE, THEN ANGER IS UNSUITABLE

The verse under this heading is:

39. *In case harming others
Is the nature of the childish,
It is as unsuitable to be angry at them
As it is to be resentful at the burning nature of
fire.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

If harming others is in the nature of the childish, who do not know what has to be practised and what has to be abandoned, and, then it is unsuitable to be angry at them; just as it is unsuitable to be resentful and angry at fire for being in the nature of burning.

There are two aspects to *if harming others is the nature of the childish who do not know what has to be practised, and what has to be abandoned*. The first aspect is not knowing what has to be practised, and what has to be abandoned. The second is that one might know what has to be abandoned and what has to be adopted but, through being overwhelmed by the afflictions, one does not engage in this practice.

Not knowing what is to be practised and what is to be abandoned may be excusable if someone has not had that explained to them, and so they have no understanding. However, some people receive the teachings, and have a clear understanding of what has to be abandoned and what has to be practised, but they are still so strongly dominated by the afflictions that they are not able to actually engage in the practices. Most of us fit into that category!

These are the shortcomings of the childish, or ordinary beings. So it is unsuitable to become angry with them, because they either don't know what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded, or because they are so overwhelmed with strong afflictions they are not able to engage in the practices of adopting what is to be adopted, and abandoning what is to be abandoned. Thus, because they have no control over their own minds, it is unsuitable to be angry with them.

The analogy that is used here is that *it is unsuitable to be resentful and angry at fire for being in the nature of burning*. The very nature of fire is that it burns. So being resentful or angry with fire because it has the nature of burning, is pointless. Just as it is silly to be resentful and angry with fire because it has the nature of burning, likewise it is unsuitable to be angry with the childish, who either don't know, or are completely overwhelmed by the afflictions. It is because of their nature that they harm themselves and others, so it is unsuitable to retaliate, or be angry with them.

1.3.2.2. ALTHOUGH THE FAULT OF HARMING IS ADVENTITIOUS, ANGER IS UNSUITABLE

The verse under this heading reads:

40. *Then, even if this fault is temporary
And the nature of sentient beings is wholesome,
It is still not suitable to become angry,
Like being resentful that smoke rises in space.*

Here, Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Even if the fault of harming others arises adventitiously and the nature of the mind of sentient beings is wholesome and gentle, it is still unsuitable to become angry at the harmer, because that would be as unsuitable as being resentful at space for letting smoke to arise.

The nature of the mind of sentient beings is wholesome and gentle, and thus the act of harming others arises only adventitiously. This means that harming others occurs only occasionally, when the all the adverse conditions are intact. As mentioned here, it is *unsuitable to become angry with the harmer*, just as it is *unsuitable to be angry with space for letting smoke arise*. Other commentaries use the example of clouds developing. If we desire a sunny clear sky, it would be pointless being resentful about any temporary obstruction such as clouds or smoke. In fact being resentful about the sky allowing smoke or clouds to arise would be quite silly.

1.3.2.3. ANGER IS UNSUITABLE WHEN THE DIRECT CAUSES ARE ANALYSED

The verse presented under this heading is often quoted in the teachings. Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins with an argument:

Argument: It is suitable to get angry as the other person is harming me.

41. *Though I am contacted directly by the stick,
If I am getting angry at the wielder,
Since they are induced by hatred,
I should get angry at hatred instead.*

Then Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning of the verse:

Answer: If I were to get angry at that which directly harms me then, since I am directly touched by the stick, weapon and so forth, and thus harmed by them, it would be suitable to get angry at them. Then, since they are not doing this independently, but are wielded by a person, if one were to get angry at the wielder, they are also without independence due to hatred. Instead of getting angry at these two I should get angry at hatred.

If we were to reason that we should be angry at what directly harms us, then we should be angry with the stick, or weapon, that actually makes contact with us. However common sense tells us that even though the stick caused us the direct pain, it would not be able to hurt us by itself, because it has to be wielded by someone. Therefore, even though it makes direct contact with us, it is not really the stick that causes the pain. Rather, the real cause is the wielder of the stick, so therefore one has reason to become upset and angry with that person.

In other words the stick is not hitting us independently, but is wielded by a person, so it is pointless being angry with the stick. The logic being presented here is that the wielder of the stick is also without independence, and is controlled by hatred.

If one is able to use logic and the common sense reasoning of not becoming upset at the stick because it is not independently hurting us, then that same line of logic also applies to the wielder of the stick, because they are, in turn, controlled by the afflictions. They are not acting independently as they are controlled by the afflictions.

So the conclusion is that *instead of becoming angry at these two—the stick and the person—one should instead become angry at hatred*, or the afflictions.

We can use this meticulous line of reasoning to further develop our own ability to use reasoning and logic to make the right decisions, followed by the correct means of engaging in whatever activity we do. We need to take, from the logic presented here, the proper way of conducting ourselves in all activities that we engage in. If one were to really contemplate these points, one can see that they give us a lot of room to use profound reasoning and logic in daily life. If one does not think much about them, then of course one will not really see their value.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcribed by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་པོ་འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷོ་ལ་འཇམ་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

9 December 2014

As usual we will spend some time in meditation.

[meditation]

The *tong len* practice is a profound practice that can really assist us if we actually implement it. With respect to the *taking* part of the practice, we may not see the relevance of taking the suffering of others upon ourselves at first, and so the benefit of that part of the practice may not be immediately evident. However there is an obvious direct benefit in the *giving* part of the practice, as it is the immediate cause for the generation of love and compassion. Once love and compassion has been generated within one's heart then one will naturally and spontaneously act to benefit other sentient beings. So we can easily relate to the benefits of the *giving* part of the practice.

When one wishes for others to be endowed with happiness and to be free from suffering, and has the determination to bring about their happiness and free them from suffering, then that can definitely lead one to act in ways to bring about happiness for others, and help to remove their suffering.

The meditation and mental training that we do now will be transformed into actions that benefit others. Those who are deprived of happiness definitely wish for happiness, and those who experience suffering definitely want to be free from suffering. So if we help them to achieve this, we are benefitting others in a very practical way. So we can see that this practice is really the essence of the Buddha's teaching.

When we generate these two most precious states of mind—love and compassion—then we are naturally inclined to benefit other sentient beings. As the second Dalai Lama, Gedun Gyatso mentioned, when one generates the mind of compassion, then that instils the wish to benefit other sentient beings. Thus, a mind of love and compassion is a most valuable and supreme state of mind, which serves as a basis for benefiting sentient beings.

A mind of genuine, unconditional love and compassion that is devoid of self-cherishing and attachment, which is accompanied with the sole intention of benefiting others, is indeed a most supreme state of mind. The more we familiarise ourselves with generating love and compassion, the more we will develop that genuine feeling within ourselves, and the kinder and gentler our mind will become. This is the practical benefit of the *tong len* practice.

The practice of giving encompasses giving one's body, possessions and root of virtue. It involves initially training the mind in selflessly giving one's body, possessions and root virtues to others. As indicated in the

teachings, having trained our mind, we then need to actually practise giving to others, as way of directly benefiting sentient beings.

As the teachings explain, mind-training needs to be followed by actual practice. The way to measure our progress in this practice is to check whether our mind of giving has in fact increased. We do this practice in a form of meditation. However, reciting a prayer, and sitting for a few minutes with closed eyes is not sufficient, if it doesn't actually transform our mind into the mind of giving. When we can see that our mind of giving has actually increased and become more natural, then that is a true mark of progress, and a positive transformation.

The teachings indicate that we need to give away our body as well as our possessions and root virtues. Now, we may have not reached the point where we are readily able to give our body parts, which of course is the practice of the great bodhisattvas. However, by training our mind in giving our body in thought, we are familiarising ourselves with the practice, thus drawing closer to being able to actually give our bodies.

Practice needs to be manageable and practical, so that means engaging in practices that are in accordance with our ability. What we need to really contemplate is minimising the mind of wishing harm upon others. The true mark of progress is when the mind wishing harm upon others is reduced, and the mind of wishing to benefit others is increased.

As advised further, one needs to immediately regard any sentient being one happens to meet as being as kind as one's mother and remember that, 'They are the supreme field of my merit, because by relying on sentient beings I will be able to accomplish all the necessary conditions (such as accumulating merit and wisdom) for achieving enlightenment. Therefore this being is really precious to me. If I endeavour to please this sentient being then that will be the equivalent to pleasing all the buddhas and bodhisattvas'. That is how we need to relate to other sentient beings.

As Shantideva mentions

*When looking at sentient beings say,
"In dependence on this very sentient being
I will become a buddha",
And look at them honestly and lovingly.*

So we need to see any sentient being we encounter as being the cause for our enlightenment. In addition to reciting that verse and remembering its meaning, one also needs to put it into practice. We need to be able to look at any sentient being, and think, 'This sentient being is the cause for me to become enlightened', and hold that being with the mind of compassion.

Memorising a verse such as this and then reciting is a way to train the mind. As the teachings indicate, one needs to first train with words. So when we do the *tong len* practice we begin by reciting this verse from the *Guru Puja*:

And thus, O Venerable Compassionate Gurus, we
seek your blessings,
That all karmic debts, obstacles and sufferings of
Mother beings,
May without exception ripen upon us right now,

And that we may give our happiness and virtue to others

And thereby invest all beings in bliss.

That recitation helps to instil the actual meaning of the practice into one's mind. That is why the teachings advise us to first train in the words, which means memorising those words and then, whilst reciting them, bringing the meaning of the words to mind.

In summary, the essential advice is to practise to the extent that one is capable. This eliminates excuses about not engaging in practices because one doesn't know enough, and so forth. In fact, as some teachers have advised, we are not deprived of the knowledge of how to practice, but we are deprived of the actual effort to put in the practice. So, beginning with the basics, we need to actually apply whatever we have learnt.

Essentially, this means integrating the practices into your minds. If we think of practices as being exterior practices, and live our life in a manner that is not in accord with the teachings, then that is where we will fall short of any true transformation. We need to integrate our practises into our minds so that we always carry them with us, in whatever we do.

When they hear such advice, anyone who is keen to put the Dharma into practice will say to themselves, 'Yes, this is meant for me. This is what I need to be doing'. But when someone who is not too keen on practice hears such advice they will think, 'Oh yes, I have heard that before. I already know that' and thus fall short in implementing the advice. They have reached a dangerous point where they have this false assumption that they know all that they hear, and they don't relate it to themselves. There is a particular term in Tibetan, *cho drep*, sometimes translated as *immune to the Dharma*, which is derived from the fact that no matter how long you boil some vegetables, they never really cook well. This sort of analogy is used to describe someone who hears advice and instructions in the teachings, but keeps thinking, 'Oh yes, I have heard that before. It doesn't relate to me, because I already know it'. If that is their attitude then how could the advice in the Dharma ever help them to transform their own mind? The Dharma only transforms the mind if one takes it to heart, and practises what one hears.

Another example of how we might relate something in the teachings to some external factor is the teaching on impermanence, which is an essential teaching for helping to transform the mind. If, for example, a glass breaks and one has heard the teaching on impermanence and how things are transitory and change moment by moment, then one might think, 'Oh yes, of course. This is an example of impermanence'. However, that does not actually instil any sort of personal realisation of how one is also impermanent and changing from moment to moment. In particular, one's own life is also fragile and changing moment by moment. If one is able to relate the glass breaking to oneself in that way, then one has then taken the teaching on impermanence as a personal instruction, and used the external event as an impetus to practise the Dharma.

For those who are keen to practise, witnessing someone's death will also be a very strong impetus to remind

themselves of the fragility of their own life, and the need to practise before the moment of death arises. So we can see the difference it makes, when an instruction is applied on a personal level and put into practice.

Coming back to the main point, the practice of love and compassion is essential. We might not be able to generate the bodhicitta attitude right now, but we do have access to its base which is love and compassion. So it is just a matter of actually contemplating and putting effort into generating those states of mind. That is something we definitely can do, and generating the thought of love and compassion to the best of our ability, and meditating on that, is essential for our practice.

When we are able to generate the thought of love and compassion to a certain extent, then it becomes easier to actually move to the next step of developing the special intention in which one takes on the personal responsibility of benefiting sentient beings. One thinks, 'It is not sufficient to merely wish other beings to be free from suffering and endowed with happiness. I need to take responsibility for doing that myself. I need to take on the responsibility of freeing all beings from every type of suffering, and leading them to the state of ultimate happiness'. When we take personal responsibility in this way, then our minds become a much more fertile ground for the development of actual bodhicitta.

After having developed the special intention, we realise, 'Even though I wholeheartedly want to take on the responsibility of freeing all beings from suffering, and leading them to the ultimate state of happiness, the reality is that I don't have that ability right now'. So one contemplates, 'Who has that ability? How can I possibly achieve this ability myself?' That is when one contemplates reaching the state of enlightenment, and how it is a perfected state, where one is free from all adversity and has developed all qualities. At this point one thinks, 'When I have achieved that state of enlightenment, then I will have the capacity and ability to free all beings from suffering, and lead them to happiness'. It is at that point one has generated a very firm foundation for generating bodhicitta.

Over the past year we have been studying Shantideva's precious text together. Studying this text and making the effort together makes us real Dharma friends. From the teacher's side, I have tried my best in presenting it, and from your side, you have placed all of your attention on listening to the teachings, and trying to study them. We have made that joint effort to study this profound text by Shantideva, which presents the unmistakable methods of generating bodhicitta and then practising the six perfections. So we can all rejoice in our joint efforts.

As a result we have definitely accumulated a great amount of root virtue. So we need to secure and increase it so that it does not go to waste. Thus we rejoice in and dedicate that virtue, which is a supreme practice.

One of the greatest prayers of aspiration that is a means to dedicate one's virtues is the *King of Prayers*. As we did last year, we will recite it again, not only as a supreme means to rejoice and dedicate for our own virtues, but also as a means to dedicate that virtue to those who are connected to the Centre who are unwell, and those who

have passed away. Because of the connection we have with them, and the connection that they have with the Centre, our practice will definitely benefit them as well. So this is not just a personal practice

Of course, as you recite it in English, I will have to recite it in Tibetan. However I don't necessarily feel left out, as I'm happy and proud to be reciting the text in Tibetan! Tibetan is now being accepted as being one of the most supreme languages for the study of the Dharma. Leaving aside the contents of the texts such as Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, the language is incredibly rich with lots of deeper meanings in the words. It would be quite difficult to find any other language, even in other Buddhist countries, which presents the teachings so profoundly.

Only in Tibetan will you find all of the Buddha's doctrine intact. Many works were translated into Chinese, but a lot of them have been since destroyed. There are some Japanese translations, but I have heard that you need to know Chinese characters to be able to read them. So Tibetan is one of the rare languages that has kept all of the Buddha's doctrine intact. That is why I can claim Tibetan to be supreme. I value the language and don't wish to forget it.

Given that Buddha's teachings are preserved in the Tibetan language, it seems quite reasonable to think that being reborn as a Tibetan might be a reasonable aspiration.

There are now many Buddhist scholars in America and other countries who only became renowned after they learned Tibetan and studied the texts directly in the Tibetan language. Glen Mullin once told me that every big university in America has one student of late Geshe Ngawang Dhargye as a staff member, which has to imply that he was a great teacher. I have heard that Glen is a very learned man himself, with a very intelligent mind. I gather that he has translated many texts and also written the history of all the previous Dalai Lamas.

Glen presented me some of these translated works himself, and told me that the late Geshe Ngawang Dhargye had advised him that it will be good for him to engage in the Dharma activity of translation and so forth. But in order to do that, he advised that it would be good, not just to learn Tibetan, but to also have some understanding in the debate system. That is why Glen was advised to go to the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics in Dharamsala, where he studied for a while.

Apparently Glen indulged in a care-free hippie lifestyle in his youth. However, he developed a connection with Gen Rinpoche, Geshe Ngawang Dhargye. He would visit Geshe-la in the evening, and Geshe-la would reprimand him about his ways. Then slowly, slowly he began to transform himself to the point where he really got into the Dharma, and became a good scholar.

Before reciting *The King of Prayers*, generate a bodhicitta motivation that is based on the intention:

For the sake of all sentient beings, and to lead them to the ultimate state of happiness and free them from all suffering, I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will recite this prayer, and dedicate it to that purpose.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcribed by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© **Tara Institute**



*Shantideva's
Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡེད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Ven. Michael Lobsang Yeshe

2015 Notes

Tara Institute
3 Mavis Avenue
East Brighton VIC 3187
Tel: (03) 9586 8900

A branch of FPMT, the Foundation
for the Preservation of the
Mahayana Tradition, a network of
Buddhist Centres in Australia and
worldwide.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་ཀྱི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

17 February 2015

As usual we can spend some time in meditation. For this we use the motivation that we generated in the refuge and bodhicitta prayer.

[meditation]

Today, we meet again to begin our study program for the year.

All of you will probably be aware of the discipline that is an integral part of the study group program, so I don't need to go into detail about that. It would, however, be good for the senior students to explain the commitments to any new students.

For the senior students it's good to remember these commitments. Just listing them is not sufficient—we have to actually put them into practice. For example, last year when we did our recitation of Shantideva's text, there were many who did not attend on the day, so I have to assume that you did that recitation at home.

One can be aware that these commitments are virtuous in nature, but if one fails to engage in that commitment then one should be able to recognise that as being a personal fault, and that something is missing. Not meeting that commitment indicates that one is not practising what one knows intellectually. This also applies in daily life.

This also brings to light the situation where people can relate to others by grandly talking about practice, and the points of Buddhism, but when it comes to themselves they fail to put it into practice. Personally, I find that discrepancy a bit strange. This discrepancy between relating the teaching to others, but not putting it into practice oneself, really comes down to not paying much attention to cultivating a true sense of love and compassion within one's heart. The giving and taking meditation practice that we did earlier is a practice that instils and further establishes this love and compassion within oneself.

If one actually lacks a true sense of love and compassion, or even just a keen wish to develop love and compassion, then all sorts of faults begin to affect the rest of our practice, and it will not be very effective at all. This is something we really need to pay attention to; ultimately the very basis of our practice is love and compassion, so that should be our primary focus.

If we are preoccupied with self interest, and always thinking about our own needs or agendas or interests, then that is where we fall short of putting the Dharma into practice. If we really think about it, is there any benefit in always focussing on oneself and one's own interest? Does it actually benefit one? Does it really help? Personally I don't find it helpful at all. I find that rather than benefitting oneself it is actually harmful to one's development.

Thinking only of one's own interests makes it very difficult to associate with others, because it becomes very hard to really relate to them. Whereas when one's mind is imbued with genuinely thinking about others and their welfare, it is

much easier to relate to others. That is something which I'm sure you would have experienced for yourselves.

The main point that I'm emphasising here is the importance of really taking to heart the practice of cultivating love and compassion. We attempt to meditate on love and compassion at the beginning of each session, and the purpose of that is to help to really transform our minds. When we look back, has our practice of meditating on love and compassion over the past year brought about a significant change in us or not?

If we find there has been no change in our attitude and state of mind, then we need to acknowledge that the fault lies within ourselves and is not a fault of the practice. That is because we have not actually implemented that practice into our lives. If we see that there has been an improvement, then that is a good sign. Whatever we have practised in the last year should develop a little bit further this year; that is how we make progress in our practice.

That's also true for any normal mundane activity. Whatever we do in daily life should follow exactly the same procedure of using the experience one has gained in the previous year as a base on which to improve that activity in the new year.

With our progress in the practice of Dharma, if we have found that our mind has not improved over the previous year and that there is no improvement taking place this year, then we need recognise that as our fault, and not the fault of the Dharma. This is how we need to gauge our progress, by looking into where the fault really lies. The Buddha gave us the very clear analogy of how the doctor prescribes a treatment such as medication and so forth, but if the patient doesn't take the medication, they cannot hope to be cured. Blaming the doctor is completely baseless. It's not the fault of the doctor, it's not the fault of the medication or the treatment either; if the patient has not taken the medication, then the fault lies there. This illustration shows us how to engage in the practice of Dharma.

Rather than finding fault and always blaming others, our preoccupation needs to be with our own state of mind. I don't approve of those who always talk about the mistakes of others and pick on their faults, but never seem to take much initiative in improving themselves. When I encounter people who constantly complain and talk about the faults of others, that indicates to me that there is a lack of love and compassion in their heart.

We have all seen that there are some people, who, as soon as there is some sort of social engagement or meeting, quite readily talk about others' faults and so forth. I don't approve of that. Rather, one should be checking one's own state of mind, looking at one's own faults, and trying to improve on that. It's a matter of trying to work on one's own mind, rather than finding fault with others.

This is the real purpose of meditating on love and compassion. The *tong-len* practice that we do at the beginning of every session is said to be one of the best practices to develop love and compassion, and for a bodhisattva it is one of the greatest practices. We may not have actually cultivated genuine bodhicitta yet, and our practice of *tong-len*, or giving and taking, may not yet be a fully-formed practice. Nevertheless, even that contrived bodhicitta attitude, that similitude of the bodhicitta motivation that we base on the refuge prayer, is the basis of a sense of real purpose and deeper meaning. At our level that is what we base our practice on, and then we gradually

improve on that. We really need to keep the essentials of the practice in our mind.

It is because of our acquaintance over many years, and with a sense of genuine care and love and compassion for you, that I say all of this to you. From the very beginning my commitment to remain and teach here has always been with the intention that sharing the Dharma with you will actually benefit your mind. Essentially the whole purpose of the Dharma is ultimately to help to transform one's mind.

As the great masters have repeatedly emphasised, we can gauge the effectiveness of our meditation practice when we see a decrease in the delusions in our minds. When one notices that there is a decrease in these delusions, then that is a true mark of the meditation practice and the Dharma practice having had a positive effect. This instruction indicates to us that we can gauge our progress in our practice for ourselves. We practise Dharma meditation so that the delusions decrease, so we can check for ourselves whether that is happening or not.

In fact, when we repeatedly look into the real cause of problems in our life we find that it is the unsubdued mind that is the cause of all our mental turmoil. We need to see that the ultimate purpose of our practice is to ensure that it actually hits the mark of reducing the real troublemaker in our mind, which is the delusions. That is the ultimate purpose.

You are not just interested in the Dharma, but you are also keen in practising the Dharma, therefore I consider you to be practitioners. I want to reassure you that the purpose of the practice of Dharma is to weaken the delusions in the mind. I want to remind you that when you see delusions such as attachment and anger and pride reducing, or when you see less competitiveness arising out of jealousy, then you will understand that it has been your practice that has been the means to serve that purpose. This is how we need to see the value of the Dharma.

We all wish to achieve and strive to have a positive, kind and happy mind. Conversely, none of us wishes to experience an unhappy state of mind. What I'm reminding you of here is the causes that will bring about a more positive, kinder and happier state of mind, and what will reduce unhappiness. When we really look into why we experience unhappy states of mind then we will find that the causes don't lie outside, and that the ultimate cause of an unhappy mind lies within.

Specifically, it is the delusions that cause unhappy states of mind. We need to be able to recognise that the more we apply the antidotes for overcoming negative states of mind (such as anger, jealousy, pride and so forth), the more our mind becomes genuinely happier. Applying the antidotes for overcoming jealousy, pride and so forth makes our mind more relaxed, calm and genuinely happier. We need to understand the antidotes, and actually apply them, so that they help to reduce negative states of mind.

The essential practice comes down to developing love and compassion. The more we do that, the more it actually helps the mind. In a practical sense a lot of the mental agony we experience is caused by our biased attitudes towards others. The practice of cultivating immeasurable equanimity, which precedes developing love and compassion is in fact a practice that really helps to develop an unbiased attitude towards others, not discriminating between friends, enemies and strangers. Attitudes like having a strong sense of clinging to those who are close, and being distant to others,

can, at the very least, be reduced, and even overcome when one embraces the practice of, for example, developing immeasurable equanimity. Immeasurable love and immeasurable compassion, not to mention a lack of discrimination, actually leads to seeing everyone as being close. The way to cultivate that state of mind is to familiarise ourselves with these attitudes again and again, and really try to develop them within ourselves.

I spend a lot of time contemplating these points. I cannot claim in any way that I've developed love and compassion, but to the extent that I've devoted some time and energy towards developing that, what I can say is that it definitely helps my mind to become much more genuinely relaxed, and much more settled. As I often relate to you, my best companion is the positive state of mind of love and compassion, and the happy mind that follows from that. It definitely helps me in my life, and it seems to have a positive effect upon others too. I can definitely vouch for this from my experience.

I cannot emphasise enough that the essence of the Dharma is really love and compassion, specifically the love and compassion that is not stained by the self-cherishing mind. That is what pure love and compassion is—it is a love and compassion not stained by the self-cherishing mind. As mentioned earlier, developing that pure love and compassion needs to be based on developing our mind so that it does not discriminate between friends, enemies and strangers.

The practice of immeasurable equanimity involves overcoming the strong feelings of attachment when one focuses on friends, and overcoming anger when focussing on enemies, and overcoming a sense of indifference when focussing on strangers. It is these two different aspects of holding some close and others distant that cause a biased state of mind.

When one actually develops the mind of immeasurable equanimity, one will no longer have any sense of liking or dislike. Rather, one will embrace all equally. This is a point made by the Seventh Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Kelsang Gyatso. I'm not randomly making these points up. They are, in fact, all related to the sayings and writings of the great masters of the past, in which they explained the teachings from the perspective of their own practice and their own experiences. The important points that I share with you are based on those sources.

So it is important that we attempt to develop a love that is not sullied by a self-cherishing mind, and a compassion that is not sullied by the self-cherishing mind. Then we can really work on developing an unconditional love and compassion towards all beings.

Now while what I have said so far might not have been in an orderly, sequential manner, I have nevertheless been attempting to present to you the essential points of practice and so forth. So it is worthwhile that you really keep this in mind.

The great master Atisha gave us some very profound advice: 'The best instruction is to check one's state of mind'. Furthermore, he says 'Hide one's qualities and proclaim one's own faults, while hiding the faults of others and proclaiming their qualities'. That is an essential practice, and a very profound piece of advice that we need to really try to embrace at all times.

In his recent teachings in India, His Holiness the Dalai Lama mentioned something to the same effect. As those of you

who were at the teachings might recall, he was reprimanding the abbots and saying it is not sufficient to hold a high position, while piously thinking "Oh I've done quite well, and things are quite OK", when things are actually falling apart, such as the discipline of the monks becoming lax, and other faults in the monastery. Pretending that there are no problems and that everything is fine is not a good practice. His Holiness was pointing out that it is very important to really look out for faults, and if things are not going so well, acknowledge that, and try to fix the problem right from the start.

These are some of the profound points made by the great Kadampa masters of the past. This essential advice is what we need to keep in mind at all times: always be ready to talk about your own faults, rather than proclaiming your qualities, and be ready to talk about the qualities of others, rather than bringing out their faults and criticising them.

As mentioned previously, the essence of the Buddha's teachings is love and compassion, and so every attempt we make to develop love and compassion is moving in the right direction. Fully developing love and compassion is our ultimate task. And a teaching that profoundly and unmistakably presents the methods for developing love and compassion, followed by developing the altruistic awakening mind of bodhicitta, is this very text that we are studying, Shantideva's *Bodhisattva's Way of Life*.

This is a text which has been praised by all the great masters. His Holiness the Dalai Lama praises it again and again, saying that the depth and breadth of the instructions of how to develop love and compassion that are found in Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavata* are unequalled. When it is hard for us to consistently practise love and compassion, we need to, on a regular basis, read this text as much as possible and contemplate its meaning. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said, just remembering and acknowledging the value of such teachings can, in itself, be a great practice; reminding us again of the importance of love and compassion.

We, of course, have received many teachings on this text, and sometimes we may fail to see its real value. Yet other people who do not even consider themselves as Buddhists really seem to see its great value. Just last Friday I was invited out for lunch by a Chinese lady called Cynthia, and we went to a Chinese restaurant in New Street, a little bit up from Bay Street. We parked quite close to a very nice building and I jokingly commented that it must be worth millions of dollars.

When we returned to the car after lunch we noticed someone was watering the garden while someone else was feeding the dog. Then the man feeding the dog saw me, said "Hello", and came over to greet me. He said that he was not the owner, but was overseeing its renovation. He said, "I can show you inside". So he took us inside and showed us all of the features of the ground floor. He said that the house was over a hundred years old, and that a lot of those features were genuinely unique. Then he pointed out one element, and said that the only other building in Melbourne with the same sort of patterns and designs was Parliament House.

He was very courteous and very, very nice. As we came out of the building he asked me, "Where are you from?", and I replied "I'm actually a Tibetan Buddhist monk". Then he said "Oh, like the Dalai Lama. Are you following the same sort of tradition?" Then he went onto comment that the wisdom and knowledge that the Dalai Lama imparts is not just good, but indeed perfect.

Our conversation continued when he asked where I lived, and I replied that the building where I lived in might be even older than this house. He seemed quite surprised, and took down the details of the address of Tara Institute.

Then he asked me "How do you find Australia", and I said that I find Melbourne really nice. He said that although he was born here, his parents are of Italian descent. They had travelled around the world, and gone to many different countries, and then having come to Australia, had found that Australia was really the best place for them to live.

At this point he introduced his son, who was the person watering the garden, and went on to offer to show us the entire building when it's completely finished. It really is a very grand place, and must have been really expensive to buy and renovate. Then the other workers all came up and shook my hand, and were really happy to see me.

This is just one small example of how, even though I haven't, as I mentioned earlier, developed any kind of significant realisation, my attempts to embrace love and compassion, seeing them as being of paramount importance, has definitely been of benefit. Even without any sort of formal understanding or knowledge, people just seem to relate to me and are happy to greet me and so forth. That's my own experience. Relating this story to you is yet another attempt to point out that when one makes a genuine attempt to familiarise oneself with the attitudes of love and compassion, making it a core practice, it definitely helps to reduce a lot of negative mindsets. These negative attitudes are naturally overcome by the positive attitudes of love and compassion.

We can all relate to the types of delusions that lead to negative minds. All of us have had the experience that as soon as a delusion takes hold of one's mind it really weighs one down, leaving one feeling unsettled, with a very heavy, dark sort of mind. These dark feelings all arise due to the predominance of negative states of mind, which quite readily manifest themselves in our minds. The more we attempt to develop, cultivate and recognise the love and compassion which is within ourselves, the less the opportunity for the negative sort of minds to arise. Thus, as the delusions become less prominent, our mind becomes happier, lighter and more joyful. We can see that the state of our mind, whether it is happy or unhappy, is not related to external things. Rather, it's dependent on our own state of mind. In other words, our overall state of mind depends on the most predominant attitudes in our mind.

I am openly sharing all of this with you as friends, using my own experiences and the attempts that I have made which have definitely helped my mind. I can confidently predict that if you make the same attempt it will definitely help you in your life as well.

This is what I bring back from India to share with you. I don't have any material things such as presents and the like to give you. In fact, whatever money I had was used to make offerings there, so there was not much left to buy presents for you. However I consider the advice that I have just given as my present to you.

To summarise this pith instruction, the more we familiarise ourselves with generating a positive state of mind, the more the negative states of mind will be naturally reduced. We need to really reflect upon that again and again.

What part of the outline are we up to now? What verse are we on?

[A student replies that we have completed the heading, Anger Is Unsuitable when the Direct or Indirect Causes Are Analysed, which was covered in verse 41. Geshe-la complimented her saying "You seem to be right on the ball, and that's good. Others are still looking for it!"]

This outline was the second part of an earlier outline and it particularly relates to not retaliating when others harm oneself. Now we move to the third subdivision of that outline.

STOPPING ANGER AT WRONGDOINGS DIRECTED AT ONESELF

1. TOLERATING THE GENERATION OF SUFFERING

1.3. Meditating on the patience that does not think anything of harm

1.3.3. Considering it one's fault if something undesirable is received¹

Putting patience into practice relates to the significant point of not retaliating when others harm us. Our normal, immediate reaction when we receive any harm is to retaliate out of anger. When we contemplate these points and change that attitude, then we are practising patience.

The point of this outline is that we need to realise that it is our own fault if we have some undesirable experience. This is again referring to the point about not retaliating when others harm us. At this point in the training, one trains one's mind to understand that if one is experiencing harm, then that is due one's own faults, rather than any fault of the other.

This is actually a very profound point. In fact it's actually presenting the profundity of karma. Therefore it is really an essential point to consider when thinking about the importance of practising patience. If one wishes to benefit others one cannot do that without the practice of patience. If, out of a sense of love and compassion, one attempts to benefit others, they may either show a lack of appreciation or even harm us. If we don't practise patience then that is the point where it will be very easy for us to actually give up any sense of wishing to benefit the other.

The most essential tool for benefitting others is developing and practising patience. Geshe Chengawa said that the essence of the Dharma is contained in these two lines:

Refrain from harming others,
While benefitting others

He said that when these two lines are practised effectively, they encapsulate all of the Dharma. The teachings of the Buddha in the form of the three baskets, as well as the practices of the three vehicles, are actually subsumed into these two lines. Being able to refrain from harming others when others harm oneself requires the practice of patience. It also helps us to not become disheartened when we try to benefit others. So we need to realise how essential it is to develop patience.

This outline, Considering It One's Fault If Something Undesirable Is Received, is divided into two parts:

1.3.3.1. The actual meaning

1.3.3.2. Refuting objections

When Shantideva was preparing his instructions and advice he would have thought, "When one experiences harm from

others, which stance would be most reasonable and beneficial? To think that it is their fault or one's own fault?" Of these two options Shantideva would have found that the greatest benefit comes from thinking that it is one's own fault. There is no actual loss but only gain in thinking in that way. Thinking that it is the other's fault will only serve to justify becoming angry and then retaliating.

So the practice of patience cannot be based on thinking that it's the other's fault. If one starts to understand that it's one's own fault that one is receiving the harm then that can be a sound basis to prevent anger from arising and for practising patience. So there is only gain in thinking in this way.

1.3.3.1. THE ACTUAL MEANING

This is subdivided into five:

1.3.3.1.1. Considering that it is one's own fault if one is harmed by others

1.3.3.1.2. It is the fault of holding onto the body which is a cause for suffering

1.3.3.1.3. It is the fault of having craved the cause of suffering in previous lives

1.3.3.1.4. The unsuitability of being angry at others by relating one's karma to the cause of their suffering

1.3.3.1.5 Anger is simply wrong and unsuitable

Having now listed the five subdivisions under this outline we can cover the verses relating to each of them in the following sessions.

We need to really contemplate this meticulously logical and systematic presentation. There is so much to contemplate here, and we really need to become familiar with it, and embrace it as the means for our practice.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcribed by Mark Emerson

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© Tara Institute

¹ The other two outlines are:

1.3.1. Bringing to Mind the Method of Compassion

1.3.2. Anger Is Unsuitable when the Direct or Indirect Causes Are Analysed

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱུང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བལྟགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

24 February 2015

Based on the motivation we generated during the recitation of the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, we will now engage in the practice of meditation. [meditation]

1.3.3. Considering it one's fault if something undesirable is received

1.3.3.1. THE ACTUAL MEANING

In our last session we introduced the five subdivisions under this outline.

The following verses contain very profound advice about why we need to practise patience with people who harm us. Taken at face value, this advice might seem quite unreasonable. How could being harmed by someone else be one's own fault? Without a proper understanding, this could sound quite crazy, so we need to understand this advice in its proper context.

1.3.3.1.1. Considering it one's own fault if one is harmed by others

The verse relating to this outline reads:

42. *I previously caused sentient beings
Harm similar to this.
Therefore it is suitable that
I receive now the harm that sentient beings
inflict.*

In essence, this is a presentation of cause and effect, the law of karma.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

Because I have caused the same harm that I am receiving now to sentient beings in a previous life, it is therefore appropriate that I now receive the harm that sentient beings inflict. Practise patience by thinking in this way.

While this explanation is quite clear, it is in fact a presentation of the subtle workings of karma. To understand this subtlety, one needs to have a deeper understanding of how karma works. As presented here, one is receiving harm now because one has caused a similar type of harm to sentient beings in past lives. Having harmed others in a similar way previously, the harm one is experiencing now is the ripening of the result of that previous harm. Thus one thinks, *It is therefore appropriate that I now receive the harm that sentient beings inflict upon me.* It is by thinking in this way that one will be able to practise patience.

If one already has a good understanding and faith in karma then, as presented here, one will be able to willingly accept suffering, because one understands that in the past one created the cause to experience such results.

As mentioned previously, willingly enduring suffering is said to be a paramount practice of patience, along with the patience of thinking about the Dharma. We don't need these two types of patience a lot of the time. After all, we don't encounter people who actually harm us all that often. So you extend this practice of willingly enduring suffering to all forms of discomfort and suffering.

With conviction in karma, knowing that when the cause is created, then the effect will definitely be experienced, one can immediately see one's experience of suffering as being the result of the karma that one created in the past. Then the mind of blaming the other for causing that harm will definitely not occur. One will be able to point the finger at karma, rather than blaming the person who is attacking or harming one.

When one practises patience in this way then the real benefit will be that one's mind does not become disturbed in the event of hardships such as pain and suffering. That is the real benefit of this practice. Of course we need to engage in this practice each and every day, as it is only with familiarity that we gain the benefit of the practice.

To re-emphasise these points, without a good understanding of, and conviction in karma, it would be very difficult to put this instruction into practice. Conviction in karma is developed when one contemplates how happiness arises from virtue, and how suffering arises from non-virtue. One needs to really understand if one creates virtue, then, unless it is destroyed by some negative karma or negative act, it will definitely reap the positive result of happiness. Likewise when one creates negative karma, then, if the non-virtue is not destroyed by purification, the result of suffering will definitely be experienced.

When one thoroughly understands this, then one develops a conviction in the infallibility of karma, which is that when the cause is created, the result will definitely be experienced. Karma is not a separate entity out there that brings us bad results. That is the wrong way to understand it. The negative results of karma and the positive results of virtue are to be understood as happening within one's own mental continuum, i.e. karma lies within one's own mental continuum. When contemplating karma, it is important to personalise it, and integrate it into one's own life.

The whole point of gaining conviction in karma is that it will enable one to apply one's three doors of body, speech and mind to engaging in virtue as much as possible, and avoid engaging in non-virtuous deeds as much as possible. Of course, we have covered karma in more detail in previous teachings. The point here is that one needs to use this conviction in karma to put these verses into practice.

Having an understanding of karma is said to be one of the basic ways to adopt virtue and avoid non-virtue, and a more profound way is that an understanding of selflessness and so forth is the antidote for overcoming delusions and so forth. These are the steps that we take in our practice.

1.3.3.1.2. It is the fault of holding onto the body that is a cause for suffering

Here the root verse reads:

43. *Their weapons and my body
Are both causes for the suffering.
Weapons come from them and the body from
me,
At whom shall I get angry?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on the verse reads:

Also for the following reason it is unsuitable to get angry: both the weapon of the other person and my body are causes for my suffering since my suffering is created by the other's weapon meeting with my body. At whom is one supposed to get angry? It is unsuitable to get angry at the other person alone.

Again, these are not obscure points. If we honestly check, we will accept this presentation as being very reasonable.

Normally we might immediately blame the person who inflicts physical harm on us, and become angry with them. Here, we are being asked to consider the causes of our pain, which are both the weapon that is used by the other person, as well as our own body. They are equally the cause of our suffering. When we consider this, then we see that it is unreasonable to see the other as the cause of the pain, and become angry with them.

If the weapon did not make contact with us we would not experience any pain. Likewise if our body were not in the nature of suffering, and therefore subject to pain, then, even if a weapon were to come into contact with our body, we would not experience pain. So the very nature of the body itself is that it is subject to pain. In other words, without a contaminated body we would not experience physical pain. Therefore it is our own body that is the cause of our pain. We may not be able to accept this immediately, but if we really pay attention, and analyse it carefully, we will come to accept that this is actually true.

Here again we are being presented with a variety of reasons to contemplate, all of which lead to the conclusion that it is reasonable to practise patience, and not retaliate when others inflict harm upon us.

Now of course being able to practise patience in this way will not develop overnight. Without conditions that make us feel angry, there is nothing to challenge us, and we might easily conclude that we are practising patience, and feel that it is very easy to practise patience. The real test is in the moment of being criticised or harmed. If we become upset and angry, then our claim to be practising patience is unfounded. Therefore we need to contemplate and become familiar with these reasons before conditions arise that might make us angry. If we do that they will become part of us.

The second verse under this heading is:

44. *This abscess similar to a human body
That is suffering and cannot bear touch,
If I hold on to it with blind craving
At whom should I be angry when it gets
harmed?*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

This abscess that is similar to a human body if I hold onto this suffering body that cannot bear the slightest touch with craving, and ignorance that blinds intelligence, then since it can be harmed even by thorns, with whom should I become angry when it is harmed? One should think that it is one's own fault.

This verse is further elaborating on how our body is a cause of suffering, because its very nature is that it is subject to pain. The analogy used here is that the *body is similar to an abscess*, the Tibetan word for which has the connotation of the skin being scraped off. As it heals, a very thin layer of skin begins to form, but it is still very fragile, and the slightest touch might rupture it, with pus and blood then oozing out of it.

Our body is like an abscess, which can be pierced by the slightest touch or thorn, causing bleeding and so forth, and that is what causes so much suffering and pain. This relates to the nature of our body. Normally we have such strong craving and attachment to our bodies, and describing the nature of our body like this is also a way to reduce this strong craving and attachment. Contemplating in this way on a regular basis will help to develop a sense of renunciation. We might not be able to develop actual renunciation right away, but this contemplation will

definitely become the basis for developing some disenchantment with the nature of our body and reduce craving for it.

As explained here, our body is really fragile, and when the slightest rough surface, or sharp object like a thorn, comes into contact with it, we immediately experience discomfort and pain. We place so much importance on our body—we care for it and we really cherish it. This presentation asks why, if our body is so fragile and easily harmed, is it reasonable to become angry with someone else if it is hurt. It is the very nature of our body that is so easily prone to hurt and pain.

What can be understood from this presentation is that we cherish our body so much, and due to that attachment, we experience agony when it is hurt. The point here is that by engaging in the practice of not retaliating when others harm us, we are also reducing strong craving and attachment to the body. In that way, as presented here, one should be thinking that it is one's own fault that one suffers, rather than anything others might have done.

1.3.3.1.3. *It is the fault of having craved the cause of suffering in previous lives*

The first of the two verses under this heading is:

45. *The childish do not desire suffering and
Are attached to its causes;
If one gets harmed though one's own fault
What reason is there to become angry with
others?*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads

The childish do not desire suffering but are attached to and crave the causes of suffering such as killing and so forth. Hence, since I receive a result of harm projected by my own faults, what reason is there to become angry with others? It is my own fault alone.

Here, *the childish* refers to ourselves when we are experiencing suffering. We *do not desire suffering, but are attached to and crave the causes of suffering such as killing and so forth*.

This is a really profound explanation about the workings of karma. Even though we do not desire the result of suffering, we readily engage in the causes of suffering, such as engaging in the ten non-virtues of killing and so forth. Thus, we will inevitably experience suffering as a natural consequence of the negativity created in the past. This verse has the similar meaning as verse 28 in Chapter 1, where Shantideva says that even though ordinary beings wish to discard suffering, they run towards the very causes of suffering, and although they want to experience happiness, they destroy the causes of happiness like an enemy, because of their ignorance.

These lines are really quite a profound presentation of karma. Although not wishing to experience suffering, beings are naturally drawn to its causes, and they willingly engage in those causes, which include non-virtuous acts such as killing, stealing and so forth. Furthermore, beings want to experience happiness, yet they destroy the causes of their happiness by intentionally discarding its causes, which are virtuous deeds. By not intentionally engaging in virtue, one is destroying the cause of happiness.

As mentioned previously this is really profound reasoning. There is no-one who voluntarily wishes to experience suffering, and there is no-one who does not wish to experience happiness, yet we create the very causes of our own suffering and we fail to create, and actually destroy, the

causes of happiness. The unwanted results are the natural consequence of our own actions.

These are very significant points. Shantideva is meticulously presenting a very profound explanation of our situation, and the suffering that we experience. Therefore, to think *since I receive a result of harm projected by my own faults, what reason is there to become angry with others*, is very reasonable. In other words, there is no real reason to become angry with others, because one has created the causes oneself.

This advice is in line with the practices of the great Kadampa of the past. It is said that they would ask themselves, 'How many causes of happiness do I create in one day, and how many more causes of suffering do I actually create in a single day?' When they realise that they are creating more negativity, the Kadampa masters had the practice of using black and white stones. Every time they had a virtuous mind they would place a white stone in front of themselves, and every time they had a negative mind they would put a black stone there. At the end of the day they would count how many black and white stones there were. They used this technique as a deterrent to negativity, and to encourage themselves to engage in more virtuous deeds.

If you attempt to do this practice, you need to be warned that in the early days there will definitely be more black stones. This is natural for ordinary sentient beings. However that should not discourage you, because as with the examples of the previous masters, if you practise diligently, then gradually the number of black stones will start to reduce, and there will be more and more white stones in front of you. That will be a measure that you are constantly engaging in virtue.

If we don't take a farsighted view in our practice then we could easily be discouraged. We might attempt to be pious, and assume that we are practising virtue, but end up with more black stones at the end of the day, and think, 'Oh this is too much! I give up'. It is very important to have reasonable expectations. We need to understand that the process of practising Dharma requires tremendous patience and perseverance.

The next verse in this section is:

46. *For example, if the guardians of hell
And the forest of sword leaves
Are generated by one's karma
At whom shall one get angry?*

Here, Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

For example, if the guardians of hell, the forest of sword leaves and so forth, which harm one, are not generated by someone else with purpose, but arise from one's karma, then one cannot get angry at them. Similarly, if harm is generated also from one's karma in one's life, then at whom shall one get angry? Since it is one's own fault alone, from now on strive in abandoning the cause for suffering.

Here, an example of those who inflict extreme suffering are *the guardians of hell*, likewise to experience the sufferings of being in the hell of a *forest of sword leaves*, and so forth. So, what is being explained is that no-one actually creates that tremendous suffering of the hell realms, and nor are the hell realms a place that was purposely constructed. Rather, the experience of being in that state is actually created by one's own karma. That is how it is to be understood. This explanation is quite clear so I won't go into any more detail.

1.3.3.1.4. *The unsuitability of being angry at others by relating one's karma to the cause of their suffering*

The workings of karma may seem mysterious. We can take the example of the Malaysian Airlines flight MH370, which was lost without trace at sea. Some say it fell into the sea, others are not sure. Regardless of what actually happened, the fact remains that they haven't found any trace of it, so all the passengers are presumed to be dead. However two passengers booked on that flight survived. One because they were too ill to travel that day, and the other decided to book another flight. If these two hadn't experienced these immediate conditions they would have been on that ill-fated flight and experienced the same fate as the other passengers. Something created events in their personal life that caused them to not board that flight. This is an indication that when one has created virtuous causes, then even dire situations can be averted.

I have often heard people say, 'I don't know much about karma, but it seems to be true that if you do good to others, good things will definitely happen to oneself, and if one is cruel to others then there are definitely negative consequences for oneself'.

A true mark of whether one has conviction in karma can be seen in their attitude to truth and honesty. An individual who abides by the law of karma would naturally be an honest person, whereas those who may have some understanding but who don't put it into practice, are those who would deceive others. This is a practical way to gauge whether one has some faith in karma or not.

Indeed, if we really think of the infallibility of karma, then it is as if one's own karma is compelling the other person to do things to hurt oneself. It is as if it's one's own karma is putting them in a position that causes them to harm one. This profound way of thinking about karma is the focus of this outline.

The verse relating to this reads:

47. *Having been induced by my karma
Harm givers come into existence.
If that throws them into the lower realms,
Have I not destroyed them?*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

Further, having been induced by my previous negative karma, in this life people that give me harm come into existence. If through harming me the person is thrown into the hell realms, then have I not destroyed that person? Saying this to my mind, I should scold it by thinking: 'I have thrown them into the hell realms'.

Further, having been induced by my previous negative karma, in this life people that give me harm come into existence, refers to the reason why there are those who harm oneself. It is one's previous karma that induces them to harm one. So we reflect, 'Having harmed me, this person will be thrown into the hell realms. So have I not destroyed them?'

What is being presented here is that it is one's own karma that induces the other person to cause harm, and because they have engaged in the action of harming, they have created negative karma for themselves, which will cause them to go to the hell realms. So one has, in fact, actually caused them harm, because if it was not due to one's own karma there would have been nothing that compelled them to create that harm.

When one thinks about it from this angle, then it becomes apparent that it is we who are causing them to be born in

unfortunate realms, where they will experience tremendous suffering. The point that is being presented is that seeing oneself as a cause for their future suffering is another way to prevent anger and retaliation.

1.3.3.1.5. Anger is simply wrong and unsuitable

This section shows how those who harm us are actually helping us, while also being a cause for them to go to the unfortunate realms, such as the hell realms.

48. *In dependence on them
I purify much karma through patience,
In dependence on me
They will be thrown for a long time into the
hells.*
49. *I give them harm
And they give me benefit
Why, oh unsuitable mind
Are you mistakenly angry?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Further, by having taken that person as the object of patience I have meditated on patience and purified much negativity. In dependence on me that person will be thrown into the hells where they experience suffering for a long time. I am giving harm to the enemy and he is benefitting me. To be angry with someone who benefits one is mistaken. Why, you unsuitable mind, do you get angry? You should like them.

As presented quite clearly, if there was no-one to harm us, we could not possibly practise patience. So an object that causes us harm gives us the opportunity to practise patience. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama mentions, our teachers are not appropriate objects on which to practise patience. Rather, it is our enemies, those who harm us, who are the objects on which to practise patience. Our teachers teach us how to practise patience, but generally speaking there is no need to practise patience with them, because we consider them to be very kind and helpful. There might be some absurd exceptions, but generally speaking that's how it is.

So the object of one's practice of patience is those very beings who we consider as an enemy, or those who harm us in any way. The harm caused by these enemies is what motivates us to engage in the practice of patience, which accumulates great virtue or extensive merit. So our enemy has given us the opportunity to purify negative karma extensively and accumulate great extensive merit. Yet *in dependence on me, that person will be thrown into the hells where they experience suffering for a long time. So I am giving harm to the enemy and he is benefitting me. Becoming angry with someone who benefits us is mistaken. Why, you unsuitable mind, do you get angry? You should like them.*

If one contemplates and considers how one practises patience, then one can see that there is a deep truth here. Those who actively go out of their way to harm us are giving us the opportunity to practise patience and so forth. Since they are giving us the opportunity to accumulate great extensive merit and purify negative karma, then they are in fact benefitting us.

Being grateful might seem to run counter to common sense, but even in ordinary terms it would not be considered correct to be angry with someone who actually helps us. So while all these practices may not immediately seem reasonable, when one actually contemplates and thinks about them, then one can see that there is great truth in them. They are not ideas that have been conjured up, but in fact present the actual reality of the situation.

The *Eight Verses of Mind Training* explain how we need to view other beings as cherished, precious jewels, when one sees that how it is in dependence upon such beings that one actually engages in the practices such as generosity, patience and so forth. However it is a gradual process and doesn't happen overnight.

1.3.3.2. REFUTING OBJECTIONS

Here there are three sub-divisions.

- 1.3.3.2.1. Refuting that it is incorrect that others benefit us
1.3.3.2.2. Refuting that it is incorrect that one is harming others
1.3.3.2.3. Stop ill treatment to those who benefit one

1.3.3.2.1. Refuting that it is incorrect that others benefit us

This relates to the earlier explanation that the person who harms us is, in fact, benefitting us. It is presented as a refutation of a hypothetical doubt.

First Gyaltsab Je presents the argument:

Argument: Do I then not also go to the lower realms due to the condition of the negativity of others?

As explained earlier, one will be the cause for others to go to the lower realms, so would it not then be the case that: *Do I not also not go to the lower realms due to the condition of negativity for others?*

The response is in these two lines:

*50ab. If I have the quality of thought
Then I will not go to the lower realms.*

Gyaltsab Je responds to the hypothetical doubt that he raised at the beginning.

Answer: If one has the quality of the thought of patience, 'They benefit me', then one will not go to the lower realms but purify negativities.

The answer to the opening hypothetical argument is that if one has the thought of practising patience and engages in that practice, thinking, *They benefit me, then one will not go to the lower realms, but will purify negativities.* This, then, is the virtue of the practice of patience. If one's mind is not disturbed by the intention of retaliation and so forth, and one practises patience thinking, 'They are benefitting me,' then, far from leading one to the lower realms, it will be a cause to purify one's negativities.

What one needs to understand from this presentation is that if one were not to practise patience and retaliate, and returns harm for harm, then one will indeed be creating the negativity that will cause one to go to the lower realms as well. However, even though the harm one receives might possibly have served as a cause for the other to go to the lower realms, the positive mind that engages in the practice of patience means that the harm does not act as a cause for one to go to the lower realms.

There are so many situations that can serve as a cause for others to create negativity, so we need to be a bit cautious in making sure that we avoid, as much as possible, putting ourselves in a position where others might generate a negative mind and create negativity. That is something we can take as a personal instruction.

These presentations are not too difficult to understand. The main thing is to contemplate these points, and really think about them.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Edited Version
© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

3 March 2015

As usual, we can spend some time in meditation. For this we use the motivation that we generated in the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*.

[meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teachings and then, through understanding their meaning, put them into practice well.

1.3.3.2. REFUTING OBJECTIONS

1.3.3.2.1. Refuting that it is incorrect that others benefit us (cont.)

In our last session we covered these two lines of verse:

50ab. *If I have the quality of thought
Then I will not go to the lower realms.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je prefaced these lines with this qualm:

Argument: Do I then not also go to the lower realms due to being the condition of the negativity of others?

Previously it had been explained that one becomes the cause for others to create negativity, and hence go to the lower realms. The doubt raised here is that if we are a cause for the other to create negativity, then wouldn't that also be a condition for us to go to the lower realms as well?

The response to that is that our practice of patience will protect us against going to the lower realms. And, as will be explained further on, the harm we receive from others actually benefits us. The implication here is that it is also important for us not to serve as a condition for others to create negativity. We need to be mindful that we don't put ourselves in a position where we engage in deeds that will cause others to create negativity.

Here we can see how the commentary presents this and the following verses as a way to overcome doubts or qualms that might arise from previous points. So the commentary prefaces each verse with a qualm, which is then answered by the verse.

1.3.3.2.2. Refuting that it is incorrect that one is harming others

Here the qualm presented by the commentary is:

Argument: Since the other person exhausts my negative karma they benefit me and therefore will also not go to the lower realms.

As mentioned earlier, the reason one does not go to the lower realms is because one engages in the practice of patience. So, since the other person has served as a

condition for one to practice patience, wouldn't they also not go to the lower realms?

The answer is in these two lines of verse:

50cd. *If I guard myself
Then how could they receive anything here?*

Then Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning of these lines:

Answer: Since I meditate on patience for my attacker, I protect myself from negativity, but how does the other person receive merit here in this life? They do not practise virtue, and only harm.

As the commentary meticulously explains, one is protecting oneself from negativity because one practises patience with the attacker. From this explanation we need to derive the understanding that the real protector is our own practice of patience, because it protects us from creating negativity, and hence unfortunate rebirths in future lives. This makes it very clear that the real protector is not an external entity, but that it lies within oneself. It is our own practice of patience that is the real protector: it protects us from creating an immediate negativity; and in the long run it protects us from being reborn in the unfortunate lower realms.

If practising patience is a way of gaining merit for oneself, then *how does the other person receive the merit* from our practise of patience? As explained in the commentary, they do not accrue any merit from our practice of patience because *they only harm and do not practise virtue*. So the merit that we have accumulated from practising patience cannot be a cause for the other to gain merit, and thus a cause to be born in the fortunate realms.

This is also a presentation of the infallibility of karma. As explained clearly in other teachings, such as the Middle Way teachings or *Madhyamaka*, there is no way that the karma created by one individual can be transferred to another. The karmic consequences one creates, whether they are virtuous or non-virtuous, will accrue only to the one who created it. Therefore karma is not transferrable. If it were to be transferrable, then the Buddha would definitely transfer all his merits to us so that we would not experience any kind of misery or suffering. But that is not possible. What we are being shown here is that we have to take the sole responsibility for creating virtue and positive karma, and for preventing negative karma.

We need to understand that the opposite of practising patience is allowing oneself to become angry. When one exhibits anger, then that becomes a cause for creating non-virtue and negativity, which is, in turn, the cause for rebirth in the unfortunate realms. Therefore we need to take initiative to subdue and overcome anger, and for that purpose practise patience. It is said that of the many methods to encourage one to practise patience, one of the best is to contemplate the disadvantages of anger. The more we contemplate the disadvantages and faults of anger, the more inclined to practise patience we will be.

To give an analogy to illustrate how karma is non-transferable, for example we cannot say to someone, 'You can take a leisurely rest, and I'll create virtue for you'. However that does not mean that one doesn't create any virtue in relation to someone else. When we engage in a virtuous deed for the sake of others, then because the

other serves as a condition for us to accumulate virtue, we can definitely dedicate our merit to the wellbeing of the other. So although the complete results of our practice such as patience and so forth cannot be experienced by the other, they will definitely derive some benefit from our practice.

1.3.3.2.3. *Stopping ill treatment to those who benefit one*

Again Gyaltsab Je commences his commentary with an argument or doubt:

Argument: If harming is a benefit then it would also be suitable for me to retaliate.

The verse presented as a response is:

51. *However, if I retaliate with harm
They are not guarded.
Also, my actions will degenerate
Finally my austerity will disintegrate.*

Then Gyaltsab Je explains the answer:

Answer: When I harm the other person in retaliation they will not be protected, and my practice of the four dharmas of a monk and my promise to meditate on love and compassion degenerate. Thus the supreme austerity of patience disintegrates.

As the commentary explains, if one is harmed by another, and one benefits from practising patience, one might misconstrue that reasoning, and come to a conclusion that it would be suitable to retaliate and harm them in return. The answer is that *when I harm the other person in retaliation they will not be protected, and my own practice of the four dharmas of a monk will degenerate.*

The four dharmas are

- Not to scold another although being scolded;
- Not to become angry when incited to anger;
- Not to hit another when being hit;
- Not to reveal another's fault when they do the same

These four dharmas are part of the vows of a fully ordained monk, as well as a core bodhisattva practice, along with the practice of love and compassion.

If these essential practices were to degenerate then, as presented here, the practice of patience, which is the *supreme austerity*, would also degenerate. As *The Bodhisattvas Way of Life* mentions, the best austerity is the austerity of patience. So if one engages in the practice of retaliating then that supreme austerity will also degenerate.

I have contemplated these points many, many times. If someone were to harm us, we might initially think that it is reasonable to retaliate, but there is no benefit in that. In fact, rather than any benefit there's only real loss. If one's love and compassion degenerates, then there's really nothing of any real substance in one's being. The person who lacks love and compassion is someone who is empty of any real values or virtues. So retaliation is nothing but the greatest loss.

These presentations are not to be taken lightly; rather they need to be really contemplated very carefully. The more one contemplates and thinks about these points, the more one's inner wisdom will increase. This very logical and systematic presentation will also help to develop our analytical reasoning skills.

When we establish a practice based on profound analytical reasoning, then it becomes much firmer and more stable. We might superficially agree with what has been presented here, but if we don't really contemplate these points, then the next time someone says something that is inappropriate, critical or harmful in any way, the immediate reaction will be anger and the wish to retaliate.

Normally, it might seem that retaliating is a way to protect oneself, but far from protecting oneself, it only brings more misery, and more harm to oneself. The real protection is when one practises patience. If we contemplate these points again and again, using all these logical reasons, and meditate on them, then we will be well equipped to be able to actually practise patience when someone harms us. Then, rather than retaliating with anger one could, with a sense of compassion and love, actually benefit them. Even if one is not in a position to benefit them, then at the very least, one will definitely be inclined not to harm them.

We need to contemplate how these points give us a very practical way to benefit ourselves. Of course we all naturally carry the imprints of anger, so we are therefore prone to getting angry, but we also have the potential to practise patience. That is also well within our capacity. Since we have the imprints of both anger and patience we need to decide which of these two, anger or patience, we wish to follow. When we think carefully, it will become quite clear as to which option is the better one.

When we look around, it is quite evident that those who are perpetually in an angry frame of mind are those who are suffering more, whereas those who are more patient and tolerant have a happier mind. Since we all wish for happiness, and do not wish to experience any suffering, it is in our own best interest that we choose to practise that which brings the most happiness, and which reduces our suffering.

This is how we need to reason and what we need to implement in our practice. If we practise in this way then that will be the optimum means of taking care of ourselves. The practice of patience is the best protection, and the best contributor to our own wellbeing. Through these reasons and practices we can see how a genuine follower of Buddhism definitely gains the benefit of becoming a happier and gentler person. We can see that if the guidance in this presentation were to be actually practised, the result can only be that we will be genuinely happier.

There is a story about one of the former abbots of Gomang Monastery asking a visiting monk from Sera Monastery about the welfare of one of the former abbots of Sera Monastery, Khensur Lobsang Wangchuk (who was renowned as a great scholar and practitioner). The visiting monk happened to be Mongolian, and Mongolians are known to be very straightforward. His response to the enquiry about the welfare of Khensur Lobsang Wangchuk was, 'Khensur Lobsang Wangchuk is always joyful and happy. Whether he's going somewhere or just in his room, whatever he does, he is always in a joyful state of mind'.

2. BE PATIENT WITH CONTEMPT AND SO FORTH

As I have mentioned previously, we really need to pay attention to these practices, as they are very relevant to our situation.

There are four subdivisions under this heading:

- 2.1. Contempt, slander etc. do not harm my body
- 2.2. It is unsuitable to be angry with a person who is related, or connected to, the anger
- 2.3. It is unsuitable to be angry with obstacles to things like gain
- 2.4. It is unsuitable to be angry with others who lack faith in oneself

2.1. Contempt, slander etc. do not harm my body

The relevant verse reads:

52. *Since the mind is not physical
Nobody can destroy it.
If one grasps at the body
The body will harm me with suffering.*

Gyaltsab Je then explains the meaning of the verse

If I protect my mind then, since it is not physical, it cannot be harmed at all by harsh words, weapons and so forth.

Contempt, slander and so forth do *not* harm one's *physical* body, so, *if* one protects one's *mind* then *it cannot be harmed at all by harsh words, weapons and so forth.*

Then this hypothetical doubt arises:

Argument: I get angry because the body harms me with suffering, due to me grasping at the body.

The proposition is that when one actually experiences physical suffering, then it must be reasonable to become angry. What is being presented clearly here is that the physical suffering that we experience is because of our strong attachment to our body.

As an answer to that hypothetical proposition that even if one is able to protect one's mind, it must be reasonable to be angry when one experiences physical suffering, the next verse is presented:

53. *When criticism, harsh words and
Unpleasant words
Do not harm the body
Then why, mind, do you get so angry?*

Gyaltsab Je explains:

Answer: If criticism, harsh words and unpleasant words do not harm, then why mind do you get so angry? It is unsuitable.

In explaining the verse, the commentary states *if criticism harsh words and unpleasant words of others do not harm my body in the least, then, why mind, do you get angry?* Implying that *it is unsuitable* to get angry. The point here is that it is unreasonable to get angry when criticism and harsh words and so forth are heard, because there is no actual harm to one's physical body.

2.2. It is unsuitable to be angry with a person who is connected to anger

This is similar to the previous heading. The verse is:

54. *If the dislike of others for me
Does not devour me,
Neither in this life nor in others,
Why do I have dislike for them?*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

If dislike by others for me does not harm and devour me in this life or in other lives, then why do I have dislike for them? As this only unnecessarily creates the cause for suffering, dislike is unsuitable.

It has just been shown that there is physical suffering due to strong grasping at one's physical body. However, when harsh words and so forth are spoken, they don't really hurt the physical body.

When one has accepted that there's no point in becoming upset with harsh words and so forth, then the next doubt which may arise is that whilst harsh words and criticism and so forth may not harm me physically or mentally, they still cause others to dislike me, so therefore there is a reason to become angry.

In order to overcome that doubt the commentary states that *dislike by others for me does not harm and devour me in this life or in other lives.* The reasoning is that even if others were to dislike me, then how could that actually really harm me, when it does not devour me, or the merits that I have accumulated in this life? One's merit and life will not decline now, or in future lives, as a result of dislike. Since it does not cause me any actual harm now or in the future, there's no real reason for me to become angry at those who cause others to dislike me. *As this only unnecessarily creates the cause for suffering, dislike is unsuitable.*

2.3. It is unsuitable to be angry with obstacles to things like gain

Now the text moves on to a doubt that harsh words and criticism might harm us through being an obstruction to material gain. As a way to point out that it is unsuitable to be angry in that case, the next five subdivisions are presented:

- 2.3.1. Since gain disintegrates quickly, anger at obstacles to gain is unsuitable
- 2.3.2. Stopping wrongful gain
- 2.3.3. Establishing by example that craving for gain is unsuitable
- 2.3.4. The reason why craving for gain is unsuitable
- 2.3.5. Refuting that it is suitable to establish gain

2.3.1. Since gain disintegrates quickly, anger at obstacles to gain is unsuitable

What is being presented here is that all gain is in the nature of being transient. So there's no point in being really attached to some impermanent thing that is transitory, and which disintegrates.

The first two lines of the next verse are presented as a *qualm*:

- 55ab. *If I have dislike for them
Because they obstruct my gain,*

Again, Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins with a presentation of the argument or the doubt:

Argument: I do not like criticism, slander and harsh words as they obstruct my gain.

If one were to say that, then the next two lines of verse 55 serve as an answer.

- 55cd. *I destroy my gain in this
And negativities abide firmly.*

The explanation in the commentary is quite easy to understand. However the personal instruction is that we need to be mindful of not being too attached to things like gain and so forth. If one has excessive attachment to gain, then that will definitely be an obstruction to one's Dharma practice, which will really harm one. Therefore it is in our own best interest to reduce strong attachment to gain and so forth.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Answer: The gain, for which one meditates on anger, will be destroyed quickly in this life, and the negativity of anger will remain firmly in my continuum. It is easier to not achieve gain and it is unsuitable to get angry.

As the commentary clearly explains, *the gain for which one familiarises oneself with anger, will be destroyed quickly in this life, and the negativity of anger will remain firmly in my continuum.* Whatever gain one achieves will be destroyed in this life, but the negativity of anger remains firmly in one's continuum. That being the case, *it is easier to not achieve gain, and it is unsuitable to get angry.* In other words it is much better to avoid becoming angry, even if it means passing up the opportunity for gain.

2.3.2. Stopping wrongful gain

Wrongful gain basically occurs in conjunction with wrong livelihood. Having strong and excessive attachments to one's gains and so forth, will naturally fall into the category of wrong livelihood. We covered the five wrong livelihoods in the teachings on *Precious Garland*.¹

The relevant verse is:

56. *If I die today, that is easy,
To live long with wrong livelihood is
unsuitable.
Even if someone like me remained for long,
One is the very suffering of death.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

Even if I die today without any gain, that is easy, but it is unsuitable to live long with the wrong livelihood gained through anger. Even if someone like me abides for a long time, in the end I have to give up everything and am not beyond the very sufferings of death.

When the commentary states, *even if I die today without any gain, that is easy,* it is implying that it would be better to die (even if death comes tomorrow) without any gain, because *it is unsuitable to live long with wrong livelihood gained through anger.* A long life, sustained by gains that involve deceiving, cheating or harming others and anger, is unsuitable.

Even if someone like me abides for a long time, in the end I have to give up everything and am not beyond the very sufferings of death. Whatever gains one may have accumulated through wrong livelihoods, harming others, anger and so forth, will not sustain us for very long anyway, because when we experience death, we will have to give it all up.

If we really pay attention to this presentation, and think about the points carefully, it will make a lot of sense.

2.3.3. Establishing by example that craving for gain is unsuitable

The two verses relating to this are:

57. *If one is someone who wakes up
After having experienced a hundred years of
happiness in a dream
Or if one is someone who wakes up
After having experienced only a moment of
happiness,*
58. *For both, when they are awake
This happiness does not return.
For both, those of short life, or of long
It will be the same at the time of death.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Regardless of whether one is someone who wakes up from a hundred year dream in which one experienced happiness or whether one is someone who wakes up after only a brief moment of happiness in a dream, for either, when awake, this happiness will not return. Similarly, whether one has had a long happy life or a short happy life, at the time of death it becomes only a mere memory, and therefore it is unsuitable to crave for gain.

Here the commentary explains the examples given in the text. Regardless of whether *one wakes up from a hundred year dream in which one experienced happiness, or wakes up after only a brief moment of happiness in a dream,* that happiness will not return. Whatever the duration of happiness experienced in a dream, it will not return. Likewise, whether one has had a *happy long life or short happy life, it becomes mere memory at the time of death.* What is being indicated here is that whatever happiness one has one has experienced from mere worldly gains, out of attachment, or from sensual pleasures and so forth, is only a mere memory at the time of death. *Therefore it is unsuitable to crave for gain.*

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcribed by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

¹ See teaching of 9 March 2010.
Chapter 6

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་པོ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

10 March 2015

While maintaining the motivation we generated during the prayers, we can engage in our meditation practice. [meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along the usual lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

It is indeed important for us to familiarise ourselves with this positive motivation. It is through familiarity that we can readily draw on this positive motivation during our practice, which will make the practice truly meaningful. Even when we are not engaged in formal practice and are just going about in our everyday lives, we can periodically recall this motivation. In this way we consistently familiarise our minds with this motivation.

The optimum benefit from familiarising ourselves with this positive motivation is that once it becomes spontaneous, we will not need to spend much time generating a positive motivation when we sit down to practice, as it is already there. Thus we can go straight into the practice. If a positive motivation is not present, then one actually needs to take the time to cultivate it. It is similar to meditating on love and compassion. If we are already familiar with love and compassion then love and compassion will be present in whatever practice or activity we engage in.

2.3. It is unsuitable to be angry at obstacles to things like gain (cont.)

2.3.4. The reason why craving for gain is unsuitable

What is being presented here is something which we need to be really mindful of: craving for gain is unsuitable. The text however doesn't say that 'gain is unsuitable', but rather that it is the craving for gain that is unsuitable. This is an important point that needs to be understood. Otherwise one could easily think, 'As a Buddhist I shouldn't be thinking about any gains'. There are many who think in this way! As it clearly states here, it is craving or attachment to gain that is the problem.

One can relate this explanation to other teachings e.g. the *Letter to a King*, where Nagarjuna explains that the purpose of wealth is to be content. What prevents one from being satisfied with wealth is attachment, and in turn, as attachment does not allow a sense of contentment, the more you have, the more you want. If one had a satisfied mind through practising contentment, and sufficient means to sustain oneself, then wealth has served its purpose and one can feel very, very satisfied, content and happy.

What is being explained here is how gain through craving will only become a cause for misery, because later on, when we become old and frail, when we go on from this life, then everything has to be left behind. At that time a lot of suffering occurs; whatever has been gained through craving causes great agony and suffering, rather than being a means of bringing a sense of joy and happiness.

The important point here is to recognise craving as a cause for real suffering. Most ordinary people feel that attachment gives them a sense of satisfaction and pleasure, however that is of course an illusion. They can't be blamed as they don't know any better. When one really thinks about the situation, there is no satisfaction in craving. In fact, the more attachment one has, the more it becomes a cause for misery.

Someone who has strong attachment is someone who is really not settled; they experience great pain when their expectations are not met. This is true particularly in relation to friends, relationships, material wealth, gain, status etc. All of these cause suffering when expectations are not met, or when one has to be parted from them.

As previously stated, the most vulnerable time in life is old age, when one is frail and will soon pass on. At that time one can develop very strong attachments. For a practitioner it is said that one of the greatest obstacles for a good death is attachment and craving for one's possessions, friends and relatives. The significant point being presented here, is that if we work on craving now, then slowly, slowly we will become more attuned to its finer points, and be able to give up strong craving.

The great master Asvaghosa said: 'if someone lacks contentment due to very strong craving, there is no greater sickness than this state of mind'. This reinforces the point that craving causes a lack of contentment, which causes great mental agony; it is like a great sickness festering in one's mind. Some people say that when they didn't have much in the early part of their life they seemed to have a happier, more joyful state of mind. But as they became more successful and gained more wealth, the sense of joy and happiness started to fade away and they actually started to become more agitated and restless.

In brief, the main point here is that while we need possessions to sustain ourselves, we should not go to the extent of becoming so attached to them that they cause mental pain.

The relevant verse reads:

59. *Though I may attain much gain
And live for a long time happily,
Like being robbed by a thief
I will go naked and empty-handed.*

The commentary further explains the meaning:

Though I may attain much gain and live happily for a long time, at the time of death, like having been robbed by a thief, I will have to go naked without clothing and empty-handed without wealth.

While the explanation here is quite clear, I will reiterate some of the main points. The gain in *I may attain much gain and live for a long time happily* relates to gaining things that we perceive as giving us some sense of joy or pleasure. This refers to gaining pleasure from the five

sense objects, such as: nice forms, i.e. acquiring material possessions and relations; pleasant sounds, i.e. acquiring the means to listen to pleasant sounds; nice fragrances, i.e. acquiring the means to enjoy pleasant scents; nice taste, i.e. acquiring the means to obtain delicious foods; pleasant touch, i.e. acquiring the means to have pleasant touch or sensations. So we perceive these objects of the five senses as pleasurable.

As ordinary beings we believe that a happy life is one which is filled with the most experiences of the pleasures of the five senses. Nevertheless, no matter how long one lives, and no matter how much one has acquired through craving, at the inevitable time of death, one is stripped of everything and one has to leave everything behind. The analogy used here is *like having been robbed by a thief, I will have to go naked*. So the time of death involves being *naked and empty-handed*, and leaving behind all the pleasures of the five senses.

If one has strong craving for one's possessions, then at the time of death one would have an unbearable sensation of being robbed, and completely stripped of all that one has cherished all of one's life. Then one will experience the suffering of having to part unwillingly, and being involuntarily separated from everything. What prevents this situation from arising is overcoming attachment and strong craving for one's possessions, i.e. the objects of the five senses. If one does not have strong craving and has practised virtue, then, at the time of death, a virtuous mind with no attachment to one's possessions arises. Then one will not have the empty feeling of being stripped of everything, but rather one would be sustained with a great sense of joy in one's mind, knowing that one is not leaving anything of real value behind. Rather, one takes the most valuable asset within one's own mind, which is one's virtue and merit.

Most worldly people, because of their way of thinking, and lack of training in the disadvantages of attachment and craving, will naturally apply great effort to accumulating wealth. They believe that wealth can provide a good house, a good car and also attract good friends or a companion who looks nice and beautiful. 'With money I can achieve all that.'

[Geshe-la says in English: I have said many times before that one needs to be really careful when choosing a friend or companion, one must not look just on the outside but look for qualities inside – a good heart! Some of us have so many things, piles and piles of clothes, many sets of shoes etc. but still want more and more. What use is all that? One needs to think carefully!]

The real point to consider here is this: does having possessions and wealth really make one happy? While some pleasure may be gained through sense experiences now, one may not experience any pleasure from those same objects later on in life. So the sense objects themselves are not a real source of satisfaction and happiness, as there are definitely many cases of people who are quite poor yet who are really quite contented and happy.

While possessions, particularly those relating to the five sense objects, may give some sort of fleeting pleasures, at the most crucial time of our existence, in the last days

prior to death, then rather than giving a sense of joy and happiness, they become a cause for great suffering and misery. What purpose has the accumulation of gain served, when, rather than helping us at a time when we most need comfort and something to soothe our mind, our craving harms us? It has not served any purpose.

If we don't practise giving up possessions now, there will be a time when the possessions will abandon us. So even if you don't abandon possessions, they will finally abandon you anyway. There will be a time when we will have to go, without being able to take anything with us; all the things we worked so hard to acquire will finally abandon us. So, if one practises overcoming craving for possessions, then due to the virtuous mind of non-attachment, one will definitely experience a real sense of ease and a painless death.

Think about our existence right now. If we were stripped of all our belongings, even our clothing, and sent somewhere without anything, how unbearable would that be? Can we even imagine going somewhere without anything, not even our clothing? It would be a very pitiful and embarrassing situation to be in.

This is not a prospect that we would like to face at all, but that is what will occur at the time of death—we will be stripped of everything. It would be unbearable if it were to occur now, but it will actually occur later, and will be an unbearable cause of suffering and agony. However if we train our mind with non-attachment and non-craving now, so that our mind becomes familiar with non-craving and non-attachment, then, at the time of death there will be no sense of going naked and empty-handed. Rather, there will be fulfilment, and a sense of real joy with a virtuous Dharma mind. That is the point being emphasised here.

2.3.5. Refuting that it is suitable to establish gain

The point here, which is explained in the commentary but not mentioned in the heading, is that it is not suitable to establish gain through either anger or wrong livelihood. The heading could also read Refuting That It Is Suitable to Establish Gain Through Wrong Livelihood and Anger.

The first two lines of the verse are presented first

*60ab. If I live through gain,
I can purify negativity and shall be meritorious*

The hypothetical doubt or qualm raised here is:

Argument: If I live for a long time due to gain, then it is befitting that I achieve gain, in order to purify negativity with the four powers, and increase merits.

It is quite likely that even practitioners could have this doubt, thinking there would be nothing wrong in acquiring gain because this could sustain one for a long time and give more opportunity to make offerings to the Three Jewels, give to others and even purify negative karmas. They might conclude that having gains is a good thing. However this verse highlights it is not OK to have gains if they are acquired through wrong livelihood or through anger. As a response to this qualm the remaining lines of verse are presented:

*60cd. If one gets angry for the purpose of gain
Merits exhaust and doesn't it become
negativity?*

61. The life that I have lived for a purpose

*Should it degenerate,
What use was that life
Where I only created negativity?*

The explanation of the meaning of the lines in the verse is explained in Gyaltsab Je's commentary:

Answer: If one gets angry for the purpose of gain it will exhaust the merits accumulated over a thousand eons. Does one then not achieve negativity? If so, then what purpose did one's life serve, since it only becomes the condition for one's degeneration? The life where one only creates negativity, what shall one do with it as it is useless?

The commentary explains very clearly that, *if one gets angry for the purpose of gain, it will exhaust the merits accumulated over a thousand eons*. This relates to an earlier explanation in the text stating that one moment of anger can destroy the merit accumulated over hundreds of eons. So if the anger that has been generated over many lifetimes is exhausted, there is no question that anger will exhaust the merit accumulated over a thousand eons.

If anger is used as a means to acquire gains, then rather than benefitting from those gains, they will only become a means to harm oneself by exhausting one's merits. So if one were to continuously engage in the means to achieve gains using anger, then *does one not achieve negativity?* This rhetorical question implies that one will be only achieving more negativity and harm. So if that is the case, what purpose does one's life serve, since it only becomes the condition for one's degeneration? If one is engaging mostly in creating negativity then it only contributes to degeneration, rather than achieving one's purpose of happiness. The life that only creates negativity is useless, as it does not serve to achieve one's ultimate purposes.

2.4 It is unsuitable to be angry with others who lack faith in oneself

The teachings presented so far have been meticulous in relation to a doubt that may occur in one's mind: if someone accepts that gains are not conducive to their wellbeing, then they wouldn't get too upset if someone obstructs their gains. However this next heading is in relation to someone thinking that it is suitable to be angry with someone who lacks respect and faith in oneself. This outline explains that it is unsuitable to be angry with others who lack faith in oneself. It is subdivided into two:

2.4.1. If it is suitable to get angry when there is a loss of faith due to unpleasant words to oneself, then it is also suitable to be angry if there is a loss of faith due to unpleasant words to others

2.4.2. If one can be patient with a lack of faith for others then it is also suitable to be patient with a lack of faith in oneself due to the condition of afflictions

2.4.1. If it is suitable to get angry when there is a loss of faith due to unpleasant words to oneself, then it is also suitable to be angry if there is a loss of faith due to unpleasant words to others

What is being presented here is the absurdity of becoming angry with others if their unpleasant words cause others to lose faith in oneself. It would then follow that it would be reasonable to get angry when others use unpleasant words towards others, because it causes others to lose faith in them too.

The first two lines of the verse reads:

*62ab. If: Because it degenerates sentient beings
I shall be angry at the one saying unpleasant words.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary presents the doubt:

Argument: Though it is unsuitable to become angry at the obstacles to gain, I shall be angry at those who speak unpleasantly to me as it degenerates the faith of my faithful.

The next two lines of the verse answer that argument:

*62cd. Why do you not also get angry
When unpleasant words are said to others?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Answer: If you are angry because of a degeneration of merit, then why do you not get angry when unpleasant words are said to another person? Here also, the virtue of faith for others degenerates.

As the explanations presented in the commentary are quite clear, they don't need to be further explained.

2.4.2 If one can be patient with a lack of faith for others, then it is also suitable to be patient with a lack of faith in oneself due to the condition of afflictions

If one can reason that one can be patient when someone causes a lack of faith for others, because one sees there is a cause for others to do this, then with that reasoning it would also be suitable to be patient if someone causes lack of faith in oneself. That is because it is the afflictions that cause the lack of faith in oneself. It is not of their own doing, but caused by the condition of the afflictions.

The word 'faith' can also be used as a term to denote a lack respect. So when others use critical words and badmouth us, then that can cause others to lose respect, etc. for us. So lack of faith also means lack of respect.

To be clear with the reasoning here: If someone makes critical remarks toward oneself, one could say 'there is cause for me to be angry'. But if one says, 'I can be patient when someone makes critical remarks that cause a loss of faith in someone else, because they deserve to be insulted. They have given cause to be criticised'. If one uses that reasoning, then in the same way, you should be patient with the person who criticises and insults you, because it is the afflictions within them that is causing them to insult you.

The verse relating to this reads:

*63. If you can be patient with non-faith,
Because non-faith depends on others,
Then why are you not patient with unpleasant words
That depend on the generation of afflictions?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary gives a more literal translation:

If you can be patient and without anger with the loss of faith in another due to unpleasant words to them because the object depends on another person, then why mind, are you not patient with the unpleasant words said to me? It follows you should be because they depend on the generation of the other's afflictions.

To use an example to clarify this: let's say that if Wayne criticises me, I have a reason to get angry. But if Wayne criticises Ross, I don't get angry about that, because Ross has caused Wayne to insult him.

Following the same line of reasoning, one could argue: I can be patient when Wayne using insulting words to me because it is not actually Wayne himself, but the afflictions within him, that cause him to insult me.

These are very fine points of reasoning which indicate that there is really no point in becoming angry. In other words, there is no valid reason or excuse to get angry.

2.1.4.1.2. Stopping anger at that which faults relatives

This is subdivided into two

2.1.4.1.2.1. Stopping it with the patience of definitely relying on the Dharma

2.1.4.1.2.2. Stopping it with the patience that does not think anything of harm. (Other translations use: The Patience Of Not Retaliating Against Someone Who Harms You)

2.1.4.1.2.1. Stopping it with the patience of definitely relying on the Dharma

This moves on from the earlier point about finding reason to be angry at others criticising oneself, or preventing gain for oneself. This verse relates to stopping anger that finds fault with one's relatives and close ones.

It is also subdivided into two:

2.1.4.1.2.1.1. The reason why it is unsuitable if the holy bodies and so forth are harmed

2.1.4.1.2.1.2. It is likewise suitable to be patient with harm to friends and so forth

2.1.4.1.2.1.1. The reason why it is unsuitable if the holy bodies and so forth are harmed

The first subdivision is preceded by this hypothetical doubt:

Argument: Though it is unsuitable to be angry when oneself is harmed, it is suitable to be angry when the Triple Gem is harmed.

This is a very significant point because there are many who feel righteous about getting angry at those who harm for religious reasons. They say 'I can get angry with someone who harms my faith or religion.' Here it is clearly explained that even religion cannot be an excuse for anger.

The verse reads:

*64. Though the bodies, stupas and the holy Dharma
Are derided and destroyed
My hatred is unsuitable,
Because the buddhas and so forth do not have
harm.*

The commentary presents the answer:

Answer: If the bodies of the buddhas and the stupas of great enlightenment and so forth and the holy Dharma are the object of idle talk or criticism, and even if the bodies are destroyed, it is unsuitable to be angry. The buddhas and so forth, the Triple Gem, do not possess harm, and the attacker is the object of compassion, and it is suitable to be affectionate towards them.

The meaning is that the Triple Gem does not generate mental unhappiness due to mental pain.

One of the main points the commentary explains is that when others criticise or even destroy holy bodies, then there is no actual harm to the holy beings. As the buddhas have abandoned the causes to be harmed, they cannot be harmed.

The Triple Gem does not generate mental unhappiness due to mental pain. This is a significant point to understand: the parts of the Triple Gem are beyond experiencing any kind of unhappiness and mental pain because they have abandoned every cause for that kind of suffering to be experienced. They will not reoccur. While some, due to their ignorance, think they are causing harm, they do not understand that they cannot harm holy beings.

Having understood that, one should not find reason to be upset and angry with someone who causes harm to the Triple Gem. Rather, we should consider them as great objects of compassion, because they create so much negativity due to their own ignorance.

Often when His Holiness talks about the perpetrators of harms in Tibet he refers to them as objects of great compassion. He often says 'Oh! Have great pity for those who engage in such negative deeds'. In recent times His Holiness has told Tibetans who are visiting India that when they go back to Tibet (of course he is also sending messages to people who are in Tibet), 'If there is an occasion where you are forced to criticise or ridicule me, don't hesitate to do so. There is no reason for you to be unnecessarily tortured or given a hard time just because you don't want to criticise me. In fact, the whole world knows about me anyway, so there is no harm in you ridiculing or criticising me. It won't harm me in any way'. Nowadays, the world knows what the Dalai Lama stands for, and who he really is. So the more the Chinese continuously criticise him and make ridiculous remarks about him, they more they ridicule themselves. People laugh about it when the Chinese continue to do that.

However, the present Premier of China seems to have more understanding, and has actually stopped a lot of criticism of His Holiness, probably for political reasons. Apparently he is scrutinising the internal affairs of the Communist party for corruption, unjust torture, unjust trials and unjust imprisonment.

What has been presented thus far is something from which to take personal instructions. It relates to practising patience and, rather than finding reasons to justify one's anger, to actually practise patience for personal benefit. In relation to gain, it explains that one finds reason to get angry when others obstruct gains, but one should consider how there is no real benefit in craving gain; it doesn't serve any purpose, as one will have to part from it, and that can cause more suffering for oneself.

It is also unreasonable to be upset with others who criticise oneself. If one gets upset it just causes more hurt for oneself. There is no benefit, so it is far better to practice patience when others insult you or your relatives etc. You have been given the tools that will assist you when you are most in need, when you are impoverished, or in times of strife when others may not be able to help you. These tools will help you at that time.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcribed by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

17 March 2015

While maintaining the motivation we generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our meditation practice. [meditation]

As usual we can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings, and put them into practice well.

2.1.4.1.2. Stopping anger at that which faults relatives¹

2.1.4.1.2.1. Stopping it with the patience of definitely relying on the Dharma

2.1.4.1.2.1.1. Why it is unsuitable to be angry if holy bodies etc. are harmed (cont.)

Here, *holy bodies* refers to the actual holy bodies of buddhas, gurus and bodhisattvas, as well as holy objects such as stupas and so forth. In the past, stupas in Varanasi and other parts of India were destroyed by followers of other faiths, who acted out of evil intent or extreme ignorance. What is being explained here is that even in extreme cases where the buddhas are harmed and holy objects and so forth are destroyed, one should not find reason to become angry. Rather one should practise patience.

Instead of retaliating with anger, one needs to develop compassion for such people. This is a very significant point. When one really thinks about it, these people, who cause such destruction to holy objects, are an object of great compassion because of the heavy negativities they have created. In fact, the compassion developed for such beings of evil intent is said to be very subtle and profound.

2.1.4.1.2.1.2. It is likewise suitable to be patient with harm to relatives and so forth

It is explained here that one should also practise patience when harm is inflicted upon our teachers, close relatives and friends.

The verse relating to this is:

65. *Even if one's teacher and relatives
And friends are harmed,
Stop anger by seeing that it came about
Through the earlier way of conditions.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning of the verse as follows:

It is likewise unsuitable to get angry when one's teachers, contemporaries, relatives or friends and so

forth are being harmed or one sees them being harmed. One should stop anger by seeing that the friends and so forth are being harmed due to the karma accumulated through unsuitable actions in the past, that the harm had arisen through the earlier explained way of conditions.

Here, *contemporaries* refers to immediate relatives such as one's parents or siblings, while *relatives* refers to one's spouse and in-laws, as well as one's extended family. When they are being harmed, or when one sees them about to be harmed, *one should stop anger, by seeing that the friends and so forth are being harmed due to karma accumulated through unsuitable actions in the past.*

At this point, one needs to use the earlier explanation that harms to oneself cannot come about if one hasn't created the karma to experience that harm. Similarly, if others haven't created the karma to be harmed, they won't experience any harm. The harm they experience is a consequence of their own negative karma, rather than being entirely caused by the perpetrator. So by using the reasons that were previously explained in relation to oneself, one finds reason to practise patience when relatives and friends are harmed, rather than becoming angry.

As also explained previously, we benefit when others harm us, as that harm enables us to exhaust negative karma. Furthermore, they are giving us an opportunity to practise patience. So, rather than harming us, they are actually benefitting us. In addition, they will experience the negative consequences of their action. So they are in fact an object of compassion rather than anger. The same line of reasoning also applies when one's close relatives and friends and the like are harmed.

When we think about it carefully, these are very logical reasons. But we can't leave it at that. We need to remind ourselves to put this advice into practice. We might know about the significance of the practice, but if we don't attempt to practise it, then that knowledge won't be of much help in preventing us from becoming angry. Through training our mind, going over these explanations and meditating on them, we will not become angry even when the conditions for anger are present. That is proof that we are practising patience.

If we just skim over these explanations and think 'Oh yeah, this makes sense' and don't make any attempt to practise it, then, when the conditions arise, we will find ourselves becoming upset and angry. After we get angry we might then recall the practice and make an attempt to practise patience, but by then it's a bit too late. You've already become upset and angry, and if you had acted upon it then the damage would have already been done.

The real beneficiary of one's practice of patience is oneself. The mark of patience is that in the event of physical or verbal harm, one's mind is not disturbed and one does not become agitated. That is when one actually reaps the benefit of patience, which is maintaining a mind that is free from agitation.

Furthermore, as was mentioned previously, practising patience in the event of harm is also an optimum means to accumulate great merit, and purify negative karma. Thus it is one of the greatest virtues. As explained earlier, the austerity of patience is the supreme austerity of a

¹ Here the heading numbering in the transcript reverts (temporarily) back to the structure of the chapter, rather than the abbreviated version used in the previous section. See the teaching of 14 October for the introduction of this heading.

bodhisattva's practice. In contrast, if we allow our mind to become upset and angry, then, as explained previously, even a moment of anger can destroy the virtues of many eons, and become a cause to be born in the lower realms.

These are essential points to keep in mind, to remind ourselves of the great advantage of practising patience, and the disadvantages of not practising it.

2.1.4.1.2.2. Stopping it with the patience that does not think anything of harm

Another way to translate the heading would be:

2.1.4.1.2.2. The patience of not retaliating against someone who harms you

This has four subdivisions:

2.1.4.1.2.2.1. Being angry only at that which has a mind is unsuitable

2.1.4.1.2.2.2. The reason why it is unsuitable to be angry

2.1.4.1.2.2.3. Contemplating one's fault

2.1.4.1.2.2.4. Contemplating the benefits of patience

2.1.4.1.2.2.1. Being angry only at that which has a mind is unsuitable

Harm can be inflicted by both animate and inanimate objects. The outline, by itself, indicates that it is not reasonable to be upset by focussing solely on animate objects.

The verse relating to this reads:

66. *Embodied beings are harmed by both
Those with mind and those without mind.
Why single out and take exception to those
with mind?
Therefore be patient with harm.*

In his commentary, Gyalsab Je states:

The embodied beings that are our relatives and so forth are harmed both by the enemy that has mind, and the weapons and so forth that do not have mind. So why do I single out those with mind, and become angry and aggressive towards them? This is unsuitable and thus I should be patient with harm to relatives.

The commentary asks why, when *embodied beings*, such as relatives and so forth are *harmed by an enemy that has a mind, and by weapons and so forth that have no mind*, does one *single out* only the harm caused by the one who has a mind, and become *aggressive towards them*? It concludes by saying that it *is unsuitable and thus one should be patient with harm to relatives*.

The reasoning presented here is similar to what was explained earlier, which is that if someone harms you with the blow of a stick, for example, the one causing the direct harm is the stick. But of course one doesn't normally become angry with the stick, because one reasons that the stick is held by a person, and that if they hadn't wielded the stick, we wouldn't have experienced any pain.

With that same logical reasoning the text went on to explain that, as you don't get angry at the stick because it is controlled by the person, so too the person is controlled by delusions such as anger. Therefore one should not find reason to be upset with that person.

Although not elaborated as such, this section of the text is a similar explanation of why we should not be upset with people who harm us. However, if we don't relate this explanation to the earlier one, then we might ask, 'Why isn't it reasonable to be upset with the person who has a mind, when they have caused me harm?' If one didn't have an understanding of the previous explanation, then one might get stuck here and start thinking, 'Well, it should be reasonable to get angry at someone if they have harmed me?'

So it is important to be able to relate this verse to the logical reasons presented in the earlier explanation.

2.1.4.1.2.2.2. The reason why it is unsuitable to be angry

The verse relating to this heading is a very profound summary of the main points:

67. *Some commit faults due to ignorance,
Some become angry due to ignorance.
Who is without fault?
Who is with fault?*

Gyalsab Je's commentary begins his explanation with:

Some beings commit harms such as killing and so forth due to being ignorant of the law of cause and effect, and some become angry because of being ignorant of the faults of anger.

This is really a presentation of the fact that great harms are created due to being ignorant of the law of cause and effect or karma; and being ignorant of the faults of anger and so forth.

- Being ignorant of the law of cause and effect or karma, is the main cause for one to be reborn in the lower realms; and
- Being ignorant of the faults of anger and so forth, i.e. being ignorant of the fundamental truth of reality, is the cause to be reborn in higher realms within cyclic existence

That's how karma is created - through ignorance.

As specifically explained here, *some beings commit harms such as killing and so forth*, which includes some of the five heinous crimes of killing one's mother; killing one's father; killing an arhat and so forth.

Other heavy negative karmas implied by *and so forth* include stealing, which can be of varying degrees of severity. There is also sexual misconduct, as well as the heavy negative karma of holding on to wrong views. These are causes that create great misdeeds and negativity.

These heavy negative karmas are created due to being ignorant of the law of cause and effect. In other words, the immediate condition for creating these heavy negative karmas is the ignorance of the law of cause and effect. Although we have some understanding of karma, we continually find ourselves committing negativities and misdeeds, so we cannot blame those who, having no understanding of the law of cause and effect, create negative karmas out of sheer ignorance.

When the commentary states *and some become angry because of being ignorant of the faults of anger*, it is specifically explaining that when there's ignorance of the faults of anger, then, because one does not consider anger as a fault, one will find every reason to become angry. In

other words, if one doesn't see the faults of anger then when the conditions for anger arise and are present, it will further escalate, and there will be no hesitation in expressing and acting out of anger.

On the other hand, if one has contemplated the faults of anger, then even if anger were to momentarily arise due to certain conditions, one will prevent it from escalating by immediately recalling the faults of anger. One of the younger students, who used to come to Wednesday evening classes, once mentioned that contemplating and thinking about the faults of anger does definitely help to reduce the intensity of that negativity. Recognising the faults of anger is, in fact, one of the primary methods for preventing the escalation of anger. The more one familiarises one's mind with its faults, the more it helps to reduce that mind of anger.

Gyaltsab Je concludes his commentary on the verse with:

Out of those two, how can one say who is without fault and who is with fault? Since both are equally with fault, it is unsuitable to return harm with anger.

Here he is presenting further reasons as to why *it is unsuitable to return harm with anger*. A perpetrator of harm is either ignorant of the law of cause and effect or ignorant of the faults of anger, and so they engage in negative deeds, and create so much negativity. When one really thinks about this, they are in a very pitiful situation. Through their creation of so much negativity, they are creating the causes for their own misery and suffering. If we don't contemplate these points it would be very easy to become angry with those who are guilty of such heinous crimes as murder, saying, 'How inappropriate that is! How dare they do something like that? How is it possible for them to do such evil things?'

But if we really think about these points to gain a deeper understanding, we will understand how people engage in these negative acts out of sheer ignorance. Then, instead of annoyance and anger, one will really start to feel a deep sense of compassion for them. So these are really profound methods to develop a much stronger compassion.

One needs to relate this passage to the earlier explanations of how to prevent anger when one is harmed, and practise patience instead. Just as that elaborate presentation showed us the necessity of engaging in the practice of applying the patience of not retaliating when someone harms you, this section of the text is related specifically to the harm inflicted on holy beings and one's relatives, friends, and so forth. Just as one trains one's mind in not retaliating when others harm oneself, one uses the same thread of reasoning to practise patience, and not retaliate when one's relatives and friends and so forth are harmed.

2.1.4.1.2.2.3. *Contemplating one's fault*

This relates to contemplating the faults of the person who is being harmed.

The first of two verses under this heading is:

68. *Why did I create previously
The karma to be harmed?
If all depends on karma
Then why do I take exception with them?*

Here Gyaltsab Je explains:

In the past, why did I create the karma due to which others harm me? If all the meaningless harms that I receive depends on my bad karma, then why do I become angry with the other person?

As the commentary explains clearly, *the harm that I receive now is due to the karma that I've created in the past*. If that is the case, then whatever harm I receive from another is none other than the results of karma that I've created in the past. Therefore one should not find reason to be angry with the other. The verse backing this up is:

69. *I shall make an effort to act meritoriously
So that all, upon seeing this,
Develop the mind of love
For each other.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Having seen that all harms and sufferings arise from karma one thinks, 'When will it come to be that all living beings have a loving mind towards each other? I will make this happen'. So in this way I must strive for the merits of compassion and so forth.

This is a really wonderful explanation of how to put this teaching into practice. As explained here, *all harms and suffering are the results of previously created karma*. Having understood that, *one thinks, 'When will it come to be that all living beings have a loving mind towards each other?'* Here, all living beings refers to close and dear ones, enemies, and strangers to whom one normally would feel indifference. For as long as that distinction between friends, enemies and strangers is present, harms and so forth will be inflicted upon each other.

How wonderful it would be if all beings could replace that mind of discrimination with a genuine sense of care, and a loving attitude towards each other. Having contemplated the value of that wonderful state, one thinks *I will make this happen. I must strive for the merits of compassion and so forth*. Generating this mind of great love and compassion is also the means to accumulate great merit.

So there is no reason to be upset and angry with others. Whatever harm that's experienced is only due to the results of previous karma. Wouldn't it be wonderful if, through seeing this, everyone was free from being upset and angry with each other, and instead generated love and compassion for each other?

2.1.4.1.2.2.4. *Contemplating the benefits of patience*

This is subdivided into three:

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.1. Striving not to allow one's virtue to degenerate

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.2. Purifying the causes for hell by tolerating small sufferings

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.3. It is suitable to like the austerity for the great purpose

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.1. *Striving not to allow one's virtue to degenerate*

Far from letting virtue degenerate, we should strive to further increase those virtues.

There are two verses under this heading, the first of which is:

70. *For example, when a house is on fire,*

*And the fire has started to spread to other houses,
The hay and so forth to which it has spread
Is suitable to be given up.*

The explanation in the commentary reads:

For example, if a house is on fire and the fire has moved to another house where it spreads to the grass and wood, then it is suitable that one sacrifices the hay and wood in order to save the wealth of the house. It would be unsuitable to have attachment to them.

The *example* that is used is *that if another house is on fire, and the courtyard in one's house contains hay and wood, then to protect one's house and valuables one would be prepared to sacrifice or remove that hay and wood to remove the danger of sparks igniting it. If one were attached to the hay and wood in one's courtyard it could destroy one's own house and possessions.*

The second verse extends this example:

71. *Likewise, when, through being attached to something,
The fire of hatred spreads,
And there is doubt that one's merits will burn,
Then of course one has to give it up.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Similarly, if the fire of hatred is spreading due to the condition of attachment to friends and so forth and there is the danger that the wealth of merits and so forth will burn, then the basis of one's attachment is suitable to be given up; thus it is unsuitable to be attached.

How often do we find ourselves engaging in negativities due to strong *attachment to friends, relatives and so forth*? For example, when they are harmed one finds reason to become really upset and angry, which will destroy *one's own merit* and roots of virtues. Therefore, one *should give up attachment* to one's friends and relatives as a means of protecting the great wealth of one's merit and virtues.

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.2. Purifying the causes for hell by tolerating small sufferings

This has two subdivisions:

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.2.1. Example

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.2.2. Meaning

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.2.1. Example

First of all Gyaltsab Je presents an argument:

Argument: If one is separated from friends and relatives one will suffer.

Here one is finding reason not to be patient when one's relatives and so forth are harmed, based on the point that *if one is separated from friends and relatives one will suffer*. So seeing them harmed or suffering is a reason to be upset and angry.

The answer is presented in this verse:

72. *How can it not be good if a person to be killed
Is released upon having his hand cut off?
How can it not be good if one is freed from hell
Through the human sufferings?*

The commentary explains the answer:

Answer: If a person condemned to death is freed upon having his hand cut off then how is that not good? It is good. Likewise, if one is freed from the

suffering of hell merely by experiencing the human sufferings of hunger and thirst, then how is that not good? It is appropriate to tolerate small sufferings to reverse larger sufferings.

The explanation begins with the rhetorical question, *if a person who is condemned to death is freed upon having his hand cut off, then how is that not good?* This implies that an individual who is condemned to death would find the lesser suffering of losing one's hand to be more acceptable. In comparison with the unbearable suffering of being killed, the suffering of losing one's hand would be more bearable. The main point of this analogy is that it is appropriate to bear a small suffering as a means of relieving a greater suffering. In comparison to being killed, the suffering of having one's hand cut off is relatively minor.

Having presented this example the commentary further explains that *likewise, if one is freed from the suffering of hell merely by experiencing the human sufferings of hunger and thirst, then how is that not good? It is appropriate to tolerate small sufferings to reverse larger sufferings.*

As presented here, in comparison to the unbearable and intense sufferings of the hell realms, the suffering experienced in the human realm, such as intense hunger and thirst, is relatively minor. A very good example is the Nyung Nye practice. During the Nyung Nye one experiences extreme thirst and great pangs of hunger. However, that kind of suffering has a great purpose in that it is a way of purifying one's negative karma. When this practice is done appropriately it becomes a cause to relieve the sufferings of the hell realms. So it is worthwhile to bear small sufferings, if doing so becomes a cause to relieve a greater suffering. I've done many Nyung Nyes, and there is definitely great suffering. However even though it's not comfortable physically, when one sees its purpose, one does not allow that physical suffering to overwhelm one's mind, and so one continues with the practice. This is a good example to use in conjunction with what is being explained here.

These are examples of hardships that one goes through when practising Dharma. When one sees the value of the practice, then one will not be deterred by small sufferings and think, 'Oh it's too difficult. I can't bear this. It's not worthwhile doing it'. That would be losing the opportunity to accumulate great merit and purify great negative karma.

The main point here is that engaging in Dharma practices requires some effort, hardship and difficulties. But that is worthwhile when it becomes a cause to relieve greater suffering. This is what one needs to keep in mind. One can extend that understanding to practising patience beginning with small sufferings. As we become familiar with being patient with small sufferings we will develop patience with greater suffering. That is another way of looking at what is presented here.

As literally explained in the commentary, it is worthwhile being patient with smaller suffering as that becomes a cause to relieve greater sufferings. This also implies that if one cannot be patient with small sufferings, then there is no way that one will be able practise patience with greater sufferings. So it is definitely worthwhile to begin with being patient with small sufferings.

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.2.2. Meaning

The hypothetical argument used to introduce the verse is:

Argument: I cannot bear even these sufferings.

I cannot bear even these sufferings relates to the sufferings of the human realm. These include hunger and thirst, as well as other suffering such as being criticised, being beaten or bound, experiencing sickness and so forth. These are all sufferings experienced on the human realm.

The verse states:

73. *If I cannot bear
Even the present sufferings,
Then why do I not reverse anger
The cause of the sufferings of hell?*

Then the commentary explains that:

Answer: If I cannot bear even the small present sufferings of hunger, thirst and being cut with weapons, then why do I not make an effort to reverse anger which is the cause for the sufferings of hell? I should strive to reverse it.

As explained very clearly, we become angry because we *cannot bear the small sufferings* that we experience in this human existence, such as *hunger and thirst, being cut* and beaten and so forth. The reason why we become angry is because we're not able to bear that suffering. So if it's so hard and difficult to bear the suffering of the human existence, then why would one *not make the effort to reverse the anger which is a cause for the great sufferings in the hell realms*? The conclusion here is one should make every effort to reverse the cause of one's great sufferings in the hell realms, which is anger. So it is incredibly worthwhile to practise patience with the small sufferings of our current existence, as a means to prevent the creation of the causes to experience much greater suffering in the hell realms.

We need to keep this very significant point in mind and put it into practice. If we find it so hard to bear even the small suffering that we are experiencing now, then, with the prospect of having to experience great suffering in the future, why would we not strive to actually overcome the cause of that great suffering, which is anger. Why would one intentionally not want to practise patience? It would be really ridiculous and pointless to intentionally create the causes for much greater suffering. So the personal instruction here is that it is incredibly valuable to actually engage in the practice of patience.

It is reasonable to conclude that if one cannot bear small sufferings then one should, by every means, avoid creating causes for much greater suffering. However we often find the reverse, where someone, who cannot bear to experience some small suffering, takes the drastic measure of jumping off a cliff or a bridge to end their life, and ends up with much greater suffering through ending their life.

That's really quite ironic—they were intending to escape from the small suffering they were experiencing, and ended up having to experience much greater suffering. If we look at it from this point of view, then we can see that it is really very foolish to try to purposely create more suffering, especially as a means of trying to remove smaller sufferings. In fact, the opposite should be

practised, which is avoiding the causes for greater suffering through experiencing lesser suffering now.

The text is showing us, with very logical reasons, that if we don't want to experience small sufferings, we should then use every means to avoid the causes for much greater suffering. There are many, many instances of people taking drastic measures in an attempt to rid themselves of some comparatively minor suffering, but end up in experiencing even greater suffering.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcribed by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་བལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

24 March 2015

While maintaining the motivation generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our meditation practice. [meditation]

As usual we can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the Mahayana teachings, and put them into practice well.

2.1.4.1.2.2.4. Contemplating the benefits of patience (cont.)

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.3. It is suitable to like the austerities for the great purpose

This has two subdivisions:

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.3.1. Having regret due to not having achieved the purpose of self or others, despite all the bodies that have already been wasted

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.3.2. It is suitable to be happy because of achieving the purpose of all sentient beings by being patient with the present austerities

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.3.1. Having regret due to not having achieved the purpose of self or others, despite all the bodies that have already been wasted

74. For the purpose of desire, I experienced
The sufferings of being burned and so forth in
thousands of hells,
But I have not achieved the purpose
Of self or others.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning clearly:

Because before I was engaged in negative actions due to desire for the mistaken object of my craving, I have experienced for thousands of eons the sufferings of being cut and so forth in hell. Despite this, I have not achieved the slightest purpose of self or others.

Previously one has engaged in actions due to desire for the mistaken object of my craving. The mistaken objects of craving, as explained in other teachings in more detail, are the objects of attachment and anger. The engagement with these objects becomes mistaken, due to the mistaken perceptions through which we interact with them. That is why the objects of craving are referred to here as mistaken objects.

Neuroscientists also support this view, stating that when one sees a fault in an object (such as an object of anger), the perceived fault is only about ten percent coming from the object's side. Ninety percent of the perceived faults are actually a projection from one's own mind. This is a very significant scientific discovery, which of course has already been explained profoundly in the Buddha's teachings.

Likewise, the mind of attachment sees the object of attachment as having only appealing features of beauty. Whereas according to the earlier explanation, the appealing features of beauty in the object may be only about ten percent. The rest would be an overrated projected state of beauty in one's mind, due to the strong attachment to that object.

The commentary explains that *due to desire for the mistaken object of my craving*, one has created a lot of negative actions in the past, so due to that one has *experienced for thousands of eons the sufferings of being cut and so forth in hell*.

The first point explains how one has created many negativities in the past, for which one has already experienced the consequences over great lengths of time in the lower realms. Once reborn in the lower realms, such as the hell realm, it is very difficult to create any virtue.

Bringing this concept into one's present life, we can see how we engage in negativities due to our desires for mistaken objects of craving and so forth. In contemplating these very profound points about karma, one can see how one engages in negative actions due to mistaken perceptions in one's own mind.

Once in the human realm, if we do not use our suffering to purify our negative karma, then as explained: *I have not achieved the slightest purpose for self and others*. If one's suffering has not served the purpose of achieving either goals for a better rebirth in future lives, or for definite goodness, which is to achieve liberation and enlightenment, then we have not achieved the slightest purpose for self and others.

To take this as a personal instruction: one needs to develop regret for not having achieved the purpose of self and others. Contemplating how, despite the numerous bodies that one has already wasted, if one has not utilised one's life to counteract attachment and anger towards mistaken objects, then one has constantly created negativity. As the outline explains, we have wasted so many bodies and experienced various types of suffering, but we have not achieved any purpose. The reason we have wasted so many lives is because they have not served to fulfil the purpose of either oneself or others. You must understand that the outline serves as a great guide in extracting the meaning of the verse.

For example this outline, *Having regret due to not having achieved the purpose of self or others, despite all the bodies that have already been wasted*, directly relates to, and introduces the meaning of the next verse, which comes under the following heading: *It is suitable to be happy because of achieving the purpose of all sentient beings by being patient with the present austerities*.

This is how I understand the meaning of these outlines and I am confident that it is correct, as I am quite familiar with their content. We can see how the outline serves the purpose of showing the sequence and logic of the verses presented in the text. One should not underestimate the value of any text's outline. For example, if one wishes to meditate on the Lam Rim, it is on the basis of a thorough grasp of the outline itself that one is able to meditate on the various topics.

There was a time in the past when I spent many months meditating on the Lam Rim, which I did on the basis of having first memorised the outline. Memorising the outline is very useful, because it makes it possible to recall the topics precisely and get an overview of the entire Lam Rim. To give an analogy, it is like sitting on top of a high mountain and seeing everything below very clearly.

Similarly, when one has learned the outline of a text such as the Lam Rim, then the meditation practice becomes very meaningful, as one has an overview of the entire Lam Rim text. The reason why I regularly emphasise the importance of the outlines is because they present a sequential and logical manner for extracting the meaning of the text.

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.3.2. It is suitable to be happy because of achieving the purpose of all sentient beings by being patient with the present austerities

The verse reads:

75. *This does not harm me like that
And it also achieves great purpose
It is suitable to be only happy about
The sufferings that clear the harm of sentient beings.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains further:

This austerity at the time of achieving the purpose of others does not harm me that much, but in dependence on it, I achieve great purpose. Therefore, it is suitable to be only happy and accept the sufferings of the austerities that clear away all the harm of migrators.

The commentary explains that the austerity one could endure for the purpose of others would include practices of forsaking food or clothing and enduring hardships in the practices one engages in. These difficulties, while they may be hard, do not actually harm oneself to any great extent. In fact, whatever level of suffering we experience in our practice is a suffering within the human realm, so it is nothing compared to suffering in the lower realms. And rather than harming, austerities actually serve to help achieve the great meaning of serving the purpose of oneself and others: *in dependence upon it I achieve great purpose.*

We can relate to the great purpose of all the hardships one bears in one's practices as being a means for becoming the cause of either achieving high status in the future life, or definite goodness i.e. liberation, and ultimately enlightenment. So that is the great purpose one will be able to achieve by enduring the hardships of Dharma practice. Therefore, as the commentary explains: *it is suitable to be only happy and accept the sufferings of the austerities.* This relates specifically to the practice of the patience of willingly enduring sufferings. This is the type of patience that serves as the means *that clears away all the harm of migrators.*

When one achieves one's great purpose, such as attaining enlightenment, that then becomes the means to clear away the harms of all migrators. This is the extent of the great virtue, or great purpose, that one can achieve.

2.1.4.1.3. Stopping anger at those who benefit one's enemies

This point is very relevant and practical in our everyday life. It follows the earlier advice on how to not get angry and practise patience. It began with how to practise patience and not retaliate with anger in relation to harms inflicted on oneself personally. This was followed with advice on how to practise patience and not be angry when one's close ones, such as relatives and friends are harmed. This leads up to advice given now on how to practise patience when one's enemies are benefitted.

We can see how this is very much related to our everyday life situation. We see how we create so much negativity toward those who harm our close ones, and find reasons to get very agitated and angry. Then again, with those who help or benefit our enemies, we become really agitated and angry. This is how we seem to constantly create the situation for own mental turmoil and agony.

Everyday situations present so many occasions to get upset and angry, and create a great amount of negativity. So the sequential advice on how to practise patience is very relevant. It is not as if we are being asked to practise something which is totally unrelated to us, and beyond our reach. So we definitely need to embrace this advice and put it into practice.

This part of the outline is subdivided into three parts:

2.1.4.1.3.1. Abandoning intolerance to achieving praise and renown of enemies

2.1.4.1.3.2. Abandoning intolerance to achieving their happiness

2.1.4.1.3.3. Abandoning intolerance to achieving their gain

So from these outlines we can see great advice being presented.

In relation to the first subdivision, *Abandoning intolerance to the achievement of praise and renown by enemies* we can see how we don't favour an enemy being praised and receiving good comments, and because it makes us feel uncomfortable we find reason to get angry. Here we are being advised to abandon intolerance to this response.

The second subdivision, *Abandoning intolerance to achieving their happiness*, highlights how we are not happy when our enemies are happy. Getting angry when enemies achieve the means for happiness can cause one great pain, so this intolerance must be abandoned.

There are many who suffer precisely because they are unable to tolerate things like praise being given to one's enemies, or enemies achieving happiness. It causes many people sleepless nights, and a lot of anxiety in their mind. Many mental problems are created by none other than these ways of thinking that cause turmoil in one's mind.

Based on what is presented here we can see how people can be tormented with many reasons to become upset and angry. Elaborating on this from our own experience we can see that it is very true. We start out by not being able to tolerate good things happening to our enemies. Then, when someone helps them and benefits them, we find further reason to become more upset and aggravated. This can go further, when others help those who are helping our enemies, we find even more reason

to get upset. In this way our mind becomes more and more agitated with so much anger.

When we look at reasons for the mind to become agitated and upset, so many factors and conditions can cause one to be in mental turmoil. This seems to be in fact the reason why so many people end up becoming depressed.

Some have related to me symptoms where they reach a state of mind where everything appears to be negative and everyone is against them. These are created by none other than the mind which is going round in a vicious circle, thinking about different scenarios, adding on more and more reasons to become angry. All of that then causes the mind to have so many disturbing thoughts, causing it to become tight and very vulnerable to being easily depressed. A feeling of hostility can arise in one's mind with everything appearing negative. That is what some have confided in me. We need to understand that these feelings are created by the mind getting out of control.

The mind escalates a small problem into a big one. To use the earlier example, we first get angry with our enemy, then with those who help our enemies, then with those who help those who help our enemies, and so on and so forth. All this is the cause for one's mind to be in turmoil and become depressed. This can all be stopped when one stops anger towards one's enemy, which is the main cause for all the other reasons to become angry. Thus, when one develops a genuine sense of love and compassion towards one's enemy, all the other reasons to be angry will also naturally subside.

This is how we can see the great value and power of love and compassion. It has the power to transform our mind in a positive way. This is why I regularly emphasise love and compassion as being really important, indeed most valuable in one's life. So we need to constantly familiarise our mind with it again and again. The mind of love and compassion is one of the greatest states of mind for establishing genuine peace and wellbeing within oneself.

Based on the teachings, we can see how the Buddha has presented such profound methods and means in the techniques of cultivating love and compassion in relation to not only one's close ones, but also to strangers and enemies. When one extends one's love and compassion on all three levels—friends, strangers and enemies—then it naturally becomes unbiased love and compassion, not discriminating between some who are close, others who are distant, and some as enemies.

When one overcomes that attitude, all beings will appear as very close and dear to oneself. This is an indisputable and profound teaching by the Buddha which is unequalled by any presentation in other traditions. It is quite unique. So when we refer to the Buddha's teachings we can then start to develop a genuine sense of admiration for the qualities of the Buddha himself, and the value of his teachings.

Encompassing all beings and not having antagonistic views towards others, comes from familiarity with love and compassion. With the attitude of love and compassion we can also develop genuine respect for other traditions, by maintaining an unbiased attitude towards other faiths.

2.1.4.1.3.1. Abandoning intolerance to the achievement of praise and renown by enemies

This is subdivided into two.

2.1.4.1.3.1.1. Since it is the cause for one's happiness it is suitable to want it

2.1.4.1.3.1.2. Since it is the cause for the happiness of others it is unsuitable to not want it

Again, the outlines alone are a meticulous presentation. The meaning of the following verses are presented in relation to abandoning intolerance to one's enemies achieving praise and renown. Abandoning this becomes a cause for one's own happiness, so it is suitable to want to abandon intolerance. Secondly, it becomes the cause for others' happiness; so not wanting to abandon it is unsuitable.

The teaching is really training our minds to change our negative attitude. This is why I emphasise again and again in my regular teachings, how a lot of the problems we create are just ways of thinking (or attitudes) that we have developed in our mind over time. It is necessary to recognise this and make attempts to change our way of thinking, change our attitude. What we call happiness or unhappiness is very much related to one's way of thinking.

2.1.4.1.3.1.1. *Since it is the cause for one's happiness it is suitable to want it*

The verse under that reads:

76. *By praising others who have qualities
One attains the happiness of joy
Thus mind, if they are praised
Why are you not happy?*

The second verse under that reads:

77. *That this happiness of joy of yours
Is an unflawed source of happiness
Was taught by those endowed with qualities.
It is also the best for gathering others.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of this verse:

If others praise an enemy of mine saying, "He has qualities", then the person praising also gains happiness. In that case, why mind do you also not make the other person happy by praising the enemy? If you do, then the happiness of the joy of liking others' qualities will become the unflawed source of future happiness. This was taught by those with qualities, the conquerors and their children, and praised by them as such. It is also the best for attracting disciples.

If others praise an enemy of mine saying 'he has qualities' then the person praising also gains happiness. What is being explained in essence is that the very act of praising someone else's qualities brings joy and happiness to one's own mind. One wouldn't genuinely praise someone if one didn't like them. The very act of praising someone means that one has a sense of admiration for them, therefore one happily offers them praise.

So it is with a sense of admiration for the other that one offers praise. Normally one would criticise someone who one does not admire, instead of praising them. So when anyone praises anyone else it is done in light of genuine

admiration and respect. Thus, praising others brings joy and happiness to one's mind.

Thus, *why mind do you also not make others happy by praising the enemy?* What is being explained is that just as the other person gains joy and happiness in their mind when offering praise to the enemy, if you were to follow the same example and offer praise to the enemy, it would also bring joy to the other's mind and consequently to yourself as well.

Thus, as explained in the commentary *If you do, then the happiness of the joy of liking others' qualities will become the unflawed source of future happiness.* In relation to oneself, by praising the qualities of the enemy, one gets the immediate benefit of gaining a more joyous and happy mind now, as well as becoming a cause of happiness for future lifetimes.

This was taught by those with qualities, the conquerors and their children, and praised by them as such. What is being explained here, in relation to praise, is that seeing qualities in others and praising them, especially an enemy, becomes the supreme means for gaining happiness for oneself in this life and future lifetimes. Furthermore, it is also the best means to gather disciples. As you would recall from earlier teachings there are four means of gathering disciples, such as using pleasant words that are in accordance with their minds, helping them in according to their needs and so forth.

So here, when one praises the qualities of someone, they would naturally appreciate that. And when others appreciate you for offering words of encouragement and praise, they are naturally drawn to you. They will not feel distant to you, rather they are drawn to you. So, for someone with a bodhisattva attitude of wishing to benefit others, this is one of the supreme means of gathering disciples, as a way to further benefit them.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcribed by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

31 March 2015

Based on the motivation generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our meditation practice.

[meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practice well.

2.1.4.1.2. Stopping anger at wrongdoing which faults relatives

2.1.4.1.3.1. Abandoning intolerance to achieving praise and renown of enemies

2.1.4.1.3.1.1. *Since it is the cause for one's happiness it is suitable to want it (cont.)*

As explained last week when someone else praises an enemy, both the enemy and the person who gives the praise have a happy mind. Likewise, if one praises an enemy one will also experience a joyful mind. Praising an enemy will not only make the enemy happy, but one will also experience happiness. Thus it is appropriate to praise an enemy.

2.1.4.1.3.1.2. *It being the cause for the happiness of others, not wanting it is unsuitable¹*

This heading has two subdivisions:

2.1.4.1.3.1.2.1. If one does not wish others to have happiness, then one's happiness degenerates

2.1.4.1.3.1.2.2. Hence it is appropriate to wish others happiness

2.1.4.1.3.1.2.1. *If one does not wish others to have happiness, then one's happiness degenerates*

From the outline itself we can derive the understanding that not wishing others to have happiness causes one's own happiness to decline. This is explained in the following verse:

78. *Further, it is said: 'like this, happiness arises'.
If you do not wish for this happiness,
Through giving up offering wages,
The observed and unobserved degenerates.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains the meaning thus:

Further, by praising, the object of the praise becomes happy. If you do not wish for this happiness of praising others then, since the wages one pays one's servants makes them happy too, one should stop offering wages and so forth. By stopping this and other things, then in this life the servants will not work, and in a later life one will not have happiness. In such a way one's happiness degenerates in this observed life and in the unobserved future life.

As the commentary explains very clearly, *the object of praise becomes happy* when you praise them. The text then presents an example to illustrate the negative consequences of *not wishing* others to be happy. As presented, if you do not wish for others to be happy, then, since *paying wages to one's servants or workers makes them happy*, you might as well *stop* paying their *wages*. This phrase *if you do not wish for others to be happy* includes any means of making others happy, such as repaying the kindness of others with good deeds and so forth. If you really don't wish for others to be happy, then you will not take the initiative to repay the kindness of others with good deeds and gestures, or benefiting others in any way.

Following that, the commentary explains that *by stopping this*, i.e. not paying wages to workers, returning the kindness of others and so forth, *then in this life your servants and employees will not want to work* for you, or they will be very slack about their work. If they stop working for you altogether, then you will have harmed yourself, as no work at all will be done. Likewise if one does not return the kindness of others, people will start to shy away. Through losing one's workers, colleagues and friends and relatives, one will start to feel very lonely, and thus be deprived of happiness in this very life. Thus the *observed* or obvious *happiness* of this life will *degenerate*.

Furthermore, if one has not engaged in generosity in this life then one will not reap the positive benefits of generosity in one's *future life*. So by not engaging in acts of generosity such as paying wages, returning kindness, benefiting others and so forth, one will not reap the positive results of generosity in one's future life. Thus one's happiness in the *unobserved*, or less obvious *future life* will also degenerate.

In summary, if one dislikes others being happy, then the consequence is that one's own happiness in this life will degenerate. Furthermore, if one does not engage in generous acts, or acts that make others happy in this life, then one will experience the consequences in one's future life as well. So not wanting others to be happy is a cause for one's own happiness in both the present and in future lives to decline and degenerate.

Conversely, if one likes making others happy, one will act to benefit them and engage in acts of generosity. Then, as a consequence of making others happy, one will reap positive results in this life and in future lives. We need to take this as a personal instruction, and engage in acts that make others happy. We also need to ensure that we intentionally avoid things that will cause unhappiness. Sometimes it is very easy to make others unhappy with the simplest inappropriate gestures and remarks, so we need to try to avoid those things, no matter how trivial they may seem. We need to incorporate this way of thinking and acting into our daily life.

This dislike of enemies being happy, and wishing them unhappiness, is one of the main causes of mental agony. When we hear our enemies being praised, or see them being helped in some way, we can experience so much pain and agony. But if we actually begin to change that attitude to one of intentionally praising our enemies, speaking well of them and being happy when they experience good things and so forth, then that can really help to avoid that pain and agony. This is important to keep in mind.

We can also relate this to the practice of developing the equanimity that is part of the seven-point cause and effect practice of generating bodhicitta. When we lack that equanimity we will feel pain when our enemies experience

¹Introduced last week as *Since it is the cause for the happiness of others it is unsuitable to not want it*.

benefit, and glad when they are harmed. Conversely, we will feel joy when our friends experience benefit and anger when they are harmed. When we develop our mind so that we experience joy when we see the both our friends and our enemies benefitting, then that will release one from the agony and pain of the earlier state of mind. This is very profound mind-training that changes one's mindset.

As I have explained many times, the equanimity that is to be generated within the seven-point cause and effect sequence relates to one's own equanimity towards friends, enemies and strangers. Whereas when you generate the four immeasurable forms of equanimity, you are generating the mind of wishing others to have that state of equanimity towards friends, strangers and enemies. One generates the mind of, 'How wonderful it would be if others were to be free from being close to some out of attachment, and distant to others due to aversion', because that is the cause for sentient beings to experience the shortcomings of samsara by endlessly circling in samsara. As well as developing the very genuine and strong wish for others to have that equanimity, one can also relate it to oneself.

The conclusion is that if one actually generates the mind of wishing others to be happy, then that will be of great personal benefit, whereas holding onto a mind of disliking others being happy will be a great loss. Therefore it is in one's own best interest if one practises transforming one's habitual biased attitude into a positive one. While these points are quite easy to understand, they are actually very profound. It comes down to the very core of our wrong ways of thinking, and why we need to transform those wrong attitudes and ways of thinking.

2.1.4.1.3.1.2.2. Hence it is appropriate to wish others happiness

We can take note again of how this heading follows on directly from the earlier one, by stating that it is appropriate to wish others happiness. The verse relating to this reads:

*79. When my qualities are expressed
I wish also others to have happiness
When the qualities of others are expressed
I do not wish happiness for myself.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

When someone else expresses my qualities, that person wishes to have happiness, thus to say that when I express the qualities of others, I do not wish to have happiness myself is unsuitable and contradictory. Just as others wish to be happy in praising you, you should also be happy in praising others.

When someone else expresses my qualities then that person wishes to have happiness means that when someone we regard as an enemy expresses our qualities, they generally do so out of a wish to be happy themselves. And of course, it makes oneself happy to hear one's qualities being expressed.

Therefore *to say that when I express the qualities of others I do not wish to have happiness myself is unsuitable and contradictory.* In other words, it is contradictory to say, 'I feel happy when an enemy expresses my qualities', and then say, 'Oh, I'm not happy to express the qualities of my enemies'. If it makes oneself happy to hear nice words about oneself, then it is contradictory to say that one would not feel happy about expressing the qualities of the other. That point is further emphasised with, *just as the others would wish to be happy in praising you, you should also be happy in praising others*, which emphasises that one should take the initiative of praising others, and thus making one's own mind happy.

Here again, we can see the profound logic that is used to show why one should find reason to express the qualities of one's enemies and others in general.

2.1.4.1.3.2. Abandoning intolerance to them achieving their happiness

*80. Since one wishes all sentient beings to have happiness,
Then, having generated the mind of enlightenment,
When sentient beings find their own happiness
Why do you get angry at them?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

One has generated the mind of enlightenment out of the wish to place all sentient beings in the highest happiness of enlightenment, and has accepted subsequently to practice the trainings. Hence, when sentient beings find a little of their own happiness and achieve their wish, then why are you now angry? It is suitable to be happy.

As the commentary clearly explains, someone who has taken the bodhisattva vows and dedicated themselves to the welfare of sentient beings has *generated the mind of enlightenment, out of a wish to place all sentient beings in the highest happiness of enlightenment.* In addition to this pledge, one has further promised *to practise the trainings.* So when sentient beings, from their own side, find happiness without having had to generate the cause for their happiness, *why are you now angry?* One should, in fact, be very pleased and happy that the very being one wishes to benefit is now experiencing some level of happiness. Even if it is a slight degree of happiness, it is still good for their wellbeing. So the reasoning presented in the text is that *it is suitable to be happy* rather than being angry. The actual point is that when sentient beings experience any level of happiness, then rather than becoming upset about that through jealousy and so forth, one should actually train one's mind to feel great joy.

Many of us have already taken these bodhisattva vows and made pledges. Even though we may not have actually generated bodhicitta yet, we have certainly generated a similitude of it, in addition to taking particular vows. So the advice given here applies to us because we have made those promises. It is good to consider these points as part of our personal practice.

2.1.4.1.3.3. Abandoning intolerance to them achieving their gain

This has two sub-divisions

2.1.4.1.3.3.1. Contemplating that it achieves one's wishes

2.1.4.1.3.3.2. Contemplating that there is nothing for one to not wish for

2.1.4.1.3.3.1. Contemplating that it achieves one's wishes

Here there are three further sub-divisions:

2.1.4.1.3.3.1.1. It is suitable to be happy if sentient beings achieve their gain

2.1.4.1.3.3.1.2. Example

2.1.4.1.3.3.1.3. If one does not wish for that, the mind of enlightenment degenerates

2.1.4.1.3.3.1.1. *It is suitable to be happy if sentient beings achieve gains*

This is similar to the previous explanation. The relevant verse is:

81. *One says 'May all sentient beings
Attain enlightenment honoured by the three
worlds'.
Seeing that they receive some minimal gain and
esteem
Why does that make one miserable?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

One has accepted the promise to place all sentient beings in the state of complete enlightenment that is honoured by the three worlds. Since one wishes this, when one sees that sentient beings attain some minimal gain and esteem then why does one's mind become miserable? One's wishes have been attained in part.

As the commentary explains, *one has accepted the promise to place all sentient beings in the state of complete enlightenment that is honoured by the three worlds*. The three worlds are the nether world, the world on our plane, and the world above, which basically encompasses the six realms. *Since one wishes this*, refers to the fact that one has made the promise to place all sentient beings into a state of complete enlightenment. Therefore *when one sees sentient beings attain some minimal benefit, why does one become miserable?* In fact, *one's wishes have been partly attained*.

This is similar to the previous point. One has promised to benefit all sentient beings and fulfil their wishes, so when from their own side sentient beings experience some benefit, then it is as if one's wish for all sentient beings to be happy and to attain all their wishes has been partly fulfilled.

2.1.4.1.3.3.1.2. *Example*

The previous point is clarified with the following example:

82. *If someone in need of nurturing who is nurtured
by you,
And is solely dependent on your generosity,
When this relative finds the means for their
livelihood,
Are you not happy and instead get angry?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

If a relative who is in need of nurturing and who is nurtured by you, and is solely dependent on your generosity, such as a child and so forth, finds the means for their own livelihood, and it becomes unnecessary for you to give anymore. How is it that one is not happy and instead becomes angry? It is suitable to be happy.

When one has responsibility for *nurturing a relative*, e.g. a child, and that relative takes the initiative to look after their own wellbeing, then why wouldn't one be happy about that? It would be very appropriate to be happy. This is definitely true; in a family situation, for example where the father is responsible for finding the means to provide for his children. When the children grow up and start to take initiative to earn their own living and provide for themselves, that would make the father very happy. Far from being unhappy, the father would be very pleased indeed. There is no reason at all for the father to feel jealous of their children making money and so forth.

One needs to think very carefully in relation to situations where others are caring for one's close ones, otherwise that can be a cause for distress. I have heard of people making

comments such as, 'Why are they interfering and providing for my child, when it is my responsibility! I will take care of them myself!' The same applies to jobs people have, such as here at Tara Institute. There have been cases where someone says, 'Oh, this is my responsibility' and refuses any help from others. Sometimes they are not able to do the job alone, but because they refuse help from others, the job doesn't get done well. When we reflect on that situation we can see that, at times, it can be appropriate to accept help.

2.1.4.1.3.3.1.3. *If one does not wish for that, the mind of enlightenment degenerates*

The verse relating to this is

83. *If one does not wish this for migrators
How does one wish them to be enlightened?
How can he who is angry at the wealth of
others
Possess the mind of enlightenment?*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

If someone begrudges migrators even small gains of food, clothing and so forth, then how can this person be someone wishing sentient beings to attain enlightenment? Once someone gets angry at the slightest wealth gained by others, then how can that person possess the mind of enlightenment that wishes to place all migrators in the state of enlightenment? Since the mind of enlightenment degenerates, one should strive to abandon jealousy toward the gain of others.

This advice seems to be targeted more for ordinary beings like ourselves, rather than bodhisattvas who have already generated bodhicitta—it seems unlikely that bodhisattvas would have such narrow-minded attitudes. *If someone begrudges migrators even small gains of food, clothing and so forth* refers to the situation of being unhappy with migrators who acquire even small gains or food and so forth. How could anyone who wishes for all beings to attain enlightenment, which is the highest happiness, be unhappy about the small gains and small happiness of others? The commentary makes this quite clear when it states: *Once someone gets angry at the wealth of others then how can that person possess the mind of enlightenment that wishes to place all migrators in the state of enlightenment?* This is quite clear. Then Gyaltsab Je advises: *Since the mind of enlightenment degenerates one should strive to abandon jealousy toward the gain of others*. So the main point is the need to abandon jealousy, which seems to be one of the main culprits for causing unhappiness about the gains of others.

2.1.4.1.3.3.2. *Contemplating that there is nothing for one to not wish for*

Again, there are three subdivisions.

2.1.4.1.3.3.2.1. It is unsuitable to be jealous of the gain of others

2.1.4.1.3.3.2.2. It is unsuitable to destroy one's qualities

2.1.4.1.3.3.2.3. It is suitable to grieve over one's negativities, but it is unsuitable to be jealous of the virtue of others

2.1.4.1.3.3.2.1. *It is unsuitable to be jealous of the gain of others.*

84. *Regardless of whether it is received from them
Or whether it remains in the house of the
benefactor,
In any case, you will not have it.
So whether it is given or not, what use is it?*

The commentary reads:

Regardless of whether the enemy receives food, clothing and so forth from the benefactor, or whether it is food, clothing and so forth remaining in the benefactor's home, in either case it is the same that one will not get it. So regardless of whether it is given to the enemy or not, what use is jealousy? It is not suitable.

This example can be related to a monastic context where benefactors make offerings to the monks and so forth. *Regardless of whether the enemy receives food, clothing and so forth from the benefactor, or whether the food, clothing, and so forth remains in the benefactor's home, one will not receive anything.* If one has no direct relationship with a benefactor, it makes no difference whether the benefactor gives away food and clothing and so forth, or whether they keep it.

It is not as if one would receive it if the benefactor didn't give it to one's enemy. If that was the case, then one might find some reason to be upset when it is given to the enemy. But one would not receive it anyway, *so regardless of whether it is given to the enemy or not, what use is jealousy?* This indicates that there is no point in becoming jealous and unhappy when a benefactor gives something to the enemy, because it doesn't affect one either way. Thus, *it is not suitable* to be jealous. So again, the point being emphasised is the need to overcome jealousy.

2.1.4.1.3.3.2.2. It is unsuitable to destroy one's qualities

The root verse reads as follows:

85. *Whether it is merit or faith,
Why destroy one's qualities?
One does not find gain,
Say, 'why do you not get angry?'*

The commentary reads:

If one is angry at the gain of others and wishes gain for oneself, then why destroy with anger the causes for gain such as merits, the behaviour that causes faith in the lay person's mind, one's qualities of morality, listening and so forth. Without holding the causes for gain, which one destroys, 'Why do I not get angry at myself?'

The focus here is on those who are ordained. The verse is emphasising the danger of being *angry at the gain of others*, and *wishing to receive the gain for oneself*. As explained here, *the causes for gain from lay benefactors and so forth*, are one's *merits*, as well as *the behaviour that causes faith in the lay benefactor's mind*, such as *one's qualities of morality, listening and so forth*, i.e. the three higher trainings. Those who receive offerings from lay benefactors and so forth, do so because of the merit that they have accumulated, and their good conduct, which generates faith in the minds of lay people. Benefactors very willingly honour with gifts those who have these natural and genuine qualities. They never have to be asked to do that. This is an indication that the beneficiary has created the causes by previously engaging in virtue.

The point is that if one is lacking these causes for gain, then the fault lies with oneself. So becoming angry with the beneficiary is absurd if one hasn't actually created the causes for gain oneself. Rather than being angry at the other, if it were to be reasonable to get angry at all, then one should be angry with oneself for not creating those causes.

Furthermore, anger towards others actually destroys whatever merit one has accumulated from one's practices of morality, listening and so forth, which is the cause of gains. So if one becomes angry when others receive gain and

esteem, then it would be appropriate to contemplate, *Why am I not angry with myself?*

To re-emphasise the first point, becoming upset and angry when others receive gain and esteem is inappropriate. If there were any good reason for one to get upset and angry, then the anger should be targeted at oneself. If one is not receiving any gain or esteem from others, that is because one has not created the causes such as accumulating merit and engaging in good conduct that earns respect. Furthermore not receiving gain and esteem now is a result of not having engaged in the trainings such as listening, meditating and so forth in the past, and not developing genuine humility with love and compassion. If one has not engaged in acquiring these qualities, which are a cause for beneficence, then the fault lies with oneself. Thus, rather than becoming upset with others, one should be upset with oneself. If one wishes to be respected and honoured, then the causes are clearly to be created by oneself. We need to take this as a personal instruction.

2.1.4.1.3.3.2.3. It is suitable to grieve over one's negativities, but it is unsuitable to be jealous of the virtue of others

It is totally inappropriate if one does not regret one's own past negativities, and becomes jealous of the virtue of others. That is the reason why one does not receive gain and esteem. The verse presented under this heading is:

86. *Not only do you not grieve,
The negativity you created,
You also compete with the merits
Created by others.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je states:

Not only do you not grieve over the causes for not receiving any gain, which are the negativities that you created earlier, you also compete with the merits previously created by others and are jealous because you cannot bear them. Is this not unsuitable?

One does not grieve about the causes for not receiving any gain, which are the negativities, refers to not regretting the negativities one has created in the past, which implies one has not confessed and purified those negativities. Then on top of that one actually *competes with the merits previously created by others*, and *are jealous because you cannot bear them*.

So on the one hand, one is creating the conditions for not receiving any gains by not confessing and purifying with remorse or regret the negativities one has created in the past, while on the other hand one actually *competes with the merits previously created by others*.

It is totally *unsuitable* to be jealous when others are merely reaping the result of their previously created merit. Rather than acknowledging and rejoicing in their good fortune, if we instead become jealous, then that is really inappropriate. In fact by being jealous we are creating further causes to lack gain and esteem for ourselves. Thus, unable to bear the gains of others is totally unsuitable.

At this point in the Tibetan text it states that the second *bumpo*² is completed. The term *bumpo* doesn't refer to chapters, but to a larger section of the text.

² See the teaching of 19 February 2013 for a fuller explanation of the term.

2.1.4.3. STOPPING ANGER AT OBSTRUCTIONS TO ONE'S WISHES³

This is presented in two sub-divisions.

2.1.4.3.1. Impatience with obstacles to the harm of one's enemies is unsuitable

2.1.4.3.2. It is unsuitable to be impatient with obstacles to one's own benefit, and obstacles to the benefit of those belonging to one's side

2.1.4.3.1. *Impatience with obstacles to the harm of one's enemies is unsuitable*

This is subdivided into three:

2.1.4.3.1.1. It does not benefit one if the enemy dislikes it

2.1.4.3.1.2. Generating harmful intent for the enemy does not harm the enemy

2.1.4.3.1.3. It harms oneself

2.1.4.3.1.1. **It does not benefit one if the enemy dislikes it**

The commentary introduces the next two lines of the verse with this argument:

Argument: If you say I am happy when the enemy receives harm and I get angry at what obstructs this harm.

This is further emphasising the earlier presentation about being glad when an enemy is harmed, and unhappy when, as a result of some obstruction, they don't receive the harm one thinks is due to them.

The next two lines of verse serve as an answer to the opening argument:

*87ab. Even though the enemy does not like it
What is there for you to like?*

Gyaltsab Je explains it in this way:

Answer: Even though one's enemy generates dislike and is unhappy, what is there for you to be happy about? It does not benefit you, but harms you.

The lines *Even though one's enemy generates dislike and is unhappy, what is there for you to be happy about*, are asking: What benefit do you receive when the enemy experiences some harm? What happiness can it bring to you? How can it cause you happiness when there is no benefit for you? As the commentary states, *it does not benefit you*. In fact, it actually harms you to be glad about the harm or unhappiness experienced by others.

2.1.4.3.1.2. **Generating harmful intent for the enemy does not harm the enemy**

Again, this heading follows on directly from the previous one. It states that just wishing harm on the enemy will not actually harm them.

The next two lines of verse read:

*87cd. Just your mental wish alone
Does not cause harm to them.*

The commentary explains:

Just your mental wish alone that thinks 'may the enemy receive harm' does not cause harm to the enemy. Therefore, since your purpose is not achieved in the slightest, abandon anger.

As clearly presented here, just having the *mental wish* 'may the enemy receive harm' does not cause harm to the enemy. There are many occasions where people hold a grudge with a mind of hostility, thinking, and sometimes even saying out loud, 'Oh, I hope something terrible happens to them'. Thinking and even saying such things, will not, in themselves, be a cause for the enemy to experience any mishap or harm in any way. In fact, the enemy might very well be enjoying life and having very good time, and sleeping soundly every night! Whereas holding that grudge and thinking about it again and again causes mental distress, and one will actually lose sleep oneself. We can see how, rather than harming the enemy, a hostile mind actually harms oneself, and therefore has no benefit whatsoever.

We can relate this to the categories of anger presented in the mental factors, such as vengeance. First one becomes angry with an enemy, and when that anger escalates, it can turn into a mind of vengeance, where one really wants to harm them oneself, or wishes some mishap to befall them. It is when these thoughts of anger go round and round in our mind that we experience the ill-effects of a disturbed and troubled mind.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcribed by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

³ The way this section relates to the structure of the text is:

1. Meditating on patience earnestly, eliminating obstacles to its establishment and abiding

2. Applying to the mind the methods to establish patience

2.1. Eliminating the cause for anger

2.1.4. Striving in abandoning anger after having analysed the cause for anger in detail

2.1.4.1. Showing the general division of objects for generating anger

2.1.4.2. Stopping anger at undesired actions

2.1.4.1.1. Stopping anger at wrongdoings directed at oneself

2.1.4.1.2. Stopping anger at wrongdoing directed at one's friends

2.1.4.1.3. Stopping anger at those who benefit one's enemies

2.1.4.3. Stopping anger at obstructions to one's wishes

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

7 April 2015

While maintaining the motivation generated during the prayers, we can engage in our meditation practice. [meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along the usual lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

2.1.4.3.1. It is unsuitable not to be patient with obstacles to the harm of one's enemy (cont.)

2.1.4.3.1.3. It harms oneself

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.4.3.1.3.1. It is unsuitable to be happy over the suffering of the enemy

2.1.4.3.1.3.2. If one holds onto this happiness, it then becomes the cause for great harm for oneself

2.1.4.3.1.3.1. It is unsuitable to be happy over the suffering of the enemy

As the heading itself presents, *it is unsuitable to be happy over the suffering of the enemy*. The significant point being that if this wasn't unsuitable then one would actually be happy when the enemy suffers. This heading also implies that if one were to be happy over the suffering of the enemy, then the reverse would also be true i.e. one would be unhappy when the enemy experiences happiness.

It is important to bear these significant points in mind, and put them into practice—that would be really meaningful.

The relevant lines of verse read:

*88ab. Even if the suffering you wish for
Were established, what would be there for you
to be happy?*

Gyaltsab's commentary explains:

Even if the wish "may the enemy receive something unsuitable" were fulfilled and the other person would receive suffering, what would there be for you to be happy about? It does not benefit in the slightest.

Merely wishing unwanted things to befall the enemy, such as encountering various hardships and sufferings, will not make those unwanted things occur. Rather, it will definitely lead to more agony and suffering in one's own mind. Even if sufferings were to befall the enemy, why should one be happy about it, there is not the slightest benefit for oneself. Thus it is unsuitable.

2.1.4.3.1.3.2. If one holds onto this happiness, it then becomes the cause for great harm for oneself

The previous section highlighted that there is no benefit and that such thoughts become a cause for one's own suffering, so the next six lines of verse state:

*88cd. If it is said: "I will be satisfied,"
What would be sadder than that?*

*89. This fishhook cast by the fisher
Of the afflictions is very frightening.
Once hooked by it one will be cooked
In the cauldrons of sentient beings' hell by the
hell guardians.*

The commentary's explanation begins with this hypothetical argument:

Argument: If the enemy receives harm, I will receive satisfaction because my wish will have been fulfilled.

As an answer to that the commentary explains:

Answer: What other method is there for destruction apart from generating strong harmful intent, since one will go to the lower realms? For example, as the fisherman cooks the fish upon catching them with his hook. Similarly, having been caught by the terrifying hook of the negative karma of strong harmful intent that was cast by the fisherman of the affliction of anger, one will definitely be cooked by the hell guardians in the cauldrons of sentient beings' hell.

The argument states that when the *enemy receives harm, I will receive satisfaction because my wish will have been fulfilled*. Thus the reason for me to be happy when my enemy is harmed, is because it fulfils my wish, and thus I feel a sense of satisfaction. As an answer the commentary presents this rhetorical question, *what other method is there for destruction apart from generating strong harmful intent, since one will go to the lower realms?*

This presentation highlights that holding on to such harmful intention and feeling satisfaction becomes the supreme method for one's own destruction, as it generates such a strong harmful intent. The negativity one creates from such harmful intentions becomes the means to destroy one's own current good condition as a human being. It is as if one is exchanging one's own good current human rebirth for an unfortunate lower rebirth in the next lifetime. For example, if a rich person intentionally destroyed his wealth just to become poor and impoverished, this would be a very foolish act.

To take this as a personal instruction, one can incorporate it in one's practice by reflecting upon the fact that even while one may still have enemies, there is no benefit, and only harm if one has malicious intent towards one's enemy. As logically presented here, holding onto such harmful thoughts does not have any harmful effect on the enemy and, in fact, it only becomes a cause to experience harm oneself. Thus, in one's own interest, and as a way to protect oneself, it is far better not to hold any harmful intentions and malicious thoughts against the enemy.

The incomparably kind Buddha has given so many reasons in his teachings on how one should actually extend good intentions based on love and compassion to the enemy. When one starts to develop love and compassion for one's enemy, then that is the highest form of practice that benefits oneself.

We need to consider this advice as a means for taking precautions in our own everyday life. Whilst there may still be people that we disagree with, or who do not like us, to protect our own calm state of mind, it is best not to hold onto malicious and harmful intentions. This is the main point here.

The example is quite clear, so there is no need to elaborate on that further. The main point to take from this as a personal instruction is that, in relation to our so-called enemies it is best that we don't hold onto any harmful intention. In fact we are incredibly fortunate in that we don't have any real enemy with an intention to destroy us.

In reality, when we have disagreements with others it is usually in relation to very minor issues. So to whatever degree we may consider the other to be an 'enemy', we need to remind ourselves that there is no point, and no purpose at all in having harmful intentions, as they are not going to be of any benefit to anyone.

If we allow our mind to harbour thoughts of anger, then the nature of anger is such that if you feed it with more reasons to feel angry, then it will just increase in intensity. If anger increases, it can reach such an intense state where one would, if one had any weapons to hand, be ready to use them and harm the other. Anger can reach such levels when it increases.

If, from the very beginning, one actually trains one's mind not to hold onto harmful intent etc. then anger towards enemies, and others in general, will actually start to lessen. Then even when the enemy annoys or criticises us, we will be able to protect our mind from becoming disturbed and angry. In that instance we are actually practising patience.

When we don't allow the enemies to hurt or disturb our mind, then we will gain the great virtue of practising patience. This is how we need to try and put it into practice in our lives.

2.1.4.3.2. It is unsuitable to be impatient with obstacles to one's own benefit and obstacles to the benefit of those belonging to one's side

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.4.3.2.1. Anger at obstructions to worldly dharmas is unsuitable

2.1.4.3.2.2. Anger at obstacles to the generation of merit is unsuitable

2.1.4.3.2.1. Anger at obstructions to worldly dharmas is unsuitable

This heading implies that one should be patient when there are obstacles either to oneself or to those who are close to oneself, e.g. one's friends and relatives and so forth. What it presents in the explanations of the next verses is the means to overcome the four pairs of worldly dharmas, such as being glad when you have gain or profits and unhappy when there is loss, or you don't gain, being happy when one is praised and unhappy when one is criticised, and so forth.

These are called worldly dharmas as they relate to worldly perceptions, e.g. what would make one happy is receiving gain and profits, but when one does not receive gain this makes one feel unhappy.

In relation to praise and criticism one needs to understand that it is not the praise and criticism themselves that are considered as worldly dharmas, rather it is the effect these have upon oneself. When a worldly person is praised it makes them feel elated and happy. It is that feeling of happiness that is actually the

worldly dharma. Conversely, when one is criticised and feels unhappy, that feeling of unhappiness is the worldly dharma rather than actual criticism itself. That needs to be understood.

For worldly beings, this is what makes them either happy or sad. It is called a worldly dharma because the happiness is related to very trivial causes. Otherwise, if any sense of happiness was considered to be a worldly dharma then that would imply that bodhisattvas would have many worldly dharmas, because they have many reasons to feel joyful and happy.

The teachings explain that to apply the methods and practices to overcome the eight worldly dharmas, one needs to exchange and equalise these thoughts. In relation to praise and criticism, this means that whilst previously one would have experienced happiness when praised, and unhappiness when criticised, having trained one's mind, the reverse takes place whereby one actually starts to feel joy when one is criticised and unhappy when one is praised. That is how one exchanges and equalises these thoughts, so that it doesn't disturb one's mind. It is the same with other worldly dharmas, such as being glad when unwanted things, such as hardships, happen.

Equalising and exchanging the worldly dharmas becomes the real basis for mind training and for one to engage in the giving and taking practice of *tong-len*. Having trained one's mind in this way, one would be able to joyfully and happily take the sufferings of other sentient beings, and joyfully and happily give one's happiness to others. This is the result of having trained one's mind not to be too attached to one's circumstances.

The actual *tong-len* practice is an essential practice which serves as the very foundation of a bodhisattva's attitudes, deeds and practices. Even though we may not yet be capable of really practising it in its entirety, just training our mind in thought and contemplation is a very meaningful practice. So we need to take this on board as an essential practice.

While I have explained this many times previously, it is good to present it again as a way for you to really try and grasp the main points of equalising and exchanging the worldly dharmas.

If we do not exchange our mindset, and just maintain a worldly view, we will become habituated to feeling glad when good things happen and feeling extremely sad when bad things occur. Then because of the gladness, one develops attachment towards the things which makes one feel happy. If one is unhappy rather than glad when one experiences suffering, then when suffering occurs it will cause anger to arise in one's mind. It is in this way that maintaining a worldly view becomes the basis for one to repeatedly experience attachment and anger in relation to one's circumstances and experiences. Thus, equalising and exchanging our worldly concerns becomes a supreme means to overcome strong attachment and anger.

Another way to consider why it is inappropriate to feel joyful when one experiences happiness, and sorrow when one experiences suffering, is to see that happy experiences in any form actually use up one's virtue,

because the cause for happiness is virtue. So if we strive to experience happiness and indulge in that experience, this uses up your good karma and virtues.

Using up one's virtue for trivial things is not good, as there be won't enough virtue left to acquire the more essential things for our wellbeing. So there is no reason for one to feel joyful about experiencing happiness if one is using up one's virtues. In contrast, when one experiences suffering one normally feels sorrowful and unhappy. However if one considers that in experiencing suffering the negative karma is actually being used up, then one can feel joyful about that. So actually there's no reason not to feel happy.

This section of the text has two subdivisions.

2.1.4.3.2.1.1. Anger at obstructions to receiving praise and reputation is unsuitable

2.1.4.3.2.1.2. Thinking in a beneficial way

2.1.4.3.2.1.1. Anger at obstructions to receiving praise and reputation is unsuitable

This is subdivided into four:

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.1. There is no need for mere praise and reputation

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.2. Mere mental happiness is unsuitable as an objective

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.3. It is distorted to make merely this one's objective

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.4. The reason for it being distorted

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.1. There is no need for mere praise and reputation

The verse presents a hypothetical argument:

Argument: I do not like it when praise or reputation is obstructed.

This becomes the justification for one to be upset and angry, because *I do not like it when praise or reputation is obstructed*.

With worldly concerns, when there are obstructions to one's praise and reputation one feels unhappy, and because one is unhappy, one finds reason to be angry. We need to understand that anger is generated out of an unhappy mind, and that if one is not happy about something then it causes anger to arise.

The verse and a half relating to this reads:

*90. The tribute of praise and reputation
Does not become merit or life,
One does not become strong or without
sickness,
And happiness of the body is also not attained.*

*91ab. If one understands what is beneficial for self
Then what benefit for self lies therein?*

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse to answer to the argument:

Answer: Out of the five benefits that are explained for sentient beings, which does the tribute of direct praise and indirect reputation accomplish? It does not become merit and it does not become life. It also does not become the cause for increasing one's strength, and it does not provide physical happiness.

Therefore, if one analyses and understands the benefit for self, what benefit for self lies within praise and reputation? Not the least.

In explaining the verse, Gyaltsab Je asks one to analyse and reason whether praise and reputation bring real benefit to oneself or not. It states that *out of the five benefits that are explained for sentient beings, which does the tribute of direct praise and indirect reputation accomplish?* This is to imply that it really does not accomplish anything.

The benefits are then presented¹: 1) *It does not become merit*—praise and reputation do not transform oneself nor become a means to gain more merit; 2) *It does not become life*—it is not as if reputation and praise can help to prolong our life; 3) *It also does not become the cause for increasing one's strength*—again praise and reputation cannot in any way help us to gain more physical strength; and 4) nor does it produce any kind of physical happiness for oneself. *Therefore, if one analyses and understands the benefit for self, what benefit for self lies within praise and reputation? Not the least.*

In conclusion, since praise and reputation do not serve any purpose of bringing about true benefit for oneself, there should be no reason to be upset and angry when it is obstructed.

Training one's mind not to be upset when not receiving praise and good reputation, also means that when one does receive them one would not feel proud and elated.

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.2. Mere mental happiness is unsuitable as an objective

The next two lines of the verse read:

*91cd. If one wishes for mere mental happiness
Then one should also rely on gambling, alcohol
and so forth.*

The commentary explains,

If one's sole objective is mere mental happiness, or merely feeling happy mentally, then one would also rely on gambling, singing and dancing, taking someone else's woman and drinking alcohol.

This point really hits the mark for many who have this very ordinary motivation. The point here is that if all one is seeking is some sort of temporary mental happiness, then that is a very childish attitude. And as the commentary says, if that is all you are seeking you might as well *rely on gambling, singing and dancing, taking someone else's partner and drinking alcohol* because these give temporary mental happiness.

The precautions to take against this are that one should not resort to obtaining mere temporary mental happiness. Those without Dharma understanding can't be blamed for adopting these activities, as they consider them a real source of happiness. But for us as Dharma practitioners there are numerous means for gaining true mental happiness. So one needs to seek those that are produced through the practise of Dharma, which is genuine happiness. This is a very important instruction to keep in mind.

So whilst there are numerous ways to create happiness by immersing oneself in distractions and sensual pleasures, this would be the wrong approach, as these are fleeting and temporary. In contrast, in seeking happiness through

¹ Only four of the five are presented in the commentary.

the Dharma, one gains the bliss of the Dharma, which is sustained and maintained in one's mind.

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.3. It is distorted to make merely this one's objective

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.3.1. Mere praise and reputation are needless

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.3.2. Disliking their degeneration means one is like a child

These are significant points as many complain they don't receive due praise. So considering that praise etc. does not actually serve a real purpose, then *disliking their degeneration means one is being like a child* or very childish.

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.3.1. Mere praise and reputation are needless

The verse reads:

92. *Wealth is spent for the sake of reputation
And if one is even killed
Then what use are the words?
When I am dead whom will they make happy?*

The commentary explains the meaning:

Not only are they meaningless, but in order to have renown as a generous person one gives away wealth, and to be known as courageous, one goes to war. If one then even loses one's life, what will one do with the words of praise and reputation? Consider well to whom praise and reputation will give happiness after one has died.

The commentary states that *they*, i.e. praise and reputation are *meaningless*, and makes the point that they are also needless. *In order to have renown as a generous person one gives away wealth* refers to people with a significant amount of wealth who engage in acts of charity just for personal renown or fame. This is, in fact, wasting one's wealth for no personal benefit.

Similarly, a courageous person may set out to go to war merely to be known as a courageous person. Instead of gaining something significant from the experience, they might even lose their life for the sake of reputation. In that case, what would one do with words of praise and reputation? The point here is to consider to whom praise and reputation will give happiness after one has died. This last point indicates that if seeking praise and reputation serves no purpose in this life, then it will also not serve any purpose for our future lives. If this is the case why be so concerned about it?

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.3.2. Disliking their degeneration means one is like a child

Disliking the degeneration of praise and reputation *means one is like a child*, or childish.

The verse reads:

93. *Children cry desperately when
Their house of sand collapses.
Similarly, my mind is like a child
When praise and reputation wane.*

The commentary explains:

Children cry when their house of sand collapses. Similarly, my mind becomes like a child out of dislike when praise and reputation wane.

This is clear and the illustration is quite significant. We see that when children make sand castles. If they are destroyed, they can cry as if something terrible has

happened, when in fact, it was just a sculpture made out of sand. Like that *my mind becomes like a child out of dislike when praise and reputation wane*. This implies that if one actually dislikes obstructions to one's praise and reputation, then when it starts to decline, it would be childish to become disturbed and unhappy.

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.4 The reason for it being distorted

This fourth subdivision of the earlier category is subdivided into two:

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.4.1. Attachment to the praising of oneself is unsuitable

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.4.2 If it is desired due to being joy, then it is suitable to bring joy to all beings

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.4.1. Attachment to the praising of oneself is unsuitable

The outline makes it quite clear that being attached to praise about oneself is unsuitable.

The next two verses read:

94. *For instance, since sound does not have a mind
It is impossible that sound intends to praise me.
It is known that others like one,
This is stated as the cause for the joy.*
95. *It could be others or oneself
What benefit is the joy of others for oneself?
That joy and happiness is only theirs,
One does not attain a part of it.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning:

If one is happy because of being praised, it is, for instance, unsuitable to like the praising sound, because it does not have a mind and can therefore not have the thought thinking "I shall benefit that person". Therefore it is unsuitable to like it.

It is known that the person praising one generates joy at the time of praising. If this joy of the person praising is stated as the reason for one's happiness: What use is the joy of the person praising, regardless of whether others or oneself is praised? Since the joy in another's continuum is only their consciousness, one does not even attain a part of it.

The commentary explains that if one is happy because of being praised, using the reasoning 'Yes. I am happy when I'm praised', and in an instant likes the praising sound, then this implies that 'I'm happy being praised because I like the sound of praise'. That is why it says, *for instance*, it is *unsuitable to like the praising sound*. If you are happy being praised, just because you like the sound of praise, then that is unsuitable, because sound itself does not have a mind, and therefore cannot have the thought thinking 'I shall benefit that person'. *Therefore it is unsuitable to like it.*

This point demonstrates yet another reason for being happy when praised. If *it is known that the person praising one generates joy at the time of praising*, and this is stated as the reason for one's happiness, then our mind is finding another excuse for being happy about being praised. To counteract such a thought Shantideva asks *what use is the joy of the person praising?* This means that *regardless of whether others or oneself is praised, the joy in another's continuum is only their consciousness, and one does not even attain a part of it.*

If one states the reason for being happy when praised is because it makes the other happy, then the text reasons,

how can this make your own mind happy since their happiness is something which is within their continuum, and you don't have any part of that? So why would that be a reason for you to be happy?

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.4.2. If it is desired due to being joy then it is suitable to bring joy to all beings

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.4.2.1. Actual

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.4.2.2. Liking being praised brings out the childish behaviour

Actual

The verse reads:

*96. If I am happy due to their happiness
Then one needs to treat all equally.
Then why, when they become happy through
The joy of others, one is not happy?*

The commentary explains:

If the happiness of the person praising is the happiness of others and makes me happy, then I should also be happy if all other sentient beings are happy in this way. Why then, when others become happy due to the happiness of the person praising an enemy, does one become unhappy? One should be happy.

If the happiness of the person praising is the happiness of others and makes me happy, then, following the earlier reasons, the happiness of the person doing the praising is the happiness of others. If one says 'being praised makes me happy', then with that same reasoning, one should find reason to be happy for all sentient beings. One should wish for all other sentient beings to be happy in the same way, because that is the happiness of others.

Here we need to understand the logic: if you receive praise from someone and find reason to be happy about it because it makes the other person happy, then praise offered to all sentient beings should also make you happy for the same reason. Because it makes their minds happy, one should find reason to be happy for them too. With that reasoning, the commentary says, *why then, when others become happy due to the happiness of the person praising an enemy, does one become unhappy?* If that is the case, then when an enemy is praised, why do you not feel happy and instead have a jealous mind? *One should similarly be happy when an enemy is praised.* This refers back to the earlier points about inappropriateness of feeling unhappy when the enemy is praised.

However, when it is one's relatives and friends being praised, that makes one happy, because of one's attachment to them. This shows that one needs to overcome such inappropriate ways of thinking.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcribed by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་བ་ལ་འཇུག་བ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

14 April 2015

Based on the motivation we have just generated, we can now engage in our meditation practice. *[meditation]*

It is very important that we generate a proper motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

2.1.4.3.2.1. Anger at obstructions to worldly dharmas is unsuitable

2.1.4.3.2.1.1. Anger at obstructions to receiving praise and reputation is unsuitable

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.4. The reason for it being distorted

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.4.2. If it is suitable to be wished for because it makes others happy, then it is suitable to like all others¹ (cont.)

The main point to be understood in this part of the text is that it is encouraging one to practise patience with many different reasons.

Indeed, the practice of patience is essential for our wellbeing. The reality is that we repeatedly experience all sorts of hardships and difficulties in daily life, which can cause us so much mental agony, and without the practice of patience it would be very difficult to bear those hardships and difficulties. More specifically, the patience of bearing these difficulties lies within the category of being patient with suffering. As you will recall, the definition of patience is a mind that remains undisturbed in the face of harm or suffering. Through the practice of patience we are able to protect our minds from becoming disturbed when difficulties and hardships arise, and thus maintain a happier state of mind.

Whenever we think, 'Oh, I have difficulty', or 'I have a problem', then the primary method for dealing with hardship and problems is the practice of endurance, willingly accepting that problem or difficulty. If we are able to practise the patience of willingly accepting hardship then we will not fall victim to that hardship. Conversely, if we lack that patience of willingly accepting hardship, then we will always be controlled by hardships. Then we will always be controlled by problems rather than being in control of those problems.

This is also true with our pursuit of studies. When we are willing to accept hardships, then whatever circumstances we may face we will be able to continue our studies and complete them. Otherwise when we encounter the slightest difficulties we might find excuses not to continue, saying things like, 'Oh, I'm just too tired', or 'I feel hungry', or 'I don't feel like doing it right now' and so forth. These sorts of excuses in the face of small hardships mean that we procrastinate, and may end up not completing our studies.

It's inevitable that we encounter hardships and difficulties with our study and so forth. However, the difficulties that you may face now are nothing compared to the hardships that I have gone through to complete my studies. In spite of many hardships, it was not giving up and willingly accepting those hardships that allowed me to continue, to keep up with my studies and complete them. I'm not saying this to boast about what I've endured. Rather, from my own experience I'm sharing with you what is possible when one has the mindset of willingly accepting hardships. With such an approach one will have the endurance to continue with one's studies.

In fact, willingly accepting difficulties is the optimum means for overcoming difficulties and hardships. If we don't willingly accept difficulties, then we will not find the means to overcome them. As a result we will be perpetually dominated by difficulties and one hardship after the other, to the point where we may feel that we are not be able to cope with them any longer.

Liking being praised brings about childish behaviour²

What is being addressed here is attachment to praise and so forth. When one has strong attachment to seeking praise and so forth, then that resembles childish behaviour. So we need to practise patience to overcome our attachment to this worldly desire for praise and so forth. As will be pointed out later on, our main goal is seeking liberation, and so being attached to praise and so forth is not conducive for attaining our goal.

The verse relating to this heading reads:

97. *Therefore, if one generates joy,
By saying 'I am being praised',
Since this is again invalid,
It resembles childish behaviour.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Therefore, if it generates joy in one's continuum saying 'I am being praised', then when this is analysed it does not have the slightest essence. In this way, since mere praise is not valid as the cause for happiness, it only resembles childish behaviour.

As the commentary explains, if one actually analyses the *joy in one's continuum* when one is *being praised*, then one would find that *it does not have the slightest essence*. When one analyses the situation, one finds that praise is merely conventional, and thus it doesn't have any real essence. So when one actually looks for the joy that one experiences when one is praised, one will find that there is no real essence to it.

The commentary continues, *In this way, since mere praise is not valid as the cause for happiness...* This means that mere praise is not the actual cause for happiness, so liking praise only *resembles childish behaviour*. What we need to understand here is that if there is attachment to praise, then the implied converse is that one will be unhappy when one is criticised. The two go hand in hand.

If one is attached to praise then that naturally means that one is averse to criticism. When one is attached to praise and seeks it out, then the slightest criticism becomes a cause for great unhappiness. Whereas if one has trained one's mind to not be overly attached to praise, then criticism will not cause so much unhappiness and mental pain. Liking praise and not liking criticism are joined at the hip.

¹ Last week it was given as *It is distorted to make merely this as one's objective*
Chapter 6

² *Through liking being praised one becomes a childish person*

In fact criticism can even become a cause for joy; great practitioners train their minds to welcome criticism. By applying the mind training techniques it is actually possible to like criticism. This is the main point that we need to understand: attachment to praise is ultimately the cause for unhappiness, rather than a cause of happiness. When one understands this point then one will be able to see that seeking praise, and always wanting to hear nice words and so forth, does indeed resemble childish behaviour. This is what needs to be understood.

These points are very significant points in relation to our everyday encounters with others. There are so many occasions where even the slightest provocative or unpleasant word can immediately cause great anger, leading to conflicts between individuals. So these are definitely relevant points.

2.1.4.3.2.1.2. Thinking of it as beneficial

There are two subheadings under this heading:

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.1. Anger at obstruction to praise and reputation is unsuitable, as it obstructs [the path leading to] the lower realms

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.2. Anger is unsuitable as one wants to become liberated from cyclic existence

From these headings we can see that when there is some obstruction to receiving praise, then that is actually a great cause to be happy, because it obstructs the path leading to the lower realms. Also, obstructions to praise and reputation liberate one from cyclic existence, thus there is no reason to be upset and angry about that. That is what is being explained under these two headings.

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.1. Anger at obstruction to praise and reputation is unsuitable, as it obstructs [the path leading to] the lower realms

This is subdivided into two

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.1.1. Through grasping at praise and reputation all faults are generated

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.1.2. Obstructing them obstructs the lower realms

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.1.1. Through grasping at praise and reputation all faults are generated

Before the verse is presented, the commentary presents this statement:

It is unsuitable to be angry at that which destroys praise and reputation.

Then the verse is presented.

**98. Praise and so forth distract one
And also destroy disillusionment,
Jealousy for those with qualities
And degeneration of excellences**

Here, Gyaltsab Je explains:

Praise, reputation and gain distract one from the virtuous object and also destroy disillusionment with cyclic existence. They also cause jealousy for others with qualities and also destroy one's virtues and the excellences of others. As such, they are the source of all faults.

The line *praise, reputation and gain distract one from the virtuous object*, presents an extremely significant point. It indicates that attachment is the main obstacle to one's meditation practice. This is explained in great detail in Chapter 8. When one has strong attachment to worldly concerns and so forth, one will always have a distracted mind. Consequently, because of these distractions, one will not be able to maintain one's focus on the virtuous object when meditating.

Furthermore, as mentioned here, praise, reputation and gain *also destroy disillusionment with cyclic existence*. The basis for developing renunciation is to first generate a sense of disillusionment with cyclic existence. So being attached to the joys and pleasures of cyclic existence, and being concerned with worldly things, such as liking praise and so forth, opposes the development of disillusionment with cyclic existence. Since attachment to praise and so forth destroys disillusionment with cyclic existence it is an obstacle for developing renunciation.

Then, as further explained in the commentary, *they also cause jealousy for others with qualities and also destroy one's virtues and the perfections of others*. When one cannot bear hearing about the good qualities and virtues of someone else, then that is due to jealousy. That jealous mind escalates to the point where it actually generates a mind of anger. Through not being able to bear hearing about the good qualities of someone, a mind of aversion or anger can arise. That mind of anger then destroys one's own virtues and excellences, and other good qualities that we have. So it is the mind of jealousy that leads one to generate the mind of anger, which then causes one's own excellences and virtues to decline and be destroyed.

Furthermore, *the excellence of others* is also destroyed. Through the mind of jealousy you can disturb the minds of others in various ways, causing their excellences to also decline and be destroyed. So, while a mind of jealousy and anger destroys one's own excellences and qualities, it also serves, indirectly, as the means to destroy the excellences and qualities of others as well.

Thus, the commentary concludes, *As such they are the source of all faults*, which means that attachment to praise and reputation is the basis of all faults.

These are really significant points of advice that speak right to our hearts. When others are praised one should find reason to be joyful and happy about that, rather than being unhappy. The only reason for being unhappy is because of jealousy. When we are jealous, we will feel uncomfortable and unhappy the moment others are praised. As jealousy increases, that discomfort turns into being unable to bear hearing others being praised for their good qualities and excellences, and that leads to anguish and anger.

Further, one needs to change one's attitude from one of acceptance, to one of actually liking it when others are praised for their qualities and so forth, thinking, 'Oh, how wonderful they have such qualities! These people are indeed praiseworthy because of their qualities and so forth. How wonderful it is to hear that praise!' This then creates a happy mind for oneself. Just as others experience joy when others praise them, one can also experience joy and happiness when they are praised. All it takes is a change of attitude, replacing a mind that would otherwise feel unhappy out of jealousy into a mind that feels joy when others are praised. Then, hearing others being praised for their qualities and so forth will bring happiness to oneself, which is a great benefit.

This is what we can refer to as the Buddhist science of the mind, which is really very profound. Indeed, Western psychologists and scientists also recognise how profound these passages are. They comment that this is not an exclusively Buddhist approach, but one that is universal. If everybody adopted these ways of thinking and changing attitudes, then there would be so much benefit in the world. We can describe these parts of Buddhist teachings as being the psychology or science of the mind. In fact the Buddhist

world is rich in the science or psychology of the mind, although perhaps somewhat lacking in the science of the external world, whereas the western developed countries and so forth are quite rich in the science of the external world, while lacking in the science of the inner world, or science of the mind.

To reemphasise the main point, as a Dharma practitioner one needs to adopt an attitude of not being attached to receiving praise while being happy when others are praised. That is because being attached to receiving praise only contributes to the decline of one's own virtues and so forth. On the other hand, being happy to hear others being praised only brings about good qualities and virtues, while at the same time preventing mental agony.

The reason why I emphasise these really significant points is because they may be not be apparent right away. But if you really pay attention you will find that a lack of appreciation of the excellences and goodness of others actually causes lot of mental pain, more specifically jealousy, to arise. Many have confided in me saying that when they notice that their siblings or relatives are doing well, they feel uncomfortable, and even experience a lot of mental pain. Indeed, the people we are most likely to be jealous of are those with whom we have a close connection. It is less likely that we will be jealous of those with whom we are not acquainted, strangers and so forth.

As mentioned previously, we might not initially notice that the pain and discomfort we feel actually comes from jealousy. But if we really take the initiative to think about these points, we will check our mind as soon as we start feeling uncomfortable. Then we will be able to notice jealousy and be able counteract that jealousy. We can then replace the agony of not feeling comfortable with their excellences with an attitude of appreciation. Training the mind to be happy about the excellences of others definitely relieves much unnecessary mental pain and agony.

To retain a sense of balance, one really needs to pay attention to these points. As the teachings mention, it is the afflictions that cause us so much mental pain. To see this, all we need to do is to consider these practical examples of the effects of jealousy and anger. We can all relate to how they disturb our state of mind. Whereas the person who is practising, finding antidotes and counteracting these afflictions, is someone who is really at ease and who maintains a sense of joy. People will be at ease with them, and they will be welcome guests wherever they go!

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.1.2. Obstructing them obstructs the lower realms

Here *obstructing them* refers again to obstructing the worldly concerns of grasping at praise and reputation. And obstructing them is a means of obstructing the path to the lower realms. The implication here is that there is no reason not to accept that.

What we need to understand from this presentation is that this mind training is a supreme means of engaging in Dharma practice. If we want to consider ourselves as Dharma practitioners, then we need to take these points on board, and try to incorporate them into our mindset.

The relevant verse reads:

**99. Therefore, aren't those that are closely involved
In destroying one's praise and so forth,
Engaged in protecting one from falling
Into the lower realms?**

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning as follows:

Therefore, aren't those taking great care in destroying one's praise, reputation and so forth, engaged in protecting one from falling into the lower realms?
How can one be angry at them?

This rhetorical question implies that they are indeed protecting one from falling into the lower realms. When others are critical and destroy one's reputation, they are also destroying attachment to praise and reputation. Those who pamper us with praise and reputation could, in fact, lead us to become more inclined to be attached to that. Whereas those who are critical and who destroy one's reputation are, in fact, destroying one of the causes, i.e. attachment to reputation and praise, for one to go to the lower realms. When someone destroys that attachment to praise and reputation, then in fact they are ultimately taking care of one. *So how can one be angry at them?* This implies that one should actually like them.

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.2. It is the means to become liberated from cyclic existence and thus it is unsuitable to be angry³

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.2.1. Since obstructing praise and so forth liberates one from cyclic existence it is unsuitable to be angry

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.2.2. Anger is unsuitable as it cuts the door to suffering

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.2.1. Since obstructing praise and so forth liberates one from cyclic existence it is unsuitable to be angry

**100. Oneself, who aspires to liberation,
Does not need the restraints of gain and
veneration,
How can one be angry
At that which liberates one from bondage?**

Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning of this verse as follows:

Further, since one aspires to attain liberation from cyclic existence, and since gain and veneration bind one to cyclic existence, one does not need such restraints. How can one be angry at that which liberates one from bondage by obstructing gain and veneration? It would be appropriate to like it.

The commentary begins by pointing out that we *aspire to liberation from cyclic existence*. Following this affirmation the commentary goes on to say that *gain and veneration bind one to cyclic existence*. Here we need to understand that attachment to gain and veneration binds one to cyclic existence. *One does not need such restraints*, relates to the earlier affirmation that one is seeking to be free from cyclic existence. Since attachment to gain and veneration actually binds one to cyclic existence, hence the affirmation, 'I don't need them, because I aspire to be free from cyclic existence'.

So, *how can one be angry at that which liberates one from bondage by obstructing gain and veneration?* Having pointed out earlier that attachment to gain and veneration binds one to cyclic existence, how could one then be angry with someone who actually obstructs the binding factor of gain and veneration? The words *how can one be angry at that* implies that one shouldn't be angry with them. In fact, as mentioned here, *it would be appropriate to like it*. Thus, rather than becoming angry with these obstructions, it is appropriate to like them.

³ The text uses *Anger is unsuitable as obstructions to praise and such liberate from cyclic existence*

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.2.2: *It is unsuitable to be angry since it cuts the door to suffering*

Again this is referring to obstructions to praise and so forth. Obstructions to praise actually cuts the door to suffering, therefore anger is unsuitable. The verse relating to this reads:

101. *One wishes to enter suffering
But like the blessings of the buddhas
It becomes the threshold not allowing to pass.
How can one get angry at that?*

One wishes to enter the house of suffering, but like the blessings of the buddhas, it serves as a bolt to the door, not allowing one to pass into that house of suffering. How can one become angry at that? Since it is a great friend it is appropriate to like it.

Being attached to praise is like wishing *to enter the house of suffering, but, like the blessings of the buddhas*, the obstruction to gaining praise and veneration is like a bolt that locks the door, *not allowing one to pass into that house of suffering. How can one become angry at that?* In this analogy, just as you cannot enter a house when the door is bolted, obstructing attachment to gain and veneration obstructs one from entering the house of suffering. Therefore *how can one become angry at that?* This rhetorical question is implying that one should not be angry.

Since it is a great friend it is appropriate to like it refers to those who obstruct one from entering a situation that involves great suffering; they are the greatest of friends. That is how this line is to be understood.

ANGER AT OBSTACLES TO THE GENERATION OF MERIT IS UNSUITABLE⁴

Having just explained the unsuitability of anger at that which obstructs gains, one might now wonder whether it might be acceptable to be angry at those who obstruct one's merits. This section counteracts that thought in three subdivisions:

1. It is unsuitable to be angry due to obstructions to merit
2. It is not an obstruction to merit
3. Think of it as an object worthy of respect

1. IT IS UNSUITABLE TO BE ANGRY DUE TO OBSTRUCTIONS TO MERIT

Here there are two subdivisions:

- 1.1. Abide on the supreme austerity
- 1.2. Obstructing it becomes an obstacle to one's merits

1.1. Abide on the supreme austerity

The commentary begins by referring back to the previous section.

Argument: Though it is unsuitable to be angry at obstructions to worldly dharmas,...

The implication of this is, 'OK, I accept that it is unsuitable to become angry with obstructions to worldly dharmas, but it must surely be fine to be angry with that which obstructs one's merits. Then the next verse is presented:

102. *They are an obstruction to merits it is said;
It is also unsuitable to be angry at them.
If there is no austerity like patience
Then wouldn't one abide on it?*

The commentary then completes the opening sentence:

... enemies obstruct the merits of generosity, morality and so forth, thus one gets angry.

Answer: It is unsuitable to be angry at them, because since one aspires to accumulating merits then wouldn't one abide in patience, since there is no other austerity that equals being patient with anger? It is extremely suitable to abide on patience.

The opening line makes this hypothetical statement: *enemies obstruct the merits of generosity, morality and so forth, thus one gets angry*. This is indirectly saying that they are obstructing our opportunity to gain merit. When others obstruct our gain, 'they are obstructing my means for engaging in meritorious activities such as generosity and so forth, and therefore I don't get an opportunity to accumulate merit'. Therefore, one becomes angry.

To counteract the hypothetical assertion that it may be suitable to be angry at those who obstruct the means for one to accumulate merit, the commentary says, *It is unsuitable to be angry at them because since one aspires towards accumulating merits then wouldn't one abide in patience, since there is no other austerity that equals being patient with anger?* As presented at the very beginning of the chapter, there is no higher form of austerity than the practice of patience. So because the practice of patience is a supreme form of austerity, it is the supreme means to accumulate merit. Since you aspire to accumulate merit, then rather than becoming angry at those who obstruct your means of accumulating merits, wouldn't you rather practise patience, since that is the supreme means to accumulate merit? The conclusion here is *it is extremely suitable to abide on patience* since there are no other practices equal to the practice of patience for accumulating merit. Therefore it is far more appropriate to abide on patience, rather than retaliating with anger.

1.2. Obstructing it becomes an obstacle to one's merits

The verse relating to this heading reads:

103. *If, through my own fault,
I do not practise patience with them,
I obstruct myself from
Abiding close to the cause of merits.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary on the verse reads:

If, through one's own fault of being greatly angry, one generates anger to abiding close to the cause of merits of being patient with the enemy, then one obstructs one's merits and not the other person.

Here we are being told that it is not the enemy that is the real obstacle to one's generation of merit. Rather it is the way one's own mind relates to the enemy. If one becomes angry with the enemy, then one's merits will decline, whereas keeping the enemy close will be a means to accumulate more merit through the practice of patience. As the commentary says: *through one's own fault of being greatly angry, one generates anger to abiding close to the cause of merits of being patient with the enemy*. So the enemy is actually a cause for one to accumulate merit through being patient with them, while becoming angry one destroys that merit. This is really quite a subtle presentation. In saying, *then one obstructs one's merits and not the other person*, the commentary is stating that the other person is not responsible or obstructing one's merit. Rather, through becoming angry one obstructs one's own merit.

⁴ ed. Technically this is the second part of the earlier heading 2.1.4.3.1. *It is unsuitable to be impatient with obstacles to one's own benefit and obstacles to the benefit of those belonging to one's side*, which was introduced last week. Because it contains a number of nested headings the numbering system is being restarted here.

Thus, it is all related to one's own state of mind. Depending on one's mindset, an enemy can be a great cause to accumulate merit by practising patience with them. But if one becomes angry with the enemy then what would otherwise become an opportunity for one's merit to increase, actually causes merit to decline.

To emphasise the point, it is the way we relate to the enemy that actually causes our mental agony. If we become angry with the enemy then of course our mind becomes disturbed. Whereas if we accept the enemy, even if they are near by, and don't allow ourselves to become angry, then there will be no mental pain or agony. So what is clearly being shown here is how it actually depends on our own attitudes rather than on the other person. Now this might differ from western psychology, which might say, 'If the cause of distress is the other person, try to avoid them'. However in Buddhism it is not the external person who is the cause of our agony, but our own mind.

This point was presented earlier in the chapter with an analogy of how it is impossible to subdue and overcome all enemies, but subduing one's own mind and overcoming anger is equivalent to subduing all enemies. The analogy was that it is impossible to cover the whole earth with leather so that one's feet will not be punctured with thorns and so forth. But if one covers one's own feet with leather then that will protect one's feet in the same way as covering the whole world.

2. IT IS NOT AN OBSTRUCTION TO MERIT

This has two parts, which are very profound presentations about how to practice:

2.1. General

2.2. Establishing with example

2.1. General

The verse relating to this reads:

*104. When it does not exist it does not arise,
When it exists it does arise,
If it is its cause
Then how can it be called an obstruction?*

The commentary explains:

The merit of patience does not arise when there is no harmer; when there is an enemy then the merit of patience exists. If this very enemy is the definite cause of the merit, then how can it be called an obstruction? That which is conducive is not suitable as an obstruction.

The merit of patience does not arise when there is no harmer, relates to the first type of patience, which is the patience of not retaliating to harm. The second two types of patience is the patience of definitely thinking of Dharma and willingly accepting suffering, which is much more pervasive, and relates to many different circumstances in life.

That first patience of not becoming angry and retaliating to harm is only practised in relation to there being a harmer. So there has to be someone who is harming us if we want to practise this type of patience. Gaining merit through the practice of patience does not arise when there is no harmer. It is only *when there is an enemy that the merit of that patience of not retaliating to harm can be gained.*

Further, the commentary explains, *if this very enemy is the definite cause of the merit then how can it be called an obstruction?* This refers back to the earlier presentation of how to

counteract the false reasoning that it is suitable to be angry with an enemy because they obstruct our merit.

Here the text is saying that far from being an obstruction to one's merit, the enemy is the very cause of one's merit, because without an enemy who harms one, one could not possibly practise the patience of not retaliating in the face of harm. It is only because there is a harmer that the need to practice the patience of not retaliating to harm arises. Therefore, there is a cause and effect sequence where the enemy who is the harmer is the cause for the generation of patience of not retaliating.

Therefore *that which is conducive is not suitable as an obstruction.* Because something or someone is conducive to one's practice of patience, and thus the accumulation of merit, it cannot possibly be an obstruction. This is a very profound reasoning showing us how to see an enemy as our best friend.

If we can cover at least eight verses in each session, then we should be able to move quite rapidly through the text. The discussion and test nights should then take us through to the end of May.

We will also do our recitation of the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* on 24 May. Please make a note of that date, as this recitation is part of the Study Group commitments. I have scheduled the recitation to coincide with Saka Dawa, the holy month of the Buddha's birth and enlightenment. Because that is such an auspicious time, reciting the text will be a means to accumulate extensive merit.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcribed by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སློབ་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

21 April 2015

While maintaining the motivation just generated, we can now engage in our meditation practice. [*meditation*]

It is very important that we generate a proper motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practice well.

2. IT IS NOT AN OBSTRUCTION TO MERIT (CONT.)

2.2. Establishing this with an example

The word 'this' refers to the earlier point that the enemy is not an obstruction to gaining merit or practising patience. The example is presented in the verse that reads:

105. *The beggar at the time of generosity
Is not an obstruction to generosity.
Those facilitating the renunciate
Are not an obstruction to a renunciate.*

The commentary reflects the meaning:

At the time of having the means and delight to give, the beggar is not an obstruction to generosity. Also, the abbots and preceptors facilitating the renunciate are unsuitable to be called obstructions for becoming a renunciate, of those wishing to do so.

If a beggar happens to come by when one has the material means, and delights in giving, then at that time they are not an obstruction to the practice of generosity. In fact the beggar is a condition enabling one to practise generosity and gain the merit associated with being generous.

Similarly, for someone who wishes to practise patience, the harms inflicted by an enemy are not an obstruction to the practice of patience. Rather, the harmer is actually a cause for one to engage in the practice of patience, and thus accumulate the merit associated with that practice.

The second example in the verse states that abbots and preceptors who facilitate those wishing to become renunciates, or be ordained, are not an obstruction but rather the required condition for them to actually become renunciates.

3. THINK OF IT AS AN OBJECT WORTHY OF RESPECT

This is subdivided into two:

- 3.1. One should be respectful since it generates qualities
- 3.2. One should be respectful because one has faith in the Buddha

3.1. One should be respectful since it generates qualities

This is subdivided into three:

- 3.1.1. Great benefit to oneself

- 3.1.2. Not dependent on the thought to benefit

- 3.1.3. Viewing them like the Buddha

3.1.1. Great benefit to oneself

This is subdivided into three:

- 3.1.1.1. Supreme fields are rare

- 3.1.1.2. It is suitable to like them

- 3.1.1.3. It is appropriate to have the thought of benefiting them

3.1.1.1. SUPREME FIELDS ARE RARE

The objects of generosity are plentiful whereas objects of patience, particularly the patience of not retaliating to harm, are relatively rare. A supreme field can be related to something which is rare and precious. In this sense, those who harm one can be considered to be a supreme field, as they are rare.

The verse reads:

106. *In the world there are indeed beggars,
Those harming are much rarer,
If one thus does not harm them,
Then nobody will inflict harm.*

The Tibetan word *long-wa* literally means those who seek, and people who seek something from others don't necessarily have to be beggars. So while the word is loosely used for a beggar, in general it means someone who is seeking something from you. For example, we would not refer to Buddha Shakyamuni as a beggar, although he would have sought alms in the community as a means for others to accumulate merit. The term beggar here has a larger context, and should not be limited to those who are viewed as destitute and poor.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on the verse reads:

Since the field of patience is rarer than the field of generosity it is suitable to like one's enemies. In the world there are indeed beggars who are the field of generosity, but those who harm, who are the field of patience, are much rarer. If asked why, that is because if one does not harm others, then one will not be harmed in return.

The first part of the explanation highlights that *the field of patience is rarer than the field of generosity, and thus it is suitable to like one's enemies. The field of patience* refers to others who harm one and thus give one the opportunity to practise patience. Because those who intentionally harm one are rare, it is suitable to like them. Worldly examples confirm that rare things are more highly valued than common things e.g. the rarer a jewel, the higher its value. The field of patience refers to the harm giver, and because they are rare *it is suitable to like one's enemies.*

The commentary explains that *in the world there are indeed beggars who are the field of generosity.* This fact is easy to see. In these times of the five degenerations there is so much conflict, strife and poverty prevalent in the world. Thus, those in need of material aid are very easy to find.

In comparison, the text states that *those who harm, who are the fields of patience, are much rarer. If asked why, the explanation here is that is because if one does not harm others then one will not be harmed in return.*

This relates to subtle points of the karmic cause and effect sequence. If one is harmed now, then this is a result of having harmed others either in this life, or in previous

lifetimes. This may not be immediately obvious, but consider the possibility that those we have harmed in the early and middle part of our life might start harming us towards the end of our life. This type of cause and effect sequence is quite prevalent. The key point here is that because of the harm you have extended to others, there will be others who will harm you. What is being pointed out here is that if one does not intentionally go out to harm others, then naturally others won't harm you. So, if you don't harm others it is unlikely that you will have many enemies harming you.

Normally we would think that if someone harms us we are entitled to harm them in return because 'they hurt me first'. This indicates that if someone has initiated the harm first, then there is a justification to return harm for harm in retaliation. Even in a legal context where there is a fight, the punishment is given to the one who initiated that fight. For those who retaliate, perhaps in self-defence, the punishment seems to be less.

The worldly perspective is that if someone harms you it is quite acceptable to harm them back. In fact it is considered brave and courageous to fight back. This thought is strongly ingrained into the psyche of ordinary beings. However Shantideva is pointing out that this is not suitable, and that one should not retaliate harm with harm.

The truth of what is being explained here is evident when related to a bodhisattvas' level of practice, because a bodhisattva, whose only intention is to benefit sentient beings, would not intentionally harm any living being in the slightest. Using a Tibetan expression, they will not inflict even an atom of harm on other sentient beings.

For noble beings such as bodhisattvas, whose very practice is only to benefit and refrain from the slightest harm to sentient beings, others will naturally appreciate them. When they are highly respected and admired, there would hardly be anyone wishing to intentionally harm them. This should hold true for human sentiments. Even animals, who are considerably dumber than humans, when nurtured and cared for can recognise that kindness, show affection and do no harm in return. If an animal can recognise those who have benefitted them and give affection in return, then surely, for humans with intelligence, that would have to be the case too.

Those harming a bodhisattva are rare because of the bodhisattvas' own dedicated practice to benefit sentient beings. When bodhisattvas do encounter someone with the intention of harming them, then rather than becoming upset they would show great respect to them. They act as if they are encountering a rare and precious gem that is a cause for them to further develop their practice of patience.

To take this as a personal instruction, we need to practise as much as possible not to harbour any kind of harmful intentions. If we were to actually practise not intentionally harming others, not even in the slightest, then others around us would naturally appreciate us and like us.

When the intention of refraining from harm and wishing to benefit others is extended to one's companion, someone who one lives with, then if those two people can

practise in this way, then their relationship will be healthy and harmonious. This is something I emphasise regularly, as it is the means of leading a more meaningful and happy life.

These are significant points to keep in mind as one needs to reflect upon what causes a happy relationship with someone else. It is not dependent on wealth. Clearly just because one is wealthy doesn't mean one will have harmonious relationships. Also, just because one is influential or has status doesn't necessarily mean these will become conditions for having harmonious relationships. So what is the key factor to having harmonious relationships? It is one's positive mind, and the intention of wishing to benefit the other, and not intentionally harm them. Such a mind based on love and compassion is the key factor for harmonious relationships.

3.1.1.2. IT IS SUITABLE TO LIKE THEM

Having covered that the fields of patience are supreme and rare, the next point emphasises that it is suitable to like them.

The verse reads:

107. *Hence, just like a treasure
Received effortlessly in one's house,
One should like one's enemies,
Since they become a condition for
enlightenment.*

The commentary explains the meaning as follows:

The fields for patience are rare. Therefore one should like one's enemies with the thought of wanting to repay their kindness, since they become the condition to meditate on the bodhisattva action of patience, just like a treasure that one receives effortlessly in one's house.

The first part uses the example, *just like a treasure that one receives effortlessly in one's house*. For example, if a destitute person suddenly found some treasure in their house, without intentionally seeking for it, how glad they would be! It would be a cause for tremendous relief and joy in their mind.

Further, *The fields for patience are rare. Therefore one should like one's enemies with the thought of wanting to repay their kindness*, and the reason is *since they become the condition to meditate on the bodhisattva action of patience*.

Using the example of finding a treasure without effort, the enemy that harms one is also incredibly rare and precious. Far from becoming an obstruction to one's ultimate goal of achieving enlightenment, the enemy who harms one becomes the supreme cause for one to quickly achieve enlightenment.

It is appropriate that one generates a mind of wanting to repay the enemy's kindness, as it *becomes the condition to meditate on the bodhisattvas' actions of patience*, thus becoming the cause for one's enlightenment.

The point here is that by regarding the enemy as extremely precious and kind, rather than retaliating with harm when they harm you, you should think about repaying their kindness.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama mentions that the supreme object of practising patience is the one who harms you. It

is not our kind teachers who teach us how to practise patience, as there is no need to practise patience towards one who doesn't harm you. The actual practice is integrating the opportunity that one gets to practise patience when someone harms you.

3.1.1.3. IT IS APPROPRIATE TO HAVE THE THOUGHT OF BENEFITING THEM

The verse reads:

*108. Since it is established through this and myself
It is suitable to dedicate the result of patience
First to them -
They are the cause of patience.*

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse clearly:

Since it is established through this enemy, and myself practising patience, we are both the cause for patience. Therefore it is suitable to dedicate enlightenment, which is the result of patience, first to the harmer. The enemy is a powerful cause for the patience that creates my enlightenment.

Since it is established through the enemy and myself practising patience, we are both the cause for patience. In a practical sense, one's own initiative to practise patience is the ultimate cause for one to practise patience with an enemy, but it is through a combination of both practices that one is actually able to practise patience. Therefore it is befitting to dedicate enlightenment, which is the result of patience, first to the harmer.

This indicates the great extent of the bodhisattvas' aspirations and dedications. The altruistic mind of a bodhisattva acknowledges that the one who intended to harm them is actually a rare cause for them to practise patience.

When enlightenment is attained, the cause for the resultant enlightenment is thus dedicated first and foremost to the one who caused one to attain it, which is the enemy—the one who harmed us.

In bodhisattvas' practices that are completely dedicated to the benefit of others, there is no sense of self-centredness and no ulterior motive. Their practice is solely to benefit other sentient beings and acknowledge their contributions. The conclusion is that *the enemy is a powerful cause for the patience that creates my enlightenment.*

The aspirations and dedications we make in our daily practice come from the bodhisattva's supreme practices and positive way of dedication. Normally, when we do a practice one of the first dedications is to benefit all sentient beings to the ultimate state of enlightenment. This encompasses everything we are able to practise, and everything we receive is due to the kindness of other sentient beings. Recognising this it is befitting that we dedicate whatever practices we engage in first and foremost to the welfare of sentient beings, which is a very noble and selfless way of dedicating one's virtues. The merit one accumulates from this becomes expansive, and it is good to keep the significance of this in mind. If you use these explanations as a personal instruction to enhance your own daily practices, and give them impetus and deeper meaning, then it becomes beneficial.

3.1.2. Not dependent on the thought to benefit

This is divided into three:

3.1.2.1. It is incorrect that they are not an object of offering due to not having an intent to benefit

3.1.2.2. It is incorrect that they are not an object of offering as they have the intent to harm

3.1.2.3. They are a suitable object for offerings since they act as objects for patience

3.1.2.1. IT IS INCORRECT THAT THEY ARE NOT AN OBJECT OF OFFERING DUE TO NOT HAVING AN INTENT TO BENEFIT

What is being countered here is the thought of how could one consider an enemy as an object of offering, or to repay their kindness when they had no intention of benefitting you? The verse aims to overcome such doubts.

The verse reads:

*109. If enemies have no intent to establish patience
And therefore are not an object of offering,
Then why make offerings to the holy Dharma
Which is a suitable cause for practice?*

The commentary begins with a hypothetical argument:

Argument: Since they do not have the thought to establish patience in my continuum, they are not to be made offerings to.

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse, which provides the answer:

Answer: Then it follows one also should not make offerings to the holy Dharma jewel that is suitable as a cause for practice, because it does not have the thought thinking, 'I shall cause the generation of virtue'.

The argument is presented as *since they do not have the thought to establish patience in my continuum, they are not to be made offerings to.* One may think, 'because enemies just want to harm me, why should I venerate them and consider them kind'?

The answer: If you used this logic as a reason not to honour or make offerings to the enemy, what follows is that you would also *not make offerings to the holy Dharma jewel* which is in fact a supreme cause for one's practice. So while the Dharma jewel *is* one of the most supreme causes for one to practise, *because it does not have the thought 'I shall cause the generation of virtue'*, one may as well think that there is no need to make offerings and venerate the Dharma jewel.

If the doubt is based on the harmer not having the intention to establish virtue in one's continuum, one could say that there's no point in honouring the Dharma as well, because the Dharma, being inanimate, doesn't have the intention to establish virtue in one's continuum.

This reasoning would not apply to the two other jewels, the Sangha jewel and the Buddha jewel. But the Dharma jewel as an inanimate object definitely doesn't have any intention to benefit one. However it is one of the greatest sources for one gaining understanding and knowledge, and the causes for developing realisations. When one thinks about the words of the Buddha as the Dharma Jewel, then it is the advice and instructions the Buddha gives that become one of the supreme means for gaining understanding and realisations to progress along the path. They are indeed an object of veneration and respect.

The commentary meticulously presents this very sound logic as a way to overcome one's doubts.

Seeing that an enemy only has an intention to harm, and thus seeing no reason why one should venerate them, is due to the ordinary worldly way of thinking. These arguments and answers are presented to counteract ordinary thoughts, where we find it reasonable to retaliate or harm an enemy. These are essential points for those who intentionally want to practise patience, particularly the patience of not retaliating to harm. For someone who intends to practise this, one has to use this reasoning as a way to counteract false justifications for harming an enemy.

3.1.2.2. IT IS INCORRECT THAT THEY ARE NOT AN OBJECT OF OFFERING AS THEY HAVE THE INTENT TO HARM

The verse reads:

*110. If: this enemy has the intent to harm,
And therefore they are not the object of offering.
If they were to strive to benefit like a doctor
Then how could one practise patience?*

Again a hypothetical doubt or argument is presented:

Argument: It is not the same. The enemy is not an object of offering because they have the intent to harm me.

As a way to counteract that reasoning, the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Answer: If they strove to accomplish benefit and happiness, like a doctor, then they would not be the object of patience. How would one then practice the patience that does not think anything of harm? It is suitable to like the harmer.

Using the earlier example of the Dharma having no wish to benefit, yet still being an object of veneration and offering, similarly the enemy should be an object of veneration and offering. The hypothetical argument states that it's not the same, because while the Dharma has no intent to harm oneself, an enemy does have the intention to harm one, and therefore the enemy cannot be an object of offering.

The way to counteract such flawed reasoning is that it is because of the very fact that they harm you that you need to practise the patience of not retaliating to harm. If they had the intention to benefit you, like a doctor, then they would not be an object of patience, and you would not get the benefit of practising patience.

As I mentioned earlier, one does not practise patience in relation to a teacher because a teacher only has an intention to benefit one. In general, a teacher is not an object that you need to practise patience with, because they only wish to benefit you. Likewise, a doctor only intends to benefit you, so they are not an object on which you would need to practise patience.

How would one then practise the patience that does not think anything of harm? Without someone intending to harm oneself, how could one possibly practise the patience of not retaliating to harm? What is emphasised here is because they are the supreme object for practising patience, it is suitable to like the harmer.

3.1.2.3. THEY ARE A SUITABLE OBJECT FOR OFFERINGS SINCE THEY ACT AS AN OBJECT FOR PATIENCE

The verse reads:

*111. Hence, since patience is generated in dependence
On a strong mind of hatred,
It alone is the cause for patience
And suitable for offerings just like the holy
Dharma.*

The commentary explains the meaning as follows:

Since patience is not completed in dependence on a mind intending to benefit, it is generated in dependence on the harm inflicted due to strong hatred. Hence, only the harmer is the cause of patience and is suitable to be made offerings to just like the holy Dharma, despite not having the intent to benefit.

The earlier points clearly explained that patience cannot be completed in dependence on a mind intending to benefit. Rather it is generated in dependence on the harm inflicted due to the strong hatred of the harmer. What is further explained here is that there would be no need to practise patience with someone who benefits you.

Taking an example of a so-called enemy hitting you with a stick compared to a doctor giving you an injection. The injection still hurts us and we feel pain, but we don't find reason to get angry with the doctor. In fact we are glad that the doctor is giving us an injection so that we'll be cured of our illness. We are actually grateful and thankful for that.

If an enemy or someone who intends to harm one comes around with a needle and starts pricking us with it, we would become very angry. It doesn't even take a needle to prick us, even an inappropriate look will make us very upset and angry.

What this goes to show is that it is because of the intention to harm that we get hurt. When there's an intention to harm then the slightest inappropriate gesture, or physical harm, will become a cause for one to become extremely upset and angry and want to retaliate. Whereas when there's intention to benefit, even if there is some actual pain caused, then because of the intention in the other's mind, we don't consider it harm, or the other as an enemy.

The main point is that someone who harms us allows us to actually practise patience. *Hence, only the harmer is the cause of patience and is suitable to be made offerings to, just like the holy Dharma, despite not having the intent to benefit.*

The thing to understand here is the distinction between someone who harms, and someone who benefits. It really comes down to the intention they have in their mind. With an intention to benefit one, even when some discomfort is caused, such as when a doctor gives us treatment, we don't label them as a harmer. Whereas when someone has the intention to harm, then even the slightest inappropriate gesture causes us a lot of distress.

So what really differentiates a harmer from someone who benefits is the intention they have in their mind.

As mentioned in an earlier teaching, Lama Tsong Khapa said that without wishing the other to gain happiness and be free from suffering one cannot possibly have the

intention to benefit the other. These are profound points that Lama Tsong Khapa is sharing with us: a genuine intent to benefit others has to be preceded by a wish for them to be happy and not to experience suffering.

3.1.3. Viewing them like the Buddha

Here, *Viewing them* refers to sentient beings, including the harmer, as being similar to the Buddha.

3.1.3.1. Extensive explanation

3.1.3.2. Summary

3.1.3.1. EXTENSIVE EXPLANATION

This is subdivided into three:

3.1.3.1.1. It is stated in the scriptures that sentient beings and the buddhas are equal in being a field for merit

3.1.3.1.2. Establishing this with reasoning

3.1.3.1.3. Refuting objections

3.1.3.1.1. *It is stated in the scriptures that sentient beings and buddhas are equal in being a field for merit*

The Tibetan word translated literally as equal can also denote similarity, so the heading could read *are similar in being a field of merit*.

The first two lines of the verse relate to this heading:

*112ab. Therefore the Able One said: "The field
Of sentient beings and the field of conquerors."*

The commentary explains that:

Since it is necessary to treat sentient beings with respect it is stated in the *Sutra Perfectly Containing Dharma*:

The field of sentient beings is the field of the buddhas. From the field of the buddhas the Buddhadharma is obtained. It would be unsuitable to mistreat them.

In this and other quotes the Able One stated that the field of sentient beings, where one can plant the extensive seeds for merits, is as much a field to accumulate merits as the field of the buddhas.

Since *it is necessary to treat sentient beings with respect it is stated in the Sutra Perfectly Containing Dharma, that the field of sentient beings is the field of the buddhas*.

The term *field* is used in the context of the fields that serve as a basis for crops to grow. Likewise sentient beings reap the realisations leading all the way to enlightenment.

The field of sentient beings is the field of buddhas, relates to the cause and effect sequence of obtaining enlightenment. It is by relying on sentient beings, and engaging in the practices of the six perfections, that one implants the seeds of enlightenment to finally reap the result of becoming a buddha.

Furthermore, from *the field of the buddhas the Buddhadharma is obtained*, thus *it would be unsuitable to mistreat them*. The quote is explained with, *in this and other quotes the Able One stated that the field of sentient beings, where one can plant the extensive seeds for merits, is as much a field to accumulate merits as the field of the buddhas*.

What is explained here is that while we have great respect and veneration for the buddhas as a supreme field from which to accumulate merit and gain realisations etc., it is in relation to sentient beings that one actually engages in the practices of the six perfections. With the example of generosity this is very clear—

without sentient beings as objects to be generous towards, how can one possibly practise generosity?

So it is in relation to sentient beings that we are able to practise generosity, morality and so forth. It is the same with the practice of patience, as presented here, without the harmers we cannot possibly practice patience. It is only in relation to sentient beings that we are able to engage in all the forms of practice.

Without relying on sentient beings one cannot possibly practise the six perfections. Therefore sentient beings are an extremely precious field for one to accumulate merit. In that light, as a cause for one's ultimate goal of enlightenment, the buddha fields and the fields of sentient beings are equal, or similar, in providing one with the causes.

When we generate faith there is a natural inclination to make offerings and pay respect to the enlightened beings. That is because we consider the enlightened beings as a supreme field of merit. But since sentient beings are an object for one's accumulation of merit, and without them one cannot engage in practices of generosity and so forth, they are also to be seen as a similar field of merit. The point here is that one should apply one's practice of veneration, respect and offerings to the buddhas as well as sentient beings, because they are a similar field of merit. In the teachings, the source of the points which emphasise that one needs to pay respect, venerate and honour sentient beings, is none other than Shantideva's explanations.

3.1.3.1.2. *Establishing this with reasoning*

This is subdivided into two:

3.1.3.1.2.1. By having faith in the buddhas and sentient beings one will attain the ultimate aim

3.1.3.1.2.2. To discriminate between them, accepting one and rejecting the other, is unsuitable, since they are the same in that one will attain enlightenment by having faith in them.

3.1.3.1.2.1. *By having faith in the buddhas and sentient beings one will attain the ultimate aim*

The next two lines of the verse read:

*112cd. Many a one, by making them happy,
Have thus gone to the perfection beyond.*

The commentary explains:

It is suitable to respect all sentient beings, because by having faith in the buddhas and sentient beings, and by making them happy, many have gone to the perfection beyond that has completed the two purposes.

Gyaltsab Je says that *it is suitable to respect all sentient beings, because by having faith in the buddhas and sentient beings, and by making them happy, many have gone to the perfection beyond that has completed the two purposes*. This emphasises that it is both the buddhas as a supreme field of merit, and sentient beings as a supreme field of merit, and the combination of making offerings, paying respect, and doing practices to both fields, that one obtains one's ultimate goal of enlightenment and thus fulfils the two purposes.

As buddhas and sentient beings equally assist one to achieve one's ultimate goal of enlightenment, both are equally an object of veneration, respect and offerings.

3.1.3.1.2.2. To discriminate between them, accepting one and rejecting the other, is unsuitable, since they are the same in that one will attain enlightenment by having faith in them.

The verse reads:

*113. The dharmas of a buddha are equally attained
From sentient beings and the conquerors.
What behaviour would it be to please the
conquerors
But not sentient beings?*

The commentary explains:

For these reasons one attains the resultant dharmas of a buddha, such as the powers and so forth, equally from sentient beings and the conquerors. What kind of behaviour would it therefore be to respect the conquerors but to not respect sentient beings likewise? It would be unsuitable.

As explained earlier, both the buddha and the sentient beings are equal fields of merit, and so for these reasons one obtains the dharmas or the qualities of a buddha, such as the ten powers and so forth. This encompasses all the qualities of a buddha's holy body, speech, and mind. The particular qualities specified in the teachings are all obtained as a result of the fields of merit. As *sentient beings and the conquerors* are equal in this respect, *what kind of behaviour would it therefore be to respect the conquerors but to not respect sentient beings likewise*. This implies that it is indeed suitable, and that one needs to pay equal respect to both.

So what is being highlighted here is that, if on the one hand one is very pious, and shows a lot of respect, making offerings and veneration to the enlightened being, but on the other hand ignores and pays no respect to sentient beings, then this would be inappropriate and shameful behaviour as both are an equal cause for obtaining such qualities.

The personal instruction is that one really needs to incorporate this understanding and show genuine respect to all sentient beings, in whatever form they take, to always extend respect to all beings equally.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© *Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱུང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

28 April 2015

As usual we will now engage in our meditation practice.

[meditation]

Now we can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

It needs to be understood that generating a motivation prior to receiving the teachings secures the time we spend as a meaningful practice. In fact, with a proper motivation, the attention one pays to the topic being presented is actually a form of meditation. The purpose of meditation is to keep the mind in virtue. While a single-pointed meditation focuses on one particular object, listening to a teaching with a proper motivation is also a form of meditation practice. That is because it is a means for keeping one's mind in virtue. The teacher definitely has to maintain a focused mind, because they have to be focused on the teaching material. Likewise the listeners also need to take the initiative to keep their minds focused on what is being presented. When the attention that one pays listening to the teachings is complemented with the earlier positive motivation, then it definitely becomes a very meaningful meditation practice.

As I regularly mention, we need to incorporate the practices that we do here into our daily life, and then we will have integrated the Dharma into our lives. Just sitting piously for a few minutes at a time may not be really enough if we want any real transformation to take place.

3.1. One should be respectful since it generates qualities (cont.)

3.1.3.1.3. Refuting objections

This has three subdivisions:

3.1.3.1.3.1. Refuting that it is unsuitable to meditate on equal faith, because of not having equal qualities

3.1.3.1.3.2. It is suitable to equally meditate on faith, because the greatness of having faith in both is equally the cause for enlightenment

3.1.3.1.3.3. It is suitable to have faith, because the merits of making offerings to sentient beings, who possess parts of the qualities of a buddha, is infinite

3.1.3.1.3.1. Refuting that it is unsuitable to meditate on equal faith, because of not having equal qualities

This section refutes the thought that since sentient beings and enlightened beings don't possess the same qualities, it would be unsuitable to think that one could have equal faith in both.

This is a very reasonable doubt, and the following verse is a presentation of the way to overcome that doubt.

114. *Not through the qualities of thought,
But through the result, sentient beings
Also equally have qualities.
Therefore they are equal.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je begins with a statement of the doubt or argument:

Argument: Even though sentient beings are a field of merit, since they do not have equal qualities it is unsuitable to make offerings to them as to the buddhas.

Then he explains the meaning of the verse, which serves as an answer:

Answer: There is no such fault, because they are not made equal through the qualities of thought, but because they are the same in being the cause for enlightenment. Thus if one is equally respectful to sentient beings, because they also have the qualities of enlightenment, they are therefore equal fields of merit.

The main point is that sentient beings and enlightened beings are *equally a field of merit*. As explained previously, a field of merit is an object through which one accumulates merit. Enlightened beings are a field of merit for making offerings, and sentient beings are also a field of merit as an object of generosity. Indeed, sentient beings are a supreme field for accumulating the merit of generosity. Making offerings to the enlightened beings and holy objects is, of course, also considered to be a practice of generosity. However the real beneficiaries of an act of generosity are sentient beings. Therefore they are the supreme object of one's generosity, and since one accumulates merit in relation to them, they are considered to be fields of merit.

While accepting that both sentient beings and enlightened beings are fields of merit, the doubt being expressed here is that since *they do not have equal qualities, it is unsuitable to make offerings to them as to the buddhas*. The main point about this doubt is thinking, 'because buddhas and sentient beings don't have equal qualities there is no reason to have equal faith in both'.

They are not made equal through qualities but because they are the same in being the cause for enlightenment explains that even though they are not equal in having the same qualities, they are equally the cause for enlightenment. The lam rim teaching also makes this same point in stating that the cause for one's enlightenment relies equally both on the teacher, who presents the teaching, and sentient beings, on whom one relies as an object for engaging in the practices. As both are the same in being the cause for enlightenment, one needs to rely equally on the buddhas who present the teachings and sentient beings who are a condition for one's practice.

In simple terms, if one has to rely equally on both as causes for one's own enlightenment, then how can it be reasonable to only have faith in one and not the other? It would be quite unreasonable. *If one is also respectful to sentient beings then one will gain the qualities of enlightenment. Therefore they are equal fields of merit*. They are equal in being the causes for one's enlightenment.

3.1.3.1.3.2. It is suitable to equally meditate on faith, because the greatness of having faith in both is equally the cause for enlightenment

This further emphasises how it is suitable to meditate on faith in both enlightened beings and sentient beings, as both are equally the cause of enlightenment. The relevant lines of verse present this point very meticulously.

115. *Any offerings to those with the mind of love
Are the very greatness of sentient beings.
Any merit of having faith in the buddhas
Is again a greatness of the buddhas.*

116.ab *There is a part establishing the dharmas of a
buddha
And therefore they are asserted to be equal*

Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning as follows:

The offerings to those endowed with the mind of love for all sentient beings, which is taught to be infinite merit, are the very greatness of the sentient beings that are the object of that love.

Any merit of having faith in the buddhas is again a greatness of the object of the faith, the buddhas alone. Therefore, having faith in both contains equally the causes that establish the dharmas of a buddha and therefore they are both equally asserted as suitable.

The offerings of those endowed with the mind of love refers to limitless love, focusing on limitless *sentient beings*. Therefore, the infinite amount of merit that is accumulated from developing a limitless mind of love for a limitless number of sentient beings is said to be the *greatness*, i.e. the qualities, *of sentient beings*. One obtains *infinite merit* because of the greatness of the object, which is limitless sentient beings.

Likewise, the merit of having *faith in the buddhas is again a greatness of the object of that faith*, which are *the buddhas alone*. When one generates faith in a buddha, one again accumulates an infinite amount of merit because of the greatness or the qualities of the buddhas. As one accumulates infinite amounts of merit through the greatness of the objects, *they are both equally asserted as suitable objects of faith*.

From this we can derive a personal instruction. When we do the *tong len* meditation, for example, we are attempting to generate love and compassion. The scope of the love that we are attempting to generate is, as explained here, love for an infinite or limitless number of sentient beings. When one ensures that one is focusing on the practice of giving and taking in relation to limitless sentient beings, then that becomes a means for one to accumulate an infinite amount of merit. So we can see that if we do our regular *tong len* meditation with a proper motivation and proper recollection, then it is not just a simple practice. Because it is very profound, it is a means to accumulate great merit. So one needs to ensure that one fully embraces the practice, on the basis of a deeper understanding of the explanations that have been presented here.

In summary, the main point is that the infinite merit that one gains by generating a limitless mind of love for a limitless number of sentient beings, is due to the greatness that are the qualities of sentient beings. Likewise the merit that one gains from generating faith in the buddhas is due to the greatness, or the qualities of the

buddhas. Since both are equally a part of the Buddhadharma that one practices as a means to accumulate the causes for enlightenment, they are equally an object of faith.

3.1.3.1.3.3. It is suitable to have faith, because the merits of making offerings to sentient beings, who possess parts of the qualities of a buddha, is infinite

The next six lines of verse, which relate to this, read:

116cd. *Not at all equal to the buddhas
With an ocean of infinite qualities*

117. *Even giving the three realms for the purpose
Of making offerings to those few in whom
appears
A mere part of the qualities of those
That are only an accumulation of qualities, it
would be too little.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

From the side of the qualities of thought they are not equal, because they are not at all equal with the qualities of the buddhas that possess an infinite ocean of extensive and difficult to fathom qualities. Although the qualities are not equal, there are some that have parts of the qualities of the buddhas who are an unequalled accumulation of supreme and great qualities. To give all objects of the three realms for the purpose of making offerings to them would still be too little. What need is there to mention others?

What is being explained here is that in relation to the qualities of thought or mind, the qualities of sentient beings do not equal the qualities of the buddhas, who possess an infinite ocean of extensive, and difficult to fathom, qualities.

Although the qualities are not equal, however *there are some who have parts of the qualities of the buddhas*, and *to give all objects of the three realms for the purpose of making offerings to them would still be too little*. This indicates that making offerings to someone who has even a part of the qualities of the buddhas is a cause for extensive merit. *What need is there to mention others?* This rhetorical question implies that if the merit of making offerings to someone who only has a partial quality of the buddhas is extremely extensive, then there is no need to mention the extensive merit gained by making offerings to all sentient beings.

3.1.3.2. SUMMARY

The verse relating to this reads:

118. *A part of that which generates the supreme
dharmas
Of a buddha exists in sentient beings.
Merely through this they become equal
And it is suitable to make offerings to sentient
beings.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Though they do not have qualities equal to the buddhas, since a part of the cause that generates these supreme qualities exists in sentient beings, they become equal merely through this. Hence it is suitable to respect sentient beings and make offerings to them as to the buddhas.

As the commentary clearly explains, *though they do not have qualities equal to the buddhas*, *a part of the cause that generates these supreme qualities exists in sentient beings*. While sentient beings don't have equal qualities to the

buddhas, the enlightened beings, there is a part that serves as cause for one to accumulate those great qualities of the buddhas. Through this they become equal in being a field of one's faith. *Hence it is suitable to respect sentient beings and make offerings to them as to the buddhas.* This is the summarising point.

3.2. One should be respectful because one has faith in the buddhas

This is subdivided into two:

3.2.1. One should be respectful because they view all sentient beings like an only child

3.2.2. Showing subsequently as a summary that one also needs to be respectful to sentient beings

3.2.1. One should be respectful because they view all sentient beings like an only child

This has three subdivisions.

3.2.1.1. Establishing the main method needed for becoming enlightened

3.2.1.2. To confess the disrespectful things engaged in earlier

3.2.1.3. Refraining from future disrespectful actions

3.2.1.1. ESTABLISHING THE MAIN METHOD NEEDED FOR BECOMING ENLIGHTENED

This is subdivided into two:

3.2.1.1.1. Identifying the main method for repaying the kindness of the buddhas

3.2.1.1.2. Achieving that very action

3.2.1.1.1. Identifying the main method for repaying the kindness of the buddhas

Having presented that, through to the buddhas' teachings and kindness in presenting those teachings, one gains the means to accumulate the merit for achieving enlightenment, the question is what is the best way to actually repay that kindness?

The relevant verse reads:

*119. Further, apart from making sentient beings happy,
How can one repay the kindness
Of those that are honest friends
And accomplish boundless benefit.*

Gyaltsab Je's explanation in his commentary reads:

Further, another reason for treating sentient beings respectfully: The buddhas, induced by great compassion, are honest friends of all migrators who act without being asked and establish boundless benefit for them. Apart from making sentient beings happy, how can one repay their kindness? There is no better offering to please the buddhas than to work for the benefit of sentient beings.

The buddhas, induced by great compassion, are honest friends, means that the buddhas have no ulterior motive in benefiting others—there is no deceit and no intention of getting something in return. In other words, they benefit *sentient beings selflessly*, and they do so *without being asked*. Thus they *establish boundless benefits* for sentient beings. So the enlightened beings, in serving sentient beings, are honest and extend their benefits, even without being asked, and are thus *friends of migrators*, which establishes boundless benefits for sentient beings.

The great compassion of the buddhas was developed in the countless lives of their training on the path to enlightenment, where, as bodhisattvas, they repeatedly and unceasingly familiarised themselves with the mind of great compassion. Having attained enlightenment, the compassion with which they acquainted themselves over numberless lifetimes, transforms into unsurpassed compassion. Due to that, sentient beings regard the buddhas as great, honest and unfailing friends, who will be ready to help without any request being made. Unlike temporary small benefits, the buddhas offer boundless benefits that extend to alleviating all the sufferings and problems of sentient beings.

The second part of the commentary indicates that the way for sentient beings to repay the kindness of these unfailing, honest friends, who help without being asked, is by making other sentient beings happy. Apart from that there is no other way. This is expressed as a rhetorical question: *how can one repay their kindness, apart from making sentient beings happy?* This implies that there is no other way to repay the kindness of the enlightened beings, the buddhas, apart from actually making other sentient beings happy.

Furthermore, *there is no better offering to please the buddhas than to work for the benefit of sentient beings.* There is no other way to repay the kindness of the enlightened beings than by actually benefiting sentient beings by making offerings to them, making them happy and so forth. This is yet *another reason for treating sentient beings respectfully.*

3.2.1.1.2. Achieving that very action

Here there are three subdivisions:

3.2.1.1.2.1. Being patient when harmed by sentient beings

3.2.1.1.2.2. Abandoning the arrogance that focuses on sentient beings

3.2.1.1.2.3. Abandoning harm

3.2.1.1.2.1. Being patient when harmed by sentient beings

Even though this was presented earlier, it refers here to being patient when harmed by sentient beings, as a means of repaying the kindness of the buddhas.

As one doesn't want to upset sentient beings and make them unhappy, one needs to practise patience when harmed by sentient beings. The verse relating to this reads:

*120. If one repays the benefit of those
That give up their life and enter without respite,
Then even if one is harmed greatly by them,
One solely treats them with everything
wholesome.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning as follows:

Benefiting sentient beings repays the kindness of the buddhas, who gave up their life for sentient beings, and who would even enter the hells without respite. Hence, even if one is harmed greatly by sentient beings one not only does not get angry, but one should strive solely to benefit them through one's three doors with everything wholesome that establishes all happiness for them.

As explained here, the act of *benefiting sentient beings repays the kindness of the buddhas, who gave up their life for*

sentient beings, and who would even enter the hells without respite. This is explaining the unimaginable extent of the buddhas' practices to benefit sentient beings—their unceasing toil, giving up their bodies for the sake of other beings, and even going to the hells without respite. This is in accordance with the *Commentary on Bodhicitta*, which explains how, for the sake of sentient beings, bodhisattvas have no hesitation in engaging in any austerities in order to work for sentient beings. Their sacrifices are all for the sake of sentient beings.

If one is harmed by sentient beings now, then, as a way to remember and show faith in the buddhas, one should not only not become angry with them, but one should strive to benefit them through one's three doors *with everything wholesome that establishes all happiness for them.*

Engaging in the practice of being able to return harm with benefit is in fact possible when one contemplates and trains one's mind in thinking in this way. As the teachings have mentioned, there is nothing that one cannot achieve through acquaintance. Therefore acquainting oneself with this way of thinking will make it possible to actually return harm with benefit, rather than retaliating. With the practice of patience it is possible to return harm with benefit rather than harm.

At a practical level, the best way to apply this advice is with one's closest companion. As I emphasise regularly, in any kind of relationship one cannot expect to always hear pleasant words, and never hear unpleasant words. That is unrealistic. Indeed there will be times when, while a bit upset, or not in the right state of mind, the other might make some inappropriate comment or gesture. If one takes the initiative to not return that unkind word or gesture with unkindness, and tries to practise a bit of patience, and show an appealing gesture or a smile, then that will prevent a lot of difficulties that might otherwise arise. If one fails to practise patience, and decides to become upset and angry and retaliate with more inappropriate gestures and unkind words, then the problem will just escalate and worsen. Then that relationship will be harmed.

Of course this advice is not limited to sorting out the problems of couples and helping them to maintain a good relationship. The scope is much greater than that. Nevertheless ordinary life is where we really need to practice. We need to begin our practice with the individuals that we are dealing with on a regular basis. That is how to incorporate the teachings into our life in a practical way.

There have been people who have confided in me that this advice has been helpful when they have put it into practice. When someone comes home from work, don't get into the habit of querying them about their day if they come in with a worried face. Say 'Go and relax. Have a shower. I'll make you tea and a nice meal'. Speak quietly, and don't insist on asking 'Why are you upset?' which will only aggravate them even more.

3.2.1.1.2.2. Abandoning the arrogance that focuses on sentient beings

This is, yet again, very practical advice for our daily life. The verse relating to this is:

121. *One should not be ignorant and generate pride
Or be competitive with those
That even the very ones that are one's lords
Regard without concern for their own bodies.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

Further, one should not be ignorant and generate arrogant pride or be competitive in any action with the sentient beings for whose purpose the very buddhas, that are one's lords, work without concern for their own bodies. One should abandon pride and be respectful.

As the commentary explains, one should not allow an *ignorant* mind to *generate* arrogance, *pride or be competitive with the sentient beings*, for whom *the very buddhas that are one's lords work, without concern for their own bodies.* This is explaining that it is inappropriate to generate pride and arrogance towards sentient beings, who are the very beings the buddhas have sought to benefit by sacrificing their lives and giving away their body, wealth and so forth.

If the enlightened beings hold these sentient beings so dearly and work endlessly for their benefit, then it would be totally inappropriate to develop a sense of arrogance and competitiveness with sentient beings. If anyone should have pride, it would be the buddhas, but in fact they only benefit and help sentient beings. So one should not develop pride and arrogance towards the very objects the buddhas help.

The really crucial advice here is that if one follows the example of the enlightened beings, the lords, who one holds in high esteem and respects, then one should refrain from harming sentient beings. Rather than arrogance and pride and so forth, they should only think of benefiting sentient beings. That is what has to be kept in mind.

3.2.1.1.2.3. Abandoning harm

This is subdivided into two:

3.2.1.1.2.3.1. The reason why it is unsuitable to harm

3.2.1.1.2.3.2. If one harms them there is no way to please the buddhas

3.2.1.1.2.3.1. *The reason why it is unsuitable to harm*

The text and the explanation in the commentary is quite clear. The verse reads:

122. *Those whose happiness makes the conquerors
pleased,
Those then when harmed causes unhappiness to
arise,
The conquerors are pleased when they are
happy
And harming them will harm the conquerors.*

The explanation in the commentary reads:

The conquerors are pleased when sentient beings are happy, and are not pleased when they are harmed. Therefore the best offering to all the able ones is to make these sentient beings happy, by benefiting them. This makes the conquerors pleased, and harming

these sentient beings becomes harming the conquerors.

As clearly explained here, *The conquerors are pleased when sentient beings are happy, and are not pleased when they are harmed. So the best offering to all able ones is to make these sentient beings happy by benefiting them. This makes the conquerors pleased, and harming sentient beings is in fact harming the conquerors.*

What is being explained here reflects a point that I regularly emphasise: the Buddha said that if you benefit sentient beings you are benefiting me, and if you harm sentient beings you are harming me. Thus, if one considers oneself to be a follower of the Buddha then the best way to please the Buddha is by pleasing sentient beings, and the best way to refrain from being disrespectful to the Buddha is by refraining from harming sentient beings. This is the point to be understood here.

We will break early, and recite the tenth chapter of the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* together.

We will dedicated this first of all to Wendy Pullen's mother who passed away recently. And, as we all know, there has been that disaster in Nepal. So many people have perished there and we need to dedicate our prayers and practices to them. I haven't heard anything directly, but some acquaintances of mine might have been affected. So we also need to dedicate to them.

I have two nieces, who some of you met when we were in Nepal, and one of them has a son. The first time I met one of the nieces was when she came to the last Kalachakra in Bodhgaya, and later the boy came to Sera, which was the only time I met him. They live in Nepal in the Tibetan settlement, and I am not sure if that has been affected. I haven't heard anything specific, but I have quite a few acquaintances in that area. In any case, it is good to dedicate to all who have been affected.

Also Lama Zopa Rinpoche's brother, Sangay, lives in the next village after Boudha. His wife is the sister of Donyo, the Gyuto monk who used to live here. I was once invited to the house and had lunch there with Lama Zopa. I am not sure about the father but the mother passed away not long ago. There are some other relatives as well.

Student: There are also the men who are to be shot in Indonesia tonight. Many are holding a vigil tonight.

The nuns over the road said that they were doing some prayers for them. As spiritual people the only help that we can extend is by doing prayers and sending our good wishes and good intentions, and dedicating that to them.

What is happening in Indonesia seems to be because the Prime Minister apparently tried to say something quite forcefully, and then there was retaliation. Then he became very quiet. So if one is not careful it makes others very cross.

These are just some examples, and of course there are many who are suffering, and so we dedicate this recitation to all of them.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་པོ་འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷོ་ལ་འཇམ་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

5 May 2015

Let us do our regular meditation practice.

[meditation]

Now we can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practice well.

3.2.1.1. ESTABLISHING THE MAIN METHOD NEEDED FOR BECOMING ENLIGHTENED

3.2.1.1.2. Achieving that very action

3.2.1.1.2.3. Abandoning harm

3.2.1.1.2.3.2. *If one harms them, there is no way to please the buddhas*

The following explanations are quite easy to understand. The verse relating to this heading is:

123. *Just as one will never be mentally happy despite all sense objects
When the whole body is completely in flames,
Similarly there is no way to please the greatly compassionate ones
When one harms sentient beings.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads

For that reason, just as one will never be mentally happy despite all sense objects such as food and so forth, if one's body is completely in flames, there is no way to please the greatly compassionate ones if one harms sentient beings.

The analogy here is that if *one's body is consumed in flames* then not even *objects of the sense pleasures such as delicious food, beautiful sights and so forth*, will bring mental happiness. The agony is so great that one cannot experience any joy from the sense pleasures. Similarly, *there is no way to please the greatly compassionate ones if one harms sentient beings*. The point of this example is if one were to harm sentient beings then, even if one were to present extensive offerings to the enlightened beings, it will not please them.

We need to understand how *great compassionate ones'* love and concern for sentient beings exceeds a mother's love for an only child. The love of a mother for her only child is a contemporary example that illustrates the extent of the love and compassion that a sentient being can have for another being. The buddhas' love and compassion for each and every living sentient being far exceeds that. It is hard to measure the love and compassion the buddhas have for all living beings. Thus, when one harms any living being, then that definitely displeases the buddhas. What we need to understand from this explanation, and put into personal practice, is to make every effort to avoid harming any living being.

No amount of offerings or practice can please the buddhas if one is harming sentient beings, as that is completely contrary to their wishes. So refraining from harming sentient beings is one of the optimum offerings to the enlightened beings. The real meaning of the Sanskrit word *punja*, which we pronounce as *puja*, has the connotation of pleasing the mind. Therefore since whatever pleases the mind of the enlightened beings is the real offering, avoiding harm towards any living being is the optimum offering.

It is good to understand the real connotation of *offering* as a way to incorporate it into our practice. With the proper understanding we can then adopt this resolution: 'To the utmost of my ability I will refrain from harming sentient beings, as this is the optimum means to gain genuine peace and happiness, as well as the supreme offering to the enlightened beings'. Of course, as mentioned earlier, it only becomes a real offering when we incorporate this understanding into our daily life and put it into practice. Nice offerings laid on the altar don't really amount to much if we neglect this essential practice.

One needs to understand that the practice of non-harmfulness is an actual antidote to harmful intentions. That is what practising non-harmfulness means. If one resolves to practise non-harmfulness, then one is applying the antidote to harmful intention. This is how the practice actually works—when it is applied as an antidote to overcome negative states of mind.

If we fail to understand this, then even though we might be able to extensively explain a topic, we will not know how to put it into practice.

3.2.1.2. TO CONFESS THE DISRESPECTFUL THINGS ONE DID EARLIER

This, of course, relates to the need to confess the negativities that one has committed, and then purify them. These negativities will have been driven by the influence of the three poisons, namely anger, attachment and ignorance. The way to please the minds of the buddhas is by accumulating virtue, and any negative actions will be a source of displeasure for them.

So one confesses all these negative actions. This involves developing strong regret for having committed those negativities, clearly recognising them as being such; understanding that it has been a great fault; feeling a strong sense of remorse; and resolving not to commit them again.

A point to keep in mind is that one will resolve to the extent of one's regret. This is where you need to refer back to the second chapter on confession, which explains how to engage in the confession practice. Otherwise, one might wonder what the practice entails.

The verse relating to this heading reads:

124. *Hence, whatever harm to migrators
That caused displeasure to the greatly
compassionate ones,
That negativity I confess today individually
And request the conquerors to be patient with
anything causing displeasure.*

Gyaltsab Je's explanation reads:

Since harming sentient beings causes displeasure to the buddhas, I will confess the negativities that

brought displeasure to the greatly compassionate ones, because of my previous harm to migrators. From today I will confess them individually, and not conceal them, and I request them to be patient with any harm to sentient beings that causes displeasure.

With the words, *since harming sentient beings causes displeasure to the buddhas I will confess the negativities that brought displeasure*, one recalls all the negativities one has engaged in previously, particularly those numerous ways where, under the influence of strong anger, attachment, or jealousy and so forth, one has harmed sentient beings. When one's mind is afflicted by strong negativities, then one engages in such negative actions as taking the life of other sentient beings, stealing, engaging in sexual misconduct, lying, engaging in slanderous, or divisive and harmful speech, and so forth. These negativities, along with covetousness, deluded doubt, and wrong view, are called the ten non-virtues.

As further explained, *these negativities brought displeasure to the great compassionate ones because of my previous harm to migrators*. Here it is specifically stating that these actions displease the great compassionate ones, i.e. enlightened beings, as well as the noble beings. So one is confessing all of the negativities that displease the minds of these holy beings.

Having identified the negativities one has engaged in previously, and with clear recognition of those negativities, one confesses them as follows, *from this day on I will confess them individually and not conceal them*. This refers to recalling all the negativities one has previously engaged in. Confessing them individually refers to confessing and purifying the negativities accumulated by engaging in physical actions, through speech, as well as negative thoughts. Thus one confesses and purifies the negativities created through one's body, speech and mind.

Not concealing them means that having acknowledged them, one proclaims those negativities verbally. One does this as a way of not concealing them. This is followed by requesting the compassionate ones *to be patient with any harm to sentient beings that cause displeasure to the minds of the buddhas*.

In summary, one identifies the negative actions that have harmed sentient beings which have caused displeasure to the buddhas' minds; one acknowledges one has committed them; one confesses them individually; one does not conceal them; and finally one requests the buddhas to be patient with the negativities that one has created.

3.2.1.3. RESTRAINING FROM FUTURE DISRESPECTFUL ACTIONS

Following the confession one makes a pledge or resolution to refrain from future negative actions.

The verse relating to this heading is:

125. *In order to make the tathagatas happy
From today I will be absolutely subdued and
the world's servant
Though many beings pound my head by kicking it
Or even kill me, I won't retaliate but please the
protectors of the world. Gyaltsab Je explains
this verse as follows:*

In order to make the tathagatas happy, from today I will be absolutely subdued and harm nobody and become and accept myself as the servant of the world. Subdue here refers to accepting oneself as servant of the world with firmness in one's mind. Though many beings pound my head by kicking it or even kill me, I shall not retaliate but bear it and in such a way act to please the minds of the protectors of the world.

As explained here one makes the pledge: *In order to make the tathagatas happy, from today I will be absolutely subdued and harm nobody*. Here, *subdued* refers to subduing one's mind from harmful intention, and we can also relate it to delusions such as pride. *And then become and accept myself as a servant of the world* indicates that one will place oneself in a lowly position, where one shows great respect for all sentient beings, refrains from harming them, subdues harmful intentions and delusions such as pride, and pays respect to all sentient beings. This is what one resolves to do.

One should not misinterpret 'holding others as being supreme' as meaning that one should regard oneself as insignificant. That is not what it means. Rather, having respect for other sentient beings relates to remembering their kindness. As explained in the teachings, particularly in the *Abhidharma*, when one remembers the kindness of others one generates respect for them, and when one remembers the qualities of others one generates faith in them.

In relation to one's parents, for example, we develop a sense of respect when we remember their kindness. One wouldn't necessarily call that faith, but one will definitely have respect for one's parents, which comes from thinking about the kindness that they have shown. Whereas, by remembering the qualities and kindness of one's spiritual teachers, one can generate both respect and faith in the spiritual masters.

However, as explained in the text, it is appropriate that one generates respect for, and faith in, sentient beings. Earlier it was emphasised how enlightened beings and sentient beings are equal in terms of being a cause for enlightenment. Therefore one can have equal faith in, and respect for, sentient beings, as well as enlightened beings. In the example referring to respecting one's parents a distinction was made between faith and respect, but in general one develops both attitudes towards all beings.

When we relate to these explanations, we can see how Shantideva very meticulously shows how one needs to regard sentient beings, enlightened beings and one's teachers who present the teachings, in an equal light. The commentary clearly clarified that the causes for enlightenment relies fifty percent on the enlightened beings as well as the gurus who present the teachings, and fifty percent on sentient beings. Therefore, enlightened beings and sentient beings are equal in their kindness to us.

This is a presentation of the reasons why we should benefit and respect sentient beings, and not harm them. When we look into these explanations, we can see that they have a general aspect, as well as being a specific Buddhist practice. When it explains that harming sentient beings displeases the enlightened beings, and that the way to please the enlightened beings is to practise being

kind to other sentient beings, then that is a specific Buddhist practice. Whereas explaining that one should respect sentient beings and not harm them, because they have been kind to oneself, is a more general approach. We can see that this is a presentation that everyone can relate to.

Next the commentary clarifies a point, explaining that, *subdue here refers to accepting oneself as servant of the world with firmness in one's mind.*

Finally there is a resolution or pledge:

Though many beings pound my head by kicking it, or even kill me, I shall not retaliate, but bear it, and in such a way act to please the minds of the protectors of the world.

Having confessed all these actions that have harmed sentient beings, and which displease the enlightened beings, and regretting that, one pledges, 'I will see myself as a servant of sentient beings. If they *pound my head by kicking it or even kill me, I will not retaliate.* I will not become angry, and I will bear it in such a way as *to please the protectors of the world.*

By presenting such a profound pledge, we are being encouraged to resolve to practise in this way.

3.2.2. Showing subsequently as a summary that one also needs to be respectful to sentient beings

126. *There is no doubt that all these migrators
Are regarded by those possessing compassion as self.
Those seen in the identity of sentient beings
Are in the nature of the protector, why not be respectful?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

Having meditated on equalising and exchanging self with others, the compassionate buddhas have come to regard all these migrators as self. Hence without doubt, when seeing the nature of sentient beings they are to be regarded as the very protector of oneself, since respecting them gives enlightenment. Therefore why not be respectful? It is appropriate to have faith and be respectful.

When the commentary states *having meditated on equalising and exchanging self with others, the compassionate buddhas have come to regard all these migrators as self*, the word *self* is not to be taken literally. Rather it refers to cherishing them as one would normally cherish oneself. The compassionate buddhas previously engaged in practices of exchanging self with others and developed the altruistic mind of bodhicitta. They consistently engaged in the practice of giving up cherishing themselves while cherishing other sentient beings. Having engaged in that practice, and developed the altruistic mind of bodhicitta, and then becoming enlightened, they reached the perfected state where all sentient beings are dearly cherished equally.

Without doubt when seeing the nature of sentient beings can also relate to the ultimate buddha nature in all sentient beings. It is that essence of sentient beings that will transform into the state of enlightenment. On seeing that, one regards that *as the very protector of oneself.* Having seen the nature of sentient beings in that way, and since respecting them leads to enlightenment, *Why not be respectful?* This is a rhetorical question, implying that

indeed *it is appropriate to have faith and be respectful* to all sentient beings equally.

2.2. Meditating on the benefits of patience¹

Having extensively explained how to practise patience, the text now goes on to explain the benefits of practising patience.

This section is subdivided into three:

2.2.1. In brief

2.2.2. Explaining the benefits with an example;

2.2.3. A summary of the list of benefits

2.2.1. In brief

127. *It alone pleases those gone thus,
It alone perfectly establishes the purpose of self,
It alone also clears the sufferings of the world,
Therefore I will continuously practise only this.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

To be patient and respectful when harmed by sentient beings, this alone is the supreme method for pleasing the buddhas. To work for the welfare of others, this alone is the supreme method to complete the accumulations in one's own continuum. This alone also clears the sufferings of all sentient beings. Therefore, since it perfects the two purposes, I shall continuously meditate on the three types of patience.

Earlier the text showed, with reasoning and logic, why one needs to practise patience, and be *respectful when harmed by sentient beings*, which *is alone the supreme method for pleasing the buddhas.* Also, *To work for the welfare of others, this alone is the supreme method to complete the accumulations in one's own continuum.* So working for the welfare of others becomes the supreme method to complete the accumulations of merit and wisdom.

Furthermore, as explained in the commentary, *This alone also clears the sufferings of all sentient beings.* So the supreme means to clear away the suffering of sentient beings is to practise patience, which means not retaliating, and refraining from harming other sentient beings.

Since it perfects the two purposes, i.e. the ultimate purpose for oneself and the ultimate purpose of benefiting other sentient beings, *I shall continuously meditate on the three types of patience.*

The three types of patience are:

- Not retaliating when others harm one
- Enduring suffering
- Definitely thinking about the Dharma

These three types of patience are the optimum means to please all the buddhas, they are the ultimate means to work for the welfare of others, and the ultimate means to refrain from harming other sentient beings. For all of these reasons one holds practising and meditating on these three types of patience as one's core practice.

Verse 127 has, in fact, been a summary of why one needs to respect sentient beings.

¹ At this point the numbering reverts to the larger structure of the chapter. The point where this started was 14 April 2015.

The sequence just completed began with the heading 2.1 Eliminating The Cause For Anger which was introduced on 30 September 2014. It is the second part of the heading 2 Applying the Mind To The Methods To Establish Patience.

2.2.2. Explaining the benefits with an example

This is subdivided into two:

2.2.2.1. Example and meaning from the point of view of benefit

2.2.2.2. Explaining it to be superior to the example

2.2.2.1. EXAMPLE AND MEANING FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF BENEFIT

This is further subdivided into two:

2.2.2.1.1. Example

2.2.2.1.2. Meaning

2.2.2.1.1. Example

128. *For example, though some of the kings men
Inflict harm on many beings,
The farsighted people
Will not retaliate even though they can.*

129ab. *This is not because of them alone,
But due to the king's power, that is their
support.*

Then the commentary explaining the meaning:

For example, though a few people belonging to the entourage of the king harm many others, the farsighted people that look at the long-term benefit or harm, will not retaliate even though they can.

That they cannot retaliate is not just because of the entourage's power alone, but due to the power of the king.

The *example* that is clearly explained in the commentary is when *a few people belonging to the entourage of the king harm many others*. In the event that some of the king's men go out and harm others, *farsighted people* who can see short and *long-term benefit or harm, will not retaliate, even though they can*.

If some of the king's men come out and harm many people, there will be some who, through their farsightedness are able to properly assess a situation to see potential benefit or harm, and thus see the long-term benefits of not retaliating, even though they could do so if they wished. They don't retaliate *because the entourage of the king, or soldiers, are backed up by the power of the king*. Retaliation would involve dire repercussions!

2.2.2.1.2. Meaning

Then the meaning of that example is presented.

129cd. *Likewise, one should not dismiss
An insignificant harmer.*

130ab. *The wardens of hell
And those endowed with compassion are their
support.*

The commentary on these lines reads:

Likewise, as in the example, one should not dismiss any weak harmer, because they have as their support the ripening fruit of the hell guardians, and the displeasure of the compassionate conquerors and their children.

In comparison to the might and power of the king, a few of his men would be relatively weak. This refers to the fact that when the person who harms oneself is quite weak in nature, one should not think of retaliation just because they are easy to overpower. That is because it is as if they are supported by the hell guardians, and also because one would displease the compassionate conquerors and their children.

One might well be able to retaliate and easily overcome and vanquish a weak individual who harms oneself. However by contemplating and thinking about the negative karma one creates by retaliating in that way, one will realise that one would have to experience the ripening results of the hell realm and so forth.

The point is, as explained and emphasised in other teachings, that practising patience with someone who is much weaker is, in fact, a supreme practice of patience, and much more effective than practising patience with someone who is much more powerful and mightier than oneself. One is much less likely to engage in retaliation with someone who is mighty and more powerful, so practising patience then is easier. Whereas practising patience with someone who is much weaker is much harder, because it would be so easy to retaliate. But if one were to contemplate the repercussions, and the heavy negative karma that one would create, one will refrain from returning that harm.

2.2.2.2. EXPLAINING IT TO BE SUPERIOR TO THE EXAMPLE

130cd *Thus, like people and the wrath of the king,
One should please sentient beings.*

131. *Even if one gets angry at someone like a king,
Do they give the harm of the lower realms
That one will experience due to
Making sentient beings unhappy?*

The commentary of these verses reads:

Because of this one should please sentient beings like the people fearing the wrath of the king. Even if one gets angry at someone like a king, do they give the harm of the lower realms, which one will experience as a result of making sentient beings unhappy? They cannot.

People fear a wrathful king because of the severe punishments that he can impose, such as imprisonment for long periods of time, or confiscation of land and wealth, and even execution. These are the repercussions of displeasing a wrathful king. Likewise one should please and not harm sentient beings out of fear of the consequence of going to the lower realms.

Can someone as powerful as a wrathful king *give the harm of the lower realms, which one will experience as a result of making sentient beings unhappy?* This rhetorical question implies that they cannot. What is being explained is that no matter how mighty and wrathful the king may be, the most he can do is confiscate your land, or your house, or your belongings. Even if you were condemned to death the most the king has done is to take your life. But he cannot take you to the lower realms. However, when one harms sentient beings, the negativity that one accumulates from that act is definitely a cause to be reborn in the lower realms.

132. *Even if one pleases someone like a king
That which one will attain
By pleasing sentient beings,
The very enlightenment, they cannot offer.*

The meaning of this verse is presented in contrast to the earlier point, which is that while the repercussions of getting angry at a king are quite severe, you do not receive all that much in return when you please the king.

Whereas the results of pleasing sentient beings are immense. The commentary explains:

Even if one pleases someone like a king, they cannot offer that which one will attain by pleasing sentient beings, the very result of enlightenment itself.

If one were to do something that pleased a king, the most the king can give back in return is some sort of recognition, such as the medals that generals and some soldiers wear. That is the most a king can give: some sort of status or gift, but nothing more significant than that.

The king *can* definitely *not* offer that which one will attain by pleasing sentient beings, which is, as mentioned here, the result of enlightenment itself. So the most one can receive from pleasing a king is some sort of recognition, or gift. However, by pleasing sentient beings, one can obtain the ultimate result of enlightenment. Thus what one achieves from pleasing sentient beings far exceeds anything that one could gain from a king.

This also reflects on how the meaning of the example is far greater than the example itself; that what one attains is much greater than what one would obtain from a king.

2.2.3. A summary of the list of benefits

Here there are three sub-divisions:

2.2.3.1. The main result

2.2.3.2. The seen result

2.2.3.3. The ripened result

2.2.3.1. THE MAIN RESULT

The relevant lines from the text are:

*133ab. Leaving aside the future buddha
That is attained as a result of pleasing sentient
beings.*

The commentary explains the meaning as follows:

Leaving aside it being appropriate to please sentient beings and being patient with them by contemplating the benefit of obtaining buddhahood in the future a result of pleasing sentient beings, it is also appropriate to meditate on patience in relation to results ripening in this and future lives as well.

As clearly explained here, the results of pleasing sentient beings are found not only in the ultimate result of becoming a buddha oneself, but also in this and future lives as well.

Then the commentary presents a further clarification.

Although the meaning is clear, an earlier proponent says:

Since it is difficult to cognise a buddha, *for the moment* leave it aside.

Answer: It is not tenable to interpret the meaning in this way because although the phenomena of this life are easy to cognise, the extremely hidden future results are harder to cognise than a buddha. That a buddha can be cognised by depending on reason, without depending on quotations, but the very hidden meaning can only be cognised subsequently to this, accords with the view of all great pioneers.

What is being explained is the interpretation of the words *leaving aside* from the first line of the verse. An opponent says that the meaning of *leaving aside* reflects that it is very difficult to cognise a buddha. The commentary refutes this interpretation by stating that *although the phenomena of this life are easy to cognise, the extremely hidden*

future results are harder to cognise than a buddha. That is because, a buddha can be cognised by depending on reason, without depending on quotations, but the very hidden meaning can only be cognised subsequently to this. This means that understanding very hidden phenomena, like the subtleties of karma, are dependent on valid quotations which are pure of the three-fold analysis.² Thus cognising a buddha is easier than understanding subtleties of karmic results.

The ripening results of specific karmas created in a previous life can only be understood by relying on quotations that are pure of the three-fold analysis. They thus fall into the category of extremely hidden or subtle phenomena, in contrast to the qualities of the Buddha, which can be understood through logical reasoning.

In particular, the subtleties of karma, such as a particular time, the place a karma was created and so forth are said to be only seen directly by a Buddha's mind, and thus can't be seen by ordinary sentient beings.

2.2.3.2. THE SEEN RESULT

The seen or obvious results are explained in these two lines:

*133cd. In this very life one will attain great glory,
Fame and happiness. Why does one not see
this?*

Here, Gyaltsab Je explains:

Also in this life there are seen results that arise from patience, such as glory of increased excellences, being well regarded and happiness. Why does one not see this? Therefore, one should strive in making sentient beings happy.

As explained clearly, even in this life there are seen or obvious results that arise from patience, such as glory of increased excellences. As one's excellences increase and one is well regarded by others, one has a happier mind. Why can't one see these obvious positive results? This question implies that it is obvious, and that one should be able to see them. Therefore the conclusion is that *one should strive in making sentient beings happy.*

2.2.3.3. THE RIPENED RESULT

The next verse is:

*134. While circling, one will attain from patience
Beauty and so forth, absence of sickness, and
fame,
Due to which one will live very long,
And one will attain the extensive happiness of a
wheel-turning king.*

Here the commentary reads:

Also, while circling in cyclic existence one attains a beautiful form, the samsaric excellences, good health and great reputation. Through that one will have a long life. One will also have the extensive and vast happiness of a wheel-turning king.

² The three criteria for validating a phenomena are:

1. Obvious things are not contradicted by valid bare perception.
2. Slightly obscure things are not contradicted by valid inference based on the force of evidence.
3. Extremely obscure things are not contradicted by valid inference based on scriptural authority.

See the teaching of 15 November 2011 for more details.

The ultimate result of practising patience is that it becomes the cause of enlightenment. It can take a long time to achieve the state of enlightenment, but while one is circling in cyclic existence the ripened results of practising patience include, as explained here, obtaining a *beautiful form* and so forth. This is something that we can all relate to, because everyone longs to have a good, sound body and good features, as these contribute to one's good conditions. Then there are *the samsaric excellences* such as wealth, and having *good health* and a good *reputation*, which are also favourable conditions for our wellbeing. Added to those conditions, we *will* also *have a long life*.

One will have the extensive and vast happiness of a wheel turning king indicates that while in cyclic existence one can even reach the highest status of a wheel turning king.

The author of the commentary Gyalsab Rinpoche, concludes with:

In short, having recognised opposing factors such as having intense anger, intimidation from virtuous dharmas, a lack of aspiration for virtuous dharmas and so forth, one then relies on their antidotes, which are the patience that does not think anything from harm, the mind that is not harmed by suffering and abides in its natural state, and the patience strongly abiding on the wish for the Dharma due to discriminating awareness.

Thus by meditating on patience one strives to use the basis of having the freedoms and endowments.

SUMMARISING VERSE

Next, Gyalsab Rinpoche presents the summarising verse, which reads:

*Although one meditates on the virtue of
generosity and the like for eons,
They are destroyed by the fire tongue of anger.
Therefore one needs to generate the force of
patience again and again
And not give anger any chance.*

Here, Gyalsab Rinpoche very succinctly presents the need to practise patience, not just once or twice, but again and again. Only by applying the practice again and again will it become the means to actually overcome anger, and not give anger any chance to arise. Otherwise the practice of virtue and so forth will be destroyed by anger. Therefore one needs to protect oneself from that.

2. THE NAME OF THE CHAPTER

This is the sixth chapter called 'Explaining Patience' from the Introduction to the Actions of the Bodhisattvas.

The commentary concludes:

This is the commentary on the sixth chapter called 'Explaining Patience' from the commentary on the *Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas*, called *The Entrance for the Children of the Conquerors*.

As mentioned last week, we will continue our sessions until His Holiness' teachings. There are three more weeks until the end of this month, so there will be one teaching followed by the discussion week, and the exam. An important thing to remember is to come to the recitation of Shantideva's text on May 24.

If you forget me it is no big deal, but forgetting Shantideva and the buddhas means forgetting the profound advice they have presented. The chapter on patience that we have just completed is such profound advice and instruction that we need to keep it in mind, and not forget it.

Indeed when we relate to the Buddha's teachings, we can see for ourselves that of all the various teachers that have come into the world, this is a unique presentation. It presents the teachings in a very unbiased way in order to benefit all beings equally. The profound instructions on how to do that, and how to practise, are very clearly explained in the Buddha's teachings. All the explanations are there, and all the ways and methods are presented clearly, so it is up to us as to whether we put it into practice or not.

Others, who are not Buddhists, have commented that the Buddha's teachings are not exclusive; rather, they are teachings that can be related to and applied by all.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱུང་རྒྱུ་མེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྒྱལ་མོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

12 May 2015

While maintaining the motivation we generated during the prayers, we can engage in our meditation practice. [meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings as usual:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the Mahayana teachings, and put them into practice well.

As mentioned previously the way the chapters unfold can be related to this verse:

May the precious bodhi mind
Not yet born arise and grow.
May that born have no decline,
But increase forever more.

The ten chapters of the text can be divided along the meaning of this verse in the following manner: Chapters 1-3 are to generate the bodhicitta which is not yet born or developed. Chapters 4-6 explain how to maintain the bodhicitta so it doesn't degenerate, and chapters 7-9 explain how to increase the bodhicitta which has already been developed. The tenth chapter is dedication.

To explain how the next three chapters (7-9) serve to further increase bodhicitta, the seventh chapter commences with enthusiasm or joyous effort, which is the means one actually applies to develop bodhicitta.

Bodhicitta has two main divisions: conventional bodhicitta and ultimate bodhicitta. The way to generate conventional bodhicitta is explained in chapter eight, and then chapter nine specifically explains how to generate ultimate bodhicitta. That is the chapter on wisdom.

Once both conventional and ultimate bodhicitta have been developed, the way to secure the merit from these is presented in the tenth chapter on dedication.

CHAPTER 7 THE WAY OF TRAINING AND ENTHUSIASM

There are two parts to the chapter

- I. Explaining the text of the chapter
- II. The name of the chapter

I. EXPLAINING THE TEXT OF THE CHAPTER

This is subdivided into two:

1. Exhortation in the need to strive in enthusiasm
2. The way of striving in enthusiasm

1. EXHORTATION IN THE NEED TO STRIVE IN ENTHUSIASM

This is further divided into two:

- 1.1. Actual
- 1.2. Identifying enthusiasm

1.1. Actual

The first verse reads:

1. *Being thus patient commence with enthusiasm. Enlightenment abides in those striving in this way. Just as there is no movement without wind, Merit will not arise without enthusiasm.*

The commentary explains the meaning:

If one wishes to attain enlightenment quickly by being patient with austerities and harm by others, as explained before, then one needs to commence the practice of enthusiasm. Enlightenment abides in those striving in this way in the actions of the perfections. Just as without wind there is no movement of the flame of the candle and so forth, the accumulations of merit and transcendental wisdom will not arise without enthusiasm. Since the highest enlightenment depends on enthusiasm one should make an effort.

The line *If one wishes to attain enlightenment quickly by being patient with austerities and harm by others*, identifies the three specific types of patience explained extensively in the sixth chapter. Firstly, how to be patient with hardships when engaging in austere practices; secondly how to be patient when others harm one, and not retaliate; and thirdly, the patience of definitely thinking of the Dharma. Having explained the three types of patience, those who wish to achieve enlightenment quickly need an aid to practise patience, and this is the practice of enthusiasm.

This chapter presents how enthusiasm is practised, and why one needs to implement it in one's practice.

The commentary continues that *enlightenment abides in those striving in this way in the actions of the perfections*. This means that for someone who seeks enlightenment, it is brought forward only for those striving in the actions of the perfections.

The analogy presented next says that *just as without wind the flame of the candle does not move*, which highlights that it is wind that makes a candle flame waver. Without wind the flame would remain still without any movement at all. The meaning of the analogy is brought out as the sentence continues with *the accumulations of merit and transcendental wisdom will not arise without enthusiasm*. Enthusiasm is like the wind. Without it one cannot possibly accumulate the necessary amount of merit and transcendental wisdom, which are the actual causes for enlightenment.

The commentary concludes the paragraph saying that *since the highest enlightenment depends on enthusiasm one should make an effort*. The resultant state of enlightenment is obtained only through the accumulation of merit and wisdom, and without applying enthusiasm there is no way one will be able to accumulate the level of merit and wisdom needed. This is the reason to apply enthusiasm.

The commentary then quotes from the *Introduction to the Middle Way* to support this view:

All qualities follow enthusiasm, the cause of
Both accumulations of merit and wisdom.

The quotation states that all qualities are obtained only through enthusiasm, which is also the cause for the accumulations of both merit and wisdom.

1.2. Identifying enthusiasm

Having explained the need for enthusiasm, the first line of the next verse identifies it:

2a What is enthusiasm? It is joy in virtue.

The commentary starts with the following:

Joy for the afflictions is laziness, thus if asked what is enthusiasm? It is the joy for virtuous objects.

It first presents the opposite, which is that *joy for afflictions is laziness*. Having defined what laziness is, it asks 'what is enthusiasm?' which, as presented, is the opposite—the *joy for virtuous objects*.

Enthusiasm is explained here in terms of its object and aspect. Its object is virtuous objects, and its aspect is joy. Hence the combination of joy focussing on virtuous objects is defined as enthusiasm or joyous effort. As joy for the afflictions is laziness, this would of course be non-virtuous. Focus on neutral objects would be a neutral state of mind, and not joyous effort.

Relating this to ourselves we would probably find we are inclined mostly toward having joy in the afflictions followed by having joy in neutral states. Of these, we might notice that joy in virtue is the weakest.

So the definition of enthusiasm also meticulously excludes what it is not. It is definitely not joy for the afflictions, and not joy for neutral objects. Thus, enthusiasm is defined purely as joy for virtuous objects.

When reflecting upon ourselves, we need to understand that if one has an inclination to readily feel joy in the afflictions, one must recognise this as a form of laziness, and non-virtuous. If we are serious about practice then we need to clearly identify the distinction between laziness and joyous effort.

The more one associates with the objects of the afflictions the more likely one is to engage in them further. This is how we create more and more negativity and get further away from developing ourselves on the Dharma path.

What one needs to strive for is developing joy in virtue. The more one applies oneself in virtue, the more one sees reason to apply oneself and actually adopt virtue. We slowly increase our virtues as we increase our engagement in virtuous objects, and apply our mind to abide in virtue. Acquainting our minds in this way enriches our Dharma practice by leaving very strong positive imprints, and virtue will gradually increase more and more.

The commentary categorises the types of enthusiasm:

It has the divisions of:

- Armour-like enthusiasm
- Enthusiasm of application
- Enthusiasm of non-disheartenment and non-disturbance
- Enthusiasm of non-satisfaction

Different texts have slightly different presentations of the divisions of enthusiasm. The extensive Lam Rim presents three divisions as: armour-like enthusiasm, the enthusiasm of gathering virtuous Dharma and the enthusiasm of acting for the welfare of living beings. The *Abhidharma* presents a division of five, however they all come to the same point.

Armour-like enthusiasm is described as an enthusiasm which is needed as a prerequisite to engaging in virtue. Having already contemplated the advantages and great benefits of applying virtue, this type of enthusiasm is required to make a strong commitment in one's mind not to give up on virtue no matter how long it takes, and no matter what difficulties may befall oneself. In the *Guru Puja* it says 'even if I were to remain in the fiery hells of Avici for eons, may I never give up applying bodhicitta'. So keeping the value of virtue in one's mind, and making a strong commitment not to give it up at any cost, is applying armour-like enthusiasm. Just as armour is used to protect a physical body, here the word is used as an analogy to protect the mind in being strong and firm when applying virtue.

To understand the analogy further, in the past, before going into combat, a prerequisite would be for the soldiers to put on armour to protect themselves. That is done before actually setting out to the battle in order to protect themselves from weapons (arrows, swords) in the battle. These days, we still have the equivalent of applying protective measures before engaging in combat. The analogy illustrates that prior to engaging in practices, one needs to develop a firm determination and joy in one's mind to engage in those practices and virtues. This then becomes armour-like protection for one's mind.

Enthusiasm of application refers to the time of actually engaging in the practice, and then maintaining that sense of joy in one's mind.

Next is *the enthusiasm of non-disheartenment and non-disturbance*. This particularly relates to maintaining a sense of joy while overcoming the sense of inadequacy which may think 'I'm not able to do this' or 'I'm not able to do that practice'. As a way for the mind to remain firm and protect itself from the disheartenment of feeling inadequate, a sense of joy is developed to create the enthusiasm of *non-disheartenment and non-disturbance*.

The *enthusiasm of non-satisfaction* may seem ambiguous but it refers to the enthusiasm of not being satisfied with only acquiring a few virtues. This is an important aspect of one's practice in order to further develop oneself. If one feels satisfied with just accumulating a few virtues or practices, that would obstruct one from gaining an understanding of the entire path. Developing satisfaction with just part of the path then becomes a form of laziness, which will obstruct further understanding of the entire path, particularly the higher levels of path. Therefore, enthusiasm means developing a joy that is not satisfied by merely acquiring moderate virtues, or understandings of the path, but rather to have joy in acquiring higher levels of virtues, and developing oneself toward gaining an understanding of the entire path. This will then leave very strong imprints on one's mind.

2. THE WAY OF STRIVING IN ENTHUSIASM

By following the sequence of the outline you can see that the first heading explains the need to develop enthusiasm, the next identifies it, and this part explains the way to actually practise enthusiasm.

It is subdivided into two:

2.1. Abandoning the conditions that obstruct enthusiasm

2.2. Increasing the antidote, the power of enthusiasm

2.1. Abandoning the conditions that obstruct enthusiasm

This explains that without having an understanding of what obstructs enthusiasm, and abandoning it, one cannot possibly develop enthusiasm.

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.1. Identifying the obstructing conditions

2.1.2. The way of abandoning them

2.1.1. Identifying the obstructing conditions

It is good to take notice of how the commentary presents the material sequentially and logically, which is also a means to remove doubts that may arise about why enthusiasm is explained following patience. Having identified enthusiasm, one needs to abandon what obstructs it, and then actually develop enthusiasm. The commentary presents this in a sequential manner.

The next three lines of the verse read:

*2bcd. I shall explain its antithesis:
Laziness, grasping at the negative,
And discouragement putting oneself down.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

I shall explain the antithesis of enthusiasm. There is:

- The laziness that grasps at the pleasure of lazing around, where body and mind are non-pliant.
- The laziness that grasps at the negative activities.
- The laziness that puts oneself down, thinking 'I cannot do this', after having become discouraged from practising virtue.

I shall explain the antithesis of enthusiasm shows that the antithesis or opposite of enthusiasm is laziness, which is presented as three types.

The first is *the laziness that grasps at the pleasure of lazing around, where body and mind are non-pliant*. This refers to the feeling of ease we feel when we're not engaging in practice, when we feel like just laying back and being relaxed and comfortable. At this time when our mind is not engaged in practice we think it is relaxing, but just laying around and grasping at pleasure is the first form of laziness.

The next is *the laziness that grasps at the negative activities*. This is the laziness that actually consumes most of our time. Examples are activities where we try to protect what is favourable to oneself, try to overcome what is not favourable. This is why we try to acquire as many favourable conditions as possible for oneself (such as friends etc.), and try to overcome those opposing us, such as enemies and anything which obstructs our pleasures.

According to the worldly view, if you are really busy, completely involved in working just for the sake of wealth, then this would not be considered laziness. It would likely be considered as working very hard. But according to the Dharma it would be a form of laziness because one is engaged in activities that not inclined toward virtue.

The third type of laziness is putting *oneself down, thinking 'I cannot do this' after having become discouraged*, where one

feels despondent purely because one feels something is difficult. Having this sort of thought is the laziness of feeling despondent, which is putting oneself down.

2.1.2. The way of abandoning them

Next is the way of abandoning the three forms of laziness which is sub-divided into three:

2.1.2.1. Abandoning the laziness that has a taste for lazing around

2.1.2.2. Abandoning the laziness that grasps at negative actions

2.1.2.3. Abandoning the laziness of discouragement

Having already studied the mind and mental factors, it is good to note that laziness is one of the twenty-one secondary mental afflictions.

2.1.2.1. ABANDONING THE LAZINESS THAT HAS A TASTE FOR LAZING AROUND

This is divided into two:

2.1.2.1.1. Abandoning laziness upon investigating its cause

2.1.2.1.2. The way of abandoning

In presenting how to abandon the laziness that has a taste for lazing around, the outline starts with *abandoning laziness upon investigating its cause*. This means that in order to overcome laziness one must first identify its cause. Then, like any other cause and effect sequence, overcoming the cause allows you to stop the consequence or effect. Having identified the cause of laziness, it becomes more likely that one will be able to overcome it.

2.1.2.1.1. Abandoning laziness upon investigating its cause

The verse is preceded by the statement:

If asked what the causes for laziness are:

The text then presents the verse:

3. *Experiencing the taste of lazing around
And through craving based on sleep
One does not tire of the sufferings of cyclic
existence
And generates an affinity for laziness.*

Gyaltsab's commentary expands upon the meaning:

If one views lazing around without engaging in virtue to be happiness, one develops a taste for this pleasure and grasps at it. This, and the craving based on sleep generates laziness, which causes one to be not the least afraid of cyclic existence and to not become disheartened with its sufferings. Through this in turn one develops an affinity for laziness.

Therefore strive in abandoning laziness upon having identified its causes!

The commentary says *if one views lazing around without engaging in virtue to be happiness, one develops a taste for this pleasure and grasps at it*. Viewing just lazing around e.g. kicking back on a comfortable couch, as pleasure, one gets a taste of this as pleasure and becomes attached to it. This then becomes a cause for actual laziness, because of the grasping at that pleasure of lazing around.

The next line in the verse says *and the craving based on sleep generates laziness* which is one of the main forms of laziness. If one has a very comfortable bed and looks forward to that bed thinking, 'hmm, I have a comfortable

bed and I'm really looking forward to sleeping in it', then that becomes a cause for one to engage in excessive sleeping. If one indulges in this thought over and over, then that form of indulgence—the pleasure and attachment to the comfortable bed, and not having to do anything, but just go to sleep—becomes another cause for being lazy.

The commentary states this *causes one to be not the least afraid of cyclic existence, and to not become disheartened with its sufferings*. Not being afraid of cyclic existence because of one's attachment to it, not being afraid to enjoy its pleasures, not tiring of the suffering, and not even doubting oneself about the sufferings, are amongst the worst causes of laziness. This presentation states that everything that binds us to cyclic existence is considered a form of laziness. Therefore afflictions such as anger, attachment etc. can also be forms of laziness because they bind us to cyclic existence.

The commentary explains *through this in turn*, i.e. through the cause of the three types of laziness *one develops an affinity for laziness*. The commentary then concludes that one should *strive in abandoning laziness upon having identified its causes!*

2.1.2.1.2. The way of abandoning

This is divided into two:

2.1.2.1.2.1. Abandoning laziness by contemplating the disadvantages of this life

2.1.2.1.2.2. Abandoning laziness by contemplating the sufferings of the next life

2.1.2.1.2.1. Abandoning laziness by contemplating the disadvantages of this life

This is divided into three:

2.1.2.1.2.1.1. Explaining with example how death quickly destroys one

2.1.2.1.2.1.2. Since one is under the control of death, acting leisurely is unsuitable

2.1.2.1.2.1.3. If one does not strive in virtue, one shall be overwhelmed by suffering

2.1.2.1.2.1.1. Explaining with example how death quickly destroys one

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.2.1.2.1.1.1. One sees directly how one is destroyed by death

2.1.2.1.2.1.1.2. Explaining this with an example

The following verses explain the ways of abandoning laziness. One of the most supreme ways of abandoning laziness is to recollect death and impermanence. As explained in the teachings, when we don't recollect the fragility of our lives, death and impermanence, this causes us not to even think about practising the Dharma. Even if we did, if one does not recall death and impermanence periodically and strongly in one's mind, one will not actually practise it well.

These faults of either not thinking about practicing Dharma at all, or thinking about it but not actually practising it, or not practising it well, all come as a result of the fault of not recollecting death and impermanence periodically.

2.1.2.1.2.1.1.1. One sees directly how one is destroyed by death

The way to abandon laziness is presented as recollecting death and impermanence. The heading says *one sees directly how one is destroyed by death*, which implies that there is no way one could laze around and not engage in virtue and practise Dharma if one recognised how death quickly destroys one. Therefore it is presented under this heading.

The verse which relates to this reads:

4. *Having fallen into the trap of the afflictions
One is snared by the trap of birth
And finds oneself in the mouth of the lord of death.
How can you still not know this?*

The commentary explains:

Similar to animals that cannot escape death because they are ensnared in a trap, one has fallen into the trap laid by the hunter that is the affliction of laziness and so forth. Being thus controlled one is snared by the trap of birth that connects one with the next life, and hence one finds oneself in the mouth of the lord of death. As many beings have already gone and still many will go, how can you still not know this? Strive in virtue!

The illustration used here is a trap *laid* down by hunters to capture and kill an animal, so *similar to animals that cannot escape death because they are ensnared in a trap, one has fallen into the trap laid by the hunter that is the affliction of laziness*.

With this analogy of a hunter setting down a trap for an animal, once the animal is caught in the trap it cannot be spared from death. Death is imminent once the animal has fallen into the trap. Applying the analogy, oneself is like the animal being held in a trap, and the hunter is like the afflictions of laziness, attachment, jealousy etc. As such, one is caught in the trap and cannot escape the consequence of death.

As further explained *being thus controlled one is snared by the trap of birth that connects one with the next life, and hence one finds oneself in the mouth of the lord of death*. Being controlled by the afflictions is what connects this life to the next one, and so one is not spared from the mouth of the lord of death. This refers to the actual death itself. So that which connects one from this life to the next is having to experience death.

Using the analogy of the animal trapped in a cage, the hunter will not spare the animal. Likewise with the afflictions in one's mind, one will not be spared as these are the connecting factors between this life and the next life. Furthermore, *as many beings have already gone and still many will go* into the mouth of the lord of death, *how can you still not know this?* This implies that when we look back we can recall so many who have already died and many about to face death. So with this so obvious to oneself, how can one then sit idly and not engage in virtue. The clear message is that one needs to strive in virtue.

If we apply this explanation in relation to the presentation of the Lam Rim, it says that death is certain, and it is just the time of death that is uncertain. Also at

the time of death, nothing but the Dharma will help, specifically having engaged in virtue or the Dharma practice.

What is being presented here as a personal instruction is that in the past you have seen many die already, and you may see some actually facing death. And having seen this, isn't it an obvious conclusion that one has to experience this fate as well? Therefore don't engage only in frivolous worldly activities which will not benefit you at the time of death. Rather, take time to apply yourself in virtue which will be your sole saviour and protector at the time of death.

An example of what has just been presented follows:

2.1.2.1.2.1.1.2. Explaining this with example

The verse reads:

5. *He is killing our kind gradually,
Do you not see it?
Those relying on sleep
Are like the butcher and the buffalo.*

The commentary explains this:

Do you not see directly that the lord of death is killing the old, young and middle-aged of your kind? Even while you see it, yet you develop craving based on sleep. This is unsuitable, for example, like the buffalo that is seeing directly that the butcher is killing sequentially the other buffalos, and yet he is unworried and abides leisurely.

The commentary elaborates with *do you not see directly the lord of death is killing the old, young and middle-aged of your kind?* 'Your kind' relates to one's peers, those you associate with, e.g. in a monastery it would be the other monks; in a lay community others within the community; within a family your family members etc. Amongst those you associate with regularly, there will be the old, the young and the middle-aged; all will have to experience death.

A rhetorical question is asked, *Do you not see it?* This implies that even when you do see it *you still develop* the various types of cravings based on sleep. That is what you do, and *this is unsuitable*.

The example presented earlier in the verse says, *for example, it is like the buffalo that is seeing directly that the butcher is killing sequentially the other buffalos, and yet he is unworried and abides leisurely*. In the east, when animals are butchered, the other animals are nearby. So a buffalo may well see the other buffalos being butchered, but it seems to be undaunted by that and continues to eat grass and drink water, until it is time for their turn to come.

This example illustrates that if one sees others of one's kind being taken by the lord of death—regardless of being old, young or middle aged—and one just sits around idly, and does not develop any initiative to engage in Dharma and accumulate virtues, then this is like a buffalo who is about to be slaughtered, but is lazing around as if it was unaware of what was happening.

On a personal level what we need to understand from this explanation is that we will all know someone who has passed away, and we might even have seen occasions where people have passed away. So when one sees or hears about death, this needs to become an impetus to remind us that one also has the same fate. There is no

exception, one will also have to face that consequence of having to experience death. So, before that time comes, now is the time to prepare by accumulating virtues and engaging in Dharma practices.

If seeing others who face death does not stir up any kind of feeling in you, and remind you of your own fragility of life and impending death, then it would have not served much purpose. Seeing others face the fate of experiencing death should become impetus to remind one of one's own impending death, and serve as a way to encourage oneself to practise Dharma. This is precisely presented under the next heading.

2.1.2.1.2.1.2. Since one is under the control of death, acting leisurely is unsuitable

This relates to the point mentioned earlier that when one sees how those older than oneself have died, but think that death only relates to those who are older than oneself, then one may still feel quite relaxed and think one still has more time.

The fact is that even those of the same age or younger than oneself have also perished. This is an indication that there's no certainty about when death will approach. The examples we see need to become the impetus for one to reflect on the uncertainty of one's own death, and the fragility of one's own life.

This heading is subdivided into four:

2.1.2.1.2.1.2.1. One should not be lazy as one is under the control of the lord of death (which is the same point)

2.1.2.1.2.1.2.2. Strive in virtue since you will die soon

2.1.2.1.2.1.2.3. The time of death is the wrong time to abandon laziness.

What is implied here is that the time to abandon laziness is now, not at the time of death. The actual time death occurs is the wrong time because it won't have served the purpose of abandoning laziness at the right time. Rather one should abandon laziness now.

2.1.2.1.2.1.2.4. One should not be lazy since one can die suddenly, without finishing one's work

We have now just gone over the subheadings under *since one is under the control of death, acting leisurely is unsuitable*, so we can continue with the explanations in our next teaching session.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་མེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

16 June 2015

Based on the motivation we have just generated during the recitation of our prayers, we can now engage in our meditation practice. *[meditation]*

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

2.1.2.1.2.1. Abandoning laziness by contemplating the disadvantages of this life

2.1.2.1.2.1.2. *Since one is under the control of death, acting leisurely is unsuitable (cont.)*

2.1.2.1.2.1.2.1. **One should not be lazy as one is under the control of the lord of death**

The verse relating to this heading reads:

6. *Having closed off all roads,
The lord of death has cast his eye on us.
How can you enjoy food?
How can you enjoy sleep?*

Gyalsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

The butcher that is the lord of death has closed off all roads leading to the deathless city and has already cast his eye on us. How can you be like a careless buffalo and enjoy eating food or crave for sleep. This carelessness is unsuitable.

Here, *deathless city* refers to the state of liberation. The presentation here is that the road to liberation is blocked by the lord of death. Just as the butcher's task is to slaughter animals, the task of the lord of death is to take one's life. Our life can be taken by the lord of death at any time. Gyalsab Je uses the analogy of a buffalo who continues to enjoy eating grass and drinking water, despite the fact that other buffalos are being slaughtered around it. Even though such careless buffalos are on the verge of being slaughtered themselves, they behave as if there is no immediate danger to their life.

The Tibetan word, *bak-mepa*, translated here as *careless*, carries the meaning of lacking conscientiousness. The buffalo lacks conscientiousness about the fact that it is about to be killed, and we will be like that buffalo if we also lack conscientiousness and fall into a state of enjoying food during the day and craving sleep at night. As we are in the constant grip of the lord of death, death is imminent, yet we act like the buffalo who continues to enjoy food and drink, even as it is about to be slaughtered.

Taking this as a personal instruction, we need to reflect upon the fact that we are very fortunate in that we have obtained a human life with the eight freedoms and ten endowments. Furthermore, we have come in contact with the Dharma. So it would be a great pity if we were to

focus only on the worldly affairs of this life, such as eating, drinking and sleeping, and not utilise this life to engage in some form of virtue to secure our wellbeing in our future life. Engaging in virtue and practising the Dharma becomes meaningful when the focus is at the very least for the betterment of our future life. This is really the point to consider here. The imminence of death exhorts one to engage in some practice of virtue. So, as the commentary explains, *this carelessness is unsuitable*.

To really take this instruction on board, we need to reflect upon how our remaining lifespan is constantly decreasing, and how the end of this life is definitely approaching. Now if our life were to completely cease to exist at the time of death, and if we didn't have to take rebirth again, then one might say that it is acceptable to devote ourselves entirely to worldly affairs, and enjoy ourselves as much as we like in this life, which, of course, involves accumulating non-virtues. If this approach were to actually bring some genuine sense of happiness, then we might again consider that approach as being worthwhile. But from our own experience we have found that when we are completely engaged in worldly affairs, our life isn't all that happy anyway. The main point here is that if we reflect on the fact that there is some continuity of life after death, and that we have to prepare for that future life, then we will understand why it is worthwhile to engage in virtue.

When we take a farsighted approach, and engage in activities that benefit our future life, then the natural by-product is benefit in this life as well. Whereas if one focuses only on the worldly affairs of this life, there will be no benefit in our future life, and only minimal benefit in this life. This is the significant point that we need to reflect upon.

There is a continuity of life that has no beginning, and at the end of this life we will not cease to exist. In fact this was the point of young Tenzin's question to His Holiness Dalai Lama in the recent teaching in Brisbane: if sentient beings need to rely upon the Buddhas to become enlightened then how did the first Buddha become enlightened? His Holiness definitely paid great attention to that question, and looked directly down at Tenzin as he answered it at length. I also have to say that many people have this same question.

His Holiness explained how there is a continuity of our mindstream, and that there is no beginning to samsaric existence, and that there are two interpretations about the end of samsaric existence. On a general level there cannot be an end to the cyclic existence of all sentient beings at once. In fact it is almost an irrelevant question, because some say 'yes', and others say 'no'. We could never be certain when that end has actually occurred.

However there will be an end to one's personal samsaric existence. Gyalsab Rinpoche elucidated the fact that because one can overcome all one's defilements, there is definitely an end to cyclic existence for an individual being. From the moment they gain the direct realisation of emptiness, cyclic existence ceases for that person, and they will not be involuntarily reborn into cyclic existence again. So there is definitely an end to an individual's cyclic existence.

The assertion that there is no beginning to cyclic existence relates to not being able to find a beginning to one's consciousness. When you trace back your consciousness you cannot find a particular point in time where you can say, 'This is when the consciousness first started'. So because there is no beginning to an individual's consciousness, it is asserted that there is no beginning to cyclic existence. Here of course the term *consciousness* particularly relates to the subtle awareness of an individual's mind.

Tenzin is to be congratulated for his very good question—he is a young person with a sharp mind! He also helped to clarify an earlier question asked by another person, to which His Holiness also gave a lengthy answer.

To summarise the point: an individual's cyclic existence ends at the moment the ignorance of grasping at a self is overcome by the realisation of emptiness. When the very cause of individual cyclic existence is severed, then the consequences of having to be reborn again in cyclic existence naturally ceases as well. When the cause of cyclic existence, the ignorance of grasping at an inherently existent self, is overcome, then the result, which is cyclic existence, ceases. This is the law of cause and effect—when there is no cause there cannot be an effect.

2.1.2.1.2.1.2.2. *Strive in virtue since you will die soon*

Again, the outline by itself explains the meaning of the following verse. Gyaltsab Je uses the outline as an exhortation to engage in the practice of Dharma: because one will die soon, one must strive in virtue.

The lines of verse are preceded by this hypothetical statement:

Argument: I still have some time

Then two lines of verse are presented as an answer to that statement:

*7ab. Since one is certainly going to die soon
One should build up the two accumulations
until then*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on these lines explains:

Answer: One is certainly going to die soon and hence one should build up the two accumulations as long as one is not captured by the lord of death

The meaning of the verse is quite clear. *One is certainly going to die soon, and hence one should build up two accumulations for as long as one is not captured by the lord of death.* We can relate this point to the Lam Rim teachings on the certainty of death, which explain that our lifespan is constantly decreasing, and that it is never extended. The reality of our life is that with each moment that passes, our lifespan is decreasing. It is not as if it decreases, and then stops for a while. Our lifespan is constantly decreasing, and there is no way to add more time on to it. So we need to seize the opportunity to engage in virtue right now.

One should build up the two accumulations refers to accumulating virtues and abandoning negativities or non-virtues. Death is inevitable, and we can't do anything about the fact that we will have to face it. However, what we do have in our hands is the capacity to ensure that we

will, at the very least, not experience any fear at the time of death, and that, by accumulating virtue, we can even take a better rebirth than our present one. That will then enable us to continuously engage in the practice of Dharma. That is something we can do now. We can't prevent death, but by accumulating the merit for a good rebirth next life we can definitely prevent fear at the time of death, as well as prevent an unfortunate rebirth.

We've all seen people who are completely obsessed with happiness in this life, and who end up being quite miserable. Things never seem to go well for them. They seem to be constantly facing difficulties and problems, because they are constantly trying to make things comfortable for this life. When things don't work out in that way, they experience despair and agony, and end up being quite miserable. Whereas those who focus on their future life engage in activities that will help them in the next life, while being more relaxed and contented, and thus happier in this life too. So you can see that there is a different outcome from these two different attitudes, one of which focuses only on this life, and the other which focuses on the future life.

What we can take as a personal instruction here is that it is really worthwhile to pay heed to preparing for our future life, by engaging, as much as we can, in accumulating merit with the intention that it will benefit us in the future. We are very fortunate that not only have we met and come into contact with the Buddhadharma, but we have come in contact with perfect teachers who explain the Buddhadharma, and we have the intelligence and means to understand it. It would be a great pity if we let all these good conditions go to waste, and pay no attention to accumulating virtue and merit for our future life. We have the ability to not only make this life happy, but also to prepare for our future life. So why not seize the opportunity to achieve both?

2.1.2.1.2.1.2.3. *The time of death is the wrong time to abandon laziness*

At the time when one is about to die, one might think, 'Oh, I need to practise Dharma and abandon laziness now'. But it is already too late, as death will occur at any moment. As there is no time left, abandoning laziness at that point will not really enable one to accumulate virtue. The implicit meaning here is that right now is the best time to abandon laziness, and engage in accumulating virtue.

The next two lines of verse are:

*7cd. Though one abandons laziness then,
What shall one do when it is the wrong time*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains that:

Though one may abandon laziness when one is held by death, what is striving at the wrong time supposed to accomplish? One will not achieve the slightest purpose.

We have just covered the meaning of this.

2.1.2.1.2.1.2.4. One should not be lazy since one can die suddenly without finishing one's work

The verse relating to this subdivision is:

8. *This started without completing it,
This one left half done,
With the lord of death coming all at once
One thinks, 'oh no, I am doomed.'*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Since one will die soon, at the time when this work is undone, just started, or half done, the lord of death comes suddenly. Then, regretfully, one thinks, 'Oh no, I am doomed.' When one is regretful from fear what shall one do? Strive in virtue, starting from right now onwards.

Here we can recall the story of the teacher who regularly used to tell his student, 'when we finish our work we will go on a picnic'. One day, the teacher saw a procession in the distance, and he asked the student what was happening, and what were they carrying? The student replied, 'Oh that is someone who has finished all their work, and who is going on a picnic'. In fact it was a corpse being carried in a funeral procession!

Since one will die soon indicates that death will not wait. At the time *this work is undone* means that a task has not yet been started, or a task may have *just started*, and *half-done* means that the task has yet to be completed. At any one of these stages the *lord of death* may come *suddenly*. Then one will *regretfully think*, 'Oh, no, I am doomed'. The implication is that if one has not engaged in accumulating virtues then one will feel regret and fear at the time of death. There is nothing that one can resort to if one has not accumulated virtue. The conclusion is that one should *strive in virtue starting from right now onwards*.

It is good to really contemplate these points and take them as a personal instruction, thinking that by engaging in virtues, there will, at the very least, be no regret at the time of death. That would be a good way to die. A peaceful death is one where one has no regrets, and with that lack of regret comes the consolation that one has done one's best to accumulate virtues and merit. When one has accumulated some virtue there definitely seems to be an ease at the time of death. This is a really significant point.

2.1.2.1.2.1.3. If one does not strive in virtue, one shall be overwhelmed by suffering

Here there are two subheadings.

2.1.2.1.2.1.3.1. At the time of death one shall be overwhelmed with misery

2.1.2.1.2.1.3.2. If one does not strive in virtue starting right now, one will not achieve one's aims

2.1.2.1.2.1.3.1. At the time of death one shall be overwhelmed with misery

The relevant verse reads:

9. *With swollen red eyes due to misery
And tears running down their faces,
Near and dear ones lose hope
And I look into the faces of the lord of death's
messengers.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary of this verse reads:

At the time of one's untimely death, near and dear ones, with swollen red eyes due to misery and tears

running down their faces, lose hope, and one, though being afraid, will have to look into the faces of the lord of death's messengers.

First of all, *untimely death* refers to the situation where someone might have a lifespan of, for example, one hundred years. However due to misadventure or accident, they can die prematurely. There used to be a student called Norman Henderson who asked questions, very respectfully, with his palms together. One of his questions I remember, concerned the meaning of untimely death. He wondered how, if there is a fixed time for everyone to die, one could die before that fixed time. He was quite baffled as to how someone could die when it was not their time.

It is quite clearly explained here in the commentary that it would be unfortunate if one were to be completely consumed by fear at the time of death. And if one has not prepared for one's death, then the prospect of death can definitely be a cause for fear and so forth. The exhortation here is to prepare for death by engaging in virtue and so forth. By accepting death and being prepared for it, there will be no place for fear.

As we contemplate these passages talking about death, we need to remind ourselves that the main point is that they are not intended to cause irrational fear about death. Rather, their purpose is to exhort one to engage in virtue, or in more simple terms, to lead a more meaningful life. So it is good to understand these passages in their proper context. Generating irrational fear or paranoia about death doesn't really serve much purpose.

2..2.1.2.1.3.2. If one does not strive in virtue starting right now, one will not achieve one's aims

Again, the meaning of the outline is be quite clear.

10. *When overwhelmed by the memory of one's negativities,
And covering one's body with excrement
As one becomes mad with fright because one
Hears the sounds of the hells, what shall one do
then?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

When being overwhelmed by the memory of the negativities that one created before, and one covers one's body with excrement as one becomes mad with fright, thinking 'I too have to go there', because one hears the sounds of the great sufferings of hell that one will definitely experience, such as being burned and so forth—at this time, when it is unsuitable to practise enthusiasm, what shall one do? One needs to strive in virtue straight away.

As explained quite clearly in the commentary, if, at the time of death one's mind is disturbed by *the memory of the negativities that one has created* in the past, it causes fear and so forth to arise. On a physical level one has no real control over one's bodily functions, and *one's body* can, uncontrollably, be covered by *one's own excrement*. It seems that at this time such people do have fearful visions and so forth in relation to the prospect of their future existence, which causes even more fear. But it is too late *to practise enthusiasm*, because the end of one's life is already in sight. The point here is that one needs to apply enthusiasm and engage in virtue, right now.

2.1.2.1.2.2. Abandoning laziness by contemplating the sufferings of the next life

This is has four subdivisions:

2.1.2.1.2.2.1. Sufferings will definitely arise

2.1.2.1.2.2.2. They are difficult to bear

2.1.2.1.2.2.3. It is contradictory to wish for happiness and not to strive in virtue

2.1.2.1.2.2.4. Exhorting to strive in the method for becoming liberated from suffering

These four points are an exhortation to strive in the method for becoming liberated from suffering.

2.1.2.1.2.2.1. Sufferings will definitely arise

The verse relating to this heading reads:

11. *Since one will have dangers in this life,
Like a flapping live fish,
What need is there to mention the unbearable
sufferings
Of hell, created by negativity.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

When you die you will have sufferings like a live fish flapping on hot sand. If one has such fears even in this life then what need is there to talk about what happens when you experience directly the unbearable sufferings of hell due to the results of the negativity you created?

This is an explanation of the suffering that can be experienced just before the moment of death, if one has spent one's life in negativities and not taken the initiative to accumulate virtue. Their suffering will be just *like a live fish flapping on hot sand*. If you put a fish on hot sand, its suffering will be unbearable as it flaps about in constant motion.

As the commentary further explains, *such fears* or sufferings, *even in this life* are just a prelude to the sufferings that will be experienced after death. So *what need is there to talk about what happens when you experience directly the unbearable sufferings of hell you will experience as a result of the negativity you created?* The main point here is that if the sufferings just prior to death are so unbearable, then one can just imagine the great unbearable suffering that will have to be experienced in the lower realms like the hell realms.

In order to prevent such suffering one needs to engage in virtue, as a mind that is imbued with virtue assists a peaceful death. Normally we consider that a good death is when the body is relaxed, and there is no experience of agony or pain. So we are being exhorted to prepare for our own comfortable death now, by engaging in virtue.

The point of the main heading, Abandoning Laziness by Contemplating the Sufferings of the Next Life is that we can prevent the prospect of suffering at the time of death, and most importantly the sufferings in the future lifetime. Thinking about that with a calm, logical and factual understanding will encourage one not to waste time now. Rather than engage in laziness, one needs to apply enthusiasm in order to accumulate virtues and avoid negativities. This is the main way to avoid these fears and sufferings.

We will conclude here and recite the tenth chapter of Shantideva's text as a dedication for Tenzin—Ingrid's oldest son—who passed away recently. I don't have to go

into a detailed explanation about the dedication, as the text itself is quite clear. When I received the message about his passing I did my best to do prayers from my side, with the hope that they will benefit him. The message could be passed on to Ingrid that this practice is the best thing we can do for him now. Feeling remorse and regret will not help him in any way, but doing this practice together will definitely benefit him.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་སྐྱེས་མཉམ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྒྱལ་མོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

23 June 2015

While maintaining the motivation we have just generated during the recitation of our prayers, we can now engage in our meditation practice. [*meditation*]

We can now generate the positive motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practice well.

Having just engaged in the *tong len* (giving and taking) meditation practice, we need to recognise how to incorporate its real essence, which is to generate and strengthen love and compassion in our heart. We need to do this to the extent that when we see suffering sentient beings deprived of happiness, we will be naturally inclined to help free them from sufferings and establish their happiness. The essence of Dharma practice is when we develop these attitudes and incorporate them in our practice.

Engaging the practice of *tong len* should not be a matter of just visualising it while sitting in a formal meditation posture. It needs to actually move one's mind, to transform it so that there is a more genuine sense of love and compassion extending towards other sentient beings. We need to ensure this.

I regularly emphasise that to actually embrace the practice of love and compassion extending to all beings in general, one needs to first establish love and compassion towards those who are close to oneself. If one cannot really generate a genuine sense of love and compassion towards those who are close to one, then it is quite unlikely that one will be able to develop it to the greater degree of focusing on all beings. Indeed, one needs to take the initiative to cultivate a true sense of love and compassion, beginning with those closest to oneself. One can then definitely experience the practical benefits to the extent that it will reduce problems and conflicts one may have with those who are close. In fact all our problems will naturally begin to subside. We can see that any problems that arise due to conflict, or that arise with those we are close to or deal with regularly, really arise from a lack of genuine love and compassion towards them.

When a genuine sense of love and compassion starts to take root, it is a fact that it overcomes a lot of unwanted problems and conflicts. Thus one can have a more joyous and happy relationship with one's companion and others in general.

We all already have the seeds of love and compassion within us, and it's a matter of further developing and strengthening them. This occurs gradually when we take

the initiative to contemplate on the great advantage and the essential need to develop love and compassion, and put the methods into practice. Gradually we will see that a true sense of love and compassion starts to develop in one's heart.

We can definitely see the positive outcomes of someone who has developed love and compassion as they contribute to the wellbeing of the community or society they may live in. A true sense of love and compassion means a true sense of concern for others, so such people will strive to bring about the wellbeing and betterment of that community or society. They will not engage in any destructive activities that harm their community or society's wellbeing. The positive outcome is that they will be appreciated and welcomed by others everywhere. They themselves will always have a sense of ease and natural calmness about them, and because they're not causing trouble for anyone, they won't have any enemies confronting them. This is how we need to relate to developing love and compassion on a practical basis—that real benefit does occur.

I definitely see the practice of cultivating love and compassion as essential and the most beneficial practice. In my regular practice I try to associate my mind with love and compassion, to recall it and remind myself of its essential qualities. Wherever I go, whatever the occasion might be I try to make my mind become close to the feelings and attitudes of love and compassion.

In my own personal experience, the positive consequences I experience are because I have imbued my mind with that positive attitude. Wherever I go I'm personally joyful and feel happy in whatever circumstances I find myself in. Ordinary everyday people I don't regularly associate with, or know well personally, befriend me and are happy to help me in whatever circumstance I may be in. Even though I don't ask for their help they seem naturally drawn towards trying to help me. I definitely attribute this to my efforts to try to cultivate positive attitudes. So from my own personal experience I can say that a practical benefit of befriending others and seeing everyone as close, is that it brings companionship and friendship. This is a real and positive outcome of the practice.

Most importantly, the more we familiarise ourselves with the *tong len* practice of giving and taking to strengthen our love and compassion, the more it will particularly assist us at the time of death when we may experience difficulties. Being familiar with *tong len* then allows us to take on the sufferings of all sentient beings while experiencing suffering oneself. If at that time we immediately resort to *tong len* and take on the sufferings of other sentient beings, this will purify extensive negative karmas and assist us to have a good rebirth. When very heavy negative karmas are purified, the consequences can only be that one experiences the positive results of one's karma, which will assist one for a future good rebirth.

Familiarity with the practice of exhibiting love and compassion and cultivating a positive attitude creates positive imprints, which are carried on to the future life. We can see the result in young children where some are naturally considerate and compassionate towards others.

Without being influenced they exhibit genuine concern, love and compassion towards others from their own side. This is a clear sign that they have been familiar with positive attitudes in their previous lifetimes.

I'm trying to exhort you to really take this practice to heart. The practice of Dharma really is the means of accumulating virtue and abandoning negativity. In summary that is really what Dharma practice encompasses, because any practice we relate to will be either the specific means to accumulate merit and virtues, or the means to purify one's negative karma as a way to abandon negativities.

In simple terms, if one were asked what one needs to accumulate in one's practice, it is virtue. And what one needs to abandon is negativity. When we can ensure in our heart that we are engaging in practices that encompass the means to accumulate virtues and abandon negativities, then we can be assured we are doing Dharma practice. This is, in essence, what we need to keep in mind.

That is the basis that forms a strong foundation from which we can then establish further practices. In fact we can find this base of accumulating virtues and abandoning negativities in all major religions.

This has been a summary of how to engage in the practices presented in the following verses.

2.1.2.1.2.2.2. *They are difficult to bear*

The commentary commences with the statement:

It is unsuitable to be lazy because of the many negativities created previously, and also if one analyses the various causes for the lower realms one is still creating them every day.

The verse reads:

12. *Having created the karma for the hells
Where one's delicate flesh is burned
When scalded with hot water,
Why does one abide happily?*

The main emphasis under this heading is that the sufferings *are difficult to bear*. When intense sufferings actually befall oneself at the time of death it will be extremely difficult to bear them. This highlights that we might fall short if we think, 'oh well, if sufferings occur later that's fine, I'll be able to bear them then'. But this highlights that if even small sufferings are difficult to bear now, then when extreme sufferings occur later on then it will certainly be extremely difficult to bear them at that time.

The commentary continues:

Why does one abide happily now, having created the karma to be reborn in the lower realms, where one's body of delicate flesh will have to experience the sufferings of being burned intensely when scalded by the hot water that boils angrily in the hell realms.

One should strive in virtue just like one's head is on fire.

The commentary explains that when one has created many negativities, non-virtuous actions, these become the cause to experience intense sufferings in the hell realms. It vividly explains that when it comes to one's awareness that one has created such negativities, and our delicate

body's flesh will be exposed to the extreme sufferings in the hell realms, then how can one just remain idle and do nothing about it now?

One should engage in immediate practices of purification and the accumulation of virtues. The gravity of the situation is presented with an analogy that one should *strive in virtue just like one's head is on fire*. If this were literally the case, then one would immediately react and put out the fire before one's head was scalded and burned. Just as one would have an immediate response of putting out a fire on one's head, likewise in relation to negativities one should immediately apply antidotes to purify negativities when one has created negative karmas. This is the practice that true practitioners engage in. As soon as they realise that they might have created a fault of any kind, they take the measures to immediately confess and purify it.

The essence of this presentation will also be explained in further verses, but I mention it now as a way to exhort you to engage in the means to purify negative karmas and prevent an unfortunate rebirth in a lower realm such as a hell realm. We need to bring to our awareness that one has all the conditions intact right now to actually purify negativities one has created in the past.

The commentary brings a vivid image to one's mind describing the intense sufferings of the hell realms such as *being burned intensely when scalded by the hot water that boils angrily in the hell realms*. Personally when I see volcanic eruptions spewing molten rock I imagine the extreme heat. I then bring forward the unbearable imagination of how much suffering one would experience if one were actually consumed by that lava. Apparently the fires of the hell realms are said to be even more intense, but we can only relate to something equivalent to that on this earth, like lava. The point is that these analogies are ways to exhort one to actually engage in the practice of virtue. We have favourable conditions, and so it is as if we have our fate in our hands, and whether we will experience intense sufferings or a good rebirth in the future is our responsibility. We have the choice, so we need to make that choice.

2.1.2.1.2.2.3. *It is contradictory to wish for happiness and not to strive in virtue*

The points being presented in the explanation of the verse here are very relevant for one's practice. Take it as personal instruction.

If one were asked whether one wishes for happiness, without any hesitation we would say 'yes'. But if we asked ourselves whether we were creating the causes for happiness (accumulating virtue), and found that we were not creating many of those causes, then these two thoughts would be completely contradictory. That is, while we wish for happiness, we are not taking any initiative to create the causes for happiness, which is virtue. That is definitely a contradiction.

The meaning of the verse and the explanation from the commentary are not difficult to understand, the main point is to actually try and put it into practice as this is how it will benefit you.

The verse reads:

13. *Those wishing for results without effort
And who are sensitive receive much harm
And, like the gods gripped by death,
Wail, 'Alas, I am overwhelmed by suffering'.*

The commentary explains:

Those wishing for the result of happiness without striving in its cause, virtue, and who are sensitive even towards the smallest of sufferings, will receive much harm. Like the gods gripped by death whose wish for a long life will not be fulfilled, and who will receive what they do not wish for, one will wail, 'Alas, I am overwhelmed by suffering'.

The first line in the commentary, that *those wishing for the result of happiness without striving in its cause, virtue*, is a statement we can definitely relate to. Again, it encourages us to think about the fact that we do definitely wish for happiness, but seldom find ourselves seriously engaging in creating its cause, which is virtue.

As the commentary further explains, while wishing for the results of happiness and not striving in its causes, virtue, then those in the condition of being very *sensitive even towards the smallest of sufferings, will receive much harm*.

Reflecting on the truth of the statements here we can definitely see that for someone who is sensitive, or lacks tolerance for even the smallest of problems and difficulties, would naturally be someone who always complains and who always seems to have many problems, because things are bound to go wrong and not always work the way they want. Those unable to tolerate even the smallest things going wrong will evidently experience much harm. We can see now such individuals who always complain that something is not right, and they seem to lack a true moment of relaxed and peaceful joy.

The statement that they *will receive much harm* means that difficulties and problems will always be present for those intolerant to small sufferings. In such a situation these individuals will be *like the gods gripped by death whose wish for a long life will not be fulfilled*. The gods referred to here are the long-lived gods who, due to their karma, have a very long lifespan. Then, with a long life full of luxuries and pleasures they become very complacent and don't think about the suffering they'll experience in the future.

If we become complacent, then, while in the grip of death (which can occur at any time), we would have the same mentality as a long-lived god. Like them we too become complacent with a lot of time on our hands, so when the actual time of death comes, we, like them, will realise that our time is over, and we have not had time to fulfil all our wishes and hopes. This is a time when great suffering is experienced.

The main point here is that if one doesn't prepare for the greatest time of suffering, then when it occurs one won't be able to cope with it. As mentioned previously, the best way to cope with difficulties is to endure hardships, willingly accept them now, then one will not experience a continuous sense of dissatisfaction and unhappiness.

The point of the long-lived god analogy is that one should not spend one's life as if one has all the time in the world to enjoy pleasures. If one has this attitude one becomes a victim to complacency and laziness. The actual time of death is inevitable and approaching by the moment, with the moments in our life getting shorter rather than longer. So, if we engage in frivolous activities and completely ignore the fact that death is imminent, then when death occurs, because we have failed to prepare for it, and instead become consumed with distracting activities, we will experience great suffering, as we will be unprepared to deal with the sufferings. That is the main point.

2.1.2.1.2.2.4. *Exhorting to strive in the method for becoming liberated from suffering*

As one does not want to experience suffering, this part of the outline exhorts one to actually become liberated from suffering.

The commentary starts with a hypothetical question:

If asked, 'How then should one act?'

The verse presents the response:

14. *In dependence on the human boat
One will be liberated from the great river of suffering.
Since this boat will be difficult to find later on,
Deluded one, do not fall asleep at this time.*

The commentary explains:

Since one can attain liberation if one strives in dependence on the basis that one has attained freedoms and endowments. In saying liberate yourself from the great stream of suffering in dependence on the boat of the human body, it shows that the freedoms and endowments have great purpose.

In essence the presentation here explains that, first of all, we definitely wish to be liberated and free from suffering. Then, in order to be free from suffering one has to depend on a basis which will enable one to be free from it. The basis presented here is none other than one's precious human rebirth, intact with the eight freedoms and the ten endowments. The value of a rebirth is presented in three points: our basis has great meaning as one can achieve great purpose; it is difficult to find such a good basis; and having found this basis of a precious human rebirth it can disintegrate very easily.

The commentary explains that *since one can attain liberation if one strives in dependence on the basis that one has attained freedoms and endowments*, and says you should liberate yourself from the great stream of suffering in dependence on the boat of the human body. Here our human rebirth is presented as analogous to a ferry boat that carries people across from one shore to the other.

To extend the analogy to ourselves, our body is like the boat and our individual being is like the passenger being ferried across to the other side. Just as a boat carries the passengers from one shore to the other, so our precious human body can assist us to move from samsaric existence to liberation. This shows that the freedoms and endowments have great purpose.

The commentary continues:

Since the achievement of the freedoms and endowments is extremely rare, it is very difficult to find this boat again later on. Hence, deluded one, at this time of having found this boat do not fall asleep, but liberate yourself from the great stream of cyclic existence by way of practising the paths of the small, medium and great capable beings.

This shows that one needs to strive while having found the difficult-to-find freedoms and endowments.

Having first explained that this body has a great purpose, this next point shows that it is very rare and we could easily lose it *since the achievement of the freedoms and endowments is extremely rare, it is very difficult to find this boat again later on*. Therefore, the text says, *deluded one, having found this boat do not fall asleep*, but use it for the purpose of liberating yourself.

The commentary concludes with, *this shows that one needs to strive while having found the difficult-to-find freedoms and endowments*.

2.1.2.2. ABANDONING THE LAZINESS THAT GRASPS AT NEGATIVE ACTIONS

This part of the outline explains the laziness we may have in allowing ourselves to engage in negative actions.

The verse reads:

15. *Having abandoned the supreme happiness of the infinite
And holy Dharma, which is the cause for happiness,
Why do you like the distraction, mental excitement
And so forth, that are causes of suffering?*

The commentary expands upon this:

Having abandoned the supreme joy in practicing the infinite methods of the holy Dharma, which are the causes for all the happiness of this and future lives, why do you like unsuitable actions resulting in suffering, such as negativities, the distractions of many different thrills, mental excitement and so forth? It is unsuitable to like them because they are the causes of suffering.

In stating that *having abandoned the holy Dharma which are the causes for happiness of this and future lives*, the commentary answers to a hypothetical question with the exhortation, *why do you like unsuitable actions resulting in suffering, such as negativities, the distractions of many different thrills, mental excitement and so forth?* The conclusion is *it is unsuitable to like them because they are the causes of suffering*. So this is quite clear.

The thing we need to rejoice about is the practice of virtue. When one practises any Dharma practice which involves accumulating virtues, then we can feel glad about, and rejoice in that. Then the more we feel glad and rejoice in these practices, the more this helps us increase the positive results of those positive actions.

These explanations are relevant to one's personal status. As I've mentioned previously, there are times when we would have been glad of the opportunity to accumulate some negativity, and feel sad when we've missed the opportunity. This is the point being presented here, one which brings to the heart the real issue of the attitude we

lack if we are to accumulate more virtues and engage in Dharma.

The hypothetical question in the commentary is a good one to ask yourself, 'why do I like unsuitable actions resulting in suffering, such as negativities, the distractions of many different thrills. The Tibetan word *drud-tsi* used here has the connotation of allowing oneself to be surrounded by many things which influence one into negative ways. It includes people and negative friends etc. who cause one to engage in bad behaviour. The word *drud-tsi* is translated here as *many different thrills*, followed by *mental excitement* and so forth.

This is a significant question to ask oneself. Why do we like things that are unsuitable to like, as they are the causes of suffering? If one can recognise certain activities as a cause for one's own suffering, then why would one intentionally want to engage in them? This is an exhortation to start contemplating our normal activities as a way of slowly transforming our three doors of body, speech and mind (which are otherwise inclined to creating negativity), to actually engage in more and more virtuous activities. For that transformation to take place we need to seriously contemplate these points.

The point to reflect upon is the fact that if we allow ourselves to be influenced by negativities and engage in distractions and assorted thrills and mental excitement, these then become the causes for problems in our life. When we consider the various difficulties that arise in our life, it is because we've followed these negativities or distractions that then cause the problems in our life. As such one should exhort oneself to engage in the practice of Dharma.

Leaving aside the sufferings which will have a result in the future, even in our current day-to-day life, if we want to have a more meaningful life with less problems and less conflict with others etc., then leading a life that practises virtue and conducting ourselves with positive behaviour is what ensures a more meaningful life.

Contemplating on these points takes time and we need to think it through well, but it becomes quite clear that it is quite absurd for one to willingly engage in negativities if we don't wish to experience difficulties and problems in our life. It is absurd that we engage in the very things that bring us difficult problems. These are significant points to transform.

To summarise earlier points, if we lead a life where we dislike the very causes for happiness, while on the other hand willingly like and engage in the causes for our suffering, the negativities, then the consequences are bound to be more suffering for ourselves.

We need to ensure that we practise the opposite of that, and that we begin to willingly accept and like the causes for happiness and engage in virtues, and willingly engage in abandoning the causes for suffering, which is to abandon negativities. That would be the proper way to go about our practice.

The following verses also present very significant points which we will cover in the following sessions. Just to summarise again the significant points which were presented this evening: a personal instruction is to really contemplate the fact that all the sufferings that one has

experienced thus far are none other than having engaged in the causes of suffering, the negativities. If we feel we have been deprived of happiness, then that is because we have failed to actually accumulate the causes for happiness which is virtue.

Even recognising this point takes time because it involves the subtleties of karma—the cause and effect sequence of how virtue is the cause of happiness, and negativity is actually the cause of all our sufferings. One needs to reflect upon the points of the cause and effect sequence as a way to exhort oneself to reflect upon how one needs to reverse one's inclination of liking to engage in negativities, and start putting more time and thought into the value of what we call virtues.

Contemplating these points is the way transformation will take place. We need not go too far back into the past to contemplate the negative consequences of negativity. If we could reflect on our own life so far, even within the past fifteen years, we can see the kinds of activities we have engaged in, which have clearly resulted in more problems and difficulties for ourselves. It becomes very clear when we know certain activities were clearly negative, and have definitely contributed to the unwanted circumstances and difficult problems in our life.

Conversely, if on reflection one has willingly taken upon oneself certain virtuous activities, see how these have resulted in a more peaceful and happier sort of mind, and how that has contributed to one's wellbeing. When we really reflect on how our own activities and deeds have brought about certain kinds of consequences, then that clarity is like looking in a mirror and seeing everything clearly.

The negativities here refer to the obvious ones such as killing or stealing or sexual misconduct. When we reflect upon the ten non-virtues, these are the obvious negativities. One would have engaged in these and they would have brought about negative consequences for oneself. Reversing this means to willingly abandon the taking of others' lives, to willingly make a commitment to abandon taking others' possessions and to willingly make a commitment to refrain from sexual misconduct etc. The willingness to actually take up the practice of avoiding non-virtue means we are practising the opposite, virtue.

Starting in this simple way is a means to understand how one can actually adopt these practices to avoid negativities and engage in virtues. Again, we can reflect that even in a short span of one's life one can definitely notice the negative consequences of engaging in negativity. Whilst the positive results are also experienced in this life, the positive results in the future life are also definite. Even in this life we can see that our life becomes much more meaningful, much less hectic, less problematic, and more purposeful. To that extent we can see the benefits of the practice.

2.1.2.3. ABANDONING THE LAZINESS OF DISCOURAGEMENT

This is subdivided into three, which we will cover next week.

2.1.2.3.1. Advice to strive in the antidotes to discouragement

2.1.2.3.2. How it is taught in the scriptures to practice the antidotes

2.1.2.3.3. One can attain enlightenment if one strives, by stopping laziness

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

© *Tara Institute*

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© *Tara Institute*

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

30 June 2015

Based on the motivation generated whilst reciting the refuge prayer, we can engage in our usual meditation practice. (*meditation*)

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for this purpose I will listen to the teachings well, and put them into practice.

I regularly emphasise the importance of cultivating a joyous and happy mind within oneself. Once cultivated this becomes our true, unailing companion, able to assist us at all times. We don't regularly pay attention to this factor; rather we seem to become more obsessed with trying to look for external conditions for our happiness, like finding friends or objects. We think these are going to be our companion and make us happy, but when something fails with these external conditions, it brings us great distress. That is because we have not paid attention to developing our true inner friend, and thus we feel distraught and lonely.

Taking the initiative to develop our unailing inner companion, which is a joyous and happy mind, is of course dependent on the practice of Dharma. This is actually what the practice of Dharma is meant to be for. Practising Dharma doesn't mean listening to the teachings just to acquire an intellectual understanding. It means actually putting whatever understanding we gain from the Dharma into practice, because that is how we develop our mind to become more positive and, consequently, happier.

The reason we need to take this initiative is the fact that there will never be an occasion where we will be separated from our mind, so developing it becomes essential. Wherever we go, whatever we do during the day in our everyday life and even during the night when we go to sleep, it is not as if we leave our mind somewhere else. It is with us all of the time, up until the last moment of this life, when we experience death and are separated from our physical and material conditions. Then, what goes on is the continuity of the mind and also the individual self. Up until the time of death the combination of our body, our mind and our individual self are together at all times. Therefore the wellbeing of our self as an individual is relative to the wellbeing on all three levels: the body, mind and individual self. They all contribute to the wellbeing of others. Recognising this is how we take the initiative to establish our own wellbeing.

Basically the state of our mind is what determines what kind of individual self or characteristics we have. To explain further, when the mind is harsh that makes the individual person harsh. When the mind is gentle, kind and positive it makes the person with that mind a kind

and gentle person. In other words, what determines whether a person is harsh and unruly or kind and gentle is the state of their mind. At any given time it is the state of mind that influences an individual to behave in a certain way. This, then, shows that the person is not innately good or bad right from the beginning. Bad characteristics are not in their nature, it is dependent on their state of mind (or attitude). As these can change from negative into a more positive state, we cannot say that an individual is an innately harsh and unruly person from the beginning.

Further on, at the point of the end of our life, when we separate from our physical body, the individual self and the mind continue on. From this we can begin to understand how our individual self and mind are a continuum that comes from past lifetimes. There is a very clear sign that the individual self and mind we possess now is actually a continuity from past lives. We can say that there are two levels to our individual self: a self which is related to our individual name associated with this life, and a deeper and more subtle level of self which is not associated with our name. We all have a very strong, deep sense of 'me', and when we hold onto this we are not particularly relating to the self that our name or personality represents in this lifetime. This sense of 'me' or self beyond the self related to our current individual personality or name is an indication that such a sense is coming from a previous lifetime. If we actually pay attention we might be able to detect the deeper sense of self within ourselves. This is how the consciousness can be proven to come from a previous existence.

The main point here is to understand why the teachings explain that along with the self comes an individual's consciousness or mind, which is inseparable from it. The actual reasoning presented in the teachings on past lives is that there is a continuity of our consciousness that comes from the past. This is established through reasoning, which then follows on to prove that the individual consciousness goes on to future lives. This is how one proves logically that there are past and future lives.

The point of analysing this is so we can say an individual is not something that is fixed. Thus if we term someone mean or bad we should understand the person is just influenced by a state of mind (at a given time) and when this state of mind changes, the person consequently becomes a more positive person. So a person who is considered mean at one time can become a gentle and positive person at a later time. This understanding can be very helpful in not being fixated on a particular characteristic that one may identify with now—there is a possibility of change for self and others. It can be very helpful to not identify with others solely on the basis of their immediate behaviours, gestures and habits. There is something beyond this; it is not their true nature, and this is helpful as way to have more acceptance of others.

In relation to oneself not taking things too personally and not being too negative and judgemental about others, it really helps to think about this, then any hostile feelings about them can immediately subside. We can definitely learn from others; when they do positive things we can be inspired and learn from that, but even when they do

negative things, we can take the initiative and learn from that too. We can learn that this is not their true nature and how change is possible. From that understanding we can develop a more positive mind and attitude towards them. That is something that will benefit oneself.

So it is by beginning to incorporate this understanding into one's practice that it is possible for some practitioners to state without hesitation that being with an angry person helps them to practise patience. Because of their positive attitude, others being unruly and angry only becomes a cause to find more reason to develop patience, rather than retaliate and create negativity for oneself.

2.1.2.3. ABANDONING THE LAZINESS OF DISCOURAGEMENT

This is divided into three subsections:

2.1.2.3.1. Advice to strive in the antidotes to discouragement

2.1.2.3.2. How it is taught in the scriptures to practice the antidote

2.1.2.3.3. One can attain enlightenment if one strives, by stopping laziness

2.1.2.3.1. Advice to strive in the antidotes to discouragement

The verse reads:

16. *Without discouragement, with armies,
Sincerity and self-empowerment,
Equalise self and others,
Exchange self and others.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins with:

Kings conquer their enemies with the four types of armies.

Under the heading Gyaltsab Je presents advice on how to apply antidotes for overcoming discouragement, or the laziness of despondency.

The commentary states that a king conquers the enemies with four types of armies, which is an analogy for a person applying the four types of enthusiasm to overcome discouragement. Earlier in the text 'overcoming' referred to the king overcoming external enemies like enemies of a country. Here overcoming relates to the inner enemies, the delusions within oneself. That is how the analogy is to be understood.

As the commentary further explains:

Similarly, bodhisattvas initially lift up their minds and generate the armour-like enthusiasm free from despondency that intends to train in the path.

The essential point here is *bodhisattvas initially lift up their minds*. To lift up one's mind means to have a strong, courageous mind right from the beginning, which is a significant way to overcome despondency. This is important for any kind of task one wishes to undertake, but here the advice relates to bodhisattvas engaging in practices to benefit other sentient beings in great ways. In relation to our own practices, whatever level we may be at or whatever task we might undertake, we too need to have a courageous mind initially. If we don't have this from the beginning, our mind would be wary and uncertain, and it would be very hard to take on the task at all. And even if one did, it would be easy to lose one's

enthusiasm. So having a courageous and uplifted mind right from the start is what is being recommended.

Bodhisattvas who initially uplift their minds generate armour-like enthusiasm (which was explained in earlier sessions). And having generated armour-like enthusiasm, which is being *free from despondency*, they intend to train in the path.

The commentary continues:

Then they generate the enthusiasm of application that builds up the army of the two accumulations as preparation.

At the time of the main part they sincerely practice introspection and mindfulness, and thus gain control over themselves as their body and mind become serviceable.

Having done that, one should equalise and exchange self and others as explained below.

Next, bodhisattvas *generate the enthusiasm of application* and that enthusiasm *builds up the army of the two accumulations as preparation*. Then, at the time of the main part of their practice, *they sincerely practise introspection and mindfulness and thus gain control over themselves*. I have emphasised regularly that mindfulness and introspection are the two most essential tools for securing one's practice, for it not to decline, and to ensure it has unceasing continuity. *Mindfulness* is a state of mind that constantly remembers the points of the practice, and *introspection* is the state of mind that helps detect whether one's mind is wavering away from the practice and brings it back again. Therefore mindfulness and introspection are the most essential tools for ensuring one has a steady practice.

When one has incorporated introspection and mindfulness into one's practice, then one gains control. The bodhisattvas practise this way *and thus gain control over themselves as their body and mind become serviceable*. Here we need to understand the meditation on calm abiding, the state of mental quiescence, in a very detailed way. When one uses the tools of mindfulness and introspection, and continuously focuses single-pointedly on the meditation object, through discipline and practice one reaches a state where one overcomes the defects of one's body and mind. The *physical defects* are the faults of the body that make the body feel very heavy and sluggish. When trying to meditate, aches and pains are all defects of our physical body. *Defects of the mind* make the mind feel weighed down, sluggish and heavy.

Gaining control over themselves relates to gaining complete control over their body, speech and mind and all the activities related to the body, speech and mind. In gaining this serviceability one then gains full capacity to apply them in virtue at all times.

The commentary continues that having gained complete control over one's body and mind *one should equalise and exchange self and others*. What the bodhisattvas do next is develop and further enhance bodhicitta by applying the method of exchanging self and others, right from the beginning, and it becomes a powerful method. This is the optimum method for generating bodhicitta, and is explained in detail in the eighth chapter. Here Gyaltsab Je strongly suggests that to generate bodhicitta one first

needs to achieve calm abiding, as it is difficult to generate bodhicitta without having steady concentration. He clearly states this in another text as well, although there are different interpretations as to whether this is the case or not.

2.1.2.3.2. *How it is taught in the scriptures to practice the antidotes*

The next section of the commentary explains how the antidotes are presented in the scriptures, the sutras themselves.

The commentary first presents this statement:

The Buddha alone, being of very sharp faculty, achieved his aim by practising for many countless great eons the extremely difficult trainings and accumulated infinite merits by making an effort in enthusiasm. Do not become discouraged and despondent, saying, 'Since I am not like this, how could I attain enlightenment?'

When one contemplates how the Buddha attained the state of omniscience by accumulating virtue and merit over countless great eons, it can bring about a sense of despondency, where one thinks 'How can I possibly achieve that myself?' Understand that this despondency is not a passing despondency, where one feels 'I cannot do that' but rather a specific type of despondency that arises after analysing and contemplating what it takes to become an enlightened being.

One accepts that to benefit other beings one has to achieve enlightenment. One then contemplates on what the Buddha must have done to develop his qualities. One then realises that no virtues or qualities can arise without depending on causes. In recognising the countless qualities and virtues in the Buddha's mind, one realises they are all dependent on numerous causes that had to be created in the past, and each of these involved overcoming each and every non-virtuous deed. Overcoming one non-virtuous deed yields one virtue, and in that way over countless eons the Buddha, as a bodhisattva, created all the causes required to obtain all those results. After contemplating this, a sense of despondency can arise. This is also clearly explained in the Lam Rim teachings.

The verse reads:

17. *Do not be despondent,
Saying 'How could I become enlightened?',
Since the Tathagata speaks the truth,
He taught also this truth thus.*

The commentary continues:

Question: In what manner did he teach?

Answer: From the *Sutra requested by Subahu*.

Further, bodhisattvas should practice correctly and with emphasis like this: They should think, 'If those that turned into lions, tigers, dogs and jackals, vultures, cranes, crows and owls, worms, bees, flies and mosquitoes become awakened in highest enlightenment, then now, while I am a human, I need to practice the enthusiasm that achieves enlightenment, even at the cost of my life.'

The same is also taught in the *Clouds of Jewels Sutra*.

As the commentary explains, one should not become discouraged or despondent by saying or thinking *Since I*

am not like this, how could I attain enlightenment?' This sentiment is expressed in one's present state of being, which is riddled with delusions and faults. Having a deluded state of mind in this life one may think one could never change, could never attempt to accumulate all those causes to achieve enlightenment. This is the laziness of discouragement or despondency.

In explaining the meaning of the second two lines the commentary says:

Since the Tathagata speaks the truth, he thus also taught this truth, which is suitable to accept since he has no cause to speak deceptively.

The main point here is that the Buddha abandoned all causes of deception, and that as there are no causes of deception there is no way the Buddha would speak deceptively. We can relate this to our ordinary lives, when we sometimes feel we can't trust somebody because they might be deceptive. So even though they might appear to be telling the truth, it can seem like they have cause for speaking deceptively, and we may be a bit unsure about what they say.

Contrast this with the Buddha's words. The Buddha has overcome all causes of deception, so there is no possibility for the Buddha to speak deceptively. Thus that which was taught by the Buddha can be taken as the truth as presented in the sutra below.

The commentary explains if asked: *In what manner did he teach?* Then the answer, which is presented here is *From the Sutra requested by Subahu*.

The Sutra presents:

Further, bodhisattvas should practice correctly and with emphasis like this: They should think, 'If those that turned into lions, tigers, dogs and jackals, vultures, cranes, crows and owls, worms, bees, flies and mosquitoes become awakened in highest enlightenment, then now, while I am a human, I need to practise the enthusiasm that achieves enlightenment, even at the cost of my life.'

Rebirth as one of the animals listed here would be considered as being inferior to a human rebirth. Yet what is being presented here is that even these animals and insects have a buddha-nature, and with it they have the possibility of becoming enlightened. The commentary emphasises that animals like *flies and mosquitoes become awakened in highest enlightenment, then now, while I am a human, I need to practise the enthusiasm that achieves enlightenment, even at the cost of my life* and exhorts us to embrace our human existence with all its conditions intact. The Buddha said that even beings in an inferior state, with less intellect, have the potential to become enlightened, so surely this means that as a human with all the reasons to create the causes for enlightenment, we should definitely not be despondent. In this way we are being exhorted to overcome the laziness of despondency and discouragement. The main point is that each and every living creature has the buddha-nature and the ability to achieve buddhahood. With our human rebirth we should make the most of this opportunity.

2.1.2.3.3. One can attain enlightenment if one strives, by stopping laziness

This has four subdivisions:

2.1.2.3.3.1. Considering that one can attain enlightenment if one generates the power of enthusiasm

2.1.2.3.3.2. The austerities that accomplish enlightenment are suitable to bear since they do not possess even partially the sufferings of the lower realms

2.1.2.3.3.3. They are suitable to bear since the king of physicians heals great diseases with gentle methods

2.1.2.3.3.4. It is suitable to like the austerities since they lack suffering and are strengthened by happiness

2.1.2.3.3.1. Considering that one can attain enlightenment if one generates the power of enthusiasm

This is a significant point relating to how the power of generating enthusiasm within oneself can assist one to attain enlightenment.

18. *Those that became flies, mosquitoes
Bees and likewise worms,
Even they, if they generated the force of
enthusiasm,
Attain the difficult to attain highest
enlightenment.*

19. *One like oneself, who has been born into the
human race,
And knows what is beneficial and what is
harmful,
If one does not give up the practice of
enlightenment,
Then why should one not attain enlightenment?*

The commentary explains the meaning:

As it was taught earlier, even those that became flies, mosquitoes, bees and likewise worms, will attain the difficult to attain highest enlightenment if they generate the force of enthusiasm and build up the accumulations.

Since it is taught like this, then someone like oneself, having been born into the special human race, knowing what is beneficial and has to be adapted, what harms and has to be abandoned to attain the aim of the wish for enlightenment, if one takes up the practices of enlightenment and does not give them up, then why should one not attain enlightenment? Determine that you can definitely attain it.

It is clearly explained here that the way to develop enthusiasm and overcome the laziness of despondency is to recognise that even the animals mentioned here can become enlightened. So compared to the animals' inferior physical condition, we should not be despondent as we have been born as a human with a supreme body.

Coupled with this state of mind, this discriminative wisdom of *knowing what is beneficial and has to be adapted, what harms and has to be abandoned to attain the aim of the wish for enlightenment* is the intelligence we possess as humans to attain enlightenment. Therefore, if the Buddha stated that even animals in their inferior state can generate the force of enthusiasm and build up accumulations able to attain enlightenment, then someone like oneself, who is born with all the conditions intact, with a sound physical body and sound mind, with the wisdom understanding the

causes of enlightenment, then why should one not attain enlightenment, if one were to formally take up the practices of enlightenment and not give up? One would definitely achieve it. As I often emphasise, in our condition right now, it is not as though we lack understanding. What we lack is putting it into practice. In terms of understanding the Dharma. We definitely have sufficient understanding, but if we don't put it into practice then this is when we fall short in accumulating the causes of merits etc. One should determine that one can definitely attain enlightenment, and ask oneself, 'Why shouldn't I attain enlightenment given that I have all the reasons and all the conditions necessary to attain it.'

2.1.2.3.3.2. The austerities that accomplish enlightenment are suitable to bear since they do not possess even partially the sufferings of the lower realms

This has three subdivisions:

2.1.2.3.3.2.1. Fear of the austerities of giving up legs, arms, and so forth is unsuitable

2.1.2.3.3.2.2. One does not need to experience the sufferings of the lower migrations even partially

2.1.2.3.3.2.3. The example of how it is suitable to bear small sufferings to destroy a big sickness

We will cover this next week.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྟུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

7 July 2015

While maintaining the motivation that we generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our meditation practice. [meditation]

We can now generate a positive motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

In order to fully benefit all mother sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practise well, so that they become the means to subdue my own mind.

This is an essential motivation.

The *tong-len* meditation that we did earlier is an optimum method for developing bodhicitta. In particular, it serves as the method for developing the superior intention that is part of the equalising and exchanging self with other technique of developing bodhicitta. Superior intention is not specifically listed as a separate cause with this technique, as it is integrated in the giving and taking practice.

When we do this practice wholeheartedly and sincerely, it involves the intention of taking on the responsibility for freeing all beings from suffering, and thus taking upon oneself all the sufferings of other beings. It also involves taking responsibility for establishing all sentient beings in happiness by giving them one's own happiness. In the taking part of the practice we imagine taking upon ourselves every type of suffering experienced by sentient beings, and in the giving part, we give all joy and happiness to all sentient beings. When we do this meditation sincerely it becomes a very powerful practice.

As indicated in the teachings, this is a core Mahayana practice because it involves generating the highest altruistic intention. By training our mind in taking upon the sufferings of others, and giving them all happiness, we are actually engaging in a Mahayana practice.

Doing this practice sincerely means bringing to mind the actual meaning of the words as we recite them. As explained in the teachings, we familiarise ourselves with any practice first by reciting the words, then we reflect and meditate on the meaning. If we just recite the words and don't really think about their meaning, then of course it remains at the level of being just words. Acquainting one's mind with the words means not just reciting the words, but actually bringing their meaning to mind. With the *tong-len* practice, as we recite the words from the verses we also envision that the giving and taking is actually taking place.

2.1.2.3. ABANDONING THE LAZINESS OF DISCOURAGEMENT

2.1.2.3.3. *One can attain enlightenment if one strives, by stopping laziness (cont.)*

2.1.2.3.3.2. **The austerities that accomplish enlightenment are suitable to bear since they do not possess even partially the sufferings of the lower realms**

2.1.2.3.3.2.1. *Fear of the austerities of giving up legs, arms, and so forth is unsuitable*

These explanations relate to actual states of mind that occur during a practice. When bodhisattvas practise developing great love and compassion, they reach the point of taking upon themselves the responsibility for helping all other sentient beings. One reaches the point of feeling determined that one definitely has to obtain enlightenment in order to fully benefit sentient beings. There's no other way to fully utilise one's potential to benefit sentient beings other than actually attaining enlightenment.

Having developed that intention, one considers the practices that one needs to engage in if one is to achieve enlightenment. These include the practice of generosity. Here one may be daunted by the thought of practising generosity of giving away one's legs, arms and limbs and so forth. Doubt about one's capacity to actually engage in the practices that are required to achieve enlightenment may then arise. This is not just a theoretical thought; these are states of mind that actually do occur.

These two verses present the point:

20. *If: 'Well, because one has to give up
Legs and arms I am afraid.'
Not discerning between heavy and light
One becomes afraid due to ignorance.*
21. *For innumerable tens of millions of eons
One has been cut many times,
Stabbed, burned and slashed,
But one has not attained enlightenment.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins by expressing the doubt:

If one were to say, 'Well, though one can achieve it through enthusiasm, I am afraid, because one needs to practise the generosity of giving away one's legs, arms, head, and so forth, and I am not able to engage in these difficult practices'.

The response to this is:

Answer: Though one needs to practise generosity with these, without having distinguished well between heavy and light suffering, one is ignorant with regard to what has to be abandoned, and what has to be adopted, and one is afraid, although it is unnecessary to be afraid.

That is because, while circling in cyclic existence since beginningless time one has experienced the sufferings of one's body being cut, stabbed, burned by fire and slashed by weapons not only once, but many times for innumerable tens of millions of eons in the hells. But, however much one has experienced this, it has only exhausted purposelessly the vitality of one's body, and one has not achieved highest enlightenment.

As presented here, when a bodhisattva initially considers the possibility of achieving enlightenment, they see that when the appropriate causes are accumulated, then the

result of enlightenment is definitely possible, and that if one applies enthusiasm then one can definitely achieve enlightenment.

When further considering the types of causes that have to be accumulated, one thinks about, for example, the practice of generosity, where one might have to give away one's legs, arms and so forth. That may cause a sense of fear such as, 'Oh, I might not be able to engage in these practices to that extent'.

One definitely needs to practise generosity in such ways, and fear of practising like that would arise when one is not able to distinguish *between heavy and light sufferings*. As explained here, heavy sufferings are the sufferings experienced in the hell realms, where one involuntarily experiences great extremes of suffering. If one neglects to recall that, one fails to see that the relatively minor sufferings, such as giving away one's limbs and so forth, which brings about great purpose, lead to great achievement. Feeling daunted and fearful of engaging in some practices will arise if one does not recall this.

When one is able to distinguish clearly between heavy and light suffering, one will understand that practising generosity by giving away limbs and so forth is really quite a minor suffering when compared to the great sufferings to be experienced in the hell realms. Furthermore, it has a great purpose, as it is a cause for actually achieving enlightenment. Thinking like this one develops a courageous mind of willingly taking these sufferings upon oneself, and is then able to endure them.

On a contemporary level, we can see in our normal day-to-day activities that those who wish to achieve some significant result in their work or studies definitely need to put up with some hardships and difficulties for one, two or three years. If one believes that one could achieve something quickly, and is daunted by small hardships, then one would never be able to achieve any significant result, in either study or work. So even in mundane activities we can see that in order to achieve a significant result, one also needs to endure some hardships and difficulties.

The text refers to being *ignorant with regard to what has to be abandoned and what has to be adopted*. Even though not explicitly mentioned here, one can derive from this explanation the understanding that it is reasonable to develop the fear of having to experience the sufferings of the lower realms, which will prevent one from creating the causes of those sufferings, which is negativity. Whereas being fearful of austere practices will prevent one from engaging in virtue and accumulating merit from practising generosity and so forth, which is the cause for achieving enlightenment. The first type of fear is a reasonable fear that we actually need to cultivate, as it will prevent us from creating the numerous types of negativities that are all causes for the sufferings of the lower realms. The unreasonable fear that we do need to abandon is the fear of engaging in austere practices of generosity and so forth, when in fact they are supreme causes for accumulating virtues and merits, and thus the cause for enlightenment. When we think about it in these practical ways, we can see that Shantideva is giving us very personal and profound advice.

The qualm that was raised earlier is *well, though one can achieve it through enthusiasm, I am afraid*. Now while this may be explicitly related to practicing bodhisattvas, it is also a significant personal instruction. The reason why one should not be afraid of such austerities is that *while circling in cyclic existence since beginningless time one has experienced the sufferings of one's body being cut, stabbed, burned by fire and slashed by weapons not only once, but many times for innumerable tens of millions of eons in the hells*.

What is being presented here is that it is not as if one is afraid of something that one has not previously experienced. In fact, one has already experienced the sufferings of being cut and so forth, many times over. In other words, we might feel fearful about being generous with our limbs, arms and legs and so forth, but, in fact, we've already experienced the sufferings of having our legs and limbs cut off numerous times in the past.

Despite having experienced all these sufferings in the past, it has not until now become a cause for our enlightenment. However this time around it is actually worthwhile to engage in the practice, as it will become a cause for enlightenment. That is the point being made here.

2.1.2.3.3.2. One does not need to experience the sufferings of the lower migrations even partially

While one may experience some kind of suffering from these practices, it is nowhere near the extent of sufferings that one would otherwise have to experience in the hell realms. At this point it is good to bring to mind the importance of the practice of patience, as a way of enduring the sufferings one may experience from practising generosity and so forth.

We can recall here that Lama Tsong Khapa's advice that we need to really acquaint our mind particularly with the patience of definitely thinking about the Dharma, and the patience of willingly accepting sufferings. There are many more opportunities to experience the natural sufferings that fall upon us than there are occasions when we need to practise patience when others harm us. Being intentionally harmed is much rarer than the suffering that one perpetually experiences at any given time.

We have all experienced the different types of suffering that occur continuously—it is one problem after another. We always seem to be faced with some sort of problem, either from our immediate surroundings or mentally, and they never seem to end. Therefore the patience of willingly accepting suffering is an extremely important practice, as a way of not becoming overwhelmed and daunted by these problems. As explained in the teachings, the best way to be able to deal with a problem is to willingly accept that problem. Then, whatever the problem may be, one will have the capacity to actually deal with it, and solve the problem. If we don't engage in the practice of willingly accepting suffering, then we become overwhelmed and anxious about not being able to cope, and this creates even more suffering for us. That is why this essential advice is so relevant.

If we fail to engage in the practice of willingly accepting suffering, especially psychological or mental suffering, then we can become completely overwhelmed, and reach

a point where we are seemingly not able to cope. Whereas when we are able to practise patience by accepting mental suffering and problems, then when we experience some physical suffering we will not be daunted it, due to the strength derived from willingly accepting that suffering. That is because when the mind is in a strong position it will be able to handle the physical suffering, and cope much better with it. Conversely, if one is not able to deal with mental suffering, then even the slightest physical suffering can also cause great distress.

If we can maintain the practice of patience where our mind does not become overwhelmed and daunted, then we will be able to maintain our mental strength and tranquillity. Regardless of the difficulties and problems that may be occurring, they will not disturb the mind. Otherwise the mind becomes disturbed and chaotic, and really distressed, and everything appears to be very grim. Then one may lose hope and so forth. Whereas when one has mastered that practice to the level of withstanding those difficulties and problems, then even when there are difficulties they will not disturb the mind, which will be able to maintain its integrity and practise continuously.

Patience is particularly important when dealing with the hardships and sufferings that occur during our practice. We can all relate to this. If we were not to have the mind of endurance and patience, then we might feel that a practice is too difficult and just give up even with the slightest of difficulties. If we had the choice, would we willingly accept some hardships and engage in practice, or not engage in practice so that we don't have to experience any hardship? If we choose the second then there's a great danger that we might choose not to practise at all, and as presented earlier in the text, just enjoy ourselves during the day and sleep through the night. So we need to have a really courageous mind to choose wisely.

We need to relate any given points in the text to earlier explanations, which in this instance is to also apply the practice of patience.

The verse relating to this heading reads:

22. *There is a measure to
One's sufferings in attaining enlightenment,
Similar to the sufferings of a bodily procedure
To clear the harm of tormenting diseases.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

If one considers the sufferings of the lower migrations, then the sufferings of the austerities of attaining enlightenment are of small measure and last a short time by comparison. They are also easy to bear, similar to being able to bear the sufferings of a bodily procedure to clear the harm of a tormenting disease.

As the commentary explains, *if one considers the sufferings of the lower migrations, then the sufferings of the austerities of attaining enlightenment are of small measure and last a short time by comparison.* According to the Mahayana Perfection Vehicle, we have to practise for three countless eons to achieve enlightenment, but one can spend many more countless eons in the lower realms. While that is the general presentation in the Mahayana Perfection Vehicle, it is explained in more advanced teachings that one can

actually achieve enlightenment even in just one lifetime. Lama Tsong Khapa is said to have obtained enlightenment in one lifetime, and there are many other examples of great masters who also obtained enlightenment in one lifetime. So one actually can achieve the state of enlightenment in a very short time if one engages in, and applies the practices. In comparison to the sufferings that have to be experienced in the lower realms, it's really of very short duration.

The example that is presented here is that *they are also easy to bear, similar to being able to bear the sufferings of a bodily procedure to clear the harm of tormenting diseases.* A tormenting disease is a disease that can cause great suffering if it is not cured. The cure might also cause some suffering, especially if the body is cut open as part of that cure, yet that is willingly accepted. It is considered to be a small suffering to be endured for the sake of removing the cause of a much greater suffering caused by a disease.

2.1.2.3.3.2.3 *The example of how it is suitable to bear small sufferings to destroy a great sickness*

The verse relating to this outline reads:

23. *All physicians make unpleasant sickness
Go away with cures.
Hence, one is able to bear small unpleasantness
To destroy many sufferings.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains that:

All physicians will employ slightly unpleasant cures to make an unpleasant sickness go away. Likewise, since the austerities to achieve enlightenment are very small sufferings, one should bear the small suffering of the austerity to destroy the many sufferings of cyclic existence. In this way one pacifies boundless sufferings of self and other.

As clearly explained here, *all physicians will employ similar methods of applying unpleasant cures to make an unpleasant sickness go away. The sufferings of the austerities needed to achieve enlightenment are, in comparison, very small.* One needs to be able to bear these sufferings, as they are a cause to remove the many sufferings of cyclic existence. This pacifies the suffering of oneself and others.

2.1.2.3.3.3. They are suitable to bear since the king of physicians heals great diseases with gentle methods

This is subdivided into three:

2.1.2.3.3.3.1. The Buddha shows methods to cure great diseases without having to experience the slightest suffering

2.1.2.3.3.3.2. It is forbidden to give one's body for as long as one has difficulty

2.1.2.3.3.3.3. It is not difficult since the time taught for giving one's body is when one is habituated to give it like a vegetable

These three outlines systematically remove all of the doubts that may occur relating to engaging in the practices.

2.1.2.3.3.3.1. *The Buddha shows methods to cure great diseases without having to experience the slightest suffering*

The relevant verse reads:

24. *The supreme physician does not act
In accordance with common cures;*

*He cures boundless great diseases
With extremely gentle methods.*

Here, Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

While one is working to achieve enlightenment, the supreme of physicians, the Able One, does not employ austerities like the common cures to cure sicknesses. He heals the boundless heavy sickness of having to wander in cyclic existence due to the afflictions with the method of an easy path leading to a happy result, without the extremes of being disheartened and exhausted or sensual decadence. Therefore, how is it suitable to be afraid of the austerities?

As the commentary explains, *while one is working to achieve enlightenment, the supreme of physicians, which refers to the Able One, or the Buddha, does not employ austerities like the common cures to cure sicknesses.* The methods that normal physicians use to treat disease can involve harsh and invasive treatments like cutting or even burning flesh, piercing it with needles and so forth. Even the tools they use are quite frightening—I recall seeing a young child crying when he saw the needle, before the treatment had even begun. This is how normal diseases are treated. The Buddha, who is likened to a supreme physician, does not use the harsh methods employed by normal physicians. In fact his methods are not invasive, are all very gentle, and do not harm in any way.

The method that the supreme physician, the Buddha, employs is that he *heals the boundless heavy sickness of having to wander in cyclic existence due to the afflictions with the method of an easy path leading to a happy result.* The easy, or suitable path refers to the practices leading to enlightenment, such as the six perfections. Practising generosity is a relatively easy practice, while practising moral ethics is a very gentle practice of refraining from harming others. When it comes to concentration, very suitable methods are presented. One develops concentration by sitting in the seven-point posture of the Buddha Vairochana, and developing a clear mind. These precise and gentle methods, which gradually lead to the development of higher realisations, are very meticulously presented.

Following this easy and suitable path leads to the happy result of enlightenment. Thus, the path itself is a happy and gentle path, which leads to the ultimate happy result of achieving enlightenment. Such a path is free from the *extremes of sensual decadence, and being disheartened and exhausted. Therefore, how is it suitable to be afraid of the austerities?* This implies that one should not be afraid of austere practices, when, in fact, they are gentle and suitable to practise, and moreover lead to the great result of enlightenment. That is definitely something that one should not be afraid of. Indeed one should willingly engage in them.

2.1.2.3.3.3.2. It is forbidden to give one's body for as long as one has the thought that holds it difficult

This relates to the earlier point of being daunted by the thought of giving one's body parts. As presented here, one should not be engaging in such practices for as long as one has the thought that considers it difficult to give one's body.

The verse relating to this outline is:

*25. The guide induces one to initially train
Even in the generosity of vegetables and such.
Having become habituated, then subsequently
One gradually also offers one's flesh.*

Then Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Initially, when one is not even acquainted with offering vegetables and the like, the guide, the Buddha, induces one to train in the generosity of food, drink, vegetables and so forth. When one has become acquainted with this without difficulty, then subsequently one also gradually offers one's flesh.

It is not being suggested that one should start the training in generosity by giving away one's body parts or flesh, blood and so forth. As explained in the commentary, the Buddha presented the methods for practising generosity in a very skilful way. He advised familiarising oneself with the practice of generosity with things that are plentiful, such as food and drink, *vegetables and so forth*, which one can offer without much difficulty. As one becomes acquainted with that, one can further develop one's practice of generosity by giving more valuable things.

When one has become habituated to, or acquainted with this without difficulty, refers to having become acquainted with being generous with the material possessions such as food, drink, clothing and so forth. Through that acquaintance one reaches the point where one has no hesitation in giving away more valuable possessions. Through acquaintance and familiarity with that level of generosity, *then subsequently one also gradually offers one's flesh.* Through familiarity with easier acts of generosity one can reach the point where there is no hesitation in offering one's flesh, limbs and so forth when necessary.

2.1.2.3.3.3.3. It is not difficult since the time taught for giving one's body is when one is habituated to give it like a vegetable

Following on from the previous point, this section covers when it is suitable to offer one's body, flesh and so forth.

The verse relating to this reads:

*26. Once one has generated the awareness
Of one's body as a vegetable or the like,
Then one offers one's flesh and the like.
Where lies the difficulty in that?*

As the commentary explains:

Once one has, through familiarity, generated the awareness of the generosity of one's body as the generosity of a vegetable or the like, then one can offer one's flesh and such.

Where lies the difficulty in that? Since there is not the slightest difficulty, it is unsuitable to be afraid.

As explained in the commentary, through familiarity with being generous with material possessions, one increases the mind of generosity to the point where there is no hesitation in offering these material possessions. Through that familiarity one reaches the point where offering one's body parts is no different to being generous with material possessions. In other words, it is suitable to offer one's body parts, as giving a vegetable and giving one's body parts amount to the same thing.

2.1.2.3.3.4. It is suitable to like the austerities since they lack suffering and are strengthened by happiness

This section is to remove any doubt about whether bodhisattvas suffer. When bodhisattvas reach the higher paths and grounds, then engaging in practices of generosity is a cause for great joy and happiness, rather than unhappiness and suffering. Therefore it is suitable for them to practise austerities.

This section is subdivided into four:

2.1.2.3.3.4.1. Though a person who is unskilled in the sequence of training in the path has physical and mental unhappiness, those who are skilled do not have the suffering of austerities

2.1.2.3.3.4.2. There is no cause then for a great bodhisattva to be disheartened with cyclic existence

2.1.2.3.3.4.3. For these reasons they are said to be more skilled in achieving the path than a Hinayana

2.1.2.3.3.4.4. Hence, it is unsuitable to be discouraged from the actions of a bodhisattva

2.1.2.3.3.4.1. Though a person who is unskilled in the sequence of training in the path has physical and mental unhappiness, those who are skilled do not have the suffering of austerities

The verse relating to this is:

*27. No suffering because of having abandoned negativity,
No dislike because of being skilful.
Therefore, wrong conceptions
And negativities harm mind and body.*

The commentary reads:

Bodhisattvas with the pure thought of compassion do not have physical suffering when they offer their body, because they have abandoned all the negativities of the three doors, and they also do not experience mental dislike because they are skilful regarding the time for offering the body.

Therefore, the wrong conceptions of grasping at the self of person and grasping at mine, and the negativities of killing and so forth, harm mind and body, and the great bodhisattvas have abandoned these causes for harm.

As the commentary explains, *bodhisattvas with the pure thought of compassion, do not have physical suffering when they offer their body, because they have abandoned all the negativities of the three doors, and they also do not experience mental dislike because they are skilful or have the knowledge regarding the time for offering the body.* As presented here, great bodhisattvas, who have attained high levels on the paths and grounds have no physical suffering, because they have abandoned all the negativities of the three doors.

This indicates that any mental or physical suffering that we experience on any of the three levels, is due to the negativities we create because we still have the negativities of the three doors. When negativities have been abandoned, then any suffering in relation to the three doors ceases.

Furthermore, *they also do not experience mental dislike because they are skilful regarding the time for offering the body.* Thus, because they have the skill of knowing the suitable time to give their body they do not hesitate to give their body parts whenever necessary.

Wrong conceptions of grasping at the self of person and grasping at mine, and the negativities of killing and so forth, harm mind and body, yet the great bodhisattvas have abandoned these causes for harm. More specifically, abandoning the wrong conceptions of grasping at a self of persons, and grasping at 'mine' refers to bodhisattvas who have gained a direct realisation of emptiness.

Bodhisattvas at the lower levels don't have any wrong conceptions of grasping at the self of person, and grasping at 'mine', but they don't yet have the direct realisation of emptiness.

Because the bodhisattvas who have obtained the direct realisation of emptiness have removed all the negativities of killing and so forth, they've removed the causes of harm to the mind and the body.

What is specifically explained here is that the negativity that one accumulates from engaging in the ten non-virtues such as killing and so forth, is a cause for physical and mental pain and suffering. Since *the great bodhisattvas have abandoned such causes*, they do not experience any physical and mental pain or suffering. What this implicitly points out is that if we wish to avoid suffering, then we need to avoid its causes, which are the ten non-virtues.

2.1.2.3.3.4.2. There is no cause then for a great bodhisattva to be disheartened with cyclic existence

The doubt which may arise is whether bodhisattvas who, with their commitment to benefitting sentient beings, remain in cyclic existence for a long time, will be daunted by having to remain in cyclic existence?

The presentation under this heading explains that bodhisattvas will not be disheartened about remaining in cyclic existence.

We can conclude here, and finish this in our next session.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱུང་རྒྱུ་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

14 July 2015

While maintaining the motivation we generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our meditation practice. [meditation]

Now we can generate a positive motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines:

In order to fully benefit all mother sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the Mahayana teachings, and put them into practice well.

The more we familiarise ourselves with a positive motivation like this (as we do in our meditation sessions and in listening to teachings etc.) the more we can readily generate it, and apply it to whatever practice we engage in. This is very meaningful. In meditation it is questionable which renders a better chance of accumulating merit: generating a positive motivation, or the meditation practice itself. In spending even a few moments generating a very positive motivation, one definitely accumulates extensive merit.

Our motivation involves generating an intention to achieve enlightenment for the sake of limitless mother sentient beings, so to that extent, even for a few moments when we generate it, we definitely get a sky full of merit. If we cannot generate such a motivation before our practice, it is questionable whether it will arise spontaneously during the actual practice. The most essential attitude one needs to try and adopt at all times is a positive and kind attitude. If we ensure we have that, then whatever we do, whatever the situation we find ourselves in, we can make it most beneficial. If we lose that, it is a great loss. That is why I emphasise the importance of developing loving kindness again and again.

2.1.2.3.3.4. It is suitable to like the austerities since they lack suffering and are strengthened by happiness (cont.)

2.1.2.3.3.4.2. *There is no cause then for a great bodhisattva to be disheartened with cyclic existence*

The outline here reflects the meaning of the verse and relates to bodhisattvas who have control over their rebirths. These bodhisattvas are not reborn in cyclic existence due to uncontrolled delusions and karma, but are actually born out of their aspiration to benefit sentient beings. For as long as they remain in samsara they do not become disheartened or daunted, because their purpose is solely to benefit sentient beings.

The verse reads:

28. *If the body is happy through merits
And the mind is happy through skill,
Though remaining in cyclic existence for the
purpose of others
Why should those with compassion be
disheartened?*

The commentary reads:

Bodhisattvas have physical happiness through the merits of generosity and so forth, and they have

mental happiness, like the bodhisattva ever-crying, through being skilful regarding what has to be adopted and what has to be rejected, and the meaning of emptiness. So, since there is no cause for suffering, why should those with compassion become disheartened, even though they remain in cyclic existence for the purpose of others?

The commentary explains that the *bodhisattvas have physical happiness* which is gained *through the merits of generosity and so forth*—which includes the merits gained from observing morality, practising patience, joyous effort and concentration. What is being presented here is the aspects of merit and wisdom incorporated in the practice of the six perfections. The merits accumulated from such practices as generosity, contribute to having a physically sound body up to the point of not having any physical discomfort. Therefore a bodhisattva's body, which is the result of these practices, is one which experiences happiness rather than suffering. Furthermore, *they have mental happiness, like the bodhisattva ever-crying, by being skilful in what has to be adopted and what has to be rejected, and the meaning of emptiness.* Wisdom here also includes a precise understanding of karma, how to apply and abide by the law of cause and effect, as well as the realisation of emptiness. The accumulation of wisdom becomes a cause for mental happiness. Thus, through the combination of merit and wisdom, bodhisattvas obtain a body endowed with physical happiness, and a mind which experiences mental happiness. As explained further in the commentary, *since there is no cause for suffering, within their physical aggregates or the mental continuum, why should those with compassion become disheartened even though they may remain in cyclic existence, for the purpose of others?* This rhetorical question implies that since there is no physical or mental suffering and only happiness, a bodhisattva in fact does not become disheartened by remaining in samsara for the sake of benefiting other sentient beings.

A relevant point made in the earlier part of the chapter was that bodhisattvas reach a level where they are able to be generous with their body parts, and they regard giving them away as no different to giving away food or vegetables. At that point, when they have no hesitation at the prospect of giving away their bodies (when necessary) to others, it is a suitable time for them to actually give their body, because they don't become disheartened by that act of generosity. On our own level we can relate to the fact that when we have a strong physical illness, or mental distress, we are more vulnerable to becoming disheartened. It is very easy for one to lose enthusiasm and become disheartened and daunted by the tasks one has to perform, because of the physical and mental suffering entailed in them. Conversely, when we are feeling quite well physically and mentally, we are more capable of engaging in any activity we intend to accomplish. While the direct advice here is for bodhisattvas, we can definitely relate the importance of using our own physical and mental wellbeing as a way of continuing with virtuous activities in our own practice.

We need to understand that bodhisattvas not being disheartened with cyclic existence means they are not disheartened by the prospect of being in samsara for the sole purpose of benefiting other sentient beings. If, on our ordinary level, we don't utilise our wellbeing properly when we are feeling good physically and mentally, we can lose our disheartenment with samsara, and actually lose the purpose for practising Dharma. You probably find it true that when everything is going quite well, there is a danger of forgetting about the practice of Dharma. This means we are actually

enjoying samsaric pleasures at that time and don't feel disheartened with samsara. To develop renunciation at an ordinary level we first need to become disheartened with samsara as a way to be free from samsara itself. This doesn't imply that bodhisattvas don't have renunciation! Of course they do, but it is a renunciation based on having great compassion and love for other sentient beings whereby they don't become disheartened by the prospect of being in samsara. You need to understand this in its proper context.

2.1.2.3.3.4.3. For these reasons they are said to be more skilled in achieving the path than a Hinayana

The outline here indicates that because of being undaunted by the prospect of being in samsara for the benefit of mother sentient beings, bodhisattvas are much more skilled in achieving the path than those who follow the Hinayana path. The presentation here provides immaculately profound instructions on how to really engage in the practice. Even contemplating on the meaning of these verses and pausing for a few moments to think about their meaning can, in itself, become a powerful meditation practice that greatly benefits our mind.

The verse reads:

*29. They exhaust previous negativities
Through the power of the mind of
enlightenment,
And they contain an ocean of merits.
Therefore they are said to be superior than the
hearers.*

The commentary reads as follows:

Since those with compassion exhaust previous negativities with the power of the mind of enlightenment and because they contain an ocean of accumulations of merits and wisdom they are said to be superior in progressing along the path than the hearers.

The commentary explains this quite clearly, but I'll just extract some of the main points. *Those with compassion* relates to the great bodhisattvas who are endowed with compassion who *exhaust previous negativities with the power of the mind of enlightenment*. At this point, recall how the benefits of bodhicitta were explained in the previous chapters. Generating bodhicitta for even a moment is a means to accumulate extensive merit and purify great amounts of negative karma. Hence, when someone is endowed with a perpetual state of bodhicitta in their mind, there is no question about the great extent of negativities that have been purified through the power of that mind, along with the accumulation of merit. Thus *because they contain an ocean of accumulations of merits and wisdom they are said to be superior*.

The accumulation of merit and wisdom are known as the two accumulations, so we need to understand what the accumulations refer to and what results they bring about. I have mentioned these numerous times in the past but it is good to reflect upon these points again. The whole doctrine is presented on the basis of the two truths, the path which consists of the two accumulations, and the result which consists of the two bodies of a buddha – the rupakaya and dharmakaya.

The accumulation of merit is the particular cause for obtaining the *rupakaya* which is a buddha's form body, and the accumulation of wisdom is a substantial cause to obtain the *dharmakaya* which is a buddha's wisdom truth body. Hence the two resultant enlightened bodies are the *rupakaya* and the *dharmakaya*.

The two accumulations include the practices of the six perfections, the first five of which are the particular means for accumulating merit, and the practising the perfection of wisdom is the means to accumulate wisdom. In particular, the wisdom realising emptiness forms the means to perfect the accumulation of wisdom. It is presented here that bodhisattvas *are said to be superior in progressing along the path than hearers*; this is particularly due to the fact that they have generated bodhicitta.

The main factor that differentiates bodhisattvas from hearers is the mind of bodhicitta. Hearer *aryas* (noble beings) have also gained the realisation of emptiness, so if it was just the realisation of emptiness that is required to obtain the ultimate goal of enlightenment, then when hearers on the paths of seeing and meditation obtain the hearer's path of no-more-learning, and become an *arhat* (foe-destroyer), they would have then obtained enlightenment. The factor which prevents them from obtaining enlightenment - that which obstructs them from achieving an omniscient mind - is that they have not yet developed bodhicitta. Furthermore, when a hearer or solitary realiser obtains the path of seeing, although they gain the realisation of emptiness, it is said that their body still remains a contaminated body.

However, when a bodhisattva obtains the path of seeing, their body transforms into an uncontaminated body. This has been clearly explained by Lama Tsong Khapa, and His Holiness also explained this point in his recent teachings. Therefore the key factor that makes bodhisattvas far superior to hearers is the mind generation of bodhicitta. This is the main factor to understand in order to derive the essential understanding of this verse. Obtaining the ultimate state where one has completely actualised, surpassed and perfected the two purposes comes only through following the Great Vehicle path, which focuses on the development of bodhicitta. This is why it is not sufficient to just rely on the hearers' path, as it lacks the sufficient causes for one to obtain the ultimate and perfected state of fulfilling the two purposes.

2.1.2.3.3.4.4. Hence, it is unsuitable to be discouraged from the actions of a bodhisattva

Following on from the earlier points, this part of the outline is saying *hence, it is unsuitable to be discouraged from the actions of a bodhisattva*.

The verse reads:

*30. Therefore, mounting the horse of bodhicitta
That dispels all tiredness and weariness,
Who, that knows the mind that goes
From happiness to happiness, will be
discouraged?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains as follows:

Therefore, having mounted the powerful horse of the mind of enlightenment that dispels all mental tiredness and physical weariness, who of those proficient that know the mind that goes from the path of mental and physical happiness to the result of happiness, will be discouraged? It is unsuitable to be discouraged from practising the bodhisattva actions.

For the reasons presented previously, bodhisattvas have *mounted the powerful horse of the mind of enlightenment*. The mind of enlightenment or *bodhicitta* is analogous to a powerful horse, and when one has mounted that *mind of enlightenment that dispels all mental tiredness and physical weariness*, the powerful mind of bodhicitta enables one to dispel all mental tiredness and physical weariness. The

passage ...*who of those proficient that know the mind that goes from the path of mental and physical happiness to the result of happiness* relates to having a clear understanding of how following an easy path of mental and physical happiness will result in obtaining ultimate happiness. Knowing that, *who will be discouraged?* This implies that with this understanding, no-one would be discouraged. So it concludes that, having understood the great benefits, *it is unsuitable to be discouraged from practising the bodhisattva actions.*

2.1. Increasing the antidote, the power of enthusiasm

The antidote here relates to the antidote for overcoming laziness hence increasing the antidote to laziness is *the power of enthusiasm*. The particular type of laziness here relates to the laziness of despondency.

The power of enthusiasm is subdivided into three:

2.1.1. Increasing the powers that are the conducive conditions for enthusiasm

2.1.2. Being diligent about practising the actions with mindfulness and introspection

2.1.3. Empowering oneself to achieve the actions

2.1.1. Increasing the powers that are the conducive conditions for enthusiasm

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.1.1. A short presentation by way of identifying the four powers

2.1.1.2. An extensive explanation

2.1.1.1. A SHORT PRESENTATION BY WAY OF IDENTIFYING THE FOUR POWERS

The first verse that relates to this reads:

31. *The armies for accomplishing the purpose of sentient beings
Are belief, stability, joy and relinquishment.
Belief is generated by reflecting on its benefits
And the fears of suffering.*

The commentary explains the meaning:

Regarding the generation of the armies that destroy the opposing factors of enthusiasm so as to achieve the purpose of sentient beings: Similar to the king's four armies destroying his opponents, the four powers are the conducive conditions for enthusiasm.

The analogy here explains that the four powers are similar to the four types of a king's army. This relates to ancient warfare and refers to an army mounted on horses, an army mounted on elephants, an army that goes forth on chariots and an army that goes on foot (as explained in *Precious Garland*). Of the four powers analogous to the four types of army, the first is belief.

The commentary continues:

a) Belief that is aspiration regarding the practice of adopting and abandoning, generated through contemplating karmic cause and effect.

Belief here, and as also presented in the Lam Rim teachings, particularly relates to aspiration, particularly the aspiration regarding the practice of adopting and abandoning.

Next the power of stability is explained:

b) Stability that does not start something without investigation, and which finishes what was started.

Again, this is also explained in the Lam Rim teachings. The power of stability is continuously applied enthusiasm. Once one engages in a particular virtue, continuously applying

enthusiasm in engaging in that virtue, it is the power of stability.

Next the commentary explains the power of joy.

c) Joy that engages in effort without satisfaction, but with uninterrupted joy, like a child engaged in play.

Joy is explained here with the analogy of children playing naturally, and not wanting their joy and happiness in that play to be interrupted.

Next is the power of relinquishment, which relates to taking a rest. When engaging in an activity, putting in too much effort can often become an obstacle to accomplishing it, so there are times when one needs to take a rest and find the right balance. As will be explained later on, in meditation this means for one's focus not to be too tight or too loose, but to find the right measure. Thus, in whatever practice, when one is pushing too hard one needs to apply the power of "relinquishment" or rest.

d) Relinquishment that takes a break when body and mind are tired through the practice of enthusiastic effort, only to start straightaway again once refreshed.

If one doesn't take a break one may get stressed.

The commentary explains the four powers with belief as an example:

Explaining them by taking the power of belief as an example, they are generated by contemplating the fears of the suffering of cyclic existence and the benefits of the respective power, i.e., here belief.

The powers *are generated by contemplating the fears of the suffering of cyclic existence*, refers to generating the fear of the suffering, and then the benefits of the respective power. With 'belief', one contemplates on the benefits of the belief that will be generated.

The next verse reads:

32. *Giving up the opposite in this way
Strive in increasing enthusiasm through
Belief, pride, joy and relinquishment
And the power of diligence and control.*

The powers are presented briefly in the verse, and the commentary further explains:

Giving up the opposing factors of not engaging in virtuous dharmas though seeing that one is able to, or the discouragement of thinking, 'I am not able to do this', one generates the conducive conditions of the four powers of belief, the pride of stability, joy and relinquishment.

Then, during the actual practice one diligently practises enthusiasm with mindfulness and introspection, and through the power of subsequently gaining control over body and mind one increases enthusiasm further and further. Strive in such a way.

Giving up the opposing factors such as *not engaging in virtuous dharmas though seeing that one is able to*, relates to the fact that one may see the benefits of the virtuous Dharma, but, despite that, one does not engage in the virtuous Dharma, which is caused by laziness. This type of laziness, where one thinks 'I'm not able to do this' is despondency, so at that point *one generates the conducive conditions*. *By giving up the opposing factors, one generates the conducive conditions of the four powers of belief, the pride of stability, joy and relinquishment*. Stability is referred to as a virtuous pride. The commentary further explains applying these conducive conditions of the four powers:

Then, during the actual practice, one diligently practises enthusiasm with mindfulness and introspection ...

It is not sufficient to apply the conducive conditions of the four powers initially. In *the actual practice, one needs to also diligently practise enthusiasm with mindfulness and introspection*. The point presented here is that mindfulness and introspection are an essential aid for maintaining enthusiasm during the actual practice.

... and through the power of subsequently gaining control over body and mind one increases enthusiasm further and further. Strive in such a way.

This is the way one actually adopts the practice of the four powers, and the two powers of diligence and control as well.

2.1.1.2. AN EXTENSIVE EXPLANATION

This is subdivided into four:

2.1.1.2.1. The power of belief

2.1.1.2.2. The power of stability

2.1.1.2.3. The power of joy

2.1.1.2.4. The power of relinquishment

2.1.1.2.1. *The power of belief*

This is subdivided into four:

2.1.1.2.1.1. The object of belief

2.1.1.2.1.2. The result of belief

2.1.1.2.1.3. The cause for belief

2.1.1.2.1.4. Concluding summary

Each power is presented very meticulously by defining the object of belief, the result of belief, and the actual cause of belief etc.

2.1.1.2.1.1. *The object of belief*

This is further subdivided into three:

2.1.1.2.1.1.1. Abandoning faults

2.1.1.2.1.1.2. Taking qualities

2.1.1.2.1.1.3. Analysing what one has done and what one has not

Again, in order to gain a clearer understanding of each power, the text sequentially and meticulously presents the ways to remove doubts in our minds. This will help the wisdom in our mind to really grow.

2.1.1.2.1.1.1. *Abandoning faults*

The next two verses read:

33. *One should destroy the boundless
Faults of self and others.
Even if for each individual fault
It will take an ocean of eons,*

34. *If it is not observable that one has
Started to exhaust faults even partially,
One becomes an abode for boundless suffering.
Why does one's heart not burst?*

The commentary explains the meaning:

One should destroy the boundless faults of self and others, because one has made that promise at the time of generating the mind. When one destroys these faults one familiarises oneself with the antidote for an ocean of eons even for each individual fault. Since it will come like this, if one does not observe the beginning of having started to abandon faults even partially on oneself, then one will have to experience the sufferings of the lower realms, since one cannot bear to become familiar with the antidote even that much. Since one will become an abode for boundless

suffering, why does one's heart not explode? One's heart is completely made of stone, I say.

The commentary explains here that one definitely needs to strive to *destroy the boundless faults of self and others*. Why? Because one has already made a promise when generating the mind of enlightenment. One then reflects on that when destroying these faults and *familiarises oneself with the antidote for an ocean of eons even for each individual fault*. When applying the antidotes for overcoming these faults one needs to familiarise oneself with the antidotes for many eons. Even for one fault one has to repeatedly apply the antidote and familiarise oneself with it again and again. This is the way to completely overcome that particular fault.

Having realised this then *if one does not observe the beginning of having started to abandon faults even partially on oneself, one will have to experience the sufferings of the lower realms*. If one feels daunted that one cannot familiarise oneself with the antidote for that amount of time, one will see that by not doing so one will have to experience the sufferings of the lower realms. Then *since one will become an abode for boundless suffering, why does one's heart not explode?* This is a way of exhorting us to take heed; if one does not apply the antidote to overcome the faults then the consequence is to experience the boundless suffering of the lower realms. So if one contemplates that, one's heart should feel moved to expend real effort, and strive to overcome these faults.

The extensive Lam Rim explains these points by quoting Shantideva's verses. It gives detailed explanations of how one has to apply the antidotes to overcome the faults for many eons. So if, right now, one doesn't even consider applying an antidote for even one of the faults, even partially, then how can one possibly believe one will not have to experience the sufferings of the lower realms. This is explained in the Lam Rim more elaborately, and referring to a Lam Rim text on the point of enthusiasm will complement the explanation presented here.

Another point made in the Lam Rim text is that contemplating like this is a way not to become discouraged. Rather it encourages you to realise that you have spent a lot of time in meaningless thought and activity and not much time on applying the antidotes for overcoming the faults. Thus by reflecting upon how much time one has already wasted, to take heed and apply enthusiasm to overcome the faults. That is the main point.

These presentations are all very meaningful and we can definitely relate them to our personal practice.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

21 July 2015

Based on the motivation we have just generated during our prayers, we can now engage in our meditation practice.

[meditation]

As usual we now generate a motivation that is based on the altruistic motivation of bodhicitta, such as:

May all sentient beings be free from all suffering and endowed with happiness. By taking personal responsibility for making that happen, may I be able to free all sentient beings from all suffering and lead them to ultimate happiness. It is for that purpose that I will engage in listening to the teaching and put it into practice well.

We can also use this as a motivation for engaging in the meditation practice that we have just done. When one genuinely generates an altruistic motivation such as 'How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were free from all suffering and led to the ultimate state of happiness, then that needs to be followed with the commitment 'I myself will do that for them, and for that purpose I will engage in this meditation practice'. The practice then becomes very powerful and meaningful. By generating this motivation again and again we become more and more familiar with this positive state of mind. So spending even just a few moments generating this motivation is a highly meaningful practice.

As mentioned previously, while we might not have generated bodhicitta yet, by cultivating this altruistic mind to the extent that we actually feel that sentiment, we are going beyond the mere aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, and actually generating the wish to take that responsibility upon oneself. Generating the direct intention, 'for that purpose I will engage in this practice' brings in the element of personal responsibility; thus it is called the superior intention. A superior intention is the active intention to take full responsibility for freeing all beings from suffering, and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness.

By familiarising ourselves with this motivation we will definitely reach a stage where, at the very least, no-one will appear as an enemy. Rather, all beings will start to appear appealing and worthy of love and compassion, and an object of practice that leads to enlightenment. As also mentioned previously, when one develops the intention to do everything possible to benefit sentient beings, and to not harm any living being, then all sentient beings will appear as appealing and not hostile. This pure appearance contributes to a real sense of personal joy and happiness.

This is also a significant practice for our own personal development. As we familiarise ourselves with this attitude more and more, we can see its benefit, and thus be encouraged to continue with the practice; then our wish to benefit others will also increase. By understanding how familiarising ourselves with this motivation further strengthens it, we can understand how, when bodhisattvas

become enlightened, they actively engage in going out and helping sentient beings on a constant basis. They certainly don't sit back, relax and enjoy themselves. Because they are enlightened, there is nothing to hold them back anymore, and they can benefit sentient beings constantly. It is through familiarity with this training that one reaches that perfected state of enlightenment.

This has been an abbreviated explanation of how to generate the bodhicitta mind as the basis of one's motivation. As you would know, in the seven-point cause-and-effect sequence one works through earlier states of mind until one reaches the stage where one spontaneously takes on the responsibility for benefitting sentient beings, and for that purpose engages in practising the six perfections. Based on feelings of love and compassion, one develops great love and compassion, which forms the basis for the development of that superior intention. Having developed superior intention, one can then easily generate bodhicitta. Initially however, generating bodhicitta still requires some effort, and so it is called contrived bodhicitta. Whereas when one reaches the stage where the altruistic mind of aspiring to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings is generated spontaneously, effortlessly and continuously, one has generated actual, uncontrived bodhicitta.

2.2.1.2.1. The power of belief

2.2.1.2.1.1. The object of belief (cont.)

Earlier the text explained how aspiring to achieve enlightenment involves abandoning faults, and next it goes on to explain how to acquire the qualities necessary to achieve the ultimate state of enlightenment. Again these very significant points are being presented in a very precise, sequential manner. The Lam Rim teachings mention that the attainment of enlightenment is based on abandoning each and every negativity, and acquiring each and every quality from the very outset of one's practice. More specifically, what is being mentioned is that every attempt to abandon even one negativity, and acquire even one quality, is the basis for proceeding on the path leading to the ultimate state of enlightenment.

This is a really significant point for us to consider. The state of enlightenment attained by the buddhas, who we revere, did not arise spontaneously or miraculously from nothing. Rather, that state of enlightenment is attained as a result of having abandoned each and every negativity, and acquired each and every quality at the time of being a trainee on the path, which eventually and gradually led to that state of enlightenment. This very significant point is very encouraging, because it shows us that we have the same potential. Each negativity that we abandon now, and each quality that we acquire now, is an essential part of the cause to achieve the ultimate state of enlightenment. This is the way to relate to this point.

It is, of course, not sufficient to attempt to acquire qualities if one maintains faults. Indeed, the very process of acquiring qualities entails overcoming certain faults. When each and every fault is abandoned, the quality of abandoning negativities is also acquired. So we need to understand that abandoning faults and acquiring qualities are mutually dependent upon each other. We need to understand that inter-relationship, and thus realise that we cannot hope to acquire qualities while not thinking too much about the necessity of abandoning faults. It is essential that we see that our progress is dependent upon abandoning faults. If we attempt to acquire qualities while holding fast onto our faults, then we will fall short of making any progress in the

Dharma. So from the very outset we need to make a strong attempt to abandon and overcome the faults of attachment, anger and ignorance, from which all other faults stem.

As the Lam Rim teachings clearly explain, the signs that one's practice is coming to fruition is when one sees that the delusions have started to reduce, that one's mind has become more subdued, that one has stronger faith in the teachings and the teacher, and that one has more inclination to engage in the practice. When we notice that our mind has become more and more acquainted with the Dharma in these ways, then that is a clear sign that one has made progress in the practice.

The more we become familiar with the qualities, and the greater the effort we put into overcoming faults, the more rapidly we will obtain qualities and overcome faults. The strong imprint that comes from becoming familiar with the Dharma now will ensure that our Dharma practice will be much easier in our future life.

To abandon delusions we need to first identify them clearly. Then we need to meditate and contemplate their disadvantages. When we clearly see those disadvantages, the strong wish to abandon them will arise, and then whatever attempts one makes to overcome the delusions will be fruitful. If we miss that point, then, although we might be exerting ourselves in the practice of Dharma, our mind will feel weighed down, and we may even feel depressed. That is a sign that the practice has not really taken root yet. Even though it may seem impossible to abandon all negativities and subdue all delusions in this life, the attempts we make now will not be in vain. In the next life, we will be much more able to spontaneously and rapidly apply the antidote to overcome the delusions and acquire qualities. So we definitely benefit from this practice. Conversely, if we resort into thinking, 'Oh, well, since I am not able to abandon the delusions now, I might as well just give up, and not do anything about it', then any progress is definitely limited.

The purpose of sharing this with you is to remind you that the real purpose of your efforts to study and practice is to overcome the delusions. If we make a genuine attempt we will definitely reap a significant result. While I cannot claim that I have abandoned negativities to any great degree, I can safely say that I have made some progress. In my teenage years I was influenced by strong emotions such as anger. However, by seeing the great disadvantages of anger, and making genuine attempts to overcome it, I can safely say that I have progressed to the point where the mind of anger hardly ever occurs now. I am not claiming that I have abandoned the delusions, but in comparison to the state of my mind when I was young, I feel that my mind is genuinely calmer now, and not really affected by strong delusions. So to that extent I have benefitted from my attempts to apply the antidotes earlier in my life.

We really need to think again and again about the disadvantages of negative states of mind such as anger, attachment and so forth. Also think again and again about the advantages of overcoming those delusions. When our mind is not dominated and controlled by anger, it is calmer and much more peaceful. Then, not only will we have achieved some personal transformation, but it will bring benefit to others, because of the contribution that our happy mind makes to our immediate surroundings.

We can clearly see that when anyone is affected by delusions such as anger or attachment, they do not have a happy or peaceful mind. For however long the influence of the

delusion lasts, their mind is in turmoil and unhappy. This is true for every one. No-one is exempted from mental turmoil when they experience anger. Delusions can arise in anyone, regardless of their status, whether they are well-known or respected, whether they are rich and famous, or impoverished. For as long as delusions are present they affect the mind negatively, bringing about unrest and turmoil, and there will be no mental peace.

When the mind is not affected by strong delusions, then for however long that state lasts, one will have a peaceful, joyful, contented and happy state of mind. This is true for everyone, regardless of their status. Even those without many worldly possessions will feel contented, happy and satisfied when their mind is not affected by strong delusions. Conversely, those with fame, possessions, wealth and so forth will not have a happy life if their mind is affected by strong delusions. For as long as their mind is affected by strong delusions, they will not be happy. These are the points we really need consider again and again, as a way of reaffirming our commitment to our practice, where the main focus is on subduing our mind and overcoming the delusions.

Of course all of this relates directly to the text that we are studying, where Shantideva presents the delusions and their antidotes in great detail. The fifth chapter identifies many of the delusions, and the sixth chapter specifically deals with one of the strongest delusions, anger, explaining how to apply the antidote by cultivating patience. In this seventh chapter he is again presenting delusions as faults, and showing how to overcome them by applying enthusiasm or joyful effort.

I personally find studying this text incredibly beneficial. I recall how much I benefitted when I received teachings on the entire text from His Holiness Dalai Lama. Now I have to read it again as preparation for presenting it to you. Familiarising myself with it again, reading it and studying it has, once again, brought me tremendous benefit. So it is quite appropriate to thank you for giving me the opportunity to further familiarise myself with the text. It gives me that opportunity to once more relate to this incredibly powerful practice and teaching, which I find really beneficial.

2.2.1.2.1.2. Taking qualities

Now we come to acquiring the qualities for the achievement of the ultimate state of enlightenment. The two verses relating to this read:

35. *One should establish many qualities
Of self and others.
If one meditates for an ocean of eons
For each individual quality,*
36. *One has not generated meditation
On even a part of one's qualities.
This birth that one has somehow found now,
It is strange that I make it meaningless.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on these verses reads:

One should establish the many qualities of one's own and others' liberation and enlightenment because one has promised to do so.

Not to mention all the qualities, if it is necessary to familiarise oneself for an ocean of eons even for one individual quality of the marks and signs, then one has not started to even partially meditate on those qualities. It is strange that I make meaningless this birth, with its freedoms and endowments, for this and

future rebirths, now when somehow I have found it after such a long time. This is an expression of despair.

As the commentary explains, *One should establish the many qualities of one's own and others' liberation and enlightenment because one has promised to do so.* The third chapter of the text explains the benefits of bodhicitta, and shows how to make that promise to develop bodhicitta. Having made that promise to work for the welfare of other sentient beings, one definitely needs to strive to obtain all the qualities that are the cause for obtaining liberation and enlightenment both for one's own sake, and for the sake of other sentient beings.

In order to establish others in the state of liberation and enlightenment one first needs to have obtained liberation and enlightenment oneself. Without that, one could not possibly establish other sentient beings in that state. Here again we need to reflect upon what liberation means. What does a state of liberation mean, and what does a state of enlightenment mean? At this point, we need to recall all of the explanations on liberation and enlightenment that we have studied. As soon as we hear the word *liberation* we need to immediately recall what that actually entails, and when we hear about *enlightenment* we need to recall what that actually means. We need to go beyond just hearing the words, and contemplate what they actually mean. This understanding, in itself, is said to be a means to purify a lot of negative karma and accumulate a lot of merit. We are aiming at an incredible goal, so whenever these words are mentioned, we need to recall our understanding of them.

As further presented in the commentary, *Not to mention all the qualities, if it is necessary to familiarise oneself for an ocean of eons even for one individual quality of the marks and signs.* The text *Precious Garland*, which we studied in the past, gave an extensive explanation of the marks and signs of the Buddha, obtaining each of which takes many eons of accumulation of merit. So each of the signs and marks of the Buddha has taken tremendous effort, and the accumulation of enormous merit over eons of time.

Yet *one has not started to even partially familiarise oneself with those qualities.* Despite the fact that obtaining just one mark of a buddha requires familiarising oneself with its causes and accumulating merit over many eons, the reality is that one has not yet even started to familiarise oneself, let alone exert oneself, even partially, to accumulate the merits needed to obtain these qualities.

Based on the promise that one has made, and the need to establish those qualities then *it is strange that I make meaningless my rebirth now with these freedoms and endowments for this and future lives.* Not only are we making this life meaningless, but we are also making our future life meaningless by wasting the precious human rebirth we have somehow found after such a long time. This is implying that it is like a miracle that we have obtained the condition of having the freedoms and endowments, and that wasting this very rare opportunity that we have found now is quite absurd.

This is an expression of despair implies that when the enlightened being, the Buddha, who we revere now as a supreme being, was a trainee, he used the opportunity provided by the freedoms and endowments to engage in practices to acquire qualities and abandon faults. Over many previous lifetimes, the Buddha as a trainee, and then as a bodhisattva, engaged in acquiring the causes and conditions leading to enlightenment, thus making his life highly meaningful. As we have the same freedoms and

endowments now, it would be a great pity and a loss if we were to waste it. So this statement is one of words of encouragement to exhort us to actually make the precious human rebirth we have now, with its freedoms and endowments, purposeful and meaningful, by putting it into use in acquiring the causes for obtaining those enlightened qualities.

2.2.1.2.1.3. *Analysing what one has done and what one has not done*

In this section we think about and analyse what virtues we have engaged in, and what we have not done. This is explained in these two verses:

37. *I did not make offerings to the tathagatas
Nor did I offer the happiness of great
celebrations.
I did not do anything for the teachings
And I did not meet the needs of the destitute.*
38. *I did not offer fearlessness to those in danger.
Nor did I give happiness to the wretched.
Hence, I have only given pain and suffering
While in the mother's womb.*

Here, Gyalsab Je explains:

Previously I did not make offerings to the Three Jewels, such as the Bhagavan, Lord Buddha, nor did I offer the happiness of great celebrations that serve sentient beings and the Tathagata. I did nothing for the teachings since I did not practise accordingly to the presentation of the objects of abandonment that have to be abandoned, and antidotes that have to be adopted. I also did not accomplish the wishes of the sentient beings who are destitute. I did not offer protection to those in danger from enemies or sicknesses. I also did not offer satisfaction to those that are wretched due to suffering, and hence I have not practised the holy Dharma at all and have only caused pain and suffering while being in the mother's womb.

As the commentary explains, *previously I did not make offerings to the Three Jewels, such as the Bhagavan Lord Buddha.* Here, making offerings to the Buddha includes direct offerings and indirect offerings. Direct offerings are those actually made by oneself, rather than having someone else do it. It is said that one gains more merit by presenting the offering oneself, rather than asking someone else to present it. In the monastery, sponsors making offerings to the Sangha, such as money, attempt to physically make the offering themselves. I recall one ex-abbot of Sera Monastery, who, even though he was very old, would go and make his offering to each monk personally, despite his feeble state.

Then the commentary explains that, *nor did I offer the happiness of great celebrations that serve sentient beings and the Tathagata.* Here, *not offering the happiness of celebrations* refers to not making offerings to others, not just Sangha but also enlightened beings and other sentient beings. This implies, of course, that making offerings to the buddhas and sentient beings is a very meritorious practice. For example, on the recent occasion of His Holiness' birthday, I suggested offering lunch to everyone because I thought that it would be a great way for you to accumulate merit.

Furthermore *I did nothing for the teachings* means that I have done nothing to propagate or practise the Dharma. Here we need to understand that the teachings are the Buddha's doctrine. Doing a service for the teachings means engaging in propagating the oral teachings such as the three baskets, and propagating the realisations. The Buddha's doctrine is

subsumed into these two categories: the transmission of oral teachings and the transmission of insights.

Doing service in relation to the oral teachings means that, having studied the three baskets, and gained an understanding of them, one then explains it to others. If one were to engage in that, then that would be doing **service to the Buddha's oral teachings**.

Doing **service for the transmission of insights** of the Buddha's teachings means engaging in the practice according to *the presentation of the objects of abandonment that have to be abandoned, and the antidotes that have to be adopted*. In order to gain the realisations of the Buddha's doctrine one needs to apply the practice of abandoning the faults to be abandoned, and adopting qualities that one has to adopt. If one has failed to either propagate the Buddha's oral teachings, or made no effort to gain the realisations of the Buddha's doctrine, then one has not done service to the Buddha's doctrine.

One also needs to understand that this presentation is meant to encourage one to actually engage in the practice, and, if one has not engaged in these practices extensively, to more actively adopt them. Next the commentary states, *I also did not accomplish the wishes of the sentient beings who are destitute*. This relates to beings who are really impoverished being very poor and lacking the basic necessities. Offering such beings any kind of assistance such as food or clothing would make them feel a bit more comfortable, and so it is a really beneficial and virtuous practice. So this part of the commentary is referring to the practices that involve providing immediate care for those in need, to whatever extent one can. When we come across people who are destitute, it is extremely good to offer them help.

Furthermore, *I did not offer protection to those in danger from enemies or sicknesses*, this refers to the practice of helping those who are in danger. You will recall that one of the practices of generosity is giving fearlessness to those who are in fear of losing their life. One engages in this practice when one extends help to those whose life is in immediate danger.

This also applies to animals. For example, there are those who engage in the practice of buying animals that are about to be slaughtered—liberating an animal from the fear of death is an incredibly meaningful practice. As I have mentioned previously, when you are walking around the park for example, and you see an insect struggling in the water and about to drown, it is very easy to lift it out and put it onto dry land. That is said to be an incredible act of generosity, which is of great benefit to that particular insect. The commentary reminds us, if one has not engaged in these practices then one should reprimand oneself saying, 'I have not engaged in this practice of offering protection'.

With respect to, *I did not offer satisfaction to those who are wretched due to suffering*, some commentaries explain that this point also refers to the generosity of giving the Dharma. Here, *wretched* indicates experiencing suffering as a result of lacking the knowledge of how the Dharma prevents one from creating the causes of suffering. If one has not engaged in sharing one's understanding of the Dharma with such people, then one has not engaged in this practice. Conversely, practising giving the Dharma is very meaningful and beneficial. *I also did not offer satisfaction to those that are wretched due to suffering*, also means not showing that which has to be adopted and how to discard or abandon that which has to be abandoned. The implication is that when one engages in doing that then it is a very meritorious

way of creating the causes for the achievement of enlightenment.

Hence I have not practised the holy Dharma at all. The Tibetan word *dampa*, which is translated here as *holy Dharma* can also refer to the actions of holy beings who are perpetually engaged in virtue and abandoning negativities. Thus practising the holy Dharma refers to engaging in the practices of adopting virtue and shunning all non-virtues.

Of course what is being presented here is that one may have engaged in the practices to a certain extent, but if one has not utilised one's full capacity to engage in these practices then it is as if the *only* purpose in taking rebirth is to *cause pain and suffering while being in the mother's womb*. This is a reference to the suffering experienced by the mother (and the child) as she gives birth. If one has not engaged in any purposeful way to make one's life meaningful, then it is as if one has been reborn just to cause suffering to the mother. So this is another way of exhorting us to actually engage in meaningful and purposeful practices.

Then the commentary concludes with, *not having done anything for others* one feels *regret*.

We can finish here for the evening.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྟུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

28 July 2015

While maintaining the motivation generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our meditation practice. *[meditation]*

As usual, let us generate a positive motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practice well.

As mentioned last week, the *tong-len* practice we meditate on is the very core of Mahayana practice, so the more we familiarise ourselves with it the more it reveals to us the whole purpose of listening to the teachings and practising them.

As mentioned previously, in the seven-step cause and effect sequence of developing bodhicitta, the immediate state of mind preceding bodhicitta is called superior intention. This is the mind where one personally takes complete responsibility to free all beings from all suffering, and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness. Having developed this strong personal commitment, one looks deeper into whether one has the ability to do so right now, and realises one does not, but the Buddha does. So one sees that achieving enlightenment is paramount to fulfilling this key purpose. This becomes the immediate cause for developing bodhicitta, which is an essential point to recognise. Once one has developed bodhicitta, the actions that follow are the practises of a bodhisattva.

In relation to the technique of equalising and exchanging oneself with others, while superior intention is not explicitly mentioned, it is implicitly included in the practice. In understanding how the *tong-len* practice works, where one voluntarily takes upon the suffering of all sentient beings and gives one's happiness to them, one sees that it involves taking personal responsibility. Thus the superior intention is definitely included in the technique. Prior to developing superior intention one needs to first develop great love and great compassion, where one has the spontaneous strong wish that all beings be endowed in happiness, and be free from all suffering.

When one develops superior intention it is no longer a mere wish, rather it is an actual commitment to take on that as a personal responsibility. With that understanding, engaging in the *tong-len* practice provides a supreme method for one to free beings from suffering by taking their suffering upon oneself, and place them in happiness by giving one's own happiness to them. Hence the *tong-len* practice is putting the superior intention into practice.

Engaging in regular *tong-len* meditation and incorporating it into our daily lives is a highly meaningful core practice, and it is of paramount importance in the development of love and compassion in our hearts.

As much as we can, we should familiarise our mind with love and compassion as these are the most essential qualities one can develop. The reason we need to take it more seriously and use our time now to regularly acquaint ourselves with love and compassion, is because day by day we are getting closer and closer to the end of our life. If we ensure that we familiarise ourselves with love and compassion then, at the same time as we get closer to the end of this life, we'll also be getting closer to having a good rebirth.

It is essential to act now, while one has the opportunity, because if one doesn't seize this opportunity it is like losing a precious jewel. If we had a precious jewel and we were to lose it before we got a chance to use it, we'd consider that a great loss. The cultivation of love and compassion is like a precious jewel: we have it as a potential within us right now and it is up to us to actually use it by further developing it.

In the refuge teachings, we can understand why the actual refuge within the three jewels is the Dharma jewel. That is because the Dharma jewel is the actual means to protect one from an unfortunate rebirth in the next life, as well as all other fears and sufferings. The very essence of Dharma is none other than the cultivation of love and compassion. Therefore, the more we develop love and compassion, the closer we get to a higher rebirth in our next life, and thus closer to attaining enlightenment.

If one wonders whether one is getting closer to enlightenment or not, observe whether love and compassion is developing in one's heart. When one finds that love and compassion is developing more and more strongly in one's heart, then there's no doubt that one is getting closer and closer to enlightenment. Love and compassion are the basis for developing bodhicitta, and as we develop bodhicitta we are getting closer to enlightenment.

I'm sharing this advice as an essential practice. Just knowing about Dharma topics is not sufficient; one needs to engage in practise. A mere intellectual understanding of the Dharma doesn't seem to move one's mind. But by putting it into practise, meditating and familiarising ourselves with the feeling of love and compassion in our hearts again and again, one will actually begin to have the real taste of Dharma. As it moves our mind we will begin to see a real transformation taking place within ourselves.

If one gains more knowledge of the Dharma, if one doesn't put it into practise, then there is a danger that one generates more pride. We need to protect ourselves from this pitfall. The more we integrate the Dharma within our minds, the more it will overcome the delusions rather than strengthening them. When we put the Dharma into practise then it becomes the means to actually overcome pride, jealousy, anger, attachment and so forth. Every piece of advice the Buddha gave in all his teachings serves as antidotes for overcoming the delusions. When

we integrate the Dharma within our minds, and put it into practise, we will find that transformation does take place. While I don't claim to have any realisations myself, it is with a genuine belief in the Dharma that I present these points for consideration. I spend a lot of time thinking about these points myself and strongly feel that putting the Dharma into practise is a definite way to achieve positive effects. So with this intention in mind I share these points with you again and again.

2.2.1.2.1.1. The object of belief

2.2.1.2.1.1.3. *Analysing what one has done and what one has not (cont.)*

As mentioned in verse 38, which we covered in our last session, we need to ensure that our purpose is not merely to have caused suffering while in the mother's womb.

Again, the verses read:

37. *I did not make offerings to the tathagatas
Nor did I offer the happiness of great
celebrations.
I did not do anything for the teachings
And I did not meet the needs of the destitute.*
38. *I did not offer fearlessness to those in danger.
Nor did I give happiness to the wretched.
Hence, I have only given pain and suffering
While in the mother's womb.*

The verses indicate that if one has not put any effort into the practice of Dharma, then it is as if the only thing we've really done in our lives is bring suffering to our mother. They contain profound advice if we pay attention.

2.2.1.2.1.2. The result of belief

This section of the outline is divided into two:

2.2.1.2.1.2.1. It is unsuitable to give up the belief in the Dharma

2.2.1.2.1.2.2. The reason for this

Here we can reflect on how meticulously Gyalsab Rinpoche presents outlines to explain the meaning of the verses.

He presents that it is unsuitable to give up belief in the Dharma. Naturally, when it explains that one shouldn't give up the belief in the Dharma, one may wonder what the reason may be. So, the next verses provide the reason for not giving up belief in the Dharma.

If belief is important then what are its causes? That is presented next and the sequence itself is very profound.

2.2.1.2.1.2.1. *It is unsuitable to give up the belief in the Dharma*

The verse reads:

39. *Through being separated from belief in Dharma,
Previously and in the present,
I have received this destitution.
Who would give up the wish for the Dharma?*

The commentary explains:

Through having been separated from belief in the holy Dharma, both by way of ascertaining and faith¹,

in the present and in the past, I am experiencing the destitution of being held by the degenerations of cyclic existence. Who that is proficient would give up the belief for the Dharma? Those that wish to be liberated from degeneration should generate belief for the Dharma.

The commentary first presents the shortcomings of not believing in the Dharma, *Through having been separated from belief in the holy Dharma, both by way of ascertaining and faith*, i.e. by lacking ascertainment and faith in the Dharma, *in the present and in the past*, as the result of that what one is *experiencing* now is the *destitution* - the state of *being held by the degenerations* or the sufferings of *cyclic existence*. This essentially points out that the various types of suffering and turmoil one is now experiencing physically and mentally are due to a lack of belief in the Dharma. When one lacks belief in the Dharma, the aspiration to practise Dharma will not arise, therefore aspiration is very much related to belief or faith in the Dharma. So when one has faith then the aspiration to incorporate it and practise it will arise. What is being presented here is that one's present destitute situation in cyclic existence is the result of a lack of faith in the Dharma in the past.

The commentary continues, *who that is proficient would give up the belief for the Dharma?* Those who are proficient refers to those with a profound understanding of the law of cause and effect i.e. karma. The rhetorical question implies that when one has a deep understanding of karma, and an analytical wisdom knowing the cause and effect sequence of karma, then such a skilled, proficient person would not give up a belief in Dharma, as they would value it.

The commentary continues with, *those that wish to be liberated from degeneration*, and here *degeneration* refers to a state of perpetual suffering in cyclic existence. The conclusion is that those wishing to be liberated from that state *should generate belief for the Dharma*.

Gyalsab Rinpoche himself presents a concluding remark on the meaning of the verse: *those that wish to be liberated from degeneration, should definitely generate belief in the Dharma*, because no-one wants to experience these sufferings of cyclic existence. Understanding what causes the sufferings of cyclic existence helps to free one from them. That is the Dharma. Understanding this, one would definitely generate belief in the Dharma.

2.2.1.2.1.2.2. *The reason for this*

The outline next provides the reason for not giving up the belief in the Dharma.

The first two lines of the verse read:

40ab. *The Able One taught that the root
Of every class of virtue is belief.*

The commentary then explains:

The Able One taught that the root of every class of virtue is the belief that has trust in the virtuous objects the way they have been ascertained. It is taught like this in the *Sutra of the Moon Lamp*.

As presented here, *the Able One*, being Shakyamuni, has *taught that the root of every class of virtue is the belief that has trust in the virtuous objects*. Every class of virtue here refers to the virtues which serve as a cause to obtain high

¹ Belief of those of sharp-faculty and belief of those of dull-faculty. Although in Buddhism there is faith based on reason, here faith refers to faith without analysis.

status and definite goodness. High status refers to a rebirth in the higher realms in the next life, as well as the causes for definite goodness, which is liberation and enlightenment.

Every class of virtue subsumes all of the virtues, and the root of acquiring all virtues is the *belief that has trust in the virtuous objects*. Here, *the root*, means that without belief one cannot possibly ascertain virtuous objects, and so one would not aspire to engage in the virtues that are the cause for all the positive results. This also implies that the way virtuous objects have been ascertained brings about virtuous results, while negative causes bring about negative results. Ascertaining this understanding helps one engage in the virtues and actually accomplish those goals.

It explicitly says that the root (or basis) of every class of virtue is belief, which means that it is not the case that for some virtues you need to have belief as a basis while for others you don't. This means that all virtues, from the most basic up to the ultimate, are based on belief. The commentary mentions *the Sutra of the Moon Lamp* in which the Buddha states this.

2.2.1.2.1.3. The cause for belief

This is subdivided into two:

2.2.1.2.1.3.1. Showing the cause for belief

2.2.1.2.1.3.2. Explaining the cause of belief

2.2.1.2.1.3.1. Showing the cause for belief

What I explained earlier is presented in the next two lines of the verse.

The verse reads:

*40cd. Its root is continual meditation
On the ripening results.*

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse as follows:

The root of belief in turn is to meditate on belief in the virtuous and non-virtuous karmas and their ripening results. If one has not ascertained karmic cause and effect well, then one has not found a realisation of the Dharma that will please the buddhas. Therefore one should strive in it.

The fact that some who say they have ascertained emptiness, but disregard karmic cause and effect, invalidates their understanding of emptiness.

Here the commentary specifically presents that *the root of belief in turn is to meditate* or to familiarise oneself with *belief in the virtuous and non-virtuous karmas and their ripening results*. The way to develop belief or faith is to meditate, and to familiarise oneself again and again with *the virtuous and non-virtuous karmas and their ripening results*. This means that the more one contemplates it, the more one develops a conviction in the cause and effect sequence of how non-virtuous actions (non-virtuous karma) definitely bring about unwanted results such as suffering, and that virtuous karmas definitely bring about happiness as their result.

The deeper one's conviction in this, the more inclined one would be to avoid non-virtuous actions (non-virtuous karma) as a way to prevent experiencing the effect of suffering, and the more inclined one will be to engage in virtues as a way to gain the results of happiness for

oneself. If one has a weak conviction about this fact, then one would not hesitate to create non-virtues and may not be keen on developing virtuous actions. Therefore the very root of belief is developing that conviction.

Gyaltsab Rinpoche further emphasises this point when stating that *if one has not ascertained karmic cause and effect well, then one has not found a realisation of the Dharma, one has not actualised the Dharma that will please the buddhas. Therefore one should strive in it*. Here, the commentary specifically gives the advice that for as long as one has not developed a strong conviction on the karmic cause and effect sequence, then, no matter what understanding one may have gained, one has actually not actualised the Dharma in a way that would please the buddhas.

The core advice of the Buddha's teachings, its very basis, is to avoid harming other sentient beings, and on top of that, to engage in ways to benefit and help other beings. On that basis one then goes for refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. So the core of the Buddha's teachings is non-harmfulness or non-violence towards other beings.

Without a conviction in the cause and effect of karma, there is nothing to stop one from engaging in harmful actions that actually harm sentient beings. Then, if one harms sentient beings, there is no way one can please the buddhas because the sentient beings are the very object which the buddhas hold most dear. So when we harm sentient beings we will naturally be displeasing the buddhas by going against their advice. Therefore the more one abides by the law of karma and refrains from engaging in non-virtuous deeds that harm other beings, the more we engage in practices that please the buddhas. Hence, the commentary emphasises, *one should strive in it*.

To be considered a Buddhist practitioner, the basic practice is observing morality. In this sense morality refers to specific practices which refrain from harming other sentient beings. Then, based on practising morality, one engages in further practices that are presented in the teachings. As such, the morality of refraining from harming other beings is the very basis of Buddhism, so if one is practising that one can safely assume that one is a practising Buddhist. We need to understand that the essence of the Buddha's teaching is based on morality, and that all of the other practices ensue from that.

Gyaltsab Je further mentions, *the fact that some who say they have ascertained emptiness, but disregard karmic cause and effect, invalidates their understanding of emptiness*, which is a point we touched on earlier. The danger here is that without a correct understanding of emptiness one may easily misinterpret emptiness to mean that nothing exists, and therefore karmic cause and effect also doesn't exist. One could easily come to this wrong conclusion and then think one could do anything one wishes, as cause and effect doesn't apply to oneself. However, when one gains the correct understanding of emptiness it should in fact validate and strengthen one's understanding of the cause and effect of karma. This should be the case, as understanding emptiness involves understanding that things are empty of inherent existence i.e. that things are empty of existing independently, and thus of not relying on any causes and conditions. When that is ascertained,

one understands that everything arises in dependence on its causes and conditions i.e. dependent arising.

When things are presented as being empty, if one does not understand that this means being empty of inherent existence, one falls short of the real meaning of emptiness and faces the danger of negating actual existence, and thus holding a wrong view of karma by thinking that cause and effect does not apply. When one understands that emptiness means things are empty of independent existence, then that actually establishes that they exist interdependently. I've explained this point before with the passage from the *Heart Sutra* that says, *form is empty, emptiness is form*, which is exactly the point made here. When one understands how form is empty of inherent existence then that understanding validates what emptiness is. This phrase explains how all existence, forms, and all other phenomena, are actually manifestations of emptiness. Because form is empty of inherent existence it is possible to establish form conventionally; if form were to exist inherently then it would not be possible for form to function on a conventional level. To restate the point, because form is empty of inherent existence it is possible for form to function and exist as form. Thus, form and all other phenomena arise as manifestations of emptiness.

I've explained these points in detail in previous teachings. So whenever there's mention of emptiness you need to incorporate those explanations to reinforce the proper understanding. In this way you will be able to periodically bring the correct understating of emptiness to mind, and familiarising yourselves with it again and again. Every moment we think about the meaning of emptiness, and apply that understanding in our practice, it becomes a powerful means to gain an incredible amount of merit as it is a highly virtuous activity. At the same time it also becomes the most powerful means to purify extensive negative karmas, by removing subtle imprints of misconceptions. And at the same time it also implants very positive imprints in our mind.

So, when thinking simply about how form is empty, and incorporating that understanding right away, you will come to see that it doesn't mean that form does not exist, rather that it doesn't exist inherently and independently. While it does *not* exist inherently and independently, it does exist, but there is no other way for it to exist either than by depending on causes and conditions. When that understanding develops in our mind we are moving in the right direction towards gaining the unmistakable and correct understanding of emptiness.

2.2.1.2.1.3.2. Explaining the cause of belief

This is subdivided into three:

2.2.1.2.1.3.2.1. Contemplating mixed karmic cause and effect

2.2.1.2.1.3.2.2. Contemplating singular white karmic cause and effect

2.2.1.2.1.3.2.3. Contemplating black karmic cause and effect

This heading presents the various types of karmas as the cause for belief. The first, *mixed karmic cause and effect*, implies there are certain karmas that we create which are not entirely virtuous or not entirely non-virtuous, but a

mixture of both. Then there is *singular white karmic cause and effect*, meaning that certain karmas are completely virtuous and thus their effect is also completely virtuous. Then contemplating the black karma is where the karma in its entirety is negative.

2.2.1.2.1.3.2.1. Contemplating mixed karmic cause and effect

Contemplating and understanding this is a very practical way for one to get a good understanding of the basis of the Dharma. So it is very relevant to us.

The verse reads:

41. *Sufferings and mental unhappiness,
The many different horrors,
And being separated from one's wishes
Arise from negative behaviour.*

The commentary reads as follows:

Because the physical sufferings of migrators, their mental feelings of unhappiness, the different horrors of human and non-human existences and separation from the objects of one's wishes such as friends, relatives, wealth and so forth all arise from the cause of negative behaviour, one should strive in abandoning negativity.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the sufferings of certain migrators, even in the human realms. *The physical sufferings of migrators* as well as *their mental feelings of unhappiness*, plus *the different horrors of human and non-human existences*, refers to the harms we may experience from other human or non-human existences. Furthermore, there's suffering arising from *separation from the objects of one's wishes such as friends, relatives, wealth and so forth*. All of the experiences we have, even with good conditions as a human, *arise from negative behaviour* and negative actions. Understanding this one should resolve to *strive in abandoning negativity*.

To understand this on a personal level, recognise that whenever we experience a mishap, it is not others who have caused us this mishap. We are experiencing the results of our own negative karma. Practising the opposite of this creates the opposite effect, which is presented in the next two verses where the *singular karmic cause and effect* is explained.

The next two verses read:

42. *By creating the virtue intended in one's mind,
Wherever one migrates to
There one will, through these merits,
Be honoured by the resulting qualities.*
43. *Although those creating negativity wish for
happiness
Wherever they migrate to,
There they will, through this negativity,
Be destroyed by the weapons of suffering.*

The commentary explains the meaning of these verses whose essence I have explained already:

Having created the virtue one intended to do in one's mind, motivated by the mind of abandoning, whichever birthplace one then migrates to, there one will, through these merits, be honoured by the resulting qualities of the ripening result.

The effects however do not follow merely the wish for happiness or suffering. Although the person acting non-virtuously wishes for happiness, by nature, wherever they migrate to, there they will,

through that negativity, be destroyed by the weapons of suffering. Therefore one should strive in abandoning negativity. The qualities of the result are the mode of the nature of the result.

It says that, *having created the virtue one intended to do in one's mind, motivated by the mind of abandoning as a result, whichever birthplace one then migrates to, there one will, through these merits, be honoured by the resulting qualities of the ripening result.* This explains that when one's mind is motivated with the intention of abandoning negativity, it creates virtue, which then becomes the ripened result experienced in whatever place to which one migrates. Wherever one may happen to be reborn, the merits will ripen in that place.

On the point that, *whichever birthplace one then migrates to, there one will, through these merits, be honoured by the resulting qualities of the ripening result,* the commentary specifically explains the infallibility of karma. In other words, if one has created virtues, then that virtuous result will definitely be experienced wherever one may take rebirth.

This also holds true for the non-virtuous karmas one has created. For example, while being reborn in an unfortunate realm such as an animal, which is a result of a previous negative karma, some good conditions can be experienced. We know some pets are very well fed and well groomed with a seemingly nice, free life and fully taken care of. These good conditions are the result of positive karma, created previously by that being. So even if one is reborn in an unfortunate rebirth, one still carries the positive imprints of previously-created good karma.

In contrast, a being might have a higher rebirth such as in the human realm, but the conditions are very poor. The means for basic survival are scarce, and many hardships, difficulties and sufferings are experienced. This is an example of how, while a previous good karma brings them into a good rebirth, what they then experience as bad conditions are the results of previously created negative karma. This again shows the infallibility of karma; even when one is born in a good migration, in a higher rebirth, the ripening results of previously-created negative karma catch up with oneself.

Many examples are presented in the Lam Rim, specifically where the causal karma can be virtuous, but the completing karma can be negative. The main point is that the results of karma will definitely be experienced. When one creates a positive karma, positive effects will definitely be experienced wherever one takes rebirth. And if one has created negative karmas, those will definitely ripen in whatever rebirth one may take.

The second verse says that *the effects however do not follow merely the wish for happiness or suffering.* I regularly emphasise this point. If one wishes to be happy, one cannot just sit around and think that happiness will somehow come by some day. One actually has to create the causes to be happy. Even when wanting to achieve certain worldly goals, we need to actually exert ourselves to create the conditions to achieve that goal. Likewise if one doesn't wish to experience problems, just sitting around and wishing for them to go away won't work, we actually have to engage in specific causes to remove those conditions.

The commentary further explains, *although the person acting non-virtuously wishes for happiness, by nature, wherever they migrate to, there they will, through that negativity, be destroyed by the weapons of suffering.*

The text went into quite a bit of detail about that previously. There's no-one who wouldn't wish to be happy, and there's no-one who would wish to experience suffering. But while wishing for happiness, many destroy the causes for their happiness. And while not wishing for suffering, they actually unintentionally create the causes for suffering. The problem is ignorance—not knowing how to apply the causes for happiness and how to avoid the causes that lead one to experience the unwanted suffering results. An earlier verse mentions that whilst wishing to not experience any kind of suffering, migrators run to the very cause of suffering. And whilst wishing to experience happiness they destroy their own causes for happiness. The point is that there's no-one who doesn't wish for happiness, but if one destroys the very causes of one's happiness one cannot achieve that state of happiness. Similarly, while one does not wish any kind of suffering, if one actually creates the causes for it, even if one does not wish for it, sufferings will fall on oneself.

2.2.1.2.1.3.2.2. Contemplating singular white karmic cause and effect

This explains actions that are entirely white or virtuous karma. The verse is preceded by the statement:

Through having meditated on virtuous dharmas the children of the conquerors take rebirth in the Land of Great Bliss and the like.

This means that having familiarised oneself with virtuous dharmas, the children of the conquerors (the bodhisattvas), *actually take rebirth in the Land of Great Bliss and the like.*

The verse reads:

44. *In the centre of an expansive fragrant fresh lotus flower
Splendour is born from the nourishing melodious teachings of the conqueror
Possessing a supreme body born from a lotus unfolded by the Able One's luminosity,
Abiding before the conquerors, they become the Tathagata's children by virtue.*

The commentary explains:

They abide in the centre of a lotus that is the characteristic of birthplace, a beautiful, fresh, vast and expansive fragrant lotus that generates bliss just by touching it.

Instead of living off worldly foods they listen to the more distinguished melodious teachings of the Buddha that possess the sixty qualities of enlightened speech and generate splendour and complexion through the food of the realisation of its subject, emptiness.

To arise from a lotus opened and unfolded by the luminosity of the Able One, the Tathagata, is the characteristic of birth. They possess the characteristic of body, a supreme body with the marks and signs. As the characteristic of teacher, they abide in front of Amitabha Buddha and the like and are carried by their dharmas.

By way of these characteristics the children of the tathagatas come about solely through white virtuous karma.

The first part of the commentary examines the characteristic of their birthplace which is, *they abide in the centre of a lotus that is the characteristic of birthplace, a beautiful, fresh, vast and expansive fragrant lotus that generates bliss just by touching it.* This is a description of the miraculous birth of a bodhisattva in the pure lands, born from a lotus with very pleasant conditions.

Next it presents the characteristics that nourish bodhisattvas in the pure lands, *instead of living off worldly foods, like the gross kinds of foods that we consume, they listen to the more distinguished melodious teachings of the Buddha that possess the sixty qualities of enlightened speech.* Their time is spent listening to the teachings of the Buddhas and then they *generate splendour and complexion through the food of the realisation of its subject, emptiness.* What nourishes the bodhisattvas' bodies in the pure lands is the splendour they generate, and their complexion is nourished with the food of the realisation of emptiness, which is the subject of those teachings.

The characteristic of the birth itself is, *to arise from a lotus opened and unfolded by the luminosity of the Able One, the luminosity or the light rays of the Able One (Buddha) the Tathagata, is the characteristic of birth.* Initially the lotus bud is closed, then the light rays that come forth from the buddhas serve as a condition for it to open, and it is within that lotus that a bodhisattva takes birth. The characteristic of the body is that, *they possess the characteristic of body, a supreme body with the marks and signs.*

As the characteristic of teacher, they abide in front of Amitabha Buddha and are carried (meaning transformed or further developed by) the dharmas of the buddhas such as *Amitabha Buddha* and other buddhas. What is being explained here is that they have actual buddhas such as *Amitabha Buddha* and others, giving direct teachings to them in their actual forms. They have the merit to be able to see the buddhas and receive teachings directly, so their mind develops rapidly.

The commentary concludes that, *by way of these characteristics,* which are the five characteristics just mentioned:

1. the characteristic of the birthplace;
2. the characteristic of the nourishment or food;
3. the characteristic of the actual birth;
4. the characteristic of the physical body; and
5. the characteristic of teacher

... the children of the tathagatas, (the bodhisattvas), come about solely through white virtuous karma. So these characteristics with which the bodhisattvas are endowed in the pure lands, *come about solely through white virtuous karma,* meaning they are completely the results of white virtuous karma.

We can reflect upon how wondrous and pleasant that sounds: the very birth is pleasant, no suffering is involved, just being born miraculously from a lotus, with the lotus opened by the light of the buddhas. The body is not a gross body, but a very pure body, which is not nourished by gross food, but rather by the realisations of

the teachings themselves. Then they have the marks and signs on their bodies, and receive teachings directly from the buddhas. This is a wondrous thing we can aspire to, which is why it is appropriate to make aspirations to be born in the blissful pure lands. There are many who take Amitabha as their main practice, and make strong prayers to be born in the pure lands. This is a significant point.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

4 August 2015

The prayers that we have just recited encompass both the Mahayana refuge and bodhicitta, which suffices for the altruistic Mahayana motivation. With this motivation intact we can now engage in our meditation practice.

In accordance with the sequence of the practice, we first take refuge and then generate bodhicitta. When taking refuge is combined with the bodhicitta motivation, such as 'I go for refuge for the sake of all mother sentient beings in order to liberate them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness', or 'I take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and engage in practices so that I obtain Buddhahood', then this is called generating *exceptional refuge*.

Now we can begin our meditation practice. *[meditation]*

It is good to generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, in order to liberate them from all suffering, and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teachings, and put them into practise well.

2.2.1.2.1. The power of belief

2.2.1.2.1.3. The cause for belief

2.2.1.2.1.3.2. Explaining the cause of belief (cont.)

2.2.1.2.1.3.2.3. Contemplating black karmic cause and effect

This is presented in the following verse:

45. *Extremely tormented as one is fully skinned by the minions of Yama
Copper molten by extreme heat is poured onto one's body,
Pierced by flaming swords and daggers the flesh is carved up in hundreds of pieces,
Fallen on the blazing iron ground, comes about due to the many non-virtuous karmas.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Due to the karma of killing and so forth, one will be extremely tormented by suffering as all one's skin is being pulled off by the minions of the lord of death. The characteristic of engagement, which is that copper, molten by extreme heat is poured over one's body, is difficult to bear. Not only this, but one will be pierced by flaming swords and daggers and one's flesh will be carved up into many hundreds of pieces.

The experience of being tormented by the characteristic of place, which means that one falls onto the blazing iron grounds, comes about through the many non-virtuous karmas such as the karmas of immediate retribution, the karma of abandoning Dharma and the like.

We have already covered some of the types of sufferings that are explained here. The main point is that these sufferings are experienced in the realms into which one is reborn, and

that they are the result of the negative karma that one has previously created. As presented here, we need to pay attention to the karmas of immediate retribution, also known as heinous crimes, the karma of abandoning the Dharma and so forth. It is really worthwhile to pay attention to abandoning the ten non-virtuous actions, for one will then naturally avoid engaging in many misdeeds. For example, three of the five karmas of immediate retribution i.e. killing one's mother, killing one's father and killing an arhat, are all included in the misdeed of killing. So when one makes the commitment to refrain from killing, one is naturally protected from creating these extremely heavy negative karmas.

Indeed, contemplating abandoning the ten non-virtuous karmas is a high level of practice. In order to abandon the ten non-virtuous karmas you need to practise the ten white karmas, or the ten virtuous actions. Just as there are negative consequences from committing the non-virtuous karmas, as has just been explained, one will experience positive effects from observing the ten virtuous karmas. This is explained in great detail in the teachings.

When we make the commitment to avoid the ten non-virtuous karmas then that forms the basis for practicing morality. It is explained in the teachings that when one makes an active commitment to avoid the ten non-virtuous actions, then that serves as the basis for one to take the self-liberation, bodhisattva and tantric vows. It also serves as the basis for keeping the commitments of these vows. So practising the ten non-virtuous actions is the basis for observing all of the commitments that one may have.

As explained earlier, if one doesn't observe the karmic law of cause and effect, and abide in its practice, then one is not able to please the buddhas. This emphasises the essentiality of abandoning the ten non-virtues, and adopting the ten virtues.

2.2.1.2.1.4. Concluding summary

*46ab. Therefore one should practise belief in virtue
And meditate on it with great respect.*

The commentary reads:

Therefore, having contemplated the way of karmic cause and effect, one should practise belief in virtue and meditate on it with great respect by way of having conviction.

Having extensively identified the virtues and the non-virtues, and the effects of their white karma and negative karma respectively, one then puts that understanding into practice. By meditating on and familiarising oneself with virtue one understands that the positive effect of virtue is something that one wishes for, and so one engages in virtue. Likewise, by realising that one does not wish to experience the effects of negative karma, or non-virtue, one takes the initiative and makes a strong determination to avoid non-virtue.

We find that whenever we put some effort and energy into accumulating virtues we develop a strong sense of joy. So we rejoice in having accumulated virtue, and compliment ourselves: 'It is incredibly fortunate that I have had opportunity to engage in this virtue today'. Rejoicing in the virtue that one has accumulated actually increases the positive effects of that virtue. Thus, rejoicing in virtue is the optimum means to increase the positive effects of one's virtue.

Of course, we may try our best to avoid creating negative karma. However, due to strong habituation with the

delusions in our mind we might find that we still engage in some non-virtuous actions. But by contemplating and acknowledging the consequences of those negative deeds, we can develop regret, thinking, 'It has been unfortunate that I have engaged in such negativities'.

It is essential to acknowledge the effects of positive karma and negative karma. When one experiences pleasant situations and good things happening in one's life, then one can immediately rejoice and think, 'These are the positive effects of my previous karma'. When one experiences difficulties and unwanted suffering in life, one can immediately reflect, 'These are none other than the effects of my own doing, the negative karma that I have created in the past'. One understands that whatever one experiences, whether it is positive or negative, is the result of one's own karma. There is no other cause of suffering and misery than one's own negative karma. In this way, one takes the initiative to immediately relate whatever one experiences as effects of karma that one had created in the past.

That then generates the initiative to avoid creating more negativity, and to develop strong regret (which is said to be the most powerful of the four opponent powers) and engage in purification practices for negativity that one has already created. With this awareness in mind, one will then be able to lead a life abiding in karma. When one takes the initiative to develop this keen awareness of karma, one will take every opportunity to accumulate virtue, and to avoid engaging in negativity. If, and when, one finds oneself engaging in negativity, one will immediately be able to develop regret and purify it.

When one puts this into practice on a daily basis, then at the end of each day, as one reflects on the actions created during the day, when one finds that one has accumulated more virtue, that then becomes a great source of joy and one rejoices in one's good deeds. If one finds that one has created more negativity, then one develops strong regret, engages in some form of purification practice, and finally makes a commitment to avoid engaging in that negativity again.

When we take the initiative to integrate the Dharma into our mind, then eventually that becomes a positive habit, and we become inclined to engage in virtue. We will find that our mind spontaneously and joyfully wishes to engage in virtue. When that takes place, then that is the positive outcome of contemplating karma. While it is important for us to know the categories and divisions of karma, that in itself will not benefit one. We will only benefit from that understanding and knowledge when we actually put it into practice.

When we engage in a daily practice like this, contemplating the karmic cause and effect in detail, engaging in virtue, and avoiding or purifying negative karmas, then we become more and more acquainted with engaging in virtuous deeds, and less and less inclined to engage in negativity. When that transformation takes place, one naturally and spontaneously wants to engage in virtuous deeds, and naturally wants to avoid negative deeds. That is the hallmark that our practice of karma has taken effect. You might already have a belief in karma, but it is only by abiding in karma, which means putting it into practice, that we reap positive results from that belief.

When the commentary states *one should practise belief in faith and virtue, and meditate on it with great respect by way of having conviction* it is explaining that when one has developed a conviction in karma based on a profound understanding of it, then one will be able to engage in developing familiarity with virtue. By developing a strong conviction in the

importance of virtue, one will naturally be inclined to adopt virtue as one's practice, while at the same time abandoning negativities.

That will enable us to confidently face the next life. When we reach the time when we have to discard this body and go on to the next life, there will be no hesitation. That is because we will have the conviction that having engaged in virtue, we have created the causes to obtain all the good conditions necessary to continue to practise Dharma in the next life. In fact, when one reaches a significant age, or if one's body is really weakened due to some disease, then one will be quite glad to leave this old and weak body behind, and get a fresh new body, with all the good conditions intact. With that conviction there will be no hesitation about the prospect of death and going onto the next life, instead there will be joy. These are the practical and positive effects of having belief in, and abiding in karma.

If there is strong regret at the time of death, then the mind will be quite disturbed and it won't be a very pleasant death. Apparently, all the negativities and non-virtuous actions that one has committed in one's life come vividly to mind, bringing real remorse and regret at that time. That brings a mind of fear, sadness and anxiety at the prospect of facing death. In contrast, if one has a virtuous mind, and thus a joyful state of mind, then the death will be a positive experience which will then establish the immediate conditions for a good existence in the future life. This, in fact, seems to be one practical benefit of practising the Dharma. It is this immediately practical, personal goal that gives us the impetus to practise Dharma.

As the Lam Rim teachings explain, the state of mind at the time of death will be the one with which one is most familiar. If one has strong familiarity with virtue, then it will be a virtuous state of mind that will naturally arise. If one has a strong familiarity with non-virtue, then the state of mind at the time of death will most likely be a non-virtuous mind. As the Lam Rim further explains, if one has virtue and non-virtue in equal strength, then whatever one is engaged in first will arise as the prominent state of mind. So Lama Tsong Khapa is presenting us with some very significant and crucial points as a means to encourage us to actually engage in the practice of Dharma by abiding in the law of karma and so forth.

2.2.1.2.2. The power of stability

This has two subdivisions:

2.2.1.2.2.1. Striving steadfastly

2.2.1.2.2.2. Abiding steadfastly after having started

2.2.1.2.2.1. Striving steadfastly

This has two further subdivisions:

2.2.1.2.2.1.1. Starting upon having investigated well

2.2.1.2.2.1.2. The fault of giving up after having started

Here we can see how the outlines themselves present the material of the text in a very systematic, logical way. Not only that, but they are also, in themselves, instructions on how to engage properly in the practices and so forth. As presented here, one needs to have a strong commitment to do what one wants to do, and then develop a strong commitment to complete what one has started.

Starting upon having investigated well is a really crucial instruction. Before one engages in an activity one needs to first investigate what the benefits are and so forth. Then, having completed that thorough investigation, one will not create *the fault of giving up after having started*.

2.2.1.2.2.1.1. Starting upon having investigated well

The first two lines of verse related to this heading read:

*46cd. Having started through the ritual of
Vajradhvaja
One should meditate on pride.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

The sixth dedication of the *Arya Vajradhvaja Sutra* says:

Lha'ibu, just as the rising sun, without being stopped by blindness or uneven mountains, illuminates the objects that are suitable, bodhisattvas who arise for the purpose of others, ripen and liberate those suitable to be subdued, without being stopped by the various faults of sentient beings.

The citation from this ritual explains that having started a virtuous action, one should meditate on the pride of bringing it to completion.

First there is the citation from the sixth chapter of the *Arya Vajradhvaja Sutra*, which is the dedication: *Lha'ibu*, (son of the gods) *just as the rising sun, without being stopped by blindness or uneven mountains, illuminates the objects that are suitable...*

The analogy presented here is that when the sun rises there is nothing that stops the sun's rays from illuminating earth—it illuminates the whole surface. Uneven mountains and so forth are not obstacles for the sun's rays to reach earth, likewise blindness doesn't prevent the light of the sun from illuminating the ground.

Similarly, *bodhisattvas who arise for the purpose of others, ripen and liberate those suitable to be subdued, without being stopped by the various faults of sentient beings.* As explained here, when bodhisattvas resolve to help sentient beings, those who are suitable to be subdued will naturally be subdued, and the faults and negativities of other sentient beings will not be an obstacle for bodhisattvas to continuously benefit them.

We can relate this to ourselves. We might be helping someone for a while but then start complaining, 'Oh, they get upset very easily', or 'They don't really appreciate what I do for them', and in this manner we find many reasons not to continue helping them. So the faults of the person we are helping become an obstacle for us to actually benefit them. The main point being explained with this citation is that once a bodhisattva resolves to benefit sentient beings, they will not give up that commitment, even the faults and negativities of sentient beings are not an obstacle to their commitment to benefit sentient beings.

Having cited the sutra, the commentary goes on to explain, *The citation from this ritual explains that having started a virtuous action, one should meditate on the pride of bringing it to completion.* If one starts a virtuous action, one continues with that action until it comes to completion, and does not give up part way through.

Both the root verse and the commentary state that *one should meditate on pride.* In this context pride should be understood as a mind of great strength, courage and self-confidence. This form of pride is not deluded pride.

The next verse under this heading is:

*47. One should first investigate the action
And then start or not start.
To not start is supreme
But having started one should not stop.*

The commentary on this verse explains:

Before engaging in an action one needs to analyse with one's mind whether or not one has the capacity for this action. If one is able, then one starts the action; if one is not able, then one does not. To not start the action is supreme, but once one has started then one should not stop until it is completed.

As the commentary clearly explains, *Before engaging in an action one needs to analyse with one's mind whether or not one has the capacity for this action.* Here, *capacity* can refer to internal capacity as well as external capacity. Internal capacity means investigating whether one has the inner strength or commitment to be able to see the action through and so forth, and as well as seeing the benefits of that action. External capacity relates to external means and conditions.

Although this advice is explicitly related to virtuous actions and engaging in bodhisattva's deeds, it is, as I regularly emphasise, also crucial advice for everyday life. Whatever the situation, whether it be study or work, and whatever the activity, we need to first investigate to see whether we have the ability to complete that task.

Sometimes we might understate our abilities, and sometimes we might be over-zealous, so we need to really look into our own situation. This is really profound advice. We need to use our wisdom and intelligence lest we fall victim to being wrongly influenced or manipulated by others. If we are too gullible, we can be deceived or misled by others, even if they have the best intentions. If someone says, 'You should do it like this' and we don't really think much about it and say, 'OK, I will do as you say', then we might find later that we have taken on much more than we can manage.

Also, before making a promise to others we should really check and make sure that it is something we are able to do. Once we find that it is within our capacity, then we can safely make the commitment. These are really safety measures that we need to put in place before we engage in any activity.

As further mentioned in the commentary, *if one is able then one starts the action, but if one is not able then one does not.* Again, this is very practical advice. Having done a thorough analysis as to whether one has the capacity to complete an activity, one can then make proper assessment as to whether to engage in it or not.

The next part of the explanation, *to not start the action is supreme*, relates to investigating an action and realising that one doesn't have the full capacity to complete it, or that the necessary conditions are not intact. If one finds that the conditions are not intact, then it is best not to start that action.

But *once one has started* an action or activity then *one should not stop until it is completed.* If one has found that there is some benefit in completing the action and has already started the action, then one needs to complete it. The conditions may not be quite right, but because one has understood the benefit, one should complete the action. People often say things like, 'Oh, I'll give it a try, and if I can't manage then I can just leave it'. However as explained here, this can be a fault.

2.2.1.2.2.1.2. The fault of giving up after having started

The next part of the text explains the faults of giving up after having started an action. Many consider these few verses as very sound advice, and it is often cited.

The commentary begins with a query:

Query: What is the fault of stopping something one has started?

48. *One will be habituated to it in other lives
And negativity and suffering will increase.
One is diminished at other times and at
The time of the result; one will not achieve.*

Then Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning of the verse:

Answer: Through the concordant cause of having acted like this before one will in other lives also be habituated to giving up. The action similar to the cause of a person that breaks a promise is that their negativity increases, and the ripening result is that their suffering increases.

Further, one will be diminished later at different times, when starting other actions or at the time of the result of this action, which has become greatly prolonged. The other actions one will also not achieve as well.

The commentary states very clearly, *through the concordant cause of having acted like this before, one will in other lives also be habituated to giving up.* Here we can see that even in contemporary activities there are certain individuals who are quite keen about starting something, but after a while they put it aside. Then they start something else, and after a while they put that aside too. That becomes a pattern, where they keep starting something new, but never really see it through to completion.

If one is habituated to doing that now, then that is a concordant result of having previously engaged in actions and not seeing them through to completion. As explained here, the consequence of not completing an action that one has started will be a concordant cause for acting in the same way in future lives, where one will be habituated to giving up easily. We have all seen people who never really see anything through, and that is due to habituation.

The concordant cause and effect is also understood in relation to non-virtuous actions such as killing. The concordant effect of the cause of killing in a past life would be very readily and gladly taking the life of others, animals and the like, in this life. Similarly with positive actions: if one engages in positive actions in this life, then the concordant effect will be that one will be naturally inclined to engage in positive actions and virtuous deeds in the next life.

As the commentary further explains, *the action similar to the cause of a person that breaks a promise is that their negativity increases.* The negativity of breaking a promise increases, and the ripening result is that the suffering increases. This particularly relates to the pledges and vows that are part of a bodhisattva's practice. If one breaks those virtuous promises, then naturally the negativities increase, and thus future suffering increases.

Further, one will be diminished later at different times, when starting other actions or at the time of the result of this action, means that a further negative consequence of starting an action, and not seeing it through to completion is that due to that earlier habituation, when one starts a similar action again one will again not see that through. In this way it becomes *greatly prolonged*, meaning that whatever action one does will take a long time to reach any kind of completion, because one keeps having to restart that action again and again.

The other actions one will also not achieve as well, means that the result will not be achieved.

2.2.1.2.2.2. Abiding steadfastly after having started

This is a presentation of the ways and means of abiding steadfastly, or abiding by the commitments one makes.

There are two subdivisions:

2.2.1.2.2.2.1. Explaining it condensed

2.2.1.2.2.2.2. Explaining it individually

2.2.1.2.2.2.1. *Explaining it condensed*

The relevant lines of the root text are:

*49ab. Action, affliction and ability,
Practise pride regarding those three.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Practise pride in the three, which counteracts discouragement and increases strength: pride in action after having commenced the action, pride in afflictions being an object of abandonment, and pride in the ability to engage and abandon.

As explained here in the commentary, one *practises pride in the three, which counteracts discouragement and strength.* As mentioned previously, in this context pride refers to a mind of great strength, courage and self-confidence. There are three types of this form of pride: *pride in action after having commenced an action, pride in afflictions being an object of abandonment, and pride in the ability to engage and abandon.*

2.2.1.2.2.2.2. *Explaining it individually*

Here there are three subdivisions:

2.2.1.2.2.2.2.1. Pride in taking action

2.2.1.2.2.2.2.1.2. Pride in ability

2.2.1.2.2.2.2.3. Pride against the afflictions, or applying the antidote to the afflictions

Here again, we need to understand that the term pride in this context implies a mind of courage, strength, and self-confidence. As the Lam Rim teaching also mentions, pride is a term that can be used to describe a positive state of mind.

2.2.1.2.2.2.2.1. *Pride in taking action*

Pride of action is subdivided into three:

2.2.1.2.2.2.2.1.1. Identifying the pride of taking action

2.2.1.2.2.2.2.1.2. The reason for doing this

2.2.1.2.2.2.2.1.3. Practising pride that also carries the burden of the inferior actions of others

2.2.1.2.2.2.2.1.1. *Identifying the pride of taking action*

Again, the pride of action is not the normal deluded pride. It is explained in these two lines of verse:

*49cd. Saying 'I will do the action alone',
Is the very pride of action.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

If one sees that others could do the action as well, one thinks, 'I shall do this alone'. The strength of mind generated here is the pride in action.

If one sees the benefit of an action, one takes the initiative to take on a responsibility, even when there are others capable of doing it. As the Lam Rim teaching explains clearly, one resolves, 'I will do that action. I will not rely upon others to do it, but I will personally take responsibility for that action'. Therefore it is a personal resolution. This is particularly the case with activities that fulfil the purposes of oneself and others, as one cannot rely upon others to fulfil purposes that benefit oneself and others. One has to do it oneself. This is the point of resolving 'I will do this alone'.

When identifying pride of action, the Lam Rim teachings explain clearly that having identified the positive results of fulfilling the purpose of oneself others, one then resolves, 'I,

myself, will take on responsibility for achieving that'. That is pride in action.

The Lam Rim then quotes from Nagarjuna's *Letter to the King*, where the Buddha says, 'I have shown you the path to liberation, now obtaining liberation is entirely in your own hands'. It also quotes from another text along similar lines. Once one has been shown the way and the methods to achieve liberation, then it is up to oneself to engage in acquiring the causes and conditions to actually obtain liberation. As mentioned previously, the Dharma is the actual refuge, which is the same point being made here. Achieving the results that are explained in the teachings has to be initiated and implemented by none other than oneself.

As explained in the teachings, the Dharma is the actual refuge. That would have to be the case because if the actual refuge or protector were to be the Buddha jewel or the Sangha jewel, then we would have already been liberated by now. They wouldn't be idly sitting around, they would have already liberated us! So the fact that the Buddha Jewel and the Sangha Jewel are not the actual refuge, and that the Dharma Jewel is the actual refuge is clear indication that we are not yet liberated because we have not fully relied on actualizing the Dharma refuge. These are the main points.

As I have mentioned previously, the explanations of the six perfections in the Lam Rim teachings are very clear. I have read the text myself again, but I don't know if any one of you have taken heed of that suggestion and actually checked the Lam Rim for yourselves. The actual presentation of the six perfections is found just prior to the presentation of special insight. These points are the very core of the Mahayana practice. If we don't have a good understanding of that, and if we don't try to apply it to our practice, then claiming to be a Mahayana practitioner would be just words, as we won't actually have the necessary qualification.

Reading the Lam Rim text is paramount for establishing a good basis for one's practice. Moreover, without the basis of a good understanding of the Lam Rim, there is really no way that one can adequately practice tantra. As we know, the sadhana practices begin with OM SVABHAVA SHUDDAH SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA SHUDDHO HANG meaning *all existence transforms into emptiness*. It is presented on the assumption that we know what emptiness means. There are no details about renunciation, bodhicitta and so forth. The manner of presentation clearly indicates that it is a practice given to those whose minds are already ripened with the understanding of the earlier practices of renunciation and bodhicitta and so forth.

The teachings explain that in terms of the view there is no difference between the view of emptiness presented in the *prajnaparamita* teachings, and the view that is presented in the tantric teachings. Of course, in terms of profundity, the highest yoga tantra is more profound, but in terms of actual view there is no difference. In the *prajnaparamita* teachings, the foundations of renunciation, bodhicitta and so forth are explained in great detail as a way of developing a strong familiarity with them so that they serve as a good foundation. Then, when the tantric teachings are presented, one's mind is already ripened, and ready to receive those teachings.

I mentioned earlier that the tantric teachings are presented to trainees whose mind is already ripened with a sound understanding of the teachings on sutra. If you were to initially go straight into tantric sadhanas and so forth, then when you hear *everything becomes empty* you might have this vague notion that everything is just empty like space and

that there is nothing around us. In fact, there are some who claim, 'Oh, it is very nice to meditate on emptiness, because there is nothing there'.

Lama Tsong Khapa states in his *Foundation of All Good Qualities*, which you would all be familiar with, that 'having developed a profound understanding on the common path may I be able to engage in the practice of the uncommon path'¹. What he is saying is that without a good understanding of the common path, which includes renunciation, bodhicitta and an understanding of emptiness - i.e. the three principles of the path - there is no way that one can obtain liberation. Likewise, without understanding and practising bodhicitta, there is no way that one can obtain full enlightenment. According to the common path, one cannot overcome the delusions without the understanding of emptiness. When it comes to the practice of tantra, the very basis on which one generates oneself as a deity and develops that divine pride is the understanding of emptiness. Without a good understanding of emptiness, it is not even possible to establish the divine pride of the deity. These are crucial points that one needs to understand.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute

¹ Having become a pure vessel by training in the general path
Please bless me to enter
The holy gateway of the fortunate ones
The supreme vajra vehicle.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

11 August 2015

Based on the motivation that we have just generated we can now engage in our meditation practice. [meditation]

Let us now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will listen to the profound teachings and put them into practice.

If we generate such a positive motivation prior to engaging in the practice of listening to the teachings, and then dedicate it at the end, then we have engaged in a positive practice. Any practice that begins with a positive motivation, a positive engagement in the middle and a positive dedication at the end, is a most meaningful practice.

2.2.1.2.2.2.1. Pride in taking action

2.2.1.2.2.2.1.1. Identifying the pride of taking action (cont.)

In our last session we left off at the point of identifying the pride of taking action. The pride referred to here is, as mentioned previously, not a deluded pride but a mind of great courage and strength. When the commentary explains, if one sees *that others could do the action as well, one thinks 'I shall do this alone'*, the action referred to here is a virtuous action; one shouldn't, of course, engage in non-virtuous actions. Virtuous actions can also be described as virtuous karmas, and this will be presented more elaborately later on.

The pride that is being presented here is a way to encourage the development of great strength of mind. Without that strength of mind, it is very easy to give up whenever there are difficulties or challenges. If we are to maintain our stamina in order to follow a practice through, we need to develop that strength of mind. That is what is being encouraged here.

2.2.1.2.2.2.2.2. The reason for practising it now¹

Having identified the pride of action, the next verse presents the reason for thinking, 'I shall do this alone'. Gyaltsab Je begins his commentary with this statement:

One needs to achieve the works of sentient beings by oneself, independently from others

The relevant verse is:

50. *These worldly beings with no control due to afflictions
Cannot achieve their own purpose.
Hence migrators cannot act like oneself
And therefore one needs to do this.*

Then Gyaltsab Je explains:

That is because these worldly beings, which have no control due to their afflictions, cannot achieve even their own purpose.

Hence migrators cannot strive in virtue for the purpose of others like one can, and even if one were to rely on them it would be useless. Therefore think, 'I have to do the actions for the benefit of others all by myself'.

When the commentary states *That is because these worldly beings, which have no control due to their afflictions, cannot achieve even their own purpose*, it is referring to the condition of worldly beings. As presented in an earlier verse, although wishing to overcome suffering, they run towards suffering itself, and though wishing for happiness, out of ignorance they destroy their own happiness like an enemy.² This is the situation of samsaric beings: while not wanting to experience any kind of suffering, they uncontrollably engage in the very causes of suffering due to the delusions, and whilst wishing to experience happiness, they destroy the very causes of that happiness, again due to ignorance. For as long as one is under the influence of delusions then, let alone the ultimate source of happiness, such as liberation and enlightenment, even temporary happiness is very difficult to obtain.

In order to feel the full impact of these words we need to relate them to ourselves, as they reflect our own situation. As I have mentioned previously, if one relates these lines only to other poor suffering sentient beings, then these passages will not really help to move one's mind and bring about a personal transformation. Thus, one needs to relate it to oneself by thinking, 'For as long as I am under the influence of the three poisons I will have no control over what I am doing. Even though I wish for happiness, I destroy the causes of my own happiness. Even though I don't wish to experience suffering, I have already created the cause of so much suffering'. Relating these lines directly to ourselves can really encourage us to find the means to overcome such a situation.

Worldly or samsaric beings who have no control over the afflictions cannot achieve even their own purpose. Let alone being able to achieve their ultimate purpose of liberation and enlightenment, it is very difficult for them to create even the causes for obtaining the conditions for a good rebirth in the next lifetime. For as long as living beings are under the control of the afflictions, this is their reality. As the commentary further explains, *Hence migrators cannot strive in virtue for the purpose of others like one can*. We need to understand that the *one* here refers to a bodhisattva, i.e. one who has all the right conditions to be able to strive for the purpose of others.

The commentary further explains that, *even if one were to rely on them it will be meaningless*. Therefore think, 'I have to do the actions for the benefit of others all by myself'. While this is a bodhisattva's resolve, we can relate this to our own personal practice. As mentioned previously, even generating a positive motivation for whatever one does, such as listening to the teachings, and engaging in and

¹ Last week it was listed as The Reason for Doing This
Chapter 7

² See the teaching of 28 May 2013

practising them, becomes a means to resolve to engage in positive actions for the benefit of others.

2.2.1.2.2.2.1.3. Practise the pride that also carries the burden of the inferior actions of others

It is good to note that in a worldly context many would say, 'Oh, you need to have pride in order to achieve things'. Yet even though there may be no distinction between deluded pride and virtuous pride in that worldly context, some forms of pride are considered as not being suitable, while pride in a courageous mind that can accomplish things is talked about in a positive way. So we can see that, even conventionally, there is a reason why the pride that is mentioned here refers to a noble pride, and is not a deluded pride, which is an abandonment. The two types of pride have a similar strength of mind, but one is based on ignorance and the other on wisdom.

The verse under this heading reads:

**51. When others engage in inferior actions
How can one remain?
Acting without pride,
Not to have pride one is supreme.**

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning as follows:

When others engage in inferior actions such as fieldwork, how can one, who has accepted to carry the great burden of sentient beings on one's head, remain with leisure? One should work.

When others engage in inferior work one may think, 'I should act with pride and engage in purer actions'. Do not engage in these actions with such pride, as it is supreme not to have afflicted pride. It should be abandoned because through it one will go to the lower realms.

When the commentary says that *when others engage in inferior actions such as fieldwork, how can one, who has accepted to carry the great burden of sentient beings on one's head, remain with leisure?* There are two different ways to interpret this.

One way to understand this is that worldly beings engage in inferior actions, which are worldly actions that are associated merely with obtaining food, clothing and fame. In other words, their actions are focussed only on worldly concerns; day and night, samsaric beings are constantly striving to achieve worldly gains. Seeing that, and having taken on one's head, the pledge to benefit sentient beings, meaning having made that pledge oneself, how can one remain with leisure without engaging in work? Here *one should work* refers to engaging in the actions of a bodhisattva—engaging in virtuous actions, such as the six perfections and so forth.

Another way of interpreting *remain with leisure* is not to remain idle when others are engaging in inferior work, thinking, 'That doesn't really concern me'. To understand this fully, one needs to make a distinction between general worldly actions and actions that, by their very nature, create negative karma. One should avoid engaging in negative actions and if others engage in them, one should not help them to do so. Other worldly actions, such as carrying a load, are not, by their very nature, negative. So when one notices that someone is struggling to carry a load and helps them to carry it, that

then becomes a virtuous action. Thus, considering such actions as being lowly and inferior, and not engaging in them would be a fault. One should help others to engage in such actions if one can do so. This is how we need to make the distinction.

The next part of the explanation identifies deluded pride. The commentary states, *When others engage in inferior work one may think, 'I should act with pride and engage in purer actions'*. If one thinks, 'Oh, this kind of inferior work doesn't apply to me. I need to be engaging in purer actions' then, as explained here, that is a deluded pride. As the commentary explains, *do not engage in these actions with such pride as it is supreme not to have afflicted pride*. If one engages in any kind of action with an attitude of feeling superior, looking down on menial work and thinking, 'I only engage in pure activities', then that is deluded pride.

Even in a worldly context, people who are proud are scorned. No-one appreciates people who act as if they are superior, and who look down upon others, considering that certain jobs do not apply to them and are only for the lowly. That kind of attitude is definitely recognised as being unsuitable, even in a worldly context. As explained in the commentary, one should avoid this deluded pride, as it only creates negativity for oneself. Indeed, anyone who feels superior and who looks down upon others, is definitely not appreciated and is not a welcome guest anywhere. Such pride makes others feel uncomfortable around you. We often hear comments like, 'Oh, so and so looks down on me and treats me like dirt'. Such an experience makes people feel as if they are inferior.

Harbouring this sort of deluded pride is also a cause for disharmony. Others don't appreciate such pride, and it leads to disunity within groups of people. The virtuous pride that expresses the strength of mind that resolves, 'I will take on the responsibility of benefitting others' is completely different to deluded pride. Instead of looking down upon others it makes one cherish others and wish to benefit them.

Previously I shared a story as an example of how, when one is free from such deluded pride, one can benefit others. I was once in a bank and saw a new teller having difficulty in opening a drawer. One of the senior staff came over and said, 'Oh, I used to struggle with that', and then he showed her how to open it. In this case, the senior staff member acknowledged the difficulty of the new teller and helped her, rather than looking down on her. Someone with a lot of pride might have ridiculed her saying, 'Oh, don't you even know how to open a drawer?', but here the senior staff member helped her by saying that he used to have the same problem himself.

We need to keep in mind that, when we see others struggling, extending a helping hand is of real benefit to them. Whatever the environment, in the workplace or wherever, whenever someone else is struggling with something about which one has knowledge, then the greatest benefit one can offer is to give them a helping hand. When we resolve to practise Dharma, we need to keep that in mind that, when we free ourselves from pride, there are many practical ways to benefit others.

Here at Tara Institute, many have said that when they first came here there were some who were really helpful, taking the time to explain things well, and made them feel very comfortable and welcome. They were really touched and moved to receive such help, when they were new and a bit nervous. That also might imply that there might have been others who were a bit pompous, or who didn't really pay attention or offer a helping hand, even when they saw someone who was new to Tara Institute. So here we need to apply Shantideva's advice.

The Buddha's teachings are said to be all means to overcome pride. Those of us who are following the Buddha's teachings need to ensure that we don't allow whatever study and practice we do to become a cause to further increase pride. Although we might not be able to completely overcome pride just yet, at the very least we need to ensure that, whatever we do, we are not increasing our pride. Pride is of no use whatsoever in Dharma practice.

2.2.1.2.2.2.2.2. Pride in ability

Here again we are talking about virtuous pride. Having explained that there is pride in action, next comes taking pride in one's own ability. This has five subdivisions:

2.2.1.2.2.2.2.2.1. The fault of not having pride in one's abilities

2.2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2. The benefits of being proud

2.2.1.2.2.2.2.2.3. Abiding in the pride that is the antidote

2.2.1.2.2.2.2.2.4. It is unsuitable to generate afflicted pride

2.2.1.2.2.2.2.2.5. The benefits of the pride that is the antidote

2.2.1.2.2.2.2.2.1. The fault of not having pride in one's abilities

This again refers to strength of mind. Pride in this context is the fault of not having belief in one's ability to overcome the despondent mind that feels, 'Oh, I am not able to do this'. In order to overcome that feeling of being discouraged by the task at hand, or other challenges that have to be faced, we need to have a courageous mind of great strength.

The verses under this heading indicate that if one doesn't have pride in one's ability, then one will be discouraged in the face of even the slightest of difficulties or challenges.

52. *When they meet a dead snake
Even crows act like garudas.
If one is humble
Even small downfalls will harm.*

53ab. *The discouraged who have given up striving
How can they be liberated from destitution?*

The commentary explains:

One should generate the force of the antidote to destroy the afflictions, because even crows act like garudas when they meet with a dead snake. Similarly, if one's antidotes are weak, then even small downfalls will harm the path with obstruction. When one is destitute due to having given up the striving for the purpose of self and others due to discouragement, then how can one be liberated? Being destroyed by laziness, one's actions of body and mind degenerate.

As the commentary explains, *one should generate the force of the antidote to destroy the afflictions.* In order to destroy the afflictions, one needs to generate the strong force of

the antidote, one can then combat and overcome the afflictions. This is explained with the analogy of *crows that act like garudas when they meet with a dead snake.* A garuda has the courage to face a live snake with a great majesty, while crows do the same thing when they come upon a dead snake, behaving as if it was a live snake. Crows act like that with a dead snake, because there is no threat. They act as if they are mighty, when in fact they are afraid of live snakes.

The point of the analogy is to illustrate that if the *antidotes* are *weak*, then *even a small downfall will harm the path with obstruction.* If one's antidote is weak, one will immediately feel daunted and discouraged by even small afflictions, which will become an obstruction on the path.

The commentary asks, *When one is destitute due to having given up the striving for the purpose of self and others, due to discouragement, then how can one be liberated?* If one were to easily fall victim to even small afflictions and thus become discouraged, then, as explained in the commentary, *how can one fulfil the purpose of self and others, and how can one be liberated? Being destroyed by laziness, one's actions of body and mind degenerate.* We can relate this to our own experience where we feel a bit daunted by some task. That's when we are most likely to think, 'Oh, I don't think I can manage that' and then start to become despondent. The laziness of despondency actually arises when one feels a bit discouraged. Therefore, as explained here, one needs to develop that courageous mind.

From this presentation we can see how we need to refrain from even small negative karmas, and not neglect to recall their severity by thinking, 'Oh, it is not all that grave, so it is OK if I engage in that action', because as explained by the Buddha, a spark can cause a great raging fire. Conversely one should not neglect even the smallest of virtues, thinking, 'Oh, I need not bother with small virtues', because, as the Buddha explained with another analogy, even small drops of water can fill a large container. So one accumulates great virtue by combining many small virtues. We need to pay heed to this advice and adopt it. By reflecting on these analogies, one needs to resolve on abandoning even small negativities, and adopt even small virtues as a way to further develop and progress along the path to enlightenment.

Otherwise, if one resorts to thinking, 'Oh, that's too hard and too difficult, and I had better not engage in it', then one is actually resorting to laziness. As explained in the commentary, one will be *destroyed by laziness* and *one's actions of body and mind will degenerate.* This means that when one becomes lazy one feels weighed down mentally, and is physically lethargic, not wanting to engage in any kind of activity. That is how both mental and physical degeneration occur.

The conclusion is that one needs to abandon this kind of laziness, and engage in positive actions.

2.2.1.2.2.2.2.2.2. The benefits of being proud

This relates to the benefits of applying one's strength of mind. The lines of verse relating to this are:

53cd. *Through generating the effort of pride
It will be difficult to be overcome even by
something great.*

54cd. *Therefore, with a steadfast mind*

*One should destroy all downfalls.
If one is conquered by a downfall
The wish to conquer the three realms is
laughable.*

Here, the commentary reads:

Through the pride that generates a forceful antidote and the generation of striving through application it will be difficult to overcome even the great objects of abandonment. Therefore, with a steadfast mind one should destroy the downfalls, because if one is overcome by the downfalls then the wish to conquer the three realms will make one a laughing stock.

As explained in the commentary, the pride that one needs to develop is *the pride that generates a forceful antidote, and the generation of striving through application*. Generating and applying a forceful antidote is the means to overcome the delusions, and *it will be difficult to be overcome, even by great objects of abandonment*. When one applies this forceful antidote and generates striving through application, one will not be overpowered by strong and powerful delusions.

Therefore with a steadfast mind one should destroy the downfalls, because if one is overcome by the downfalls then the wish to conquer the three realms will make one a laughing stock, clearly explains that one needs to generate a strong antidote and overcome the downfalls from one's own side. If one allows downfalls to overpower oneself, and says that one has pledged, 'I will overcome the downfalls, and I will conquer the three realms', one will become a laughing stock, and an object of ridicule.

2.2.1.2.2.2.2.3. Abiding on the pride that is the antidote

The relevant verse reads:

55. *I should conquer everything
And nothing should conquer me.
I, the child of the lion king,
Shall abide in this pride.*

Here, the commentary states:

Thus, one should abide in the supreme pride that thinks, 'I should conquer all my faults but I should not be conquered even by one of the objects of abandonment of the three realms.'

If it is asked: Who is doing this? It is oneself, the child of the lion king, who frightens the animals that are demons³ and forders⁴.

The commentary clearly explains that having shown the disadvantages of not having virtuous pride, one needs to resolve to abide in the supreme pride that thinks, '*I should conquer all my faults, but I should not be conquered even by one of the objects of abandonment of the three realms*'. As previously explained, one generates the strength of mind and courage that resolves, 'I will be the one who conquers faults, and the faults of the three realms will not conquer me'. That is the kind of pride that needs to be generated here. Such a resolve comes from understanding the response to the rhetorical question, *Who is doing this?* which is that *it is oneself, the child of the lion king*. Here *lion king* is actually a reference to the Buddha, the Conqueror. A lion king is feared by all other creatures, who, on merely seeing the lion king, are afraid and then slink

away. Likewise the Conqueror, the Buddha, *frightens the demons and all forders*.

As a child of the Conqueror, the Buddha, one resolves to abide in the supreme pride that conquers all faults of the three realms. Rather than allowing the faults to conquer oneself, one resolves, 'I, a child of the Buddha, will develop this supreme pride'.

2.2.1.2.2.2.2.4. It is unsuitable to generate afflicted pride

We will continue with this in our next session.

As you are aware next Tuesday is the discussion night. As I have mentioned previously, it is good to come with a positive mind of wanting to share and learn from each other. The following week will, as usual be the exam, and it is also good to complete that in a good manner.

As I reminded you last week, the seminar is on Sunday week. It is good for you to develop a virtuous mind of wanting to share whatever understanding you have with others. Likewise, you can benefit from the understanding of others. With that attitude, the time spent together will be really meaningful. Having an attitude of, 'Oh, I might be able to impress others with my knowledge', is the wrong sort of attitude.

As we have seen, Shantideva gives profound advice and many instructions on how to practise. So it is good to really pay attention to them, and try to think about these points, familiarising yourself with them and becoming really acquainted with them. It would be really meaningful to resolve that that this is a good way to practise, and dedicate oneself towards that end. While we may not be able to see the immediate benefit now, through familiarity with these teachings, and by following as much as possible the personal advice they offer, the time will definitely come where we will find that we can apply what we have learnt and put it into practice. But if we don't pay much attention now and just skim over these presentations, then when the time comes where we need to resort to these practices, we will not have any material with which to practise. Therefore it is important to really pay attention to Shantideva's advice now, and put it into practice as much as possible.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

³ Maras

⁴ Non-Buddhists holding extremist views

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱུང་རྒྱུ་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

1 September 2015

While maintaining the motivation we generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our meditation practice.
[meditation]

Let us re-generate the bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the purpose of all mother sentient beings, in order to liberate them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practice well.

As mentioned many times previously, generating such an altruistic state of mind even for a second becomes a condition for one to accumulate extensive merit.

Also, when one generates such a noble intention and altruistic state of mind as a motivation, one is bound to ensure that one engages in an appropriate virtuous activity to go with that good motivation.

2.2.1.2.2.2.2.4. It is unsuitable to generate afflicted pride

As opposed to generating the positive pride mentioned earlier, *it is unsuitable to generate an afflicted pride.*

This is subdivided into three:

- Disparaging afflicted pride
- The faults of pride
- It is suitable to abandon it

a. Disparaging afflicted pride

The verse reads:

56. *Any migrator that is destroyed by pride
Is afflicted, and does not possess pride.
Those that possess pride are not controlled by
the enemy,
They are controlled by the enemy of pride.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains:

Any migrator that is destroyed and overcome by the pride that is a puffed up mind, is controlled by the afflictions and not a person possessing great pride. Those possessing pride are suitable not to fall under the control of the enemy. But the migrators with a puffed up mind fall under the control of the enemy of the affliction of pride.

Any migrator, referring to any ordinary being in samsara, *that is destroyed and overcome by the pride that is a puffed up mind* is thus controlled by the afflictions and not a person possessing great pride. Here, a puffed up mind refers to the pride of those who possess only minimal knowledge but who assume they have superior knowledge to others, and are more skilled and so forth. Such beings affected by inflated pride are controlled by the afflictions. As explained in other teachings, afflicted pride destroys oneself, one's virtues, morality and so forth.

The pride of beings who possess the great pride which serves as an antidote, is actually a self-confident and

courageous state of mind. This self-confident state of mind is an antidote for overcoming afflicted pride. Thus, such beings with an afflicted pride do not possess the pride of an antidote. The reason presented as to why they don't possess the great pride is *that those possessing great pride are suitable not to fall under the control of an enemy. But the migrators with a puffed up mind, or inflated pride, do fall under the control of the enemy of the afflictions.*

Those who possess the great pride have the pride which serves as an antidote. While called pride, it is actually the self-confident and courageous state of mind, whereby one resolves to combat the afflictions and not allow them to destroy oneself. Those who are affected with afflicted pride are actually controlled by the delusions, and thus their mind is under the control of the afflictions, rather than being in control of the afflictions and overcoming them. This is how it is presented here.

b. The faults of pride

If one wonders 'What is the fault of being under the control of afflicted pride?' this is precisely what is being presented under this heading.

The commentary provides a way to really derive personal instructions from Shantideva's text. If we relate these passages to ourselves it will benefit our mind. But if we relate to it just as the general fault of pride that may concern others but doesn't really concern oneself, then we will not have benefited from this profound advice. While the presentation is very profound and very meaningful it will not really help one's own mind if we view it that way.

Some who confide in me say that they have a real problem with pride. They confess that they're having a problem with pride and want everything to go well and that they desire all the excellences, but this in fact brings more distress to their mind. These individuals are being very truthful in expressing these states of mind that affect them negatively.

If one does not acknowledge the afflictions in one's own mind there is no way to transform it. What one needs to understand is that the puffed up or inflated pride is where one feels one has great knowledge and understanding, when in fact it might be minimal. Along with that, one of the other elements of pride is that of looking down upon others. This is the pride we need to protect ourselves from. We need to reflect upon the faults of this pride as a way of avoiding its ill effects.

What is being presented here very clearly and succinctly are means to overcome afflictions in one's mind, such as pride. When we relate to the passages and then the instructions, we can clearly see that if one were to actually practise what is presented here, it can definitely help to subdue the mind.

We can see that if anyone were to actually put into practise the advice and instructions given here in *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, the consequence would be a naturally more subdued and calmer person. Therefore we need to take it as a personal instruction to relate to the faults of pride, as well as the other disadvantages which are mentioned in other teachings.

If someone is affected by strong pride:

- it will prevent them from gaining further knowledge;
- whatever knowledge they have will be tainted;
- one will not be able to relate to others well. As one perceives oneself to have a 'superior' mind, with a tendency to look down upon others, it is hard to have good rapport with others (the obvious fault of pride).

If we overcome pride it naturally brings about the opposite: it makes one much more at ease; allows one to gain more knowledge; one's knowledge and wisdom will increase; one will be naturally modest and humble, and so will be able to relate to others in a genuine way. All of these positive results will come about.

Thus we need to really relate to these teachings as a way to subdue our own mind. We do have faith in the Dharma, and we want to transform our mind, so if we have this approach then it's just a matter of actually putting it into practise. If we leave these instructions here as 'Yeah OK, something quite profound has been mentioned here' but don't actually relate it to changing one's own state of mind, then the actual positive effect will never come about. So this is how we need to relate to the teachings.

All of the faults presented here are clearly the faults that come from befriending afflicted pride. We need to be aware of that.

The verse reads:

57. *Being filled up with the affliction of pride
One will be led by pride to the lower realms,
It destroys the joys of being human;
A slave eating others' leftovers*
- 58ab. *Dumb, ugly and weak
One will be derided by all.*

The commentary reads:

The following faults will occur if one is filled with afflicted pride:

- One will be led by pride to the lower realms;
- Even if one is reborn a human, it destroys the joys of being human, such as mental happiness;
- One will live as a beggar without food;
- One will be a slave controlled by others and have to eat their others' leftovers;
- One will be mentally stupid; ugly and weak; and
- Even though one is not directly harming others, one will always be derided by all others verbally and physically.

Therefore one should abandon the pride of the puffed up mind.

The commentary explains that *the following faults will occur if one is filled with the afflicted pride*. This is the specific pride of the inflated or puffed up mind, where the effect is that one would be *led by pride to the lower realms*. What is being explained is that if one harbours pride and does not apply antidotes to overcome it, but rather fosters it in one's mind, then the consequence in future lives is that *one will be led by pride to the lower realms*, which is the ripening result of pride.

With respect to *Even if one is reborn a human*, one should note that this doesn't mean that pride is a cause to be reborn human, as that cause can only be virtuous karma one created in the past. What is being explained is that even if one were to be reborn as a human due to past virtues, the ill effects of being proud in previous lives would still be carried forth. Faults would occur whereby *it destroys the joys of being human, such as mental happiness*. So here the joys of being human refers to both good Dharma conditions as well as good material conditions. The joy of being human would also refer to having good relationships with others, and enjoying festivities and enjoying being honoured by others etc. So the joys of the natural good human conditions will be destroyed, and not be experienced.

The commentary explains that a further fault is that *one will live as a beggar without food*, which is something we obviously see. While having a human rebirth, there are many who have to live as beggars deprived of adequate food, clothing and shelter.

One will be a slave controlled by others and have to eat their leftovers, is, again, something which is quite prevalent. We can definitely see many in this situation.

One will be mentally stupid, indicates that even if born as a human with a usual human intelligence, some are born without the ability to utilise their human intelligence.

Even physically, *one will be ugly and weak* means that one's appearance may not be good and one's body is weak.

Furthermore, *even though one is not directly harming others*, which means even though one is not intentionally going out of one's way to hurt others, *one will be derided by all others verbally and physically*, ridiculed and so forth; so all these are the faults of holding on to pride.

As the commentary concludes, *therefore one should abandon the pride of the puffed up mind*. The instruction here is that by contemplating the ill effects of pride, one needs to resolve to abandon it. It is at this point that we need to take the instruction personally: 'this advice is referring to me, to my own mind'. So if one really were to pay attention to all of these ill effects, and clearly did not wish to experience them, then one would naturally strive to reduce creating their causes, which is holding on to pride.

What we can also reflect upon, is how those of us present here are free from these ill effects right now, and enjoy good conditions, which are the positive results one has created in the past. When we refer to each of these ill effects we can all safely assume that we are free from them, and that we are definitely enjoying the festivities of humans—materially and spiritually. In the Dharma we have the conditions to experience both the joy of being a human and utilising all these appropriate conditions. And we have a certain level of mental happiness and joy. It is quite clear that none of us has to live as a beggar without food. We are definitely not slaves controlled by others, having to eat their leftovers. Rather than having to eat others' leftovers we have an abundance of food, and might even find that we are wasting food. One definitely has a sound mind and our appearance is quite acceptable. Of course, if one did not practise contentment then one would want to look better and better. This is something we can all relate to.

When one contemplates how we possess the opposite of these faults and ill-effects right now, it encourages one to further engage in accumulating virtues. One can strongly rejoice in the good conditions one has now, which is definitely a result of having practised virtue previously. Then one resolves to put every effort into further engaging in the practice of accumulating virtues and overcoming negativities and afflictions such as pride.

In this way, when one makes strong resolve in one's mind, one can begin to utilise whatever activity one engages in as the means to accumulate virtue. Even drinking a cup of tea can become a means to accumulate virtue. In the case of my normal everyday activities, even when it comes to drinking just one cup of tea, I don't just gulp it down mindlessly. Rather, I spend significant time just rejoicing in the fact that I have the opportunity to have this cup of tea, and the great fortune or the great conditions I have. 'Having this cup of tea has come about through many good conditions from the past. May I use it as a way to further nourish my body so I

can continuously engage in the practice of Dharma, as the means to benefit many sentient beings’.

By using this motivation, even for showering or having a meal, again and again, it becomes possible to use normal activities as a way to accumulate virtue. Of course this might not have come easily in my youth, but at this stage I can confidently say that I definitely have the means to use my normal activities as a way to further create some merit and virtue. This is really something worthwhile to consider.

It is because I consider you all as my Dharma friends, and because we have an intimate relationship, that I share some of my daily practice with you. It is not about boasting, but rather to remind you of simple ways to create virtue. If one thinks about these points again and again, then, through familiarity one can definitely reach a point where one makes one’s life more meaningful and uses daily activities as a way to accumulate more virtues and merit. This is something which is definitely possible, so it would be good to reflect upon these points.

Previous lamas have instructed that we need to familiarise ourselves with bodhicitta to the point that whatever activity we engage in, we do it with a bodhicitta attitude: sitting with bodhicitta; standing with bodhicitta; walking with bodhicitta; sleeping with bodhicitta and so forth. Constantly remember this as you engage in any activity. That is the best way to lead one’s daily life.

At best, try to cultivate bodhicitta, but if we have not reached that point yet, then even in simple tasks, always try to bring to mind ‘May this become a benefit for other beings’. As I just mentioned, if, before drinking a cup of tea, one can remember to offer it, this is a way for you to try to remember how you can make your daily activities more meaningful. Some new students here might have not heard it, but I’ve mentioned it many times how you first offer the tea with a mantra (the simplest way to offer and bless the tea is by reciting the mantra OM AH HUNG three times), and then before consuming it, generate the thought ‘May I be nourished with this tea so that I can benefit all sentient beings’.

In sharing this with you, I have no other intention or ulterior motive than to benefit you in your everyday life. If you pay attention to the instructions, then you can get some benefit.

I mentioned a year or so ago that when preparing to listen to His Holiness teach *Vast as the Heavens, Deep as the Sea: Verses in Praise of Bodhicitta* by Khunu Lama Rinpoche, I read the text, and it really moved my mind. It gives so much practical advice about ways of making your every-day activities meaningful, as a way to create great amounts of merit. It was inspiring just to read that text. It is available in English, so you have access to it—many of you might already have it. When reading it one naturally becomes very inspired, which is the power of the author Khunu Lama Rinpoche himself. There is no doubt he was a great, great practitioner, particularly in cultivating bodhicitta. This is why his words have such moving power, and such great effect on our minds.

As we familiarise ourselves with these practices, it starts to become part of our daily routine to think in this way, then we can enjoy what we do in a meaningful way. If we try to enjoy ourselves by engaging in activities with a worldly mind that is influenced by the delusions, then, rather than bringing more happiness, it only becomes the means to further fuel the afflictions and destroy one’s happiness. When one’s mind is affected by the delusions it does not

help to bring success or external good conditions, it only creates the cause to destroy one’s own happiness from within. When the delusions are fuelled, the ultimate result is no true satisfaction, and no true contentment within oneself.

These are the points we need to reflect upon and understand: we need to minimise that which destroys our happiness, and cultivate and develop that which brings about a genuine sense of contentment and satisfaction.

Even when one has an opportunity to relax physically, one needs to understand that if one harbours afflictions and delusions in one’s mind, one is still disturbed internally. So be cautious and conscientious. (This is something that will be presented in the text further on; I’m just giving a prelude to how we need to refer to the profound advice given in this text).

c. It is suitable to abandon it

The verse reads:

*58cd. If even the ascetics¹ filled with pride
Belong to the proud,
Then what is there to say about the inferiors?*

The commentary reads:

If even the ascetics who overcome difficulties with a mind filled with and controlled by afflicted pride belong to the very proud, then what is there to say about the inferiors that are objects of compassion? Since they are controlled by the enemy, it is unsuitable to be proud.

The commentary clearly presents that, *if even the ascetics who overcome difficulties with a mind filled with and controlled by afflicted pride belong to the very proud*, meaning that if those who put in great effort are afflicted by pride, then they too are in the class of those who are proud. If that is the case then for those who are *inferiors who are objects of compassion*, there’s no need to mention that they have been affected by pride from the very beginning, and are classified as proud.

Since they are controlled by the enemy, it is unsuitable to be proud refers to afflicted pride, not the great pride that is an antidote to afflicted pride. Thus it is unsuitable to harbour such afflicted pride.

2.2.1.2.2.2.2.5. The benefits of the pride that is the antidote

Having earlier explained the faults of afflicted pride the text now explains the benefits of the pride that is an antidote—that which is also given the name pride but which is suitable to be developed.

The verse reads:

*59. Those who hold pride to conquer the enemy of pride,
They possess pride. The victorious heroes themselves
Definitely destroy the rampage of the enemy of pride
And complete the result of a conqueror, as migrators wish.*

The commentary explains by posing a question and an answer:

If asked: Who is someone with pride?

Answer: Since those that hold the pride that is the antidote, in order to conquer the enemy of the

afflictions possess a strong counter-positive force, they are called proud.

They are also the very heroes who are victorious over the enemy. If asked why. That is because upon having definitely destroyed from the root the rampage of the enemy of pride, they complete the temporary and ultimate results of the conqueror, including the enlightened activities, in accordance with the wishes of migrators, and also those that are divine. That is why they are called victorious against the enemy.

As the commentary explains, *since those that hold a pride that is the antidote, in order to conquer the enemy of the afflictions possess a strong counter-positive force which is a strong antidote, they are then called proud.* What is called pride here is actually a strong antidote for overcoming afflicted pride, and refers to the true sense of pride.

The commentary continues, *they are also the very heroes who are victorious over the enemy where 'They' refer to those who cultivate the pride which serves as an antidote for overcoming afflicted pride. They are referred to here as victorious, very brave, like heroes who overcome the enemy.*

If asked why, that is because upon having definitely destroyed from the root the rampage of the enemy of pride, they complete the temporary and ultimate result of a conqueror, including the enlightened activities, in accordance with the wishes of migrators, and also those that are divine (divine referring to the worldly gods). As clearly explained here, when the pride which serves as a great powerful antidote to overcome the afflicted pride is cultivated, that then becomes the only means to destroy the enemy of the afflictions. Therefore, that is why they are called the victorious against the enemy.

In reflecting on the meaning that *they complete the temporary and ultimate result of a conqueror*, one needs to be able to relate to earlier explanations of what the temporary and ultimate results are. *Temporary* refers to the good conditions in the higher rebirths, such as a human or in one of the divine god realms. *Ultimate* refers to liberation and ultimately the enlightenment of the conqueror.

In examining, *including the enlightened activities*, it is good to note the difference between the qualities of the conquerors (or buddhas) and their enlightened activities. Qualities refer to the ability of an enlightened being to effortlessly and spontaneously benefit all sentient beings, whereas enlightened activities refers to actually applying that ability and engaging in benefitting sentient beings with the effects to be experienced by sentient beings. In relation to (and included within) the enlightened activities, the commentary also says, *in accordance with the wishes of migrators*, which means that when the ability to benefit sentient beings effortlessly and spontaneously is established in that enlightened mind, it is then imparted in accordance to the wishes of sentient beings to benefit them in infinite ways. The actual benefit sentient beings receive is due to enlightened activities.

Referring back to the *temporary and ultimate results of the conqueror*, one needs to understand that having good temporary benefits, such as a precious human rebirth, becomes the very basis for one to accomplish the ultimate aims of achieving enlightenment. Without relying on the high status of a precious human rebirth or other conditions in higher rebirths, even as a temporary goal, we cannot possibly achieve the ultimate goals. Therefore temporary results are the direct causes for the qualities of enlightenment and the enlightened activities.

I've mentioned this previously but it is good to reflect upon these meanings which helps to enhance the overview of the path to enlightenment.

2.2.1.2.2.2.3. Pride against the afflictions

Here, the specifics about the great pride which serves as an antidote are presented.

Take note as to why the term pride is used. Normal pride has a sense of 'I can do it', 'I have the means', 'I'm better...' etc. This sort of puffed up feeling is an afflicted pride. But it is a similar state of mind to feeling confident, 'I will not succumb to the delusions or the afflictions', 'I will combat and overcome the afflictions'. So the sense of one having the ability to do something is still there, but in a positive way to combat the afflictions. It is because there is the similarity in the state of mind that feels 'I can do it', that the term 'pride' is used.

To consolidate this understanding: with an afflicted (normal) pride a worldly person feels 'I'm better than the other. I'm more skilled, I have more knowledge etc. so I'm not going to be undermined by that person, I'm not going to allow them to bully me, I'm not going to allow them to ridicule me because I'm better than them. I'm going to control them rather than allow them to control me'. This afflicted pride is based on feeling that one's (minimal) knowledge has made one superior to the other, and so one resolves not to allow the other to control them.

A bodhisattva does not harbour this kind of pride towards other sentient beings. In contrast, they use a similar state of mind to develop a sentiment that combats the afflictions resolving, 'I'm not going to be controlled by the afflictions', 'I'm not going to be undermined and influenced by the afflictions', 'I will combat and overcome the afflictions'. When this sentiment is developed, along with self-confidence, that is what is referred to as the pride which is an antidote. Because of the similarity in the resolve that one makes, or the sentiment that one develops within one's mind, the term 'pride' is used.

This is subdivided into three:

2.2.1.2.2.2.3.1. One should generate the force of the antidote against the afflictions

2.2.1.2.2.2.3.2. One should not fall under their control at all

2.2.1.2.2.2.3.3. One should generate the special thought to generate a stable antidote

2.2.1.2.2.2.3.1. One should generate the force of the antidote against the afflictions

What we need to understand from this and the following verse and explanation, is the extent to which the afflictions are strong in one's mind, and that one needs to try and develop an even stronger antidote. Rather than giving in and succumbing to the afflictions when they are strong, and saying, 'I can't manage, this is overwhelming me', rather than being submissive to the afflictions, one should develop an even stronger antidote in one's mind as a way of combating the afflictions so that they don't overpower oneself. This is the point being presented here.

It is explained in the verse which reads:

60. *When in the midst of affliction's types,
I shall stand up to them in a thousand ways,
And not let myself be touched by the host of
afflictions,
Like the lion and the foxes and such.*

The commentary explains:

When abiding in the midst of the various types of afflictions such as anger I shall stand up to them in a thousand ways through the power of the antidote. For example, like the foxes that do not touch the lion, one should act not to be touched by the host of afflictions.

When the commentary mentions, *when abiding in the midst of the various types of afflictions such as anger*, most of us can reflect on our own situation where we are abiding in the midst of various afflictions. As we are afflicted by anger, pride, desire, jealousy etc. it is really no wonder that we get so easily influenced, because if it is not one affliction, it's another one. We're constantly surrounded by the various types of afflictions that we foster in our mind.

When one is abiding amidst various types of afflictions such as anger and so forth, what one needs to resolve is that *I shall stand up to them in a thousand ways through the power of the antidote*. The mightier the antidote, the weaker the afflictions will become. If one does not apply powerful antidotes, then it is more likely that one will succumb to the afflictions because then they will overpower oneself. The example presented here is *like the foxes that do not touch the lion*. (The Tibetan word *wa* is translated as fox, but a fox smaller than a *wa*, which is a larger animal with more fur; maybe wolf is a closer example.)

A wolf is powerful amongst other animals, but when compared to a lion it is much weaker, so it would never approach a lion because the lion is more powerful. Applying this analogy to understand the verse, the antidote needs to be like the lion, whereas the afflictions are like the weaker fox and start to shy away when confronted by a lion. This is how we need to resolve to combat the afflictions in our mind.

In relating the advice, *one should act not to be touched by the host of afflictions*, to ourselves as a personal instruction, we must try as much as possible to apply it and put it into practise. We all have experience of anger and the shortcomings of anger; if we foster anger and allow it to prevail, then it only becomes mightier and stronger in our mind. When an affliction like anger arises, at best we need to apply an antidote immediately to completely conquer the anger. But if that is not possible right away then the next best is not to allow the anger to intensify, at least not to completely follow anger and be completely submissive to it. The next best thing is to at least prevent oneself from engaging in the actions of anger. As with any other afflictions, it is said that at beginners' level if one is unable to apply the antidote, unable to reduce the intensity in one's mind, then the next best thing is to remove yourself from the situation completely; try not to come into contact with the objects that cause you anger, desire and so forth.

As mentioned in *The Thirty Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*:

Giving up inhospitable places, mental afflictions gradually decrease.

With no distractions, virtuous activities naturally increase.

When the mind becomes clear, conviction in the Dharma is born.

Therefore, seeking solitude is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

As indicated in this verse, when you remove yourself from the conditions of the afflictions, then the afflictions will start to gradually subside. Thus, avoiding contact with disturbing objects is also a method. That is, if you are not able to apply the antidotes right away, then it is best to remove yourself to

a place where you are not likely to interact with objects of afflictions. At an initial stage this can help one's mind not to be affected too much.

This passage relates to the benefits of remaining in solitude. It is saying that by removing oneself from conditions of afflictions, and staying in solitude, is the practice of a bodhisattva.

When one removes oneself from immediate conditions where afflictions arise, and whilst in solitude, apply the practices of accumulating virtue, then the conditions become conducive for one's mind to be in a more virtuous state. As one increases the practice of accumulating virtue, the afflictions will naturally start to reduce. It is in this context that the benefits of going into solitude are explained.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke.

Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱུང་རྒྱུ་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

8 September 2015

Based on the motivation that we have just generated, we can now engage in our meditation practice. *[meditation]*

Now we can generate the positive motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment in order to liberate them from all suffering and lead them to ultimate happiness.

That is my goal, and in order to achieve that, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. Therefore I will engage in listening to the Mahayana teaching and put it into practise well.

Put simply, imagine someone asking, "What is your goal?" With the bodhicitta motivation the response needs to be, "My goal is to liberate all beings from suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness. In order to do that, I need to first achieve that goal, which is buddhahood, myself. So my purpose is to achieve that goal".

It is good to periodically assess oneself by asking questions such as: What is it that I really want to do? What is my main purpose in life? What is it that I wish to achieve? If one can competently respond that one's purpose is to accumulate virtue and merit, then asking those questions will be a check on whether one is actually engaging in the ways and means to accumulate that virtue. If one is doing so, then one rejoices and further strengthens that activity. If one is inclined to engage in negativities, then asking these questions acts as a reminder to be cautious. Then one can think "OK, I need to stop or reduce this activity so as to minimise the accumulation of negativity". This is how we make progress, and then a transformation can slowly start to take place.

We customarily ask others what they are doing, and then we wait for their response. Here, we need to be asking ourselves, "What am I doing?", which puts the focus on our own activities and manners. When one's partner or companion does something that is a bit inappropriate, we immediately jump on them and say, "What are you doing?" , accusing them of being ridiculous or stupid. But if we apply that approach to ourselves, "How about me, what am I doing?", then that initiative of looking into our own conduct will help us to behave more appropriately.

To re-emphasise the point: we quite readily notice someone else's mistakes and are quick to pounce on them. Periodically taking the initiative to look at our own thoughts and activities, and asking this question of ourselves, is a way of assessing our own thoughts, manners and so forth. Then we can reprimand or encourage ourselves as need be.

The instruction being presented in the following verses is to prevent the accumulation of negativities by applying mindfulness and awareness the moment one is about to engage in some negative action.

2.2.1.2.2.2.3. Pride against the afflictions (cont.) 2.2.1.2.2.2.3.2. One should not fall under their control at all

This is in reference to the afflictions.

The relevant verse reads:

61. *Just as one protects one's eyes
When great danger occurs,
One should take care not to be controlled by the
afflictions
When danger occurs.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning as follows:

When great danger. i.e. the danger of afflictions, occurs, then, just as humans protect their eyes with great concern, similarly, when there is the danger of falling under the control of the afflictions, one should take care not to be controlled by the afflictions.

As clearly explained in the commentary, *humans naturally protect their eyes with great concern*, which is especially true when there is a great danger. Their most precious organ is their eyes, and in the event of some great danger they instinctively protect their eyes, in spite of losing their limbs. That is quite obvious, as losing one's eyesight is one of the greatest concerns of any human being. Just as humans have this natural inclination to value their eyes as being most precious and thus protect them, *similarly, when there is the danger of falling under the control of the afflictions, one should take care not to be controlled by the afflictions.*

As I have indicated in the past, when there is a danger that one is going to be influenced by strong afflictions, then that is the time to apply mindfulness and awareness so as to not be completely overpowered and controlled by those afflictions. This instruction is exactly what is being explained here. Protecting one's mind from the afflictions is even more important than protecting one's eyes, or any other body part. The real destruction occurs in one's life when one is completely overpowered and influenced by the afflictions. There are those who are ultimately destroyed when they are completely controlled by attachment. Their wealth starts to decline, and their friends and companions and so forth will all fade away. It's the same with anger. So the more one contemplates the ill-effects of the afflictions and the damage that they do, the more one will be aware of that, and the more one will be primed to be really cautious about being controlled by the afflictions. As mentioned here in the commentary, whenever there is the danger that one's mind is controlled by the afflictions, then that is the time one should apply the means not to be controlled by them.

Simply put, one should not allow one's mind to be controlled by the delusions. The real culprit that destroys our happiness, and causes us so much distress, comes down to the afflictions. When the mind is controlled by the afflictions, then it is we who ultimately suffer. We are the ones who need to be in control of our own mind, so we should apply every measure not to give in to the afflictions, and not to allow them to control our mind. If we are feeling unhappy and we really look into the main cause, we will see that it comes down to the afflictions. In particular, the main affliction that causes the most distress and unhappiness is that our desires are not being fulfilled. We are not deprived of adequate wealth, food, clothing or shelter and companions, but we seem to be obsessed with unfulfilled desires, and so we constantly feel unhappy. It is this attachment to unfulfilled desires that causes inner turmoil,

stress and unhappiness. This is the point that we really need to understand.

When we are in mental turmoil, or even just unhappy, we are not capable of fulfilling our own purpose, let alone trying to fulfil the purpose of others. If we are not capable of fulfilling our own needs and purpose, then how can we even consider fulfilling the needs of others, and striving for their purpose? If one falls victim to the afflictions, then one will be defeated by them, and one's own purpose will not be fulfilled, let alone fulfilling the purposes of others. Therefore, we really need to focus on the disadvantages and faults of the afflictions, scrutinise them, and understand that what is really harming us is the afflictions that are in our own mind. We are quick to accuse others of harming us, but in comparison to the harm rendered by our own afflictions, that harm is actually quite minor. While physical wounds caused by others throwing a stone, for example, can heal after some time, the harm caused by the afflictions is continuous.

We need to recognise the afflictions for what they are. If one can recognise them when they arise, they will subside and we will not be completely overcome by them. At our level it is a significant achievement to even recognise the afflictions as they arise. As I regularly remind you, don't always try to find fault outside, and blame external situations for your problems. Rather, look within, and recognise that the real problem lies there.

If we do this on a regular basis, we will slowly begin to notice that the real cause of the problem is our negative attitude, or state of mind. When we start to notice this, and begin to manage our own attitudes and ways of thinking, the afflictions will start to subside. Then, regardless of external situations, we will feel a little bit more at ease, a little more comfortable, and we will notice an inner transformation taking place. Settling one's mind in this way is a very significant achievement.

When there is a dispute over wealth and someone gets killed, then others will remark, "What destroyed him was desire for the wealth that was the cause of the dispute". Delusions mislead us, just like others can mislead us. If, for example a non-drinker goes out with friends, and becomes more and more influenced by them, and then begins drinking a bit with those friends, they can end up becoming quite a drinker themselves. Then others make comments like, "Oh, he used to be a good person when he didn't drink. He was misled and destroyed through the negative influence of his friends".

When liberation is presented we are inspired to achieve liberation—we don't have much hesitation in wanting that! But then when the faults of the afflictions are presented, we might be hesitant in chasing them down, and applying their antidotes.

The point here is to recognise afflictions such as anger and attachment for what they are. When we recognise their ill-effects and disadvantages, then it becomes easier to understand others. When others, influenced by afflictions such as strong attachment or anger, are unhappy, showing inappropriate gestures and so forth, then instead of becoming upset and angry with them, by remembering one's own state of mind when one was affected by strong delusions, one can empathise with them. That becomes a means to develop compassion for others, rather than feeling angry and upset.

First, we need to recognise and acknowledge the ill-effects of the afflictions within ourselves, then we can relate that knowledge to others. Rather than seeing the other person as being at fault, one realises that it's the fault of the afflictions which are causing them to say inappropriate things and so forth. Of course, I have mentioned this many, many times in the past because it is such a significant point. There are many who have commented on how beneficial they have found this approach; they find they can really relate to it and find it very helpful.

When one can understand and acknowledge the real trouble maker and destroyer of happiness as being the afflictions, then they become the target. When we begin to combat the afflictions, we start to take the upper hand because we have more control over our minds. Then we will naturally become happier and more settled.

When one is not affected by the afflictions, then one feels a genuine sense of relaxation and ease. It is a break from the turmoil that can be created by manifest afflictions. The arhats, or foe destroyers, are in a perpetual state of peace, with a calm and peaceful state of mind, because they have uprooted the afflictions. We may not have reached that state yet, but nevertheless we benefit when we are temporarily free from manifest afflictions. Then we can actually experience a state of feeling calm and quiet and be at peace. From that we can gain a sense of how wonderful it would be if the afflictions were completely uprooted from our mind. Meanwhile, making an attempt to temporarily not be affected by the afflictions is a significant achievement for oneself at this stage.

2.2.1.2.2.2.3.3. One should generate the special thought to generate a stable antidote

The advice here is for bodhisattvas to obtain a stable antidote to overcome the afflictions.

The lines relating to this are:

*62. It is easy for one to die by being burnt
And even to be beheaded,
But one should not at all bow to
The enemy of the afflictions.
Likewise, at all occasions,
One should only act appropriately.*

Then the commentary presents the meaning as follows:

The measure of having a stable antidote: It is easy for one to die through being burnt by fire or having one's head chopped off, but one should not at all bow to the enemy of the afflictions.

Likewise, one should on all occasions destroy the objects of abandonment and make the antidote stable. Thus one should not act in any way other than appropriately.

Here *measure* means the mark or the gauge of having a stable antidote. *It is easy to die through being burnt by fire or having one's head chopped off, but one should not at all bow to the enemy of the afflictions*, means that, in comparison to the harm caused by the enemy of the afflictions, it is easier, or in other words, more suitable, to be burnt by fire or have one's head chopped off, because at worst it only destroys this life. Whereas if one were to *bow to the enemy*, meaning to be under the control and the influence of the afflictions, and not apply the antidotes to overcome them, then there will be perpetual harm throughout future lives. The harm that one endures over a long period of time will have come from the afflictions within ourselves.

As the harm one receives from the afflictions is so much greater and more destructive than the harm that one may receive in this life, one needs to apply the appropriate antidote. As the commentary states, *likewise, one should on all occasions destroy the objects of abandonment and make the antidote stable*. Making the antidote stable, refers ultimately to the antidote that serves as the means to overcome self-grasping. When that antidote is stabilised, then one can act appropriately on all occasions. Therefore the main focus is to stabilise that antidote.

Thus one should not act in any way other than appropriately. Having thoroughly reflected on the shortcomings of the afflictions, and their deeply rooted destructive nature, one needs to resolve to apply the antidote. Even in this life we can see the ill-effects of the afflictions, not to mention the ill-effects over many lifetimes. So we need to resolve to apply the antidote and make it stable.

2.2.1.2.3. The power of joy¹

This is subdivided into three:

2.2.1.2.3.1. One should strive in virtue regardless of the ripening result

2.2.1.2.3.2. Accomplishing virtue by keeping the result in mind

2.2.1.2.3.3. The way of relating it to the power of joy

2.2.1.2.3.1. One should strive in virtue regardless of the ripening result

This heading indicates that one should strive in virtue, without any concern for the ripening positive result that one will experience.

The instruction here is that bodhisattvas should engage in virtuous activities with the sole intention of benefitting other beings. They should not think, "If I engage in this virtue, I will personally benefit from the good result". If one engages in virtue with that intention, then that action would be done out of self interest. While there might be some virtue in that, it will be a limited virtue, as the intention to engage in the virtue will be tainted by self interest.

Whereas if one engages in virtue with the sole intention that it will be a cause to benefit others, then, regardless of any thoughts about the ripening result for oneself, one will actually experience the positive result anyway. In other words, there is no need to focus on benefit for oneself, as one will benefit as a natural by-product of the original intention. There is the famous quote in Lama Tsong Khapa's lam rim which says that by benefitting others, one's own benefit will be naturally accomplished on the side. His Holiness the Dalai Lama also emphasises the same point.

In our ordinary mind we might feel, "If I dedicate everything to others, what is there left for me? How will that benefit me?" Here we are being told that one need not worry about benefits for oneself, because personal benefit is a natural by-product of working solely to benefit others. When you dedicate yourself fully to the benefit of other sentient beings, then you will naturally be benefited as well.

In contrast to that, if one focuses only on one's own interests, then one will not even fulfil one's own purpose fully, let alone being able to fulfil the purpose of others. This is the point that was made earlier: one's own purpose and the purpose of others will be basically destroyed by self interest.

The verse relating to this heading reads:

*63. Just like desiring the resultant happiness of play,
Whatever the engaged activity is,
Hold onto these actions,
Like them without satisfaction.*

Then as the commentary explains:

Just as some children desire the resultant happiness of play so should bodhisattvas have joy and grasp at their actions for the purpose of others, such as listening, contemplating and meditating on bodhicitta. One should be so joyful that one desires the actions continually without being satisfied by them.

Just as some children desire the resultant happiness of play uses the example of children who want to keep on playing. When the parents try to call them back, or tell them to stop, they don't want to stop, because there is such joy in playing. They do not see it as a task, because they enjoy it so much. The advice here is that *bodhisattvas* should also *have joy and grasp at their actions*, meaning that they should hold onto their actions for the purpose of others with joy.

As presented here, engaging in deeds or actions of benefitting others, includes actions such as *listening* to the teachings and *contemplating* their meaning, and meditating, specifically *meditating on bodhicitta*. Of course, further practices of bodhisattvas include engaging in the three trainings of morality, concentration and wisdom, along with the practice of the six perfections of morality, generosity, patience, joyous effort, meditation and wisdom. Bodhisattvas engage in these activities with a sense of joy, and are never satisfied with engaging in them intermittently. Rather, they continuously engage in these actions for the purpose of others with joy.

One should be so joyful that one desires the actions continuously, without being satisfied by them, means not feeling satisfied in thinking "That's enough, I've done enough". Rather, one should continuously engage in these actions.

The main theme of the outline is that when bodhisattvas engage in these actions for the sole purpose of others, they have no ulterior motive of wanting to receive the benefit of the ripening results. There is no stain of self interest in their actions. Rather they feel joy in continuously engaging in actions for the sole purpose of benefitting others. Of course this advice is for bodhisattvas. However, we can take this explanation as a personal instruction to do as much as possible to develop an attitude of engaging in virtues in a continuous way, with a sense of joy. We should not be satisfied with engaging in one virtuous act now, thinking 'Oh, I've done my good deed for the day, so that's done!' Rather we should develop a mind of continuously engaging in virtuous actions, along with a sense of joy in doing so. With such a sense of joy, one will naturally be inspired to engage in these practices continuously. That is how we need to take this explicit advice to bodhisattvas as a personal instruction for ourselves.

2.2.1.2.3.2. Accomplishing virtue by keeping the result in mind

Lest one doubts that good results follow from virtuous actions, the advice here is that one needs to be mindful of the infallibility of karma;— one will definitely experience a positive result from positive actions, and when one engages in negative actions, a negative result will definitely occur.

¹ This heading was introduced on 14 July 2015.

Therefore one needs to accomplish virtue by keeping in mind the infallibility of karma.

The first verse under this heading reads:

64. *Although working for the purpose of happiness
It is uncertain whether it will become happiness
or not.
The very action that becomes happiness
How can one be happy not doing it?*

The commentary explaining this verse reads:

Though worldly beings engage in actions such as fieldwork in order to attain mental and physical happiness, it is uncertain whether the result will be happiness or not. Only the actions of bodhisattvas are certain to bring about temporary and ultimate happiness, and if one does not engage in these actions then how could one attain the resultant happiness?

As explained here in the commentary, *though worldly beings engage in actions such as fieldwork in order to attain mental and physical happiness, it is uncertain whether the result will be happiness or not.* This refers to uncertainty about immediate results. A farmer may toil in the fields but it is uncertain whether he will reap a good harvest. Even if he were to have a good harvest, then the next uncertainty is whether that success will bring about the desired result of physical and mental happiness. Likewise with those who trade with the intention of making a profit from their business ventures; it is uncertain whether they will actually make a profit, or if their business will prosper. But even if they were to make a profit, it is uncertain whether or not they would obtain the ultimate result of physical and mental happiness. That is the point being presented here.

As explained further in the commentary, *only the actions of bodhisattvas are certain to bring about temporary and ultimate happiness.* The actions of bodhisattvas, such as practising the perfection of morality, practising the perfection of generosity and so forth with the sole purpose of benefitting others, bring the certainty of physical and mental happiness.

Therefore, *if one does not engage in these actions then how could one attain the resultant happiness?* This indicates that if one does not engage in these causes, then of course one cannot experience the resultant mental and physical happiness. The main point emphasised here is that the action of benefitting others is what brings joy to a bodhisattva's mind. They find no joy in worldly activities; only actions that benefit others bring them great joy.

The next verse in this section is:

65. *If one is not satisfied by sense pleasures,
Which are like honey on a razor's edge,
Then how can one be satisfied by the merit
Of the ripening result of peaceful happiness?*

Then the commentary explains:

Sensory happiness of forms, sounds and so forth are like honey on a razor's edge: when tasted with one's tongue then, although experiencing some taste, one experiences the suffering of being cut on the tongue. If one is not satisfied by cyclic existence, no matter how much one is engaging in it, then how can one be satisfied by the merit of generosity and so forth, which is the cause to attain the temporary happiness of higher rebirth of gods and humans and the ultimate happiness where all suffering has been pacified. One should meditate on them insatiably.

The analogy used here could not be more graphic! It presents a very vivid image of what samsaric pleasures are

like: the *sensory happiness of forms, sounds and so forth are like honey on a razor's edge.* Although the Tibetan word used here refers to a very sharp knife, the English translation uses *razor*. If you smear honey on a very sharp blade, and lick it off the blade then, although you experience some temporary pleasure from the sweet taste of the honey, you will immediately feel the suffering of having cut your tongue. Shantideva, being a great master, always finds the most vivid examples in his explanations.

When the commentary refers to the *sensory happiness of forms, sounds and so forth*, the words *so forth* includes the rest of the sense pleasures—taste, smell, tactile feelings and mental pleasures. There is no other way to experience sensory pleasures other than by contact between the sensory objects and our senses. When the commentary states *if one is not satisfied by these pleasures in cyclic existence then no matter how much one engages in it* the implication is that in this life we have experienced many sensory pleasures, not to mention the pleasures we have experienced in previous lives as well.

Yet the very moment after one experiences coming into contact with an object that brings pleasure to the senses, a sense of dissatisfaction because one is not satiated arises. There has been a fleeting experience of pleasure but in the next moment, it has turned into dissatisfaction. That in itself indicates that we are not experiencing true happiness—we have not been satisfied by any of the sensory pleasures that we have experienced so far.

For as long as we are controlled by the afflictions, and experience these sensory pleasures, there will be no satisfaction while we remain in cyclic existence. That being the case, *then how can one be satisfied by the merit of generosity and so forth*, indicates that if one is inclined to be dissatisfied even with momentary pleasures, then why would one be satisfied with engaging in causes for both the temporary as well as the ultimate results?

As mentioned previously, engaging in the practices of generosity, morality, patience and so forth is the cause to obtain the temporary happiness of a higher rebirth of gods and humans. Not only that, but they are also the cause to obtain ultimate happiness, where all suffering has been pacified i.e. liberation and ultimately, enlightenment. Understanding and recognising that, one should, as the commentary concludes, *resolve to meditate on them insatiably*, and thus not be satisfied with practising the six perfections once or twice. Rather one should engage in them continuously.

Understanding this section of the text is not difficult. However we need to read it, and contemplate the meaning, then we will experience the benefit of more stability in our minds.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་རྒྱུད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

15 September 2015

While maintaining the motivation we have just generated, we can now engage in our meditation practice. *[meditation]*

We can now generate the bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, in order to liberate them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practice well.

2.2.1.2.3.3. The way of relating it to the power of joy

The verse reads:

66. *Therefore, to complete one's actions,
One should engage in the action
Like an elephant tormented at noon
That, when coming upon a lake, immerses itself
in it.*

The commentary explains the meaning:

Because it is an action suitable to engage in, therefore, in order to complete the intended action one should engage in it like an elephant tormented at noon by heat and thirst that comes upon a lake and immerses itself joyfully in it.

This explanation follows the presentation of the previous verse in the commentary about the merit of generosity and so forth, which states:

the cause to attain the temporary happiness and higher rebirth of gods and humans, and the ultimate happiness where all suffering is pacified.

In relation to the practices of the six perfections - generosity and so forth - the commentary explains that a way to actually engage in such actions is by relating them to the power of joy. The commentary states, *because it is an action suitable to engage in*, and here *suitable* indicates that it brings about the practices of the six perfections, such as generosity, ethics and morality, patience etc., which in turn bring about a temporary and ultimate goal for oneself and other sentient beings. Thus these actions are suitable to engage in, and the way to engage in these practices is with a sense of joy, achieved by contemplating the positive results that they will bring. Doing this encourages one to engage in positive actions as a cause for positive results, willingly and joyfully.

If we were given the choice to experience positive results we would not hesitate to accept them. For example, the positive results of generosity and morality are abundant wealth and a good physique, so we'd willingly accept those. But if we honestly ask ourselves whether we are engaging in the causes to obtain these good results, we'd find that we are not. In short, we wish for positive results but we don't pay much attention to creating the causes

for them. While we'd rather not experience the negative consequences of practising the opposite of the six perfections, that is actually what we do, i.e. we practise the opposite of generosity by being miserly and so forth. We find ourselves engaging in negativities willingly and without hesitation.

We need to understand that for as long as we engage in this disparity between the cause and the effect, while we wish for positive results but don't create the causes, then we cannot possibly experience them.

In order to relate to this explanation we need to bring to mind the understanding of karma. When one has a strong belief in karma one is naturally willing to engage in positive deeds, and thus accumulates virtues. Whenever there is an opportunity to accumulate virtue it brings about a sense of great joy, where we feel very fortunate to have the opportunity to do so. Being happy about the opportunity to accumulate good deeds and virtues, rejoicing in accumulating them, and dedicating them to a positive end, is the means to secure and increase the positive merit of those virtues.

With a strong belief in karma one naturally hesitates to engage in negativities, and when one finds oneself engaged in them, one immediately develops strong regret about how unfortunate it is to have succumbed again to the delusions. Such regret enables one to confess the negativities, which is a means to purify them. While at our level now, we may not be able to completely avoid engaging in negativities, the benefit of a strong belief in karma means that one will not idly let one's negativities sit; one actually resolves to purify them with confession.

When one acquaints oneself with karma to the point where towards evening one takes the initiative to purify any negativities created during the day, one can go to sleep with a clear and virtuous mind. This is the way to conduct oneself in daily life to make it more meaningful. And if one has accumulated virtues, one can rejoice and go to sleep in a virtuous state of mind. If the sleep itself can also become virtuous then that is great, and the next morning one can rejoice in having a good sleep. If we find ourselves creating negativities with thought or action during the night, then in the morning we should again take the opportunity to purify them.

It is very difficult at our level to completely avoid engaging in negativities because of the strong delusions in our mind. Habituation with negativities finds us periodically engaging in them, but we have the great advantage of using our understanding of the Dharma to counteract them by developing regret, confessing them, and then purifying the negativities. So even though we might still engage in negativities, knowing the Dharma provides us with the means to practise and purify them.

Also, when we create virtues, understanding Dharma allows us to seize the opportunity to secure them through dedication, and further increase them through rejoicing. If we actually practise the Dharma then this is the great advantage we have. There are those who create negativities but do not know how to purify them, and there are those who create great amounts of virtue and may not be aware of it, as is the case with many non-religious people.

On this point, I want to relate an incident I saw recently on TV where there was a lady who was incredibly kind in making attempts to save an injured kangaroo that had been shot with an arrow. She was holding it as if it was her own child, and nurturing it and caring for the wound. I don't know what eventually happened to the kangaroo but the great extent to which this lady was caring for it really touched me. The perpetrators would have just mindlessly shot the arrow, maybe as a game, not really valuing the life of another living being. So while some exhibit cruelty and mean to destroy life, this lady took it upon herself to try to save the kangaroo's life, and put a lot of time and love into it. Seeing it actually brought tears to my eyes. It's unlikely that she is a religious person, but I thought the extent to which she showed such great concern for another living being was a very compassionate act.

If we consider ourselves 'religious' we might consider doing even better than that! Of course there are different ways and means of putting this into practice, particularly in relation to avoiding negativities, rejoicing in virtue, and increasing our virtues. This is something we have the understanding and the knowledge to do. If we don't use the tools we have then there's no advantage in us gaining this understanding from the Dharma. The main thing is to resolve to take every opportunity to accumulate virtue, and when one finds one is creating negativities, apply methods to purify them. When we think about it, it's not that complicated. Most of it is done through our mental attitude, and our way of thinking; acknowledging negativities for what they are and regretting and confessing them. Whenever we have the opportunity to accumulate virtue we should recognise it and willingly engage in it. When we take these measures it actually starts to become a habit. Acquainting ourselves with accumulating virtue and purifying negativities can definitely lead to a much lighter and more joyous mind.

For those who intentionally engage in negative deeds we can obviously see that their lives are not really happy, and that they are constantly living in fear and worry and complications. The consequences they experience are not farfetched. Temporarily it may seem they are in control and enjoying life, but actually they end up leading very unhappy lives. In contrast, we can definitely see that those who are engaged in kind and compassionate deeds have much more joyful and happy lives. Whether they are aware of it or not, they are actually experiencing the positive consequences of abiding by karma, committing virtues and shunning negativity. On these obvious levels it is good for us to consider the significances of these practices.

As explained in the commentary, having understood the practice as being actions which are suitable to engage in, *therefore in order to complete the intended action one should engage in it*, which indicates that for bodhisattvas engaged in the practices of generosity and so forth, once they engage in them, completing the action should be done with a sense of great joy.

The analogy presented here is that, *it is like an elephant tormented at noon by heat and thirst that comes upon a lake and immerses itself joyfully in it*. This is a vivid example. When an animal like an elephant comes upon a water

hole after walking for a long time on a very hot day, and becomes thirsty, it will rush towards the water and very joyfully drink it and immerse itself in the water. It will take great joy in that activity.

Like this analogy of an elephant taking great joy in coming upon a lake, when a bodhisattva engages in the practices of generosity and so forth, they need to engage in them with a similar great sense of joy because these are actions that benefit other sentient beings.

2.2.1.2.4. The power of relinquishment

This is divided into two:

2.2.1.2.4.1. Temporary relinquishment

2.2.1.2.4.2. Certain relinquishment

2.2.1.2.4.1. Temporary relinquishment

Temporary relinquishment relates to taking a break, or rest.

The two lines of verse read:

*67ab. If one is affected by weakening strength
One should relinquish to start again.*

Gyaltshab Je's commentary explains the meaning:

If one is affected by one's weakening strength, physically and mentally exhausted by one's practice of virtue, then one should relinquish temporarily in order to start again when one is rested.

While the explanation is clear, it is good to take note of the main point which is very good advice for us at our level. When engaging in virtues, when one's *strength* is *weakened physically* with physical ailments like sickness, or *mentally exhausted* when one is a bit overwhelmed or stressed, then at that time one should relinquish the practice temporarily. This is not suggesting that we completely put the practice aside and don't do it anymore. Rather, it means taking a short rest so that one can feel rejuvenated to further engage in the practice of that virtue. So it is with the intention to continue afresh in the practice of virtue that one takes a rest, rather than having a complete break and not doing the practice at all.

2.2.1.2.4.2. Certain relinquishment

The next two lines of the verse read:

*67cd. If it is well completed one relinquishes,
Because one wishes to do it later again and again.*

The commentary explains:

If an action is completed well, then one relinquishes it because one wants to repeat that action again and again in the future.

Relinquishing an action that is completed well, needs to be understood as relinquishing the satisfaction of having done that action well, and to further develop it by striving to engage in the action again and again.

Having completed an action well, if one feels satisfied that it has already been done, then one will not feel the need to do it again. It is this satisfaction, and not seeing the need to do the action again and again that has to be relinquished. If one feels satisfied with the completion, it prevents one from engaging in it again and again. When engaging in the practice of virtue, one needs to make even more effort to increase the means of accumulating

virtue. It is in this way that one progresses from one practice to the next.

Using the example of studies at school, when one finishes the first grade, if one did not relinquish the thought of being satisfied just with that, one would not go on to the next grade, and the following grades after that. When completing first grade one has finished one part of one's schooling, but one needs to relinquish the thought, 'I'm done with my studies now', and continue on to the next grade and so forth.

2.2.2. Being earnest about practising the actions with mindfulness and introspection

This is subdivided into five:

2.2.2.1. One should earnestly be conscientious

2.2.2.2. Being earnest about mindfulness and introspection

2.2.2.3. Not giving an opportunity for faults to arise with mindfulness and introspection

2.2.2.4. If a fault arises one needs to stop it immediately

2.2.2.5. One should strive in suitable actions

All the practices presented here have already been mentioned, but now they are presented in the context of putting them into practice.

2.2.2.1. ONE SHOULD EARNESTLY BE CONSCIENTIOUS

The verse reads:

*68. Like the seasoned warrior that is engaged
In a fencing duel with the enemy
One should avoid the weapon of the afflictions
And look to attack the enemy of the afflictions.*

The commentary explains:

The seasoned warrior that is engaged in combat with an enemy and who is skilled in weapons and the art of war, will evade the enemy's weapons and attack the enemy. Similarly, upon evading the weapons that are one's own afflictions, one should stop them and not be destroyed by them. Instead one attacks the enemy of the affliction with the weapons of the antidotes and cuts them off at the root.

When the commentary explains, *when an experienced warrior that is engaged in combat with the enemy and who is skilled in the weapons and the art of war*, it means that they have all the necessary skills involved in engaging in combat. In combat they will conduct themselves with a twofold method to overcome the enemy: protecting themselves from harm by being able to evade the weapon targeted at them, and at the same time, find the ways and means to actually attack the enemy by using one's own weapons.

Just as this is done in physical combat with an enemy, when this analogy is applied to fighting afflictions, one first needs to protect oneself (make sure the afflictions don't harm oneself), while applying the means (using antidotes) to overcome them.

The significant point here is that if one is just focussed on overcoming the afflictions, there might be occasions where they actually harm oneself, and one is not aware of it. What is being highlighted here is that one needs to apply one's wisdom in both ways: while combating the afflictions in order to overcome them, at the same time ensuring that one is not harmed by them.

Instead one attacks the enemy of the affliction with the weapons of the antidotes and cuts them off at the very root means that in one's attempt to overcome the afflictions one is not satisfied with just overcoming one or two afflictions, or the manifest levels of the afflictions, but effectively attempts to abandon them from their very root. The main practice here is to abide with conscientiousness while applying enthusiasm in virtue to protect one's mind from afflictions. So we apply this twofold approach to conscientiousness: on one hand enthusiastically engaging in virtue, and on the other being constantly mindful of protecting one's mind from the harm of the afflictions.

2.2.2.2. BEING EARNEST ABOUT MINDFULNESS AND INTROSPECTION

The presentation of these practices makes us mindful of them being ways to protect our commitments, particularly one's vows. It is essential to have these tools to protect commitments.

The verse reads:

*69. If one's sword falls down in battle
Then, out of fear, one will pick it up quickly.
Similarly, if one loses the weapon of
mindfulness
Then, out of fear of the hell realms, one should
quickly pick it up.*

The commentary explains:

If one's sword falls out of one's hand in the midst of battle, one quickly picks it up out of fear of being killed by the enemy. Similarly, if one loses the weapon of mindfulness, which does not forget the virtuous object, then out of fear of the hell realms, by remembering how one will be born there if one is destroyed by the afflictions, one quickly picks up the antidote of mindfulness and introspection.

Here Shantideva shows what an insightful master he is in presenting this clear and vivid analogy; *If one's sword falls out of one's hand in the midst of battle, one quickly picks it up out of fear of being killed by the enemy*. This shows an automatic response in battle, where, if the very weapon one is using to protect oneself - e.g. a sword - falls out of the hand, one immediately reacts and picks it up again, in order to protect oneself.

What the analogy explains is that, *similarly, if one loses the weapon of mindfulness, which does not forget the virtuous object*, where mindfulness is the weapon, the state of mind that constantly remembers the virtuous object. One remembers the virtuous object constantly through mindfulness, as encouraged here, *out of fear of the hell realms*. By remembering that if one loses that mindfulness then the afflictions will destroy one, with the consequence of experiencing the hell realms as a result, *one quickly picks up the antidote of mindfulness and introspection*. As just mentioned, this particular type of mindfulness is constantly remembering the virtuous object, while introspection investigates whether one's three doors of body, speech, and mind are in tune with keeping the virtuous object in mind.

When one forgets the virtuous object then that is when it is most likely for the actions of the three doors to engage in negativity. Therefore, having both mindfulness and introspection to constantly keep our mind in virtue is at the very core of our practice. This is why, when

introducing meditation sessions, I constantly emphasise the point about keeping the virtuous object in mind and trying to remember it, and not allowing negativities to completely control oneself, so that one lapses from engaging in virtue.

There might be many virtuous objects, so to simplify one's practice into something one can do, focus on love and compassion as the main virtuous objects. Constantly try and bring to mind the value of love and compassion, the need to develop it, and try to tune one's mind into love and compassion. This protects one's mind from a lapse of love and compassion, and so one's life can become really meaningful.

2.2.2.3. NOT GIVING AN OPPORTUNITY FOR FAULTS TO ARISE WITH MINDFULNESS AND INTROSPECTION

The opportunity for faults to arise occurs during times when one lapses from mindfulness and introspection. So applying mindfulness and introspection prevents opportunities for faults to arise.

The verse reads:

70. *Just as poison will spread
In dependence on the blood,
So faults will pervade the mind
If they find an opportunity.*

The commentary explains:

If one is hit by a poisoned arrow, then just as the poison will spread through one's body in dependence on the blood that is coursing through one's veins, so will the faults of anger and so forth pervade the mind, if they find an opportunity of lapsed mindfulness and such due to afflictions. Therefore one should stop even the smallest affliction.

When the commentary explains that, *if one is hit by a poisoned arrow*, take note that it's not just a normal arrow, but the tip of the arrow is dipped into poison so that when someone is hit by it and it pierces their skin, the poison starts to spread rapidly through the bloodstream. When this happens there's really not much chance for survival, because as the poison spreads it can take one's life.

Using this vivid analogy, *if the faults of anger and so forth pervade the mind, and find an opportunity of lapsed mindfulness and such due to afflictions*, i.e. if one lapses from mindfulness and introspection, then afflictions such as anger and so forth will permeate the mind, and thus destroy one's wellbeing. The commentary concludes, *therefore one should stop even the smallest affliction*.

The next verse is presented with a query:

Query: If asked, how should one be attentive?

We'll leave the following verse and explanation for our next session. Briefly, it presents another vivid analogy for applying mindfulness. It is of someone carrying a container, like a basket with different kinds of fruits, by balancing it on the head. As difficult as this is in itself, the threat here is that if one of those fruits falls out of the basket then someone will chop off your head with a sword. With that threat one would be very, very mindful.

The analogy, as presented, consists of a person carrying a container of fruit, or in this case mustard oil, and if one drop spills then their head would be chopped off. When the road itself is uneven, with a lot of slippery gravel, it's

difficult to walk on, so under such conditions we can imagine how difficult and fearsome it would be. The person would have to exert the most incredible attentiveness in order not to spill any of that oil. In the same way, mindfulness must be applied to protect one's mind from the afflictions.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱུང་རྒྱུ་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

22 September 2015

Based on the motivation generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our meditation practice. [*meditation*]

Now we can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings, and put them into practice well. That will be a means to subdue my mind.

This would be a good way to generate the motivation for listening to the teachings.

2.2.2. Being sincere about practising actions with mindfulness and introspection

2.2.2.3. NOT GIVING AN OPPORTUNITY FOR FAULTS TO ARISE WITH MINDFULNESS AND INTROSPECTION (CONT.)

We covered the first verse under this heading last week. The next verse is preceded by this query:

If asked: How should one be attentive?

In response to this the verse reads:

71. *Just as a person that is carrying a jar filled with mustard oil
In front of someone wielding a sword
Will be careful not to spill anything out of fear of death,
In the same way should an ascetic be attentive.*

Then the commentary explains the meaning of the verse.

Answer: A person that is carrying a jar filled with mustard oil along a slippery road in front of someone carrying a sword, under the threat of being killed if they spill even just one drop, will be very attentive. A practicing bodhisattva should be similarly attentive in holding the antidote of bodhicitta and so forth with mindfulness and introspection.

This is a vivid analogy. It relates to a person who is carrying a jar filled with mustard oil (which is produced from white mustard seed, as opposed to black mustard seed). We need to visualise the container as being more like a bowl with a wide top, rather than a jar with a narrow neck. If a bowl-like container is filled to the brim with oil then it would be extremely difficult to avoid spilling the oil. In the analogy, the person carrying this container has to walk on a rough, slippery road that could easily cause them to slip or trip. The threat in the analogy is that if this person so much as spills one drop of oil, he will be beheaded. With such a threat the person would be extremely careful not to spill even just one tiny drop of oil out of fear for his own life. Far from being careless and mindless, their level of attentiveness and mindfulness in such a situation would be extremely high.

Then the commentary explains the meaning of the analogy. A practicing bodhisattva should be similarly attentive in holding the antidote of bodhicitta and so forth with mindfulness and introspection. As explained here very precisely, a practicing bodhisattva who has bodhicitta vows, and possibly ordination

vows as well, needs to be similarly attentive in holding the antidote to breaching those vows. In particular, the bodhicitta vows need to be applied with great mindfulness and introspection.

While this advice is directed at practicing bodhisattvas, we can also take this advice as an instruction for ourselves with respect to the commitments we have taken. We should not take this analogy lightly thinking, 'Oh this is a very unlikely situation' or 'This analogy seems a bit far-fetched'. In fact, the analogy indicates that we should see that breaching one's vows and commitments would be as grave as losing our own life. So the degree of attentiveness, mindfulness and introspection that we need to adopt should reflect that gravity. We need to understand that this is the level of mindfulness that needs to be applied in protecting our vows.

We also need to relate this passage to other practices as well. When the commentary refers to holding the antidote of bodhicitta and so forth, it is implying that we need to apply mindfulness and introspection so that we do not engage in the opposite of bodhisattva practices like the six perfections. This means using mindfulness and introspection to protect our minds from miserliness as a way of not hindering our practice of generosity, practising patience in order to protect our mind from anger, and practising morality as a way of refraining from harming others.

In this way, practices with a bodhicitta motivation become the ultimate antidote to the self-cherishing mind. By protecting all levels of our practice of generosity, morality, patience, joyous effort and so forth, we ensure that our actions are not tainted with the self-interest of a self-cherishing mind, which is a means to actually benefit others. That is how bodhicitta serves as an antidote to the opposite of the practices of a bodhisattva. This is also related to the cause and effect sequence of karma. So in order to fully embrace it, we need to relate this analogy to a broader perspective.

I have previously emphasised how we need to protect our mind from negativities. As emphasised here, we need to protect our mind from negativities such as miserliness, harmfulness, a lack of joyous effort and so forth. This need for mindfulness and introspection also applies to combatting strong attachment and anger. We need to apply mindfulness and introspection constantly in order to be ready to apply the appropriate antidote whenever there is a chance that negativities might arise.

As I have also mentioned previously, we also need to be mindful of the virtuous object. The real implication of the practice of meditation is to always be mindful of the virtuous object, because remembering virtuous objects lessens the opportunity for negativities to arise. So being mindful of the virtuous object in general actually serves as an antidote that overcomes negativities. This is how we need to apply this practice at our level.

2.2.2.4. IF A FAULT ARISES ONE NEEDS TO STOP IT IMMEDIATELY

I have reflected on these points previously. The first verse under this heading reads:

72. *Therefore, just as one leaps up quickly
If a snake comes into one's lap,
If sleep and sloth come
One should stop them quickly.*

Then the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Since one will go to the hell realms if one's virtue is destroyed by afflictions, one should, out of fear of the hell realms, quickly stop sleep and sloth, which cause one to withdraw involuntarily if they come, just as one would leap up quickly if a poisonous snake would come into one's lap.

Since one will go to the hell realms if one's virtue is destroyed by the afflictions refers to the root virtues. The virtue of non-attachment is destroyed by attachment, the virtue of non-anger is destroyed by the affliction of anger, and the root virtue of non-ignorance is destroyed by the mind of ignorance. Likewise, the root virtue of generosity is destroyed by miserliness, the root virtue of morality is destroyed by the lack of morality, and so forth. When one reflects on the explanation of karma, one sees that if one adopts miserliness, then there is no way that one can obtain good resources in future lives. We cannot hope to be reborn with good resources and good conditions in our next rebirth if we are affected by the negativity of miserliness now. Likewise with other non-virtues. If root virtues are destroyed by their opposing afflictions then that will destroy our prospects of enjoying good results in our future life.

As I have explained in previous sessions, if we find ourselves engaging in negativity during the day, then we should take the initiative to confess them and purify those negativities that night. We also need to purify whatever negativities we have created during the night the next morning, so that our root virtues are not completely destroyed by these negativities.

As explained in the commentary, *one should, out of fear of the hell realms, quickly stop sleep and sloth*. Sleep can be neutral or even virtuous, depending on one's state of mind. However the *sleep* that is initiated with an ignorant state of mind destroys a lot of opportunities for accumulating virtues. If sleep is established with a virtuous state of mind, then it is virtuous sleep, but if sleep is affected by *ignorance* it can become non-virtuous.

Although the act of sleeping seems harmless, it can rob us of a great opportunity for accumulating virtues. Sleep takes up a lot of our time. We can spend up to half of our lives sleeping, so if we do not use sleep in a virtuous way then we rob ourselves of a great opportunity for accumulating virtues.

Sloth is a state of worldly idleness when we are not engaged in accumulating virtues, and the consequence of being robbed of the opportunity for accumulating virtues is having to go to unfortunate rebirths such as the *hell realms*.

Here, *involuntarily withdrawn* refers to the state of our consciousness being withdrawn during sleep, and thus not able to focus on virtue.

The manner of how one should actually overcome such obstacles to accumulating virtue is explained with another vivid analogy, *just as one would leap up quickly if a poisonous snake dropped into one's lap*. If a poisonous snake were to drop onto our lap we would not just sit there doing nothing. Out of the fear that at any given moment the snake could bite us, and its venom kill us, we would immediately get rid of that poisonous snake from our lap. In the same way one needs to overcome obstacles, such as sleep and sloth, which destroy one's virtues.

The next verse under this heading is preceded by a query.

Query: How then should one stop them?

73. *With each fault that arises
One should reprimand oneself
And motivate strongly:
'I shall act so that this never happens again'.*

Then the commentary explains:

Answer: With each fault that arises one should reprimand oneself, saying 'When I acted like this in the past, many unwished-for things happened, and I did not achieve what I wanted. Do I still want to act like this?' Then one confesses with the four powers and motivates for a long time: 'I shall make an effort so that this fault never arises again.'

The explanation is quite clear. Actually, Shantideva is supporting what I regularly emphasise. As the commentary states, *with each fault that arises one should reprimand oneself*. As presented here, one investigates one's actions, and for every fault that arises one should engage in an inner dialogue, and reprimand oneself.

If what one wishes for has not materialised, and one has experienced what one does not wish for—problems, difficulties, and various types of turmoil and suffering—then that is the result of engaging in negativities in the past. Recognising that, the measure one takes is that, as soon as some sort of negativity arises to immediately remember, 'Allowing my mind to be controlled by this negativity is the cause of all the problems that I experience now, that I have experienced in the past, and that I will continue to experience for as long as I don't take control of it'. *Do I still want to act like this* is a rhetorical question which implies, 'If I don't want to experience unwanted consequences of problems and difficulties then I can't remain idle and not do anything about the faults and negativities that are the cause of those unwanted consequences'.

As I have shared with you in the past, the way that I apply this to myself is that as soon as a negative or tainted mind starts to manifest, I take the initiative and say to myself, 'Geshe Doga be careful! I have to be cautious here, because a negative state of mind is about to arise, and if I am not careful I will fall victim to this negativity'. Many people have found this advice very useful in their day-to-day lives.

The way to overcome the faults and negativities one has created in the past is by applying the practice mentioned in the commentary. *One confesses with the four powers and motivates for a long time: 'I should make an effort that this fault never arises again'*. As I have emphasised previously, for every fault that arises one needs to immediately apply the purification practice. If we don't like the negative consequences that we are experiencing now, which are the results of previous faults, then as soon as we find ourselves engaging in faults it is in our own best interests to apply the purification practice. That will stop the negativity from increasing, and from being experienced as a negative consequence in the future.

We know how to engage in the purification practice. We have knowledge of the Dharma, so the advantage of knowing the Dharma comes from putting it into practise. If we don't apply the Dharma that we know - such as applying the purification practices - then our knowledge of the Dharma would not have served any purpose for ourselves. As mentioned here, the first part of purification is confessing the faults that one has created, then comes generating the mind of strong regret and taking whatever purification

measure is needed and, at the end, resolving not to engage in these negativities again.

As I have mentioned previously, the stronger the regret is, the stronger the resolve to not commit those negative actions again will be. This is the way to implement this advice into one's practice.

2.2.2.5. ONE SHOULD STRIVE IN SUITABLE ACTIONS

The verse relating to this outline is:

74. *Say: Thus I shall meditate on mindfulness
On these occasions.
Through this cause, when meeting or otherwise,
I shall desire suitable action.*

Then the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

'Thus, in order for faults not to arise, and to eliminate those already arisen, I shall meditate on mindfulness on these occasions that call for earnest conscientiousness and introspection.' By thinking in this way, through the cause of this motivation, when I meet with the Mahayana guru, or even if I do not meet a guru immediately, I shall desire to engage in suitable actions in accord with the teachings.

This is actually quite clear. As mentioned in the commentary, *for faults to not arise and to eliminate those already arisen I shall meditate on mindfulness on these occasions that call for earnest conscientiousness and introspection.* As I have presented previously, one combats the faults that have arisen now, and to eliminate those that have arisen in the past, one meditates on mindfulness, and then applies conscientiousness and introspection.

By thinking in this way, through the causes of this motivation, i.e. with this motivation in one's mind, if one has met with a Mahayana guru, or even if one has temporarily not met with a guru, one resolves, I shall desire to engage in suitable actions that are according to the teachings, just as explained in the teachings.

2.2.3. Empowering oneself to achieve the actions

This is subdivided into two:

2.2.3.1. Being light in taking up virtue due to mental and physical pliancy

2.2.3.2. Relating the example to the meaning

2.2.3.1. BEING LIGHT IN TAKING UP VIRTUE DUE TO MENTAL AND PHYSICAL PLIANCY

First one obtains physical pliancy which then induces mental pliancy. When one obtains both physical and mental pliancy that will remove the natural defects of body and mind that cause fatigue and tiredness. It then becomes very easy to engage in virtue very joyously. That is the great benefit of attaining this pliancy.

The verse under this heading is:

75. *In order to have strength for anything
Before engaging in an action
By remembering the advice regarding
conscientiousness
I shall arise lightly.*

The commentary reads:

In order to have the power of strong enthusiasm for any virtuous action beforehand, I shall remember the advice regarding conscientiousness and arise lightly in the virtuous action free from being hesitant about performing that action due to the defects.

In order to have the power of strong enthusiasm for any virtuous action beforehand, means that first of all one needs strong enthusiasm for any virtuous action. So the main driving force behind engaging in any virtue is enthusiasm, or joyful effort. Without this joyful effort, one's interest in engaging in virtue would be lacking.

I shall remember the advice regarding conscientiousness and arise lightly in the virtuous action free from being hesitant about performing that action due to the defects, means that one needs to always be conscientiousness about engaging in virtuous actions, free from hesitation due to physical and mental defects. *Arising lightly* can be understood from the analogy in the next verse. So this verse indicates how to engage in virtuous actions joyfully, and without any hesitation or resistance.

2.2.3.2. RELATING THE EXAMPLE TO THE MEANING

76. *Just like the coming and going
Of the wind controls the cotton,
Letting oneself be controlled by joy,
One will achieve.*

Query: How should one act then?

Answer: Just like the coming and going of the wind controls the cotton, letting one's actions of body and speech be controlled by joy in virtue one will achieve one's virtuous actions of the three doors quickly.

The analogy in the commentary, *just like the coming and going of the wind controls the cotton,* is another vivid analogy. A piece of cotton moves effortlessly when the wind blows back and forth from one direction to the other. So, moved by the wind without any effort, the cotton drifts back and forth.

This analogy is used to explain how, when *one's actions of body, speech and mind are controlled by the joy of virtue, one will achieve one's virtuous actions of the three doors quickly.* When there is a joy in applying effort to accumulate virtue through one's body, speech and mind, then one's speech and one's actions will naturally be followed by a virtuous and joyful state of mind. That is why, as emphasised here, joyous effort is essential if one is to engage in virtue.

Then the commentary continues with:

In short, as it says in the *Sutra of Close Placement by Mindfulness,*

The one basis for the afflictions
Is laziness; who has it?
Wherever one laziness exists
There all dharmas become non-existent.

The commentary then explains the meaning of this verse:

One should strive in the enthusiasm that stops laziness.

As quoted in the earlier verse, no Dharma can exist for the lazy. Therefore one needs to overcome laziness with enthusiasm.

To this end one needs to make an effort to clear the opposing factors of enthusiasm and to generate the conducive conditions of the four powers, [which have been explained previously].

As a summary, the commentary is reiterating what has been previously explained. Having mentioned that one needs to make an effort to remove the opposing factors to enthusiasm, the commentary continues:

The opposing factors are that, though seeing that one is able to engage in a virtuous action one does not do so, or one thinks, 'How could I be able to do this?'

Not engaging in virtue when one is able to do so is one of the types of laziness explained previously. It takes two forms.

The first again has two: procrastinating by thinking, 'I still have time', and being overwhelmed by attachment to negative actions.

These are the two reasons for laziness.

1. The antidote to the first is:

The first one should abandon with the antidote of contemplating that one's body will soon disintegrate, that after death one will fall into the lower realms and that the freedoms and endowments are difficult to find.

2. The antidote to the second, which is being overwhelmed by attachment to negative actions, is:

... to reflect on how the holy Dharma is the cause for infinite joys in this and future lives, and that the distractions of meaningless talk and so forth harm the great purpose of this life, and are the source of many sufferings in the future.

As this is a summary of what has been extensively explained in the chapter, it is easy to relate to these explanations.

With respect to discouragement, the commentary states:

With regard to discouragement there are again three:

1. Thinking, 'I cannot attain the infinite qualities of a buddha';
2. Thinking, 'I cannot accomplish the infinite difficult actions such as offering arms, legs and so forth';
3. Thinking, 'I cannot bear the sufferings of the infinite births in cyclic existence that I would have to take.'

1. Having presented these three types of discouragement, the antidote to the first is explained.

The antidote against the first is to think, 'Also the buddhas had not completed the path from the start but in the beginning were just as myself. Then they evolved and became buddhas ...

As I have regularly explained, the resultant state of becoming a buddha is the result of having overcome each and every negativity, one at a time, along the path, and acquired each and every virtue along the path. Initially buddhas are ordinary beings just like ourselves. Having engaged in the practices of overcoming each and every fault, and acquiring each and every virtue, one at a time, they gradually, and step by step, overcome all adversities and negativities and acquire all the qualities, and attain the state of buddhahood. When it is presented in this way it gives us great hope: 'Yes, there is a real possibility that I can also become a buddha'.

Further:

... Since the Buddha taught that even beings much lower than me can attain enlightenment, then why should I not attain enlightenment as long as I do not stop practising?'

Again, these are points that were mentioned in the root text, explaining why beings from the lower realms, such as animals and insects, also have the potential to become a buddha because of their buddha nature. By reflecting on that fact, we understand that we too have that possibility.

2. The antidote to being daunted with the prospect of having to give up one's limbs and so forth is then explained.

The antidote against the second is to think, 'As long as it appears difficult for me to give up arms, legs and so forth, it is not the right time to do so.

When there is a hesitation about giving one's limbs, then that is an indication that that is not the right time. So one is advised to not engage in the practice of giving one's limbs and so forth at that time. The suitable time is then presented:

Only when I can give them up as easily as a vegetable, then it is the right time to do so.'

When bodhisattvas reach the higher grounds, they have perfected their practice of generosity to the point where they are able to give anything without hesitation.

3. As mentioned previously, there could be the thought that one could bear the suffering entailed in being born in cyclic existence again and again. This relates to the courage of the bodhisattva in coming back again and again to benefit sentient beings. If one feels daunted by that prospect, then:

The antidote against the third is to think, 'Bodhisattvas do not experience suffering because they have abandoned its cause, negativity ...

This was explained in detail previously as well.

... They also do not have mental suffering because they realise that the sufferings of cyclic existence are like an illusion, lacking inherent existence. Since one is strengthened by mental and physical happiness there is no reason to be tired despite remaining in cyclic existence'.

A bodhisattva at that level does not experience physical and mental unhappiness, so they are not affected by the sufferings of samsara, and are therefore not daunted by having to be reborn in cyclic existence again and again.

Summarising verse

The author of the commentary, Gyaltsab Rinpoche, then presents a verse that summarises the chapter.

To sincerely achieve the aspiration for liberation
Depends on the practice of enthusiasm to
Complete what one initially started and is engaged in.
Hence one should generate enthusiasm complete with
the four powers.

This is an encouragement to actually develop enthusiasm or joyous effort with the aid of the four powers.

II. THE NAME OF THE CHAPTER

This is the seventh chapter from Introduction to the Actions of the Bodhisattvas, called Explaining Enthusiasm.

Then commentary concludes:

This is the commentary on the seventh chapter called 'Explaining Enthusiasm' from the commentary on the *Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas*, called *The Entrance for the Children of the Conquerors*.

This completes the seventh chapter. In our next session we will start the eighth chapter, which is on *Mental Stabilisation*.

*Transcript prepared by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe*

© Tara Institute

Based on the positive motivation we have generated we can now engage in meditation practice. Whenever one generates a positive motivation a positive action will follow. We need to keep in mind that actions are initiated by motivations. Of course, this implies that if we have a negative motivation then a negative action will follow. So just the necessity of developing the correct motivation is also a way to show us what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded—in itself a Dharma practice. We can now engage in our meditation practice. *[meditation]*

Generate a bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will engage in listening to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practice well.

CHAPTER 8: THE WAY OF TRAINING IN MENTAL STABILISATIONS CONTAINED IN THE COMMON AND UNCOMMON TYPES OF CALM ABIDING

This chapter is on Mental Stabilisation. In relation to the Six Perfections, the first, second and third chapters were based on the perfection of generosity, the fourth and fifth chapter covers morality, followed by chapter six on patience. Chapter seven is on joyous effort and now chapter eight is on concentration or mental stabilisation. This chapter outlines the way to increase and strengthen bodhicitta, particularly with the method of giving and taking.

There are two main subdivisions of the chapter.

- I. Explaining the text of the chapter
- II. The name of the chapter

Obtaining mental stabilisation is contained in the common and uncommon means of developing calm abiding. What this implies is that calm abiding is a practice which is found both in the treatises of non-Buddhist traditions, as well as in Buddhist traditions. What makes calm abiding an uncommon Buddhist practice is when it is accompanied with refuge, bodhicitta, the realisation of emptiness and so forth.

I. EXPLAINING THE TEXT OF THE CHAPTER

This section has three parts:

1. Advice to meditate on mental stabilisation
2. Abandoning the opposing factors to calm abiding
3. The way of meditating on calm abiding

As clearly presented in the outline itself, the chapter provides advice on meditating on mental stabilisation, i.e. how to develop concentration; how to identify and abandon factors opposing calm abiding, then the way to actually meditate on calm abiding.

1. ADVICE TO MEDITATE ON MENTAL STABILISATION

This has two subdivisions:

- 1.1. The reason for the need to achieve calm abiding
- 1.2. The advice to abandon the opposing factors to calm abiding.

We can see that the outline is very logically and systematically presented.

1.1. The reason for the need to achieve calm abiding

Before listening to advice on the need to meditate on mental stabilisation, it is good to define exactly what is meant by mental stabilisation. **Mental stabilisation is a mental factor that focuses on its object from its own side.** Presenting the definition in this way shows exactly what mental stabilisation is. For example, when one engages in single-pointed focus on an object, the mind focuses single-pointedly but this mind is not mental stabilisation. There is also a mind which maintains the memory of the object held single-pointedly, but that is not mental stabilisation. There is however a separate mental factor with the specific function of holding the object single-pointedly, that is from its own side, not depending on anything else. *From its own side* means its own function is to focus on the object single-pointedly. This is mental stabilisation.

Prior to the need to achieve calm abiding, the text outlines the faults of the mind not being focused in this way. In seeing these faults one begins to see the reason why it is necessary to be focused on an object single-pointedly. The seventh chapter on joyous effort highlighted that, when one engages with a virtuous action or object, it should be with a joyous mind, but that in itself is not sufficient. This chapter explains that joyous effort needs to be accompanied with single-pointed focus on the virtuous object. This is the combination we need to achieve.

The first verse reads:

1. *Having thus generated enthusiasm,
Place the mind in concentration;
A person with a wandering mind
Lives in a cave of the affliction's fangs.*
- 2ab. *Through physical and mental isolation
Mental wandering does not arise.*

Commentary explains:

Having generated enthusiasm that delights in virtue as explained before, one should place the mind in concentration, because a person whose mind is distracted by mental sinking and excitement abides in a cave of the fangs of a malevolent animal, and will be quickly destroyed by them.

If it is asked, "How does one abandon mental wandering?" Through isolating body and mind from distraction and desirous thoughts, one will not develop mental wandering, the opposing factor to concentration.

Having generated enthusiasm (that delights in virtue) then one needs to put it into practice by placing the mind in concentration. Again this emphasises that it is not enough to engage in a virtuous object randomly, once in a while, even if it is accompanied with joyous effort. Rather one needs to continuously place one's mind on the virtuous object. The commentary explains that, *one should place the mind in concentration because a person whose mind is distracted with mental sinking and excitement abides in the cave of the fangs of a malevolent animal and will be quickly destroyed by them.*

An individual whose mind is completely distracted and engaged in worldly activities will not be able to develop single-pointed concentration for as long as they follow distractions. One may be able to sit rigidly for a while and assume the meditative posture, but, for as long as one does not lessen one's worldly desires, the mind will be distracted. We can see that Shantideva supports what I too regularly emphasise, which is that following our desires is one of the main forms of distraction. I feel that what I have been teaching is well supported here. Even after one applies one's mind on virtue and maintains a few moments of stability, immediately we find the mind wanders off. We are not able to maintain a continuous focus on the virtuous object, so developing concentration is indispensable.

The two main obstacles to concentration are sinking (or laxity) and excitement. Initially in developing one's meditation laxity is more subtle and is not recognised right away. Excitement is one of the most prominent obstacles and occurs immediately, hindering our ability to focus on the object.

The analogy suggests that someone distracted by mental sinking (or laxity) and excitement is like someone held in the fangs of a malevolent animal, like in a crocodile's jaws, with the danger that they can snap shut any minute. This is similar to how our mind can be distracted at any time with sinking and excitement, which throws us back under the influence of the afflictions.

Without being able to precisely identify mental sinking (or laxity) and excitement, there is no way one can develop calm abiding. At a subtle level laxity and excitement are hard to identify, and if one fails to identify them it hinders one's ability to develop calm abiding. The main causes for excitement are worldly desires, therefore the faults of desire or attachment are explained extensively in the following passages.

In stating that mental wandering is a fault, the commentary poses the question:

If it is asked "How does one abandon mental wandering?"

The answer follows:

Through isolating body and mind from distraction and desirous thoughts, one will not develop mental wandering, the opposing factor to concentration.

On a physical level, the commentary emphasises one should isolate oneself from the negative influences of companions who distract one by causing excitement and encouraging worldly activities. Good companions who support our practice are fine, but misleading or distracting companions are one of the faults.

If one can distance oneself from distracting companions, the next main class of obstacle to avoid is mental distractions in the form of desire and discursive thoughts etc. This is most essential because while we might have successfully isolated ourselves from the cause of external distractions, and be in an isolated and quiet place like a meditation cave, the mind can still be distracted and wandering about in town. This occurs when one has not applied measures to protect the mind from distraction. The desirous mind is still attached to pleasant forms and sounds etc. so when it is not protected from engaging in these objects of desire, the mind of desire becomes the main obstacle which impedes concentration. On the other hand, when one has developed stable concentration, then even if one were in a busy, worldly environment, one will not be swayed by distractions. The

two main points here are that in order to develop concentration and protect one's mind from mental wandering, initially one needs to apply physical isolation as well as mental isolation. When you relate these explanations to your own experience of how easily you can be influenced by internal distractions in the form of discursive thoughts, then it makes more sense and you can see how this is, in fact, is very true.

Take the simple example of trying to fall asleep when your mind is still racing with discursive thoughts. When we go to bed we are on our own with no immediate external distractions, we turn off the light so it is dark, and we have no external stimuli. However a hyperactive mind can prevent us from falling asleep when it is still very busy with a lot of discursive thoughts. When the mind is hyperactive in this way, one cannot fall asleep even though there are no external causes of distractions. Internal conceptualisations and discursive thoughts are affecting our ability to sleep. Take this as an example of the truth that the main obstacle for maintaining a virtuous, clear and focused mind is really the various forms of internal distractions - mainly desirous thoughts.

Using the sleep example again, the mind being hyperactive means one has not been able to withdraw from the gross mind, so there is no way for one to actually go to sleep. This is also the case with meditation, so it is good to actually recognise within ourselves the main obstacles, and to acknowledge them. Back to the example, if eluding sleep was our only problem, there would be just one problem to deal with, but often one cannot fall asleep because the mind is disturbed with an uncomfortable state of anxiety. Some have confided in me that sometimes when they are alone they cannot go to sleep as memories of the past creep into their mind and cause angst to the point of bringing tears. People have confided in me that their pillow gets wet with tears. Thus from the very onset, if we can apply these practices and focus our mind in virtue, that will definitely help to reduce the angst and pain in the mind. So we need to apply practical means that will help us maintain some level of sanity or calmness on a regular basis. This is how we can derive practical benefits from the practice of mind training.

The reason I remind you that meditation and mind training are useful and something we need to maintain, is because some older students might now feel like this is true, but not really pay much attention to it. I feel they may have initially had good experiences from meditation but since then may have started to lapse in their enthusiasm for meditation.

I'll give a recent account of how an explanation of meditation was experienced as something incredibly valuable. When I recently taught at Drol Kar Centre, Geshe Sonam informed me after the teaching session that there were three ladies who had come there for their first time. They had actually thought of coming to the centre for the last three years, but had never actually made it. But that day when they actually came, happened to coincide with my teaching on explaining the benefits of meditation. Later they commented how the session really helped to solve a lot of problems. Apparently they were really moved and their minds were affected in a very positive way. These are people who are completely fresh and new to Buddhism, but they felt a strong, positive impact from the presentation on meditation.

I presented the meditation technique years and years ago, and you would have seen the benefit at that time. But I have a feeling that since then it has, perhaps, lapsed a bit and has

not really been taken much further, and that some have sort of lost interest or become lazy. Of course, if one does not maintain the practice of meditation, then one will not experience the long-lasting effect.

I have many such stories of people who have been affected in a positive way. There is also another lady with three children who comes to Drol Kor. Apparently after a session she said, "Now I have no more questions left, everything has been answered. I have found the means for my development". I have many other stories to tell about people who have been affected positively. I am not saying that my advice is profound, but that by giving my teachings with the utmost best motivation, some positive effects have definitely occurred. I honestly don't have any ulterior and selfish motives when I present the Dharma and my advice to you. It's solely with the intention that it may be of some benefit to you.

This might be a prompt for you to also be mindful of generating a positive motivation before presenting teachings or advice to others. If one is not mindful of a positive motivation, it could create lot of difficulties for yourself later on. For example, after presenting you might feel that it was not appreciated, or when someone challenges you it can throw you off course. In that way it could actually affect your mind negatively. Rather than being joyful with your service and benefit to others, it might actually cause unnecessary problems for oneself.

That reminds me of another incident where someone from Adelaide had called the office, and said they wanted to come and see me. My initial response was that they don't need to come from so far away to see me just to ask some questions, as there are also geshe in Adelaide. But that person was apparently quite insistent, so I said, 'Fine'. They apparently came with the intention of spending one night here and arrived on a Wednesday night when there was a teaching. Next morning I got a message that they didn't need to see me any longer, as all their questions were answered in the teaching. These kind of astonishing things do occur.

The reason I share this with you is not to claim that I am doing any great service, but to point out again that where there is good motivation, it certainly seems to bring about benefit for others. It seems to help release the pain and agony in the listeners' minds. Again, the reason I share this with you is so that whenever an occasion arises that you also share the Dharma knowledge with others or help in any way, when done with a good motivation it can definitely benefit them. The purpose of the Dharma is to benefit others as much as it is to subdue one's own mind. When that is done truthfully and honestly and with good intention to share with others, then that encompasses the whole practice of abiding by the law of karma as well. Basically it comes down to being honest and truthful, with a mind of wishing to benefit others.

I have another positive story to share from a Monday evening presenter. One Monday evening when Ven. Kaye Miner was conducting the session, a person had apparently asked a lot questions in a very challenging and hostile way. But her response was very calm, and with a gentle demeanour she responded to all the questions. Another person who happened to be in that session later confided to me that they were really moved by that, and from then on began to really appreciate Buddhism. They felt that when challenged with hostility, to remain calm and quiet and not overreact was a really good sign of what Buddhism has to offer. This is how adopting a good nature and setting a good

example can really inspire others. This is the whole point when we talk about inspiring others; it is not only with words but most importantly with one's gentle mannerisms as well. So if we are concerned in wanting to give Buddhism a good reputation, then the best way is by conducting ourselves properly, in a gentle manner.

1.2. The advice to abandon the opposing factors to calm abiding

The next two lines of the verse read:

*2cd. Through this, one should abandon the
transitory world
And perfectly destroy the conceptualising
mind.*

The point I was making earlier is actually presented right here. The commentary explains:

Hence, through the method of physical isolation one abandons distractions such as meeting with worldly friends, relatives and so forth. Through the method of isolating the mind, one perfectly destroys thoughts for desire objects.

As I have already explained the main points of this earlier, we don't need to go over it again. The commentary then quotes from a sutra, which reads:

From a sutra:

If it is rare for a distracted mind to even attain a worldly mental stabilisation, then what need is there to mention complete enlightenment. Therefore, one should not let one's mind be distracted until the attainment of complete enlightenment.

The quote from the sutra highlights the Buddha's profound advice about the need to develop mental stabilisation, indicating that it is unlikely that a *distracted mind* can even *attain worldly mental stabilisation*, like mundane attainments. So if that is the case, *what need is there to mention complete enlightenment*. It further explains, *Therefore one should not let one's mind be distracted until the attainment of complete enlightenment*, which is the extent of the commitment one needs to make to develop mental stabilisation.

2. ABANDONING THE OPPOSING FACTORS TO CALM ABIDING

This is subdivided into two:

- 2.1. Abandoning distractions
- 2.2. Abandoning incorrect conceptualisation

2.1. Abandoning distractions

This is further subdivided into two:

- 2.1.1. Identifying the cause for attachment to the world
- 2.1.2. The way of abandoning it

2.1.1. Identifying the cause for attachment to the world

The first two lines of the verse read:

*3ab. Due to attachment and craving for gain
And the like, one does not give up the fleeting
world.*

The commentary explains:

In dependence on the grasping for 'I' and mine, one is attached to the inner object of sentient beings. Due to that, and due to craving for the outer objects of gain, praise, compliments and so forth, one does not give up the grasping for the fleeting world. Hence, one should abandon the causes for these attachments.

While these explanations have been presented many times previously, the point here is that, *in dependence on the grasping for 'I' and mine, one is attached to the inner object of sentient beings*. Firstly, as presented, *inner object* refers to sentient beings, i.e. oneself. So all our cravings begin with the grasping at one's own 'I', followed by grasping at what is regarded as 'mine'.

It first starts with the grasping at the 'I', followed by 'mine'. Without attachment to an individual 'me' the attachment to 'mine' cannot follow. So in the sequence it is definitely the attachment to the 'I' or to the individual 'me' that comes first, then comes grasping at what is 'mine' and all the distracting five sense objects of the external world. *One is attached to the inner object of sentient beings* refers to oneself as the inner being, and then, *due to that and due to craving for the outer objects of gain, compliments ... and so forth, one does not give up the grasping for the fleeting world*. It is through this combination of grasping at the individual 'I' and 'mine' that one craves the sense objects that create the craving for the fleeting or transient world. The commentary concludes with, *Hence one should abandon the causes for the attachments*, meaning that in order to overcome attachment to the fleeting world and so forth, one must abandon the very causes of these attachments. Having presented that one should abandon the causes for these, naturally what would follow is the question 'How should one abandon causes of these attachments?' So the text then presents the way to abandon them.

2.1.2. The way of abandoning it

Here there are four subdivisions:

- 2.1.2.1. Identifying the antidote
- 2.1.2.2. The method for generating the antidote
- 2.1.2.3. The faults of distractions
- 2.1.2.4. The benefits of relying on isolation

Just by relating to the sequence of the outline, we can see that it is very logically and systematically presented. Firstly, identifying the antidote refers to how to abandon the causes of attachment. One must first identify the antidote; without doing this there is no way to apply it. Then, having identified the antidote, one would naturally wonder how one can cultivate it. So next the text presents the method for generating the antidote, followed by the faults of the distraction and the benefits of relying on isolation. These are all presented in such a methodical way that one is able to adopt them.

2.1.2.1. IDENTIFYING THE ANTIDOTE

This is subdivided into two:

- 2.1.2.1.1. Advice to abandon attachment
- 2.1.2.1.2. Identifying the antidote that abandons attachment

2.1.2.1.1. Advice to abandon attachment

The first two lines of the verse read:

*3cd. Therefore, to abandon these perfectly,
The skilful will act thus.*

The commentary explains:

Therefore, to abandon these cravings for outer and inner objects, they who are skilled should investigate and contemplate as it is explained below.

The advice to abandon attachment relates to the faults of craving and so forth. *To abandon these cravings to outer and inner objects* refers, as mentioned previously, to the craving or grasping which begins with the inner being, oneself, followed by the grasping at the external objects. In order to

abandon both of these *those who are skilled*, referring to those who are intelligent and who wish to apply these methods, *should investigate and contemplate as it is explained below*. This is like a prelude, saying in simple terms that those who are interested and who have intelligence, must investigate and contemplate the methods presented.

2.1.2.1.2. Identifying the antidote that abandons attachment.

The verse reads:

*4. Having understood that superior insight
endowed
With calm abiding destroys the afflictions,
One should strive first in calm abiding, which
in turn
Is attained joyfully by lacking attachment for
the world.*

We'll cover this verse now which is actually quite important, but the rest we'll do in our next session.

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Superior insight into emptiness endowed with the horse of calm abiding that induces the bliss of physical and mental pliancy, which is free from mental sinking and excitement by having meditated single-pointedly on any virtuous object, destroys the afflictions of the three realms including the seeds. Understanding this, one should work towards superior insight, which can induce pliancy by investigating the meaning of the mode of abiding. Therefore one strives initially in calm abiding, as it is impossible to generate superior insight without firstly achieving calm abiding.

Calm abiding is achieved joyfully through a lack of attachment to outer and inner worldly objects such as the body, enjoyments and so forth. If one is attached to them, one will fall under the control of sinking and mental excitement.

What frees one from mental sinking and excitement is having meditated single-pointedly on any virtuous object. What is being explained here is that, having first focused on any chosen virtuous object, the outcome is to be able to single-pointedly focus on it, by removing the faults of mental sinking or laxity and excitement.

A simple way to understand what is being presented here is this analogy: if an individual wants to cut down a large tree, they first need to have a strong body and be in good physical shape; furthermore they need to have a steady hand with a good aim; along with that they need to have a good and sharp axe. This analogy illustrates the need for morality, concentration and wisdom to overcome the afflictions, and obtain one's ultimate goal of enlightenment.

This analogy demonstrates the manner of overcoming the afflictions. Whoever wishes to overcome the afflictions needs first of all to have the basis of sound morality. On the basis of observing faultless morality, which is like having a strong body, one needs to have very good concentration, which is like having a steady hand. If a person who wishes to fell a tree does not have a steady hand, they would constantly miss the mark, and would never be able to cut down the tree. This is like a mind which is constantly distracted, and thus never able to actually combat and overcome the afflictions.

Having a good and sharp axe is analogous to having the wisdom realising emptiness. This passage, *superior insight into emptiness endowed with the horse of calm abiding that*

induces the bliss of physical and mental pliancy, is specifically explaining that the wisdom to be developed is special insight, and the concentration to be developed is calm abiding. One develops calm abiding induced by mental and physical pliancy, by developing one's concentration gradually through the nine stages.

Having applied one's mind on a virtuous object and single-pointedly focused on that, ensuring that it is free from mental sinking and excitement, then through that familiarity one develops a strong, and very sound concentration. When the mind obtains the serviceability of focusing single-pointedly on the virtuous object that then induces mental pliancy.

Due to obtaining mental pliancy the body becomes serviceable, which induces physical pliancy. The combination of mental and physical pliancy causes the wind energy to flow well throughout the body. As the wind pervades throughout the body it induces physical bliss, which in turn induces mental bliss.

So, the sequence is this: one first obtains mental pliancy which induces physical pliancy. Then due to the winds flowing well in the body one experiences physical bliss which in turn induces mental bliss.

When one obtains both physical and mental bliss, and one is able to focus on the chosen object without any distractions or wandering, then the more one focuses on the object, the greater the level of mental and physical bliss that is experienced. When one obtains the combination of single-pointed focus combined with perpetual physical and mental bliss, then at that point one has obtained calm abiding.

The definition of **calm abiding is a concentration accompanied with the bliss of pliancy, that is obtained through the method of adopting the nine stages of concentration, and which enables one's mind to focus single-pointedly on its object for as long one wishes.**

Special insight, described later on, refers to using the base of single-pointed focus to analyse the object, and thus experience the physical and mental bliss which is induced by physical and mental pliancy. At this point one has obtained special insight.

Special insight is the wisdom that analyses the object, based on having developed single-pointed concentration. The individual who experiences that physical and mental bliss induced by physical and mental pliancy, and is able to investigate the object while maintaining a single-pointed focus, has obtained what is called 'special insight'. The difference here is that calm abiding is obtained through unwavering and single-pointed focus on the object so that one obtains the mental and physical pliancy which induces the physical and mental bliss. Whereas special insight is based on the single-pointed focus achieved through calm abiding, wherein one is able to analyse the object through one's analytical wisdom, whereby one experiences the physical and mental bliss induced by the physical and mental pliancy.

The commentary is explaining that what destroys the afflictions of the three realms, including the seeds, is superior insight into emptiness. The commentary explains that *superior insight into emptiness is endowed with the horse of calm abiding that induces the bliss of physical and mental pliancy, which is free from mental sinking and excitement by having meditated single-pointedly on any virtuous object.* The first part of the sequence is to develop a single-pointed focus on a virtuous object, free from mental sinking and excitement,

which then induces the calm abiding, and then based on that one develops superior insight. It is the superior insight into emptiness that destroys the afflictions of the three realms, including the seeds. *Understanding this, one should work towards superior insight, which can induce pliancy by investigating the meaning of mode of abiding*, defines special insight as a superior insight which induces pliancy, by investigating the meaning of ultimate reality or emptiness. So by investigating the actual object which is emptiness, that which induces bliss caused by mental and physical pliancy, is special insight. If one strives, then with that understanding one would actually destroy the seed of afflictions. Therefore one strives initially to obtain calm abiding, as it is impossible to generate superior insight without first achieving calm abiding. This is a very crucial point. In the sequence, first one needs to develop calm abiding, which is then followed by developing special insight.

Calm abiding is achieved joyfully through a lack of attachment to outer and inner worldly objects such as the body, enjoyments and so forth. If one is attached to them, one will fall under the control of sinking and mental excitement.

So, in order to develop calm abiding, one needs to be free from obstacles such as attachment to one's outer and inner attachments.

To again summarise the order: first one develops calm abiding, followed by developing special insight which is the main antidote for overcoming the afflictions. The very seeds of the afflictions are removed by the union of calm abiding and special insight. So that is the main point here. In the next session we'll cover the method for actually developing the antidote.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett or Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱུང་རྒྱུ་མེམས་དཔའི་སྤོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

6 October 2015

While maintaining the motivation we generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our meditation practice. *[meditation]*

Now we can re-generate the bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the purpose of all mother sentient beings, in order to liberate them from all suffering, and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the profound Mahayana teachings, and put them into practice well.

2.1.2.1. IDENTIFYING THE ANTIDOTE

2.1.2.1.2. *Identifying the antidote that abandons attachment (cont.)*

We covered this topic last week. It explained that the two main antidotes for overcoming attachment are calm abiding and special insight. The sequence in which one first needs to obtain calm abiding followed by special insight was also explained, as well as their definitions. So it's good to keep all of that in mind.

2.1.2.2. THE METHOD FOR GENERATING THE ANTIDOTE

Having identified the antidote that abandons attachment, the text goes on to explain the methods for generating that antidote under two main headings:

2.1.2.2.1. Abandoning attachment to the inner object—sentient beings

2.1.2.2.2. Abandoning attachment to the external

2.1.2.2.1. *Abandoning attachment to the inner object—sentient beings*

Again, this has two subdivisions:

2.1.2.2.1.1. The faults of attachment

2.1.2.2.2.2. Abandoning upon having understood the faults

2.1.2.2.1.1. The faults of attachment

The faults of attachment are further subdivided into five:

2.1.2.2.1.1.1. One will not meet with the desired object

2.1.2.2.1.1.2. Being abused by the sense objects

2.1.2.2.1.1.3. Although attaining it there is no contentment

2.1.2.2.1.1.4. Obstructing liberation

2.1.2.2.1.1.5. Squandering the freedoms and endowments

The essential points presented in the following verses are very poignant, and we really need to contemplate them.

2.1.2.2.1.1.1. *One will not meet with the desired object*

It is essential that we understand the faults of attachment. As presented, some of the faults of attachment are that the object of attachment is difficult to obtain and even when one obtains it, one is not content and happy. This is indeed very true, and verified by one's own experience. Of course if we don't pay attention, then these faults may

not be apparent. But when we do an honest internal investigation it is very clear that attachment is the main cause for many of our problems.

As I've said in the past, talking about the faults of attachment may not be a particularly interesting topic for you. But if I were to start talking about the benefits of attachment, you might start paying very good attention and think: 'Now this is what I need to hear'. It is strange how the mind works and reacts when the faults of attachment are mentioned.

This goes to show how the mind is strongly habituated with desire and attachment, to the point that it appears to be an integral part of ourselves. We have such a deeply-rooted association with attachment that it's hard for us to even acknowledge the faults, let alone overcome them. Thus, we don't find listening to the faults of attachment very appealing.

We need to think about these points very carefully, examine them, and investigate them thoroughly as a way to fully acknowledge them, for as long as we befriend attachment it will be extremely difficult to practise true Dharma. Therefore, to help us acknowledge these faults Shantideva takes great care to explain them in detail. The more we begin to acknowledge, contemplate, and make a genuine attempt to overcome attachment, the greater our extent of practising the true Dharma will be.

The presentations of these faults are not all that difficult to understand—they are presented in a straightforward and clear manner. The main thing is to actually adopt this understanding and incorporate it into in one's practice.

The verse relating to this outline reads:

5. *An impermanent person strongly attached
To an impermanent person
Will not see anything beautiful
For thousands of lifetimes.*

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse as follows:

The faults of attachment: Who that is impermanent and dying soon can be strongly attached to family and friends that are also impermanent? They, who are thus attached to the beautiful, will not see anything beautiful in the thousands of lifetimes that are karmic ripening results.

The initial rhetorical question, *Who that is impermanent and dying soon can be strongly attached to family and friends that are also impermanent?*, basically implies that both the person experiencing attachment and the object of that attachment are equally impermanent, as by their very nature, both will naturally decay and die.

If it were the case that one's object of attachment is firm and stable and never changes, then one might feel that perhaps it's acceptable to have attachment, because it's never going to change and will remain stable. However the fact is that the nature of the object that one is attached to is impermanent, and thus naturally disintegrates and decays. The point being made here is the absurdity of being strongly attached to an object that will naturally decay and disintegrate.

Furthermore, due to strong attachment to what is attractive and beautiful, the ripening result is that one will not see attractive objects for a long period of time in

future lifetimes. That is the karmic result of being attached to beautiful objects.

In contrast to that, a buddha's mind is said to remain perpetually in a state of bliss where everything—the surrounding environment and the beings within—all appear to be appealing and pleasant. That is because a buddha's mind is completely free from attachment. That is the result of completely abandoning attachment.

From our limited experience we might have noticed that once we start letting go of things, then they seem to become more abundant. Some have confided to me that when they reduce attachment to certain things, whether it is other people or objects, then the object of that attachment starts to (respectively) come closer, and be more abundant. When you are attached to money, for example, it seems to be difficult to obtain it, but when you start letting go of that attachment and not care too much about it, then money appears to come more easily. Many people seem to have actually experienced this. So even in the short term we can see that letting go of our attachment to things, situations and so forth, can actually make them even more appealing, more abundant and more enjoyable. This is one point we need to understand.

Another significant point we need to recall here is that the fault does not lie in seeing things as being appealing; rather, the fault lies in being attached to them. This is very clearly illustrated by the way sentient beings appear to bodhisattvas: because of their great endearing love, all beings appear to be very appealing and dear to them, yet they are not attached to them. In our situation the reverse seems to operate: other sentient beings appear appealing to us, and we immediately become attached to them.

A bodhisattva's lack of attachment is due to the wisdom realising emptiness that they have developed. This is a very significant point. It is that wisdom realising emptiness which protects their mind from feelings of strong attachment. As explained in the presentations on emptiness, for the person who has a deep understanding of emptiness, there's a discrepancy between the appearance and the actual mode of existence. While things appear to be truly existent, they do not actually exist in the way they appear to exist.

So when an object appears to be very attractive to us, we need to immediately apply the understanding that it does not exist in the way it appears to us, and that will immediately reduce strong interest in the beautiful features of the object. Applying the understanding of emptiness in this way immediately helps to overcome strong attachment. As explained in the teachings, having even a doubt about emptiness begins to shatter the core of cyclic existence.

Understanding emptiness means understanding that things do not exist in the way that they appear, and that there's a discrepancy between appearance and the actual mode of existence. Although things appear to our eye consciousness in a certain way, the actual mode of existence is contrary to the way it appears. Applying this understanding to objects of attachment will have an immediate impact and reduce that attachment to beautiful and appealing objects. Then, whatever

understanding of emptiness one has will have served its purpose.

One might assume that one has meditated on emptiness and understood it. But as soon as one sees an attractive object, one's mind becomes attached and one's heart starts pumping with excitement, or, on the other hand, strong aversion arises when one sees an unappealing object. That indicates that one has not derived even a drop of essence of practice from the meditation. Any understanding of emptiness would have been superficial and not deep-rooted, and hence unable to overcome afflictions. This will be an instance of where one has not even begun to taste the real Dharma. This is an important point that you really need to keep in mind.

The main point from the instructions presented here is that if we don't see the faults of attachment, and apply antidotes to overcome that attachment when it arises, then we will experience negative consequences. Conversely, if we start to recognise and accept the faults of attachment and slowly overcome its influence over our mind, then gradually our wellbeing will improve.

In simple terms, if we ask ourselves whether we want a more relaxed and happy mind, or a more troubled state of mind, then our response will naturally be that we want a genuinely calm and happier state of mind. Thus, the advice being presented here is that for a happy state of mind we should not allow our mind to be completely obsessed with attachment and desire, and this is done by recognising and acknowledging the faults of attachment. This is really the main point.

2.1.2.2.1.1.2. *Being abused by the sense objects*

The first two lines of the next verse are:

*6ab. Not seeing it, one will not have joy,
And the mind will not enter equipoise.*

In a sense, Shantideva is pointing the finger right at our hearts.

The commentary reads:

If asked: 'What will happen when one does not see anything attractive?'

Answer: If one does not see anything beautiful, one will not have joy. Since one's mind will be unhappy, it will be distracted, it will not enter equipoise of concentration and one will not attain happiness.

The hypothetical question posed in the commentary is, *what will happen if one does not see anything attractive?* What would be the consequences if one doesn't see anything attractive?

As the commentary explains very clearly, *if one does not see beautiful* or pleasant things, then that will deprive one of a sense of *joy*. If we just constantly see unpleasant things then that will weigh our minds down, and we will not be joyful.

If the mind is unhappy then it will be easily distracted. What follows from this is that the mind *will not be able to enter into the equipoise of concentration*, i.e. one will not be able to concentrate on an object because it is unhappy, or depressed. If the mind is depressed or unhappy, then it will be impossible for the mind to maintain complete focus on an object. And if one is not able to enter into the

equipoise of concentration, then there will be no way of gaining a genuine sense of happiness.

The presentation of this fault of attachment follows directly from the previous verse, which indicated that attachment will prevent one from seeing pleasant things in the long-term future. The explanation in these two lines shows the negative effects of not seeing pleasant things. Although the words *attractive* or *beautiful* are used, their meaning in this context is that people or environmental objects are suitable objects for interaction, which can be when they are pleasant, as opposed to unpleasant.

If one has a strong attachment to objects then the consequence will be not seeing pleasant things in the future. Not seeing things as being pleasant and attractive and so forth can cause unhappiness and a lack of joy, and the result of that is that the mind will not be able to develop the equipoise of concentration.

2.1.2.2.1.1.3. *Although attaining it there is no contentment*

However when things do start appearing as nice and beautiful, then there is the danger for attachment to these beautiful objects to arise, which will then cause discontentment.

The next two lines of the verse are:

*6cd. Although seeing it, one is not satisfied
And will be miserable due to craving as before.*

The commentary explains:

Even if one sees the desired objects, one is not satisfied due to craving. Due to craving one will be as miserable as before, when one did not see the desired object.

As explained clearly in the commentary, *if one sees the desired objects, one is not satisfied due to craving*. Due to attachment one desires to possess an object, or if it is a person, then you want to be close to them. However, even when one is in close proximity to the object, or one possesses it, there's a lack of contentment, and because of that lack of contentment one will again be miserable.

When one did not meet with the object there was a certain level of mental suffering, and now, having met with the object, one would assume that one is released from the suffering of not being with the object. However one experiences further suffering from not being satisfied, even though one owns the object, or is in close proximity to the other person.

If we were to take a contemporary example, when two people are initially attracted to each other then there's attachment, and because of that fascination they want to be close to each other. So they agree to live together, and perhaps even get married. But after they have lived together for some time, then a similar suffering to what they experienced before they met will arise. It is as if they are still lacking something; that is because they are still not content.

Therefore, *one will be as miserable as before, when one did not see the desired object*. The suffering that occurs in the mind will be similar to the suffering one experienced when one did not possess the object.

As the teachings explain in detail, attachment is one of the worst of the afflictions, because it is one of the main

causes of being perpetually reborn in samsara again and again.

More precisely, in reference to the twelve links of interdependent origination, at the time of death it is the links of craving and grasping that lead to the link of existence, which is how one is reborn again into cyclic existence. Both craving and grasping are aspects of attachment. So we can see how, as the teachings explain, attachment is the primary cause for one to be reborn in samsara.

2.1.2.2.1.1.4. *Obstructing liberation*

This fault is presented in the following verse:

*7. If one is attached to sentient beings
The mere perfect meaning is obscured.
It will also destroy the mind of disenchantment
And lastly, one will be overwhelmed by misery.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

For those reasons, if one is attached to sentient beings, one will be completely obscured with regard to the perfect meaning itself, and thus it will obstruct the direct perception of ultimate truth. In addition, by craving contaminated phenomena, the mind of disenchantment with cyclic existence will be destroyed and one will not attain liberation. As one will finally be separated from everything that is pleasant, one will be overwhelmed by misery.

If one is attached to sentient beings, one will be completely obscured with regard to the perfect meaning itself, and thus it will obstruct the direct perception of ultimate truth, indicates that attachment to the internal object of sentient beings obstructs the perception of ultimate reality, or emptiness.

We have all seen how strong attachment can affect normal judgements, and how it leads to mistakes and poor decisions. For example, strong attachment can obscure the faults of the other person, so that only qualities are seen. There's no question that attachment obscures faults; it impairs the wisdom or intelligence needed to be able to make sound decisions.

This verse specifically relates to attachment to sentient beings. It is explained in the teachings that attachment to animate objects is much more difficult to overcome than attachment to inanimate objects. That's why attachment to sentient beings is specifically explained here.

Furthermore, as explained here, *by craving contaminated phenomena, the mind of disenchantment with cyclic existence will be destroyed and one will not attain liberation*. Renunciation cannot be developed when one's mind is obsessed with desire and attachment. For as long as one is attached to the pleasures of samsara it is impossible to develop renunciation, and it is only when one develops a mind of disenchantment with the pleasures of samsara that one can actually start to develop renunciation.

Disenchantment with the objects of desire comes from the development of a full understanding of the sufferings of samsara. Without acknowledging and recognising the three sufferings of samsara, it is impossible to develop disenchantment with samsara and renunciation of it.

a. The first of these sufferings, **the suffering of suffering** is not too difficult to recognise. It is something we have all experienced—even animals can recognise the suffering of suffering.

b. The second suffering is **the suffering of change**. Attachment to the sensual pleasures leads to disenchantment with change. Even non-Buddhists can develop that level of disenchantment.

c. The true suffering that one needs to recognise, and seek to overcome, is **all-pervasive compounded suffering**, which is said to be much more subtle and thus much harder to recognise and overcome. It is only by fully acknowledging and recognising all-pervasive compounded suffering that one is able to develop disenchantment with samsara.

As one will finally be separated from everything that is pleasant, one will be overwhelmed by misery indicates the extent to which suffering is an obstruction to liberation.

When the commentary refers to *craving contaminated phenomena*, we need to understand that this refers specifically to craving for the appropriated contaminated aggregates. By *craving for contaminated phenomena the mind of disenchantment with cyclic existence will be destroyed*, means that being strongly attached to the appropriated contaminated aggregates destroys disenchantment with samsara, and one will not be able to develop renunciation.

Thus liberation is obstructed by craving contaminated phenomena.

2.1.2.2.1.1.5. *Squandering the freedoms and endowments*

This fault is presented in these two lines:

*8ab. Because of being obsessed with it
This life will pass meaninglessly.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

By thinking exclusively about the objects of desire, this life will pass meaninglessly and the power of the freedoms and endowments will be squandered.

This explanation is, of course, quite clear, and we need to really take it to heart, and apply it to our own practice. As explained here, *by thinking exclusively about the objects of desire, this life will pass meaninglessly and the power of the freedoms and endowments will be squandered*. We currently possess a precious human life with its freedoms and endowments. However, if we become completely obsessed with the objects of desire, then that will prevent us from obtaining any significant personal spiritual goal.

To see this as a personal instruction we need to recall how a mind that is obsessed with an object of desire experiences perpetual problems and difficulties. When we look back, we can see how, in one form or another, all the problems that we have been experiencing are mainly due to not having fulfilled our desires. We keep going from one point to the next trying to pursue an object of desire that keeps eluding us. If one continues in this way then one's life will be empty, and one will not have extracted the essence from one's life. If we behave like that, then we have definitely *squandered* our *freedoms and endowments*.

At a personal level, one should think: 'What prevents me from fully utilising my precious human rebirth to achieve goals such as a good status (which is a good rebirth in the next lifetime), and liberation and enlightenment, is none other than my own mind, which is obsessed with desires. If I continue to be obsessed like this, my mind of desire

will prevent me from using my potential to obtain these great goals. All my problems, from external ones to psychological problems, come down to the feeling of not obtaining the objects of my desire'. That is how we destroy our own temporary and ultimate happiness. So this is what we need to keep in mind.

2.1.2.2.2. *Abandoning upon having understood the faults*

That is subdivided into two:

2.1.2.2.2.1. Contemplating the faults

2.1.2.2.2.2. The way of abandoning

2.1.2.2.2.1. Contemplating the faults

Here there are two subdivisions.

2.1.2.2.2.1.1. Extensive explanation

2.1.2.2.2.1.2. Summary

2.1.2.2.2.1.1. Extensive explanation

The extensive explanation is subdivided into three:

2.1.2.2.2.1.1.1. The great purpose will be destroyed and one will be led to the lower realms

2.1.2.2.2.1.1.2. Childish friends are unreliable and they are difficult to count upon

2.1.2.2.2.1.1.3. One will not receive benefit from them and they will harm one

2.1.2.2.2.1.1.1. **The great purpose will be destroyed and one will be led to the lower realms**

Again, some very significant points are being presented under these headings. They relate to what we need to be wary of in our life. First of all *the great purpose will be destroyed and one will be led to the lower realms*. The next point is that *childish friends are unreliable and they are difficult to count upon*. Thirdly, childish friends are friends who have a bad influence over oneself. Thus, if one were to completely rely on such 'friends', one's own purpose will be destroyed and one will not even be able to help them.

We can go over the explanations in our next session.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

13 October 2015

Based on the motivation we have just generated, let us engage in the regular meditation practice. (*Meditation*)

We can now generate the motivation for receiving teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the profound Mahayana teachings and then put them into practice well.

If we can put into practice whatever understanding we gain from listening to the teachings, then it serves its purpose and makes it most meaningful. The advice in the next couple of verses is in fact very profound and should be integrated in this way.

2.1.2.2.1.2. Abandoning upon having understood the faults

2.1.2.2.1.2.1. *Contemplating the faults*

2.1.2.2.1.2.1.1. *Extensive explanation (cont.)*

2.1.2.2.1.2.1.1.1. *The great purpose will be destroyed and one will be led to the lower realms*

The last two lines of the earlier verse and the next verse read:

8cd. *Friends and relatives lacking permanence
Destroy even the eternal Dharma.*

9. *If one acts on the same level as the childish
One will definitely go to the lower realms.
If they lead one to unequal fortune
What is reliance on the childish supposed to
accomplish?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Friends and relatives, who are without permanence in that one will quickly be separated from them, destroy and degenerate even eternal liberation and the method for achieving it, i.e. the holy Dharma. If one acts on the same level as the childish then one will definitely go to the lower realms.

If one is led by the childish to a place unequal to the fortune of superior beings and deprived of the presently obtained human body that we have now, then what is supposed to be accomplished by relying on ordinary individuals? One will not achieve one's wishes, and that which one does not wish for will increase.

While the explanation is quite clear, what we should reflect upon as the essential point - *friends and relations who are without permanence in that one will quickly be separated from them* - is that whatever relationships we have with others are in the nature of impermanence. If we have this understanding from the very outset then, when separation does take place, it will help to release one from great agony. With a lack of this understanding at the beginning, and if one has very strong attachment, then one will grasp and strongly hold onto the object of

attachment. The stronger the attachment one has to the object, the more it taints one's perception and thus one sees it as permanent and long lasting. Thus when the situation changes from either side, it can cause great mental agony. Inevitably change will occur and if one is not able to accept it then it causes great pain in one's mind.

Of course we rely on relationships, especially when we live with others, but the main point is to be mindful of impermanence, which will help to reduce strong attachment and clinging to relationships. In fact, we need to integrate an understanding of impermanence in to everything we engage in. To the extent that we lack the understanding of impermanence, the stronger the attachment and grasping to that object will be.

An understanding of subtle impermanence definitely helps to overcome attachment, but even recognising the grosser levels of impermanence, such as the obvious changes that lead up to death, will definitely reduce strong attachment. The more we reflect on this reality, the less we cling and grasp to the meaningless affairs of this life. Our strong preoccupation with worldly affairs will naturally reduce to the extent that we overcome our grasping to them. Then happiness will naturally occur in one's mind. Even if one says, 'I don't wish for happiness', happiness will naturally occur. The shortcomings being presented here are the faults of attachment, and if one does not overcome attachment, there is no way one can develop renunciation.

It is important to develop **renunciation** as it is the first of the three principles of the path. The reason it is presented as one of the principles of the path is that without developing renunciation one cannot possibly develop disenchantment to samsaric pleasures. **Bodhicitta** is the second principle of the path because without developing it one cannot possibly obtain enlightenment. Whatever virtues we accumulate, without bodhicitta they cannot become causes for enlightenment, so virtuous actions need to be held with bodhicitta. The **wisdom realising emptiness** is the third principle of the path, because without it one cannot possibly overcome the grasping to the self. This is how we need to understand overcoming attachment and developing renunciation in the context of the principles of the path.

The commentary explains that if one holds onto attachment to friends and relatives it will *destroy and degenerate even eternal liberation and the method for achieving it, i.e. the holy Dharma*. Here 'eternal' refers to the unceasing state of happiness experienced when one obtains liberation. This is destroyed if one acts on the same level as the childish, and if one does that, then one will definitely go to lower realms.

I have conveyed the significant points presented here in previous teachings over and over again, specifically how we must be careful not to be misled by negative friends and act like them. What is called 'childish' here refers to those who have no qualms about engaging in negativities, and so if we follow their example we'll destroy our own potential to obtain liberation, and bring ourselves to the lower realms. An example of childish would be if others engage in a negativity such as killing and we think that is fine, and engage in the same

behaviour. That is how the negativity of killing is transferred to us. Likewise if others engage in sexual misconduct and we follow that example it destroys our own virtues and we create negativity. These are significant points that Shantideva points out, and of course we can relate it to the other negativities as well.

While we may *destroy and degenerate even eternal liberation*, ultimately failing to gain the wisdom realising emptiness can also be explained in relation to renunciation. If we do not develop renunciation, and are attached to engaging in the activities of the childish, we become influenced by those negative friends. So we need to be mindful of not associating with negative friends, while maintaining compassion for them. Shantideva clearly explains later on that not associating with negative friends is about protecting oneself so that one is not influenced by negativities. That doesn't mean one does not hold them in compassion, of course one does, but at the same time being mindful not to be influenced by their example.

The commentary states, *If one is led by the childish to a place unequal to the fortune of superior beings and presently obtained a human body*, which means that when one is influenced by one's association with those who engage in childish activities (negative friends), then this destroys one's own virtues, and leads one to a place that does not have the fortune of superior beings. Superior beings can refer to actual arya beings, but it can also refer to holy beings. The Tibetan term *kyiwo-dampa* (which can be translated as 'holy being' or 'noble being') is defined in the *Abhidharma* as beings who are engaged in pure and virtuous conduct and shun negativities.

As explained in the *Abhidharma* there are four types of aryas or holy beings: 1) one who is content with poor clothing 2) one who is content with meagre alms 3) one who is content with a poor dwelling and 4) one who takes joy in ascetic practices. Being led to a place which is unequal to the fortune of superior beings means that following the childish and engaging in non-virtues deprives one of opportunity to engage in virtue; perpetually engaging in non-virtue is exactly the opposite to having the fortune of a superior being.

Likewise, *presently obtained a human body that we have now*, means one will be led to a place where one does not have the opportunity that we have with our presently obtained body. Again, one cannot completely avoid associating with others, and in certain circumstances one may have to be with relatives, friends etc., but if any of these people engage in childish or negative behaviours we need to be mindful not to be influenced by them. We need to use our own intelligence and wisdom to distinguish between what is proper behaviour and what is improper behaviour. So when one is associating with others, even if one has to be with those who are engaging in immoral behaviours, one immediately needs to be able to hold the dignity of virtue in one's mind and be composed, and not allow oneself to follow their example. This is the main point to derive from the instruction.

The commentary further explains *then what is supposed to be accomplished by relying on ordinary individuals*, which implies that one cannot accomplish anything by relying

on ordinary individuals, and so one will not ultimately achieve one's wishes. Conversely, what one does not wish for will increase. These are the negative consequences.

If one were to take these lines literally in a worldly sense, one might think, 'so, it is good to achieve whatever one wishes for'. However the wishes referred to here are not worldly wishes but rather virtuous wishes, those that relate to the Dharma, such as liberation, enlightenment, opportunity to engage in accumulating virtues and merit. Those are the wishes being presented here. One has to understand these meanings to relate to virtues etc. because of the type of advice being presented here. The advice presented here is related to Dharma practice, and in many cases exclusively to a monk's practice. So it is important to understand and relate the advice and instructions given in the text to its proper context. However a lot of the explanations are also very practical and useful to apply by anyone in their daily life. I have presented many of these points previously, so here I am being backed up by Shantideva.

2.1.2.2.1.2.1.2. Childish friends are unreliable and they are difficult to count upon

This topic is something you can relate to your own experiences in life. There are many who might say 'Oh I cannot relate with that person, it is very difficult to rely on them' but in saying that, one is already in a committed relationship with them. Prior to engaging in the relationship one may not have taken this attribute into consideration, so once one is in a relationship with them, it is almost too late to complain that they are difficult to rely upon.

The verses read:

10. *In one instant they become friends
But in a mere moment they also turn into
enemies.
As they become angry at that which is likeable
Ordinary individuals are difficult to please.*
11. *If one says something beneficial, they become
angry
They will even reverse one from the beneficial,
If one does not listen to their words
They will go to the lower realms due to anger.*

The commentary explains:

As their mental continuum is unstable, they become friends in an instant but in the mere moment it takes to say some bad words they become enemies again.

As they become angry if one brings them into contact with virtue, which is likeable, ordinary individuals are difficult to please. Not only do they become angry if one says something beneficial, in many ways, they will also turn oneself away from the beneficial cause that is virtue. If one does not listen to their words, they become angry and go to the lower realms.

The commentary states that, *their mental continuum is unstable*, highlighting the need to understand the importance of having a stable mind. When one's mind is unstable it is vulnerable to all the faults presented here. There are so many stories I could also share about this. What is being presented here is that people become friends, but in the instant it takes to say some bad words they become enemies. This is really very true. We can see

there are many examples where someone who is supposed to be a very close friend can in an instant turn around and take a person's life. Instances like this have occurred.

These points are actually quite clear, but one should reflect on their significance. For example, the first point reflects upon how just a few words can change the sentiments within oneself or others, even strangers. But sometimes even with strangers, just a few unpleasant words can create a very hostile situation. There are many instances like that which we can reflect upon. The attribute of being childish refers to those who, if you try to connect them with virtue, and things which are actually useful and meaningful for them, become angry and do not appreciate your actions. In this way we see that ordinary beings are very difficult to please. We can also see that by befriending childish, ordinary beings one can easily be misled. There are many instances of someone who is known to be a good Dharma practitioner but because of the influence of their associates they later start to go astray and not practise the Dharma. It is in this way that we can see the disadvantages of befriending the childish.

Furthermore, *not only do they become angry if one says something beneficial, in many ways, they will also turn oneself away from the beneficial cause that is virtue.* This refers to the fact that it is one thing not being able to benefit them, but in fact associating with childish or negative friends can lead you into engaging in non-virtuous deeds and so turn you away from what has been beneficial. We can see in normal relationships that, *if one does not listen to their words, they become angry and go to the lower realms,* which occurs all too often. When you try to explain something using nice words, sometimes they don't listen, and at other times they get angry. If they get angry they are creating the causes to go to the lower realms themselves, but it is in the interaction with oneself that this happens. It is in this way that one should contemplate on the faults.

As one of the great Tibetan Masters Padampa Sangye said:

By relying on a non-virtuous friend, one's own negativities will increase rapidly. Therefore one must definitely shun association with negative friends. By relying on a virtuous friend one's virtues and positive merits will increase rapidly. Thus one must definitely rely on a virtuous friend.

The literal meaning of the term for a Dharma teacher is 'virtuous friend'. So, one must rely on those who help to increase virtues within us, and not rely on those who increase negativities. These few lines have explained the disadvantages of relying on negative friends and the great advantage of relying on a virtuous friend in a clear way. We need to take the essence of this.

2.1.2.2.1.2.1.1.3. One will not receive benefit from them and they will harm one

The verse reads:

12. *Jealous of the higher and competing with the equal,
Pride towards those lower; conceited when
praised.
If one expresses something unpleasant, they
become angry.
When does one derive benefit from the childish?*
13. *If one associates with the childish*

*One will definitely acquire every non-virtue there
is,
Such as praising oneself and criticising others,
And conversation taking pleasure in cyclic
existence.*

As the commentary explains,

Further, the childish are jealous of those higher, compete with those that are equal and if they observe those that are lower, they are proud. When praised they generate conceit, but if one says something unpleasant they become angry.

Hence, when does one receive benefit from involvement with the childish? Not only does one not, but one will definitely acquire every kind of non-virtue by keeping company with the childish. One will definitely take on praising oneself and criticising others, or get in the habit of conversation that takes pleasure in cyclic existence, such as stories that deal with the king, the people in the country and so forth. Therefore, one should not associate with the childish.

This Tibetan verse is written in such an eloquent and poetic way it is good to reflect on the words in the verse itself. You could memorise it and reflect on it, *Jealous of those higher,* and *competing with those that are equal,* is quite clear. *Pride towards those who are lower and being conceited when praised* is also quite clear. Then if one expresses *something unpleasant they become angry* so *when does one receive benefit from the childish?* These are all very significant points as further explained in the commentary.

The attributes of the childish are that they are jealous of those who are higher, and this is something about which many people lament. Many have confided in me that they feel very jealous about work situations or relationships. Jealousy is one of the main factors that cause agony in the mind, especially in a work situation when others are doing better than oneself. Rather than feeling joyful for them it is easy to experience jealousy from which many kinds of faults and spiteful words can occur.

To *compete with those who are equal* refers to being competitive with one's peers. This is something that often occurs. And then with those who are less advantaged, or a bit lower in status, one develops pride and contempt for them. What is being presented here are the shortcomings of engaging in sentiments such as pride, jealousy, and a sense of competitiveness as these are the ones that causes us a lot of problems in everyday life.

One needs to relate these points to oneself, and not think it is referring to others as being childish, and that oneself is excluded from that. If one actually has these sentiments one must reflect, 'If I have these faults then it makes it very difficult for others to relate to me. Just as I find it difficult to relate to others who have these faults, then it is the same for others who have difficulty relating to me'.

By acknowledging these shortcomings we need to apply the antidote. There are antidotes for overcoming each of these negative states of mind, and one needs to resort to them. Jealousy is a dominant sentiment which causes a lot of problems. There are many who say the boyfriend is jealous of their girlfriend, or the girlfriend is jealous of their boyfriend, or in a work situation that they are jealous of their colleagues etc. A lot of jealousy occurs in everyday situations which causes a lot of problems. The antidote for overcoming jealousy is to rejoice. To

contemplate how it is good that others have good things happening for them. If one can train one's mind to feel joy in these situations then basically that will help one to overcome jealousy.

I don't claim that I am a great practitioner, but I have protected my mind from jealousy and while there might be small occasions where jealousy might occur in the mind, I have not gone out of my way to cause disruption by back-biting, and so forth, out of jealousy. This is something I can say I have definitely not engaged in. This is how we need to protect ourselves. If we are jealous, we might go around spreading rumours or backbiting, so one really needs to protect oneself from this kind of behaviour. While the verses here are very clear, applying them in one's own practice is what one really needs to do.

2.1.2.2.1.2.1.2. Summary

*14ab. Thus, the relationship between self and other
Will create ruin.*

As the commentary explains the meaning of these two lines:

Thus, through the mutual relationship between oneself and other childish ones, they become negative friends and one will be ruined.

The commentary explicitly mentions *they become negative friends*. The reason someone would be referred to as a negative friend is that by associating with them one's own negativity increases. That would be a clear sign that one is associating with negative friends. If by associating with someone one's virtues increase, then that is by default a virtuous friend. So while we protect ourselves from associating with negative friends, we need to ensure that we don't become a cause to be a negative friend for others. For example, in our conversations if we start talking about likes and dislikes and gossip, it increases the delusions in one's own mind and creates negativity in the other's mind. Then one is, by default, serving as a negative friend for others. This is why one needs to be mindful of one's speech.

2.1.2.2.1.2.2. The way of abandoning

*14cd. As they have not produced one's purpose
And one also does not become meaningful for them,*

15a. One should get far away from the childish.

The commentary explains:

As childish ordinary individuals have not produced one's purpose and one also does not become meaningful for them, one should retreat far away into isolation.

Having earlier presented the faults of relying on, or associating with the childish, the verse and commentary explain further that *as childish ordinary individuals have not produced one's purpose*, they have not helped to fulfil one's own purpose. *One also does not become meaningful for them* means that one cannot help them. If this is the case, one needs to resolve to go into isolation, which means finding an appropriate place to abide where there are no worldly distractions.

The following lines explain what to do when one goes into isolation.

They read:

*15bcd. If one meets them, make them happy through joy
Without creating great familiarity.
Act well in an ordinary way.*

*16. Like the bee takes the honey from the flower
Take only the meaning of the Dharma and,
Like not having seen them before,
Abide without familiarity.*

The commentary states:

When occasionally meeting them, first make them happy through joy but then do not become greatly familiar. Act well, without attachment or anger, like an ordinary person just pointing the way.

Also when one goes to seek alms in the town, like the bee that takes the honey from the flower without being attached to its colour and so on, whilst being there physically, take only robes and food for the purpose of the Dharma. Abide without involvement in the distractions, and treat all people as if not having seen them before.

Thus when abiding in isolation, on occasions when one meets with ordinary people who may, for example, bring provisions etc., then the advice for that time is not to engage in lengthy conversation. Of course, make the people happy and joyful, but do not become too familiar. In this way one acts without attachment or anger towards them. Just briefly make one's point and keep one's conversation short. This is the way to avoid worldly talk, lest one gets involved in non-virtuous discussions.

When one is in isolation one still needs to eat and be clothed, so if one has no means oneself then one has to depend on alms and go out and beg. The manner of getting alms is explained with an analogy of a bee taking the essence from a flower without being attached to the colour etc. That is, when the bee actually lands on the flower it does not disturb it, it does not get distracted by the flower itself, it just takes the essence, the nectar, and flies off.

Likewise, whilst in the town, one just takes what one needs for one's purpose of Dharma, such as clothes and food, and then return to isolation. There have been times in the past, after I finished my studies, when I have aspired to go and stay in isolation, and do my practice. If that had occurred I would have gone out to seek alms, just as Shantideva is advising here. However I didn't get that opportunity in the past and now, at my age, I don't think it is possible to do it. But living simply in this way, and practising the Dharma, was something I aspired to.

The commentary advises:

Abide without involvement in the distractions, and treat all people as if not having seen them before.

In summary, when one goes out into a town, one should not allow oneself to become immersed and get caught up in frivolous activities and distractions which go on within it. Just go out for one's own purpose, to sustain oneself and for the Dharma practice. Then even if one meets people, act as if one has not known them, not seen them before, and avoid too much familiarity so that one does not get caught up in frivolous activities. This is the advice.

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་རྒྱུད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

20 October 2015

Based on the motivation that we have just generated let us engage in our regular meditation practice.

Now we generate the motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will listen to this Mahayana teaching and put it into practice well.

2.1.2.2. THE METHOD FOR GENERATING THE ANTIDOTE

2.1.2.2.1. *Abandoning attachment to the inner object of sentient being*

2.1.2.2.1.2. **Abandoning upon having understood the faults**

2.1.2.2.1.2.2. *The way of abandoning (cont.)*

As we learnt last week, there is no benefit whatsoever for oneself or others in associating with the childish.

*14cd. As they have not produced one's purpose
And one also does not become meaningful for them,*

15a. One should get far away from the childish.

It was explained very clearly that one cannot serve the purposes of the childish. As we cannot benefit them and they cannot benefit us, it is best to resort to isolation to engage in our Dharma practice.

This of course has its own significant points. Of course teachers also advise some, who might be inclined to go into isolation, to remain with their students and disciples in order to teach as it would be much more beneficial for them to engage in propagating the Dharma. So for the purpose of the Dharma and benefiting sentient beings they follow their teacher's advice, forsaking their wish to go into isolation and help to propagate the Dharma. These lines from the root text are a general explanation of why one should rely on isolation in order to engage in the practice of Dharma, and they serve to remind and encourage us to engage in the real means of practising the Dharma.

2.1.2.2.2. *Abandoning attachment to outer gain, praise and the like*

Here there are two sub-divisions:

2.1.2.2.2.1. The faults of the object possessor

2.1.2.2.2.2. The faults of the object

2.1.2.2.2.1. **The faults of the object possessor**

This is further sub-divided into two:

2.1.2.2.2.1.1. The faults of pride

2.1.2.2.2.1.2. The faults of attachment

2.1.2.2.2.1.1. *The faults of pride*

We really need to take measures to overcome pride. When one is affected by strong pride, not only does it harm oneself, but it also affects others. No-one

appreciates someone who is full of pride and contempt for others, and we often hear comments like, "Oh, he is just so proud"—such people are scorned. Having seen the faults of pride, it is good to then take measures to overcome one's own pride. It's fair to say that pride in others is never really appreciated. However, not taking any initiative to look into one's own pride and then to claim that others are being very proud, isn't really an honest and sincere approach.

This advice seems to be particularly applicable to those of high status, such as renowned lamas. It is indeed very useful advice for teachers who have a large following.

The verse reads:

*17. By saying "I have a lot of gain and praise,
I am very popular with others."
If one holds such arrogance
One will be frightened after death.*

Then the commentary reads:

If one says, "I have a lot of gain, I am praised and I am very popular with others" and holds such arrogance and conceit, one will go to the lower realms due to the faults of pride and attachment, and thus one will generate fear after death.

As clearly explained, if one is not mindful then gifts, offerings or praise can generate attachment to such things, along with pride. One could begin to think, "Oh I am admired by so many and there are many who praise me", which causes a mind of pride and conceit. In fact one needs to be particularly careful with how one uses the offerings made to one by others. It is explained in the teachings that when offerings are made with sincere faith, one needs to be very mindful to utilise them in a proper manner, and not to misuse those offerings. Personally, I am very careful about such offerings and so forth. They need to be used in an appropriate manner, and put it towards a good purpose as a means to accumulate more virtue or merit. That will then be beneficial for both oneself and the person making the offering. Basically, one needs to be really careful when obtaining and using offerings, ensuring that they are treated appropriately.

You will recall there are also detailed explanations in the lam rim teachings about the danger of making offerings and so forth that have been obtained through wrong livelihood. In addition to these extensive explanations in the lam rim, there are also explanations in the *Vinaya*, the text for monastics; as monastics we need to pay extra care to not misuse offerings.

In my own case, when someone, for example, cooks lunch for me, they might also bring a cake or some biscuits. Occasionally I ask for the cake or the biscuits to be left behind, and that they not be opened. That is because my intention is to offer them later. Some might wonder, "Why is Geshe-la not eating the biscuits or cake? Maybe he is saving it all for later". So not everyone understands my intention. I can't claim to engage in any great practices, but I do try to adopt these simple practices, just as the previous great masters did—they always made offerings of what was offered to them. Also I don't consume the offering of lunch mindlessly. I offer it and pay attention to dedicating the offering by thinking, "By consuming this meal may those who offered it be

endowed with all resources, and be able to practise Dharma”.

The main point is that one needs to be very mindful about offerings. When others make offerings of gifts and so forth to oneself, there is a great danger of becoming quite attached to those offerings. Likewise, hearing praise can generate pride. If great teachers have a large following, there is the danger of feeling, “Oh, I’ve got a great following, and many people like me”. Now some of you might feel, “Oh I am not in that situation, I’m in no danger of generating pride with a large following and receiving gifts from others”. But the situation can change, and one may achieve that status, if not in this life, then in the future lives to come. Even though overcoming attachment to gifts and so forth is not an easy practice, contemplating the disadvantages of these faults, and training one’s mind now, can prepare oneself for the future, so that one will not be affected by these faults then.

As I have mentioned previously, at an ordinary level, one may not yet be free from these faults of attachment and pride and so forth. However recognising and acknowledging that they are faults can become an impetus to engage in purification practices i.e. confessing them and purifying them. So in that way we can minimise any negative effects.

2.1.2.2.1.2. *The faults of attachment*

The lines relating to this heading are:

18. *Thus, deluded mind,
You become attached to this and that,
And separated from this and that,
And suffer a thousand times.*
- 19ab. *Therefore, the skilful should not be attached,
From attachment fear is generated.*

The commentary explains:

Hence, a mind that is deluded with regards to projecting karma, to however many objects one becomes attached to if they are summed up, it will add up to a thousand-fold. The result surely is for great sufferings to arise. Therefore, by being skilful in what has to be abandoned and adopted, one should not generate attachment to gain and praise. Due to attachment, one will generate the fear of the lower realms.

The Tibetan word *phen-pe-le* translated here as *projecting karma* can also have a more literal meaning of *actions that benefit oneself*. So if we take the literal meaning, then what is being explained is that the mind of attachment is a *mind that is deluded* into thinking that the objects of attachment will benefit oneself. With that deluded mind, one’s attachment to the object increases more and more. One is not satisfied with being attached to one object; soon one wants two and then more. Furthermore, attachment towards the objects increases.

If they are summed up, the attachments will add up to a thousand-fold, and due to that one experiences the result of great sufferings. Of course, when attachment to an object has increased a thousand fold, then the consequences of the suffering to be experienced in the future will also naturally be great. The thousand-fold increase is not a fixed number, but an indication of the magnitude of the increase. One may think that one is attached to only one

object, but in each moment of attachment to that object one is generating further attachment, thus attachment increases more and more. So what may seem like attachment to just one object becomes a thousand-fold attachment, which then brings about extensive suffering as a result. *Therefore, by being skilful in what has to be abandoned and adopted, one should not generate attachment to gain and praise.* In summary, *due to attachment, one will generate the fear that is the lower realms.*

These explanations of the verses are not all that obscure or difficult to understand. It’s a matter of contemplating them and trying to put them into practice as much as we can.

2.1.2.2.2. **The faults of the object**

This is sub-divided into two:

2.1.2.2.2.1. Desire objects are unreliable

2.1.2.2.2.2. Praise and criticism do not harm or benefit

2.1.2.2.2.2.1. *Desire objects are unreliable*

One needs to understand that the actual fault being presented here is a mind that relies on, and then develops attachment to objects of desire. The means to overcome this mental fault is to understand that the fault of the objects is that they are *unreliable*. Such objects of desire are never reliable, because they can change at any time. We often hear comments like, “That person is so unreliable — you just can’t rely on them”. Likewise objects of desire are also unreliable.

The lines of verse relating to this heading read:

- 19cd. *Because they have to be given up naturally,
One should generate firm realisation of this.*
20. *Although one may receive lots of gain
And also receive fame and pleasantness,
This accumulation of gain and fame,
One has to give them up without freedom.*

Then the commentary explains:

Though one may attain these objects of desire, they are unreliable. One needs to generate stable conviction and realisation that they will have to be given up naturally. Although one may receive a lot of gain, as well as fame and pleasantness, this accumulation of gain and fame will have to be given up without freedom at the time of death. The meaning is that at the time of death gain and fame will not follow one.

As explained in the commentary, *though one may attain these objects of desire* such as gain, praise and the like, *they are all unreliable*, regardless of their form. Whatever objects of desire one may obtain, one will not hold onto them; eventually a separation has to take place. Although they are inanimate, it’s as if the objects discard you, and you also have to discard objects. The more one contemplates this fact, the easier it becomes to not hold on to objects with strong attachment. Then, when the actual separation takes place, it will not cause mental agony or angst.

Of course, at the end of this life, at the time of death, we will definitely have to leave everything behind. But even before then, there are many times when we are separated from objects of attachment. So the more one contemplates these points now, and thinks about how the very nature of these objects of desire is that they are unreliable, the

easier it will be for the mind to handle the separation that will inevitably occur.

As the commentary further explains, *one needs to generate a stable conviction and realisation that they will have to be given up naturally*. So one has to develop that mind to make it stable and strong. Furthermore, as just mentioned, *although one may receive a lot of gain, as well as fame and pleasantness, this accumulation of gain and fame will have to be given up without freedom at the time of death*.

Understanding that one needs to generate a stable conviction and realisation that objects of desire will have to be given up naturally is neither a subtle, nor an obscure point. We have all seen the agony and suffering that many experience when they are separated from objects of attachment, such as loved and dear ones at the time of death or otherwise because of a break up, or when they experience a great financial loss. Many people are not able to accept that separation, due to the strong grasping of attachment. So when separation occurs, they experience the agony of enormous suffering. Thus the advice being presented here is an instruction on how to prepare our minds, so that when separation does occur, we will not experience great mental distress.

It is, of course obvious that although one may receive a lot of gain and praise and experience pleasant situations and so forth, we will definitely, without any freedom or control from our side, have to give all of that up at the time of death. But if one has created extensive merit, then there is the possibility of obtaining wealth again in future lives. One can definitely create the causes to obtain such good conditions in the next life.

As explained in the teachings in great detail, by practising morality, one will create the causes to secure a body with all of the senses intact in a future life. By engaging in the practice of generosity, one will obtain good resources and wealth in future lives, and by practising patience one will create the cause to obtain a good retinue, or companions in future lives. So rather than being attached to objects, and engaging in immoral deeds to accumulate more wealth and so forth, one should practice the opposite of these deeds: the opposite to engaging in corrupt morality is to practise morality, and the opposite of miserliness is to practise generosity, and the opposite of anger is patience. So while we might not be able to prevent separation from the good conditions that we have now, such as our body and resources, we can at least engage in practices to secure such good conditions again in the future.

Contemplating the cause and effect sequence of how to obtain good conditions in the future encourages one to abide by the law of karma and engage in virtue. This is how we need to apply our understanding of the faults and disadvantages of attachment, and the importance of practising its opposite. There are stories of people who are so overly attached to their objects and possessions that they keep them hidden in their pillows and so forth. If one's mind is a bit more prepared by thinking about the faults and disadvantages of attachment, it will help to reduce a lot of the agony when separation takes place.

When I was in India, an Indian once asked me "Why do you always seem to be so joyful and happy?" My

immediate response was "Because I lost everything, my country, my home, my family. I had to leave everything behind to escape to India". When I said that he was first taken aback and wondered how that was relevant. Soon enough, he seemed to get the point. He said, "Oh, what you mean is that you have given up attachment to all of these things, and that is what is making you happy now". It seems that he had derived a significant point from what I was saying. Even though I had to leave everything behind, I don't recall it causing great agony or mental distress. That is just a small account from my own experience of how we could have to discard everything at any time.

The main point of the practices that are being explained here is the need to reduce strong attachment and grasping at our own body, resources, wealth, fame and so forth. If one contemplates these points now, to that extent it can definitely help at the time of death, for example. When separation is imminent, it will help to relieve mental agony and distress, and while physically we might experience some discomfort of pain and so forth, mentally we can remain calm with a sense of joy.

2.1.2.2.2.2. *Praise and criticism do not harm or benefit*

21. *If there are others who criticise one
Then why be happy when one is praised?
If there are others who praise one
Then why be unhappy if one is criticised?*

The commentary explains the meaning as follows:

It is unsuitable to have attachment and anger for praise and criticism. What does one have to be happy about when one is praised directly, if one is secretly criticised by someone else, as there is interference to that happiness? What does one have to be unhappy about if one is criticised, when there is someone by whom one is praised?

As one does not become high or low through praise or criticism, one should abandon attachment and hate towards them.

These are very significant points for our practice as a means to overcome the eight worldly concerns.¹ If one is obsessed with the eight worldly concerns, one will be happy when praised, and unhappy when criticised. If one has worldly concerns of feeling glad when one is praised, and feeling unhappy at the slightest criticism, then that will cause much mental distress and angst. Therefore, as explained here, *it is unsuitable to have attachment and anger for praise and criticism*.

What does one have to be happy about when one is praised directly, if one is secretly criticised by someone else, is a really significant point to consider. Even though one may be praised directly by some, there are others who may secretly or indirectly criticise oneself. Thus, as a way to not become too attached to any praise one hears, it is good to remind oneself, "Oh, I might be offered praise now, but there are, of course, others who will be criticising me. So I shouldn't let that praise affect me too much". Likewise when one is criticised one can think, "Oh well, there are others who also indirectly praise me!"

¹ Ed: Gain and loss; praise and criticism; fame and notoriety; happiness and suffering.

This kind of thinking prevents criticism from weighing too heavily on one's mind, and having a negative impact.

As also mentioned many times in the past, when one is inclined to practise the mind training teachings to reverse the eight worldly concerns, one needs to practise an attitude of not being happy when praised, and happy when one is criticised. When one is able to transform our immediate responses to these kinds of attitudes, one will have a more stable mind, which will not be easily influenced by the slightest praise or criticism.

This is very practical advice. If someone criticises us we think, "OK, they might criticise me, but that's fine as there are others who praise me. So I shouldn't be too worried about the criticism, and not take it too personally". And if one is praised too much then one should also remember that criticism and the faults that one might engage in if one develops pride. More specifically, when one is praised then that can cause elation and happiness and then one develops strong attachment to that feeling, which is how praise can induce attachment. Whereas when one hears criticism, that can cause the mind to feel unhappy, and due to that unhappy state of mind, anger can arise.

Of course I have discussed these points many times in previous teachings, however I really want you to reflect on them. If one is inclined to put the Dharma into practice, then when one previously liked praise and disliked criticism, one needs to change that. The mind training teachings explain how to equalise these worldly concerns, and then change one's attitude to disliking praise and liking criticism. If one can reach that level of liking criticism and disliking praise, then one has entered the ranks of real Dharma practitioners.

As the lam rim teachings mention, a good Dharma practitioner is someone who has no concern for the worldly dharmas. Through training the mind, one can slowly transform one's attitude towards praise and criticism. From having once sought praise and so forth, and been overly attached to that, one reaches a point where, rather than disliking criticism, one will like it, and then use that for further development and so forth. When one trains one's mind, it is possible to achieve that transformation. So we need to incorporate these practices in our daily life.

Of course, as I have mentioned previously, these are not very profound or subtle points, and they can be easily understood just by reading the text. However, the reason why I take time to emphasise these points, and explain them a little bit further, is to encourage you to put them into practice. That's my intention.

2.1.2.3. THE FAULTS OF DISTRACTIONS

This is sub-divided into two:

2.1.2.3.1. Since it is difficult to be associated with the childish, one should not be attached to their distractions

2.1.2.3.2. Stating supporting quotes

you know, is a good and sincere person, and very hard working. What we can do at this critical time is to generate a mind of love and compassion for him, rely on a powerful practice and dedicate it to the success of his surgery, so that he becomes well and strong again both physically and mentally, and that he continuously has the opportunity to engage in Dharma practice. This is how we can dedicate our prayers for him.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

We'll conclude the teaching session here and dedicate our Tara Praises to John Frigo who is now undergoing, or has just undergone, major surgery. John Frigo, as many of

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་རྗེ་དཔལ་འདུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

27 October 2015

While maintaining the motivation we generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [meditation]

Let us now generate the bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, in order to liberate them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practice well.

2.1.2.3. THE FAULTS OF DISTRACTIONS

This is divided into two:

2.1.2.3.1. Since it is difficult to be associated with the childish, one should not be attached to their distractions

2.1.2.3.2. Stating supporting quotes

2.1.2.3.1. *Since it is difficult to be associated with the childish, one should not be attached to their distractions*

The verse reads:

22. *Sentient beings have many wishes,
That even the conquerors cannot satisfy.
What need is there to mention someone inferior
Like oneself?
Therefore, give up worldly thoughts.*

The commentary explains the meaning as follows:

One cannot fulfil the various wishes of sentient beings. If even the conquerors cannot fulfil their wishes with their diverse enlightened activities, then what need is there to mention someone inferior like oneself who does not know their thoughts? Therefore, give up the thought of associating with worldly people.

The commentary explains how worldly friends cannot be relied upon. They have childish wishes, and as their minds are unstable and change all the time, their wishes also change all the time. The point here is that, because their minds are not easily satisfied, they cannot actually fulfil their wishes.

The commentary explains, *one cannot fulfil the various wishes of sentient beings. If even the conquerors cannot fulfil their wishes with their diverse enlightened activities, then what need is there to mention someone inferior like oneself who does not know their thoughts?* As worldly beings only have worldly concerns, such as attachment to the body, possessions, wealth and friends etc., it becomes very difficult to associate with them, and to try to please them. Whilst it is very difficult to fulfil their wishes, they in turn obstruct one from engaging in virtuous activities. The commentary's resolution to this is, *therefore, give up the thought of associating with worldly people.*

When one resolves to go into isolation as a way of engaging in virtuous practice, one needs to do so with a deep sense of disenchantment with the worldly concerns of worldly beings. As just mentioned, the concerns of worldly beings revolve around trying to please one's relatives and friends, acquiring possessions, status, wealth, attachment to the body etc. These are their main concerns.

The emphasis here is to strongly recognise the pointlessness of relying on childish beings: one cannot benefit them by fulfilling their worldly wishes, and it can harm oneself. If this understanding can be deeply established, then when one actually resolves to go into isolation, then there is no danger of turning back. Conversely, if one does not have this deep sense of disenchantment with worldly concerns, then while one may like being in isolation, at times it becomes a bit difficult. Then one may consider coming out of isolation and associating with worldly beings again out of attachment.

Going into isolation and fully engaging in meditation practice is really the way of a pure Dharma practitioner. While it is not easy to leave everything behind and go into isolation to fully focus on practise, generating such a wish and aspiring to do so is very beneficial. Even people from ordinary walks of life have shared with me the fact that they are a bit weary of the everyday concerns of work etc. They have told me that they'd like to leave everything behind and go somewhere where there are no phones, no business agendas or appointments, and no one to hassle them, and that just going to an isolated quiet place would be really nice. Of course even though this isn't possible for them in their present situation, it is something they find very attractive. When one wishes to do this for the purpose of Dharma, and all the conducive conditions come together, then it becomes a very meaningful thing to do.

By reflecting on the great advantages of being able to practise wholeheartedly and virtuously in isolation, even if one does not have the capacity to do it right now, one should make strong aspirations and prayers that one may be able to do so in the future. That will leave a very good imprint on one's mind so that even if it is not possible in this life, it lays the foundations for one to acquire all the necessary conditions to practise in isolation in future lives. There will be a time when all the necessary conditions come together for one to actually go into isolation.

One needs to understand the great significance of making aspirational prayers. The teachings state that when aspirational prayers are made deeply from one's heart, the content of that prayer can definitely materialise in the future.

The next verse continues to explain why the childish are not reliable and why they are difficult to associate with.

The verse reads:

23. *They criticise those who do not have gain
And are unpleasant to those with gain.
How can one be made happy by them
Who are naturally difficult to associate with?*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

They criticise and put down those sentient beings that have not found gain, saying, "They have no merits." Those who have gain they criticise, saying, "They practise wrong livelihood". As they are difficult to associate with, how can one be made happy by the childish? As one cannot, one should not associate.

We would recognise what the commentary is presenting here! People who associate with others who are less fortunate or less successful than themselves, criticise them for having less wealth than is seemingly suitable. They say, 'Oh, how unlucky', or 'They are good-for-nothings' etc. However when others do have significant wealth they are again criticised, and people say for example, 'They must have cheated to get what they have' or 'They probably got that wealth through devious means'. These are the very worldly companions we associate with, and this is how they either look down upon others or scorn them.

The commentary points out, *they criticise and put down those sentient beings that have not found gain, saying, "They have no merits,"* and so forth. *Those who have gain they criticise, saying, "They practise wrong livelihood".* Therefore, *as they are difficult to associate with, how can one be made happy by the childish?* This implies that as one cannot be made happy by those who have childish and worldly concerns, *one should not associate with them.*

2.1.2.3.2. Stating supporting quotes

This next part is from the sutras.

The verse reads:

24. *As the childish are not happy
If their purpose is not fulfilled,
Those gone thus teach:
Do not be friends with any of them.*

The commentary explains:

Those gone thus teach that as the childish are unhappy if their purpose is not fulfilled, which is more important to them than anything else, one should not associate and befriend them.

The ones gone thus, meaning the buddhas, taught that *as the childish are unhappy if their purpose is not fulfilled, which for them is more important than anything else, one should thus not associate and befriend them.* That is what the Buddha had advised.

An example from the *Sutra of the Moonlight Lamp* is quoted:

Ordinary individuals do not have friends;
Even if one says words endowed with
Dharma;
They do not believe and show anger and hate;
These are the actions of the childish.

Further,

Although one relates well with the childish for
a long time,
One can say that later they will become
unfriendly and disagreeable,
Having understood the causes of the childish,
The skilled do not rely on the childish.

This is quite easy to understand so there is no need for further explanations.

2.1.2.4. THE BENEFITS OF RELYING ON ISOLATION

This is further subdivided into five:

- 2.1.2.4.1. Distinction of company
- 2.1.2.4.2. Distinction of place
- 2.1.2.4.3. Distinction of livelihood
- 2.1.2.4.4. Distinction of individual discernment
- 2.1.2.4.5. Distinction of non-distraction

2.1.2.4.1. Distinction of company

The commentary starts with the statement:

The skilled who have listened to much Dharma should stop associating with the childish and retire to the forest.

The verse reads:

25. *The animals, birds and trees in the forest
Do not say anything unpleasant.
When shall I abide together with
Those whose company is delightful?*

The commentary then continues:

The animals, birds and trees in the forest do not say anything unpleasant. Generate the wish thinking, "When will I abide together with those whose company is delightful?"

The great advantage of going into isolation with just the company of animals and birds is that there is no worry about them criticising oneself, or saying unpleasant things. Likewise one need have no concern about displeasing them. However with ordinary childish beings one always has to be careful not to offend them. There is always doubt about whether what one has said could be taken the wrong way, or if what one has done has pleased them or not. It seems that apart from some exceptional cases, where people know each other very well, and can communicate without causing any sort of dispute or conflict, most people always have to be careful with each other. Even couples that have been together for many years still seem to need to be careful not to say the wrong thing, which could displease the other.

In contrast, when one lives in isolation amongst the animals and birds, one has no doubts whether one would be pleasing them or not. One can remain comfortable without those kind of doubts or fears, and that in itself is a very delightful atmosphere and conducive environment for one's practice. Thus, one generates this thought as an aspirational prayer, "*When will I abide together with those whose company is delightful?*"

Soon after we settled in India, after the escape, there were many very good monks who resolved to go into isolation and practise. Unfortunately many did not survive for long because of health conditions etc. There was one quite young monk named Kelsang in Dalhousie, who was 25 years old at that time, and a student of the late Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey-la, from whom he received many teachings on the lam rim and so forth. He was so inspired to go into retreat that he would go up into the cold mountainous area; altogether he went up for about 12 years. In winter he would come down for some time because it gets extremely cold, but then he'd go up into isolation again in the summer months, then come down to receive more teachings before going back into the retreat area. In this way he spent a long time in retreat mode.

Every three years he would go up for a period of time and then come out for a while, and then go back again for three years. It was on the fourth time, after he'd come out that I met him in Dharamsala and we had some tea together at a tea stall. There he told me that he was out to receive some rare teachings from His Holiness on the *Six Yogas of Naropa*, and then he was planning to go back into retreat again. He was from Amdo in the eastern part of Tibet. The late Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey-la told me in Varanasi that this monk was of good nature and had very good potential. In later years I didn't hear what happened to him, or know his whereabouts.

Some years ago I visited a serene and isolated place in Tasmania. The area is called Lorinna which is not far from Devonport. There were only two families there and I stayed in one of the cabins, and the family there looked after me. They had a small gumpa where I was staying. I remember there was a beautiful peacock and mountains in the distance, and further down some lakes. It was a very quiet and serene area. I remember the family looking after me had a son called Owen, who would bring me my meals. I stayed there for two weeks and did the White Manjushri retreat. I was a very happy to be alone in a quiet and serene atmosphere. The family would send me tea, hot water and other essentials. Apparently the late Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey had also visited that place, and I heard that a hundred people had come at that time. Anyhow, as described in the text, this is a serene and isolated place that I visited in Tasmania.

This verse describes specifically the distinction of company, so the next verse describes a suitable place.

2.1.2.4.2. *Distinction of place*

This refers to a suitable place.

The verses read:

26. *Abiding in a cave, empty temple
Or abiding at the foot of a tree,
When will I not look back
And be without attachment?*
27. *When shall I abide
Without attachment and act independently
In naturally spacious places
Not held as 'mine'?*

The commentary explains the meaning as follows:

Abide as you desire in a cave, empty temple or at the foot of a tree. Having abandoned the family home and not wishing to take it back, generate the wish thinking, "When shall I abide in solitude without attachment and not look back?"

Generate the wish, thinking, "When can I act independently in naturally wide open places not held by someone else as 'mine', and become unattached to body and enjoyments."

The commentary explains the place or abode is to be in a *cave, empty temple or at the foot of a tree*. The Vinaya has a description of an ideal place for retreat as being in an area where there are plenty of trees.

Resorting to such isolated places is further explained as most ideal where *having abandoned the family home and not wishing to take it back*; one goes into isolation with a sense of resolve and commitment that one will not turn back until one achieves one's goals. One generates the wish,

"when shall I abide in solitude without attachment and not look back?" Here an aspiration is presented: may I be able to abide in such places, along with the following wish, *"When can I act independently in naturally wide open places not held by someone else as 'mine', and become unattached to body and enjoyments."* This again refers to leaving aside all worldly pleasures—attachment to one's body, wealth, relatives and friends etc.—and going into isolation with only the intention to engage in practice. It's good for one to read these lines periodically and generate this aspiration in one's mind.

First, the text describes the suitable company to be found in isolation, followed by the suitable place for one's practice in isolation. The next verse explains the distinction of livelihood—which is the type of livelihood one must rely upon. We can see that all of these are the means to practise less desire and contentment.

2.1.2.4.3. *Distinction of livelihood*

The verse reads:

28. *When will I abide without fear,
Despite not hiding my body,
With as little as a begging bowl,
Wearing clothes unneeded by anyone else.*

The commentary explains the meaning as follows:

Generate the wish thinking, "When will I abide without fear of robbers though not hiding this body in an inaccessible abode where there's no cause to be robbed, having only an earthen bowl, a little incomplete food and wearing clothes discarded by others?" Meditate on this again and again and also put it into practise.

This advice would be for fully ordained monks as it refers to, *having only an earthen bowl*, which is the simplest form of begging bowl. Other belongings of a fully-ordained monk would be a walking staff and a sieve. Because of their simplicity one can abide in places with no *fear of robbers*, and one does not have to resort to hiding one's body *in an inaccessible abode*, because one's belongings are so meagre there is no fear of robbers in relation to either one's body or possessions, such as the clothing *discarded by others*.

As explained distinctively in the Vinaya, the clothing of a fully-ordained monk is of two types; either clothes discarded by others, already used and old, and thrown away; or robes which have already been used by others. In either case they are very simple, not new or fancy clothes. With these meagre belongings, which are not valuable, one can reside in isolation without any sense of fear that robbers could come and take things away from oneself. Naturally one would abide in a very relaxed atmosphere without such fears.

As the advice here is about livelihood, it might be directed to the livelihood of going into isolation as a fully-ordained monk. The personal instruction is to live a life with contentment and few desires. We can see the value of having contentment and how having less desire would be a very relaxed and conducive way of living.

After finding an ideal, conducive place in relation to one's company, the place itself, and livelihood, one needs to resolve to meditate on this again and again, and put it into practice.

This advice is quite suitable for someone with a male form because maybe there would be less fear about going out into the wilderness alone. As a woman one might be a bit more hesitant, and one needs to be more careful in how to go about it. In the past I remember an American nun called Thubten Pemo who wanted to go up into a cave, and live in isolation. But she said she needed someone not too far away to help her. Which monk could go and serve her? How could monks decide that anyway? So that was difficult for her.

In either case, male or female, one must resort to strong determination to go out in the wilderness. That definitely requires courage. Without courage I think it would be very difficult to resolve to do it.

2.1.2.4.4. *Distinction of individual discernment*

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.2.4.4.1. Individually discerning the antidote against attachment to the body

2.1.2.4.4.2. Individually discerning the antidote against attachment to friends and relatives

2.1.2.4.4.1. Individually discerning the antidote against attachment to the body

This is presented in two verses, the first reads:

29. *Having visited the cemetery,
When will I equalise
My body with the bones of others,
As being subject to disintegration?*

The commentary explains the meaning:

Bringing to mind the impermanence of the body: Having visited the cemetery make prayers thinking, "When will my body equal the corpse and bones of those others that are subject to disintegration?"

Generate the recognition of decay as explained in the *Mother of Conqueror Sutras*.

This verse presents one of the best methods to overcome attachment to one's body—to go into cemeteries and observe the corpses as a reminder of what one's own body will eventually become. The only difference between the corpse you see there and your own body is that you happen to be living now. When death comes one's body will be no different to the state of the corpse's body one sees in the cemetery. By relating to the corpses, *bringing to mind the impermanence of the body, having visited the cemetery*, one resolves to think, "When will my body equal the corpse and bones of those others that are subject to disintegration?" and contemplate in this way.

One will generate the recognition of decay as explained in the *Mother of Conqueror Sutras*, refers to eight different ways of meditating on the imperfections of the objects, such as body. Look up the eight different methods yourselves; I've presented them in earlier teachings. Amongst the eight there are those who are attached to the body's shape, then one meditates on the decomposition or disintegration of the body's shape. Then for those who are attracted to the colour of the body, meditating specifically on the change of the corpses' colour etc. In this way the eight specific types of meditations unfold.

The next verse reads:

30. *Also, this very body of mine
Will cause even the coyotes
To stay away from it with its stink.
It will come like this.*

The commentary explains the meaning as follows:

Regarding generating the recognition of the impure body, also this very body of mine will cause even the coyotes, which crave the impure, to want to stay away from it and its stink of decay. Equalise your body with the corpse in the cemetery, thinking, "It will come definitely like this, it is its nature."

Here the commentary emphasises the impurity of that body to which one is so attached. The way to reduce this strong attachment is to think, *this very body of mine will cause even the coyotes, which crave the impure, to want to stay away from it and its stink of decay*. So even wild animals like coyotes and animals that normally devour corpses would be repulsed and not approach the corpse due to the stench and decay of putrefaction. One's own body is in that same nature. The only thing keeping our body fresh and lustrous now is the fact that it has a consciousness in it. But once the consciousness leaves, it is only a matter of days before one's own body is the same as explained here. One should resolve that it will definitely occur like this; it is its nature. The personal instruction here is recognising the means to overcome attachment to our body because often we succumb to strong attachment to it.

2.1.2.4.4.2. Individually discerning the antidote against attachment to friends and relatives

This is subdivided into three:

2.1.2.4.4.2.1. It is unsuitable to be attached to friends and relatives

2.1.2.4.4.2.2. The reason for that

2.1.2.4.4.2.3. Thinking of oneself as a guest that stays each day in a different place

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

3 November 2015

There was no teaching on this date.

This is a placeholder file to use so that you don't think the teaching is missing.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱུང་རྒྱུ་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

10 November 2015

While maintaining the motivation we generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our meditation practice. [meditation]

Now can generate the bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, in order to liberate them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the Mahayana teachings, and put them into practice well.

2.1. Abandoning distractions

2.1.2. The way of abandoning it

2.1.2.4. THE BENEFITS OF RELYING ON ISOLATION

2.1.2.4.4. Distinction of individual discernment (cont.)

2.1.2.4.4.2. Individually discerning the antidote against attachment to friends and relatives

This is subdivided into three

2.1.2.4.4.2.1. It is unsuitable to be attached to friends and relatives

2.1.2.4.4.2.2. The reason for that

2.1.2.4.4.2.3. Thinking of oneself as a guest that stays each day in a different abode

2.1.2.4.4.2.1. *It is unsuitable to be attached to friends and relatives*

This section of the text explains the disadvantages of being overly attached to friends, relatives, and close companions. Indeed, strong attachment to those closest to us seems to lead to a lot of mental agony. It is suitable to generate compassion for close ones, relatives and friends, but strong attachment is the cause of a lot of mental agony. Of course we may engage in relationships with the idea that we are going to derive happiness from that relationship, but it often leads to more suffering, more agony and more disturbance to the mind.

The faults of attachment are specifically explained in the following passages of the text. Really, the main point is that having an overly strong attachment to one's close and dear relatives can be a hindrance to one's practice. These faults are quite clearly explained in the text and are not very difficult to understand.

The verse relating to this heading reads:

31. *Although this body came as one,
If the flesh and bones, which were born at the
same time,
Disintegrate and separate from each other,
Then what need is there to mention friends and
relatives?*

The commentary explains the meaning as follows:

One should give up the craving of not wanting to be separated from friends and relatives. Even though this body came as a whole, if the flesh and bones, which were born at the same time, disintegrate and separate

from each other, then what need is there to mention that one will be separated from friends that came unrelated, through the power of their own individual karma? Think that you will quickly be separated.

The commentary states that *one should give up the craving of not wanting to be separated from friends and relatives*. In addition to attachment to relatives, friends, and companions, which is, of course, a fault, the specific attachment being referred to here is attachment to not wanting to be separated from a partner in a close relationship. One needs to give up that craving. As presented here, the disadvantage of having this craving is that one will experience enormous mental suffering when separation inevitably takes place.

The reason for giving up this craving (which also serves as an antidote to it) is that *even though this body came as a whole, the flesh and bones (which were born at the same time) disintegrate and separate from each other*. Of course, the self and the body are inseparable during this lifetime. However, one is born with a body that will naturally disintegrate, and when that happens, the self and the physical body will separate from each other.

So *what need is there to mention that one will be separated from friends that came unrelated, through the power of their own individual karma?* This rhetorical question implies that as one will be separated from this very body that one is born with, there's no question then that one will be separated from close relatives and friends, and so forth. That will definitely happen.

Contemplating these points is the means to overcome that craving of not wanting to be separated from close friends and relatives. Thinking *that you will quickly be separated* will then help to overcome that craving. When one contemplates these points thoroughly and overcomes the strong craving of not wanting to be separated, then when the actual separation takes place, there won't be as much agony and suffering.

2.1.2.4.4.2.2. The reason for that

Having explained that it is unsuitable to be attached to friends and relatives, the text then explains why that is the case. So we can see how the text presents the material very meticulously, backing up explanations with sound reasoning.

The verse relating to this heading is:

32. *When one is born, one is born alone,
And when one dies, one dies alone.
Since others will not take our fortune and luck,
What is there to do with obstructing friends?*

The commentary explains:

Although one stays together for a short time, there is no need to grasp at that, because when one is born, one is born alone and when one dies, one dies alone. Since others will not take the sufferings of one's ripened results of the karmas that one created in relation to them, what good are those friends that obstruct the creation of virtue? As one is not benefited by them in the slightest, it is unsuitable to be attached to them.

As explained here in the commentary, *although one stays together for a short time, there is no need to grasp at that*. The reason for this is that *when one is born, one is born alone and when one dies, one dies alone*. Since others will not take the sufferings of one's ripened results of the karmas that one created in relation to them, what good are those friends that obstruct the creation of virtue?

While these points are quite clearly explained, we need to contemplate them carefully, and put them into practice so as not to create negativity and harm in relation to one's close ones, relatives and so forth. This is particularly important with Dharma friends, where we need to take particular care not to obstruct their creation of virtue. Indeed, rather than obstructing them, we need to be helping them to create more virtue. One needs to really pay attention to this point.

There are some who claim to be helping others but who are acting with a completely wrong motivation. Some say they are helping the other when in fact they are engaging in sexual misconduct. Behaving in this way is completely contrary to the Dharma, and such a person doesn't even come close to being a real practitioner. One is, in fact, just deluding oneself and the other.

As mentioned in Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*, obstructing virtue is one of the heaviest negativities. Since we consider ourselves as Dharma practitioners, we need to pay great attention so that we do not obstruct the collection of virtue by other Dharma practitioners.

Individually, of course, we may engage in negativities, and when we recognise that we have created negativity, we need to acknowledge that. As I've mentioned previously, we acknowledge that we have engaged in the negativity, develop strong regret about having done so, and then engage in confession practices. If we find ourselves engaging in negativity, then that is the time to engage in purification practices by confessing those negativities. We also need to rejoice when we engage in virtue, and when we encourage others to also engage in virtue. Then we can rejoice in that too.

However the reverse of that is also practised where, as I've mentioned previously, people rejoice in the fact that they've created some negativity, and regret that they have accumulated virtue. That is the complete antithesis of Dharma practice. This is an example of one's wisdom eye being blinded. One needs to not be blinded, but to take the initiative to use one's wisdom and intelligence to engage in proper Dharma practice.

The main point being related here is that one should overcome attachment to close ones, such as relatives, friends, and companions, because that attachment can serve as a condition to create a lot of negativities. It can also obstruct the creation of virtue. However the result of that negativity can only be experienced by oneself—one can't share the negative consequences of one's negativities with another person. One has to experience those consequences by oneself.

Then the commentary concludes, *as one is not benefited by them in the slightest, it is unsuitable to be attached to them*. This is the real point that one needs to keep in mind.

2.1.2.4.4.2.3. *Thinking of oneself as a guest that stays each day in a different abode*

The analogy being presented here is that of discarding an abode in which one has resided temporarily. Another analogy is of how big gatherings of people will eventually disperse. For example crowds of people swarm around Victoria Market during the day, but by evening the market is completely empty. A recent example was His Holiness's visit to Uluru. I stayed at a guest house which, I was told, had over 200 guests at that time. But the next day, after His Holiness left, most of the guests had left and that abode was now empty. This idea also applies to families. For example, I've heard that there were ten children in the family who

originally owned this building, and I heard from one young man who came here that there are very few decedents of that family. These examples show us how gatherings, abodes and so forth naturally disperse.

The verse relating to this reads:

33. *Just as those travelling
Perceive an abode,
Those on the road of existence
Should perceive the abode of birth.*

The commentary explains:

Just as guests travelling on the road perceive the guesthouse as an abode to stay in for one day, likewise it is inappropriate for those who travel on the road of existence due to karma, to have attachment for them that are of the same kind, blood relatives, and the abode of birth where one was born once.

The commentary begins with the analogy of *guests travelling on the road finding a guesthouse as an abode to stay in for one day*. Likewise, it is inappropriate for those who travel on the road of existence due to karma, to be attached to those who are of the same kind, blood relatives. As we have all been born in this abode of human existence it is as if we are all blood relatives, in the sense that we are all of the same species, i.e. humans. However the time will come when we have to depart this abode and go on to different types of existences. Due to their karma some might be reborn in the unfortunate realms such as the hungry ghost spirit realms; others might be reborn in the human realms again; and yet others find rebirth in the god realms. So in this way the different types of existence, which are similar to abodes, keep on changing.

The point here is there's no point being attached to this abode, as one will eventually have to discard it, and go on to dwell in a different abode.

2.1.2.4.5. *Distinction of non-distraction*

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.2.4.5.1. It is suitable for the skilled to rely on isolation

2.1.2.4.5.2. The benefits of relying on isolation

2.1.2.4.5.1. **It is suitable for the skilled to rely on isolation**

Here *the skilled* refers to those who have great wisdom. Having contemplated the disadvantages presented in the earlier points, they will earnestly seek isolation.

34. *Until this body will be carried
By four people,
While the world is mourning,
Remain in the forest.*

The commentary explains:

Since one is not beyond death at the end of one's life, one should remain in the forest and rely on isolation until one's body will be carried from one's home by four people while the world of one's friends is mourning.

The very fact that one is born means that one will have to inevitably experience death; that is the natural result of being born due to the influence of delusions and karma. Since that is the case then, as explained here, one goes into isolation as a way of applying all of one's time in practice and accumulating virtue before one's body is carried by four pallbearers to the cemetery.

If one were to take this explanation literally, then the best condition for practice is isolation, where one is not distracted. However if one were to take this as a personal instruction, then the main point is that one should dedicate

one's time to engaging in the practice of Dharma and accumulating virtue, and not be overly influenced or consumed by distractions from one's close relatives and so forth. In particular, one should bring to mind that when one's life comes to its end, then it will have gone without any essence if one has not engaged in practice. That is the main point to recall here.

2.1.2.4.5.2. The benefits of relying on isolation

Again we can note here the very systematic and logical presentation of the text. Having explained that it is suitable for the skilled to rely on isolation, the logical sequence is to think about the benefits of relying on isolation.

Here there are three subdivisions:

2.1.2.4.5.2.1. There is no misery of mourning

2.1.2.4.5.2.2. Virtue does not decrease but increases

2.1.2.4.5.2.3. Hence, it is appropriate for one to rely on isolation

2.1.2.4.5.2.1. *There is no misery of mourning*

The verse relating to this heading is preceded by this rhetorical question:

If it is asked, "What are the benefits of remaining in the forest?"

Then the verse is presented:

35. *As there is no friend and no-one with resentment,
This body should remain alone in solitude.
Being regarded as dead even before death,
There will be no mourner when one dies.*

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse, which serves as an answer to the earlier rhetorical question:

Answer: In the forest there are no friends that generate attachment or hatred and there is no-one harbouring resentment against one because of wondering whether they have been harmed by one. Hence, one should remain in physical isolation. Having given up friends and relatives one will be regarded by them as already dead before death, and so there will be no attachment and no mourners when one dies.

As the commentary explains, *in the forest there are no friends who generate attachment or hatred, so there is no-one harbouring resentment against one because of wondering whether they have been harmed by one.* What is being clearly explained here is that when one goes into solitude to engage in practice then there are no immediate concerns about whether one will be offending others, or be harmed by others. One will be free from all the normal harms and conflicts that arise due to one's relations with others and so forth.

Therefore, as explained here, *one should remain in physical isolation. Having given up friends and relatives one will be regarded by them as already dead.* By remaining in solitude and engaging in the practice, even those who knew you before will not know exactly where you are. You often hear remarks like, 'Have you seen so and so?' To which others reply, 'Well, we don't know; they could be dead for all we know'. These kinds of remarks are appropriate when one has gone into solitude to engage fully in practice.

Thus there will be *no mourners* even at the time of death.

2.1.2.4.5.2.2. *Virtue does not decrease but increases*

The verse relating to this reads:

36. *There is nobody close by
That will mourn or harm.
Through this one will not be distracted
From the recollections of Buddha and so forth.*

As the commentary explains:

If one is remaining in solitude in the forest, as there is no friend or enemy close by that will mourn or harm, one does not have any distractions from the recollections of Buddha and so forth, and from meditating on the path to liberation and omniscient transcendental wisdom. Hence, the skilled will give up distractions and retire to the forest.

As explained here, *virtue does not decrease but increases. If one remains in solitude in the forest, as there is no friend or enemy close by that will mourn or harm,* means that there will be no one to mourn if one is dead, and no-one to harm oneself.

One does not have any distractions from the recollections of Buddha and so forth. There are six recollections:

1. Recollection of the Buddha;
2. Recollection of the Dharma;
3. Recollection of the Sangha;
4. Recollection of morality;
5. Recollection of generosity; and
6. Recollection of the deities.

Furthermore, contemplating suchness and acquiring the conditions for liberation and enlightenment are further practices that one engages in without distraction in isolation. Thus the *skilled*, (those with great wisdom) *will give up distractions and retire to the forest,* to remain in solitude in order to engage in practice.

2.1.2.4.5.2.3. *Hence, it is appropriate for one to rely on isolation*

Having explained the benefits of isolation, the conclusion is that *it is appropriate for one to rely on isolation.* The verse relating to this reads:

37. *Hence, in the extremely delightful forest
There is little difficulty but bliss and happiness.
Pacifying all distraction
I shall remain in solitude.*

The commentary explains:

Hence, by remaining in the extremely delightful forest, where physical and mental happiness increases, one has little difficulty as one obtains livelihood easily, and as there are no harms like sicknesses, happiness is generated. Therefore, one should pacify all distractions and abide in solitude. One will have less harm, and virtue will increase.

As explained clearly *here, by remaining in the extremely delightful forest,* i.e. the conducive conditions in the forest, *where physical and mental happiness increases, one has little difficulty,* because *one obtains livelihood easily, and as there are no harms like sicknesses;* as such *happiness is generated.* Thus, *one should pacify all distractions and abide in solitude.* By doing so *one will have less harm, and virtue will increase.*

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷོ་མེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འདུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

17 November 2015

Based on the motivation generated during the prayers, let us engage in our meditation practice. (*Meditation*)

We can now generate the bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it's meaning into practice.

2.2. Abandoning incorrect conceptualisation

This is divided into two:

2.2.1. Meditating on disillusionment of desire

2.2.2. Meditating on joy for solitude

2.2.1. Meditating on disillusionment of desire

This is sub-divided into three:

2.2.1.1. Contemplating that the result of cultivating desire is fraught with dangers

2.2.1.2. Contemplating the impure nature of the body, and so forth

2.2.1.3. Contemplating that it will give rise to much that is unwished for

2.2.1.1. CONTEMPLATING THAT THE RESULT OF CULTIVATING DESIRE IS FRAUGHT WITH DANGERS

This is sub-divided into two:

2.2.1.1.1. Advice to strive in virtue

2.2.1.1.2. Contemplating the faults of desire

Having earlier presented the reason to seek solitude, this advice follows sequentially in that once in solitude one should then strive in virtue. These are very significant points.

2.2.1.1.1. Advice to strive in virtue

The verse reads:

38. *Giving up all other thoughts,
I shall strive single-mindedly
In placing the mind in equipoise
For the purpose of subduing it.*

The commentary then explains the meaning as follows:

Giving up all other thoughts such as attachment and harmful intent, and with only the one thought to meditate on the two bodhicittas, I shall strive to place my mind in single-pointed equipoise on virtue and then, to subdue the mind, strive to abandon the afflictions by meditating on the meaning of reality.

The commentary clearly presents that the condition of going into solitude means giving up all other thoughts, such as the eight worldly concerns, specifically, attachment. This includes attachment to one's own body, attachment to wealth and good resources, as well as attachment to dear ones such as relatives and friends. Giving up harmful intentions also includes ulterior motives, such as meditating for the sake of gaining renown as a great meditator. So having given up all such

thoughts, the commentary encourages one to have *only the one thought*, meditating on the two bodhicittas— aspiring bodhicitta and engaging bodhicitta. *I shall strive to place my mind in single-pointed equipoise* specifically relates to having the single-pointed mind of focusing on virtue. Thus one's sole intention is to completely use one's time for the benefit of other sentient beings.

Only the one thought, refers to the sole thought of benefitting sentient beings, and *single-pointed equipoise*, refers to placing one's mind in virtue. So what one strives to achieve in solitude is *single-pointed equipoise on virtue*, which indicates developing calm abiding. Based on this, to further subdue one's mind one strives, *to abandon the afflictions by meditating on the meaning of reality*. This reveals that having developed calm abiding, one further applies the antidotes for overcoming the afflictions and subduing one's mind, by achieving 'special insight'. With the aid of special insight one *meditates on the meaning of reality*, through which one then strives to abandon the afflictions. Shantideva meticulously summarises here that the purpose of going into solitude is to achieve calm abiding, and based on that, achieve special insight and subdue one's mind by overcoming the afflictions.

The instruction here is given on the basis of having given up attachment and choosing solitude, and then applying the practice in this way. How do those of us, who do not yet have all the conditions for going into solitude, take this advice as personal instruction to apply to our own practice? The approach is to apply our mind, even if only for a few minutes (up to one hour is great but if not, at least five to ten minutes a day). If one could begin one's meditation by applying and maintaining a single-pointed mind on a virtuous object (for a few minutes or as long as is comfortable), then one can contemplate how all things are empty of inherent existence (with whatever understanding one has) and apply that in one's practice. If one maintains such a practice at one's own level, it will establish the conditions for developing calm abiding and cultivating special insight.

To expand on personal practice further, the first part is subduing one's mind by single-pointed focus on virtuous objects, followed by analytical meditation on the nature of reality or emptiness. Then generate the bodhicitta mind by contemplating the seven-step cause and effect sequence. If one is familiar with it then one can combine it with the 'exchanging self with other' technique. Having meditated in these ways to generate the mind of bodhicitta, one can then generate the aspiring mind to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. After spending some time contemplating that, next acknowledge that just having the aspiration to achieve enlightenment is not enough—one needs to actually engage in the practices of a bodhisattva. Recall one's own vows (if one has taken bodhisattva vows) as a way to re-establish and enhance them. Meditate further on remembering the promise one made, and develop a keen determination to practice the six perfections. In this way one establishes a very good imprint in one's mind by putting these instructions into practice to the best of one's own ability.

In what has been explained here, one can notice that this practice also summarises the three higher trainings. The

first part - the practice of morality - relates to giving up all other thoughts. Thus as one gives up attachment one generates renunciation. In this way, giving up attachments such as the eight worldly concerns establishes the training of morality. Based on that, developing single-pointed equipoise is the basis for developing calm abiding, which is training in meditation; then cultivating special insight becomes the training of wisdom. In this way the three trainings are encompassed in this practice.

The commentary presents a quote:

From the *Sutra that was requested by the Fierce Householder*:

And further, Householder, if ordained bodhisattvas remain in solitude why should I remain in solitude? Only remaining in solitude is not virtuous practice ... Investigate by thinking, 'for what reason shall I perfectly complete my virtuous practice by remaining in solitude?'

This is one of the many passages that indicate how the direct recipients of Shantideva's teaching are the ordained community. The sutra says, *further, Householder, if ordained bodhisattvas remain in solitude why should I remain in solitude?* highlighting that when an ordained bodhisattva goes into solitude, the reason for doing so needs to be contemplated. The commentary states *only remaining in solitude is not virtuous practice*, meaning that going into solitude is not all that difficult—with the right conditions anyone could do it. But seeking solitude to engage in virtuous practice is the main point. So even if one has given up a nice house, nice food and nice clothing and has borne hardships, if one just remains idly in solitude without placing one's mind in virtue and accomplishing the practice, then being in solitude doesn't serve much purpose. We are being encouraged here to really contemplate the real purpose for going into solitude. Having contemplated this, and as one reassures oneself that it is for the purpose of engaging in practice, then it becomes a supreme condition for actually engaging in practice.

I'll relate a personal experience about the early part of my life. Having left my home town to go to Lhasa, which is quite a significant journey, I remained three years in the monastery. It is a tradition that after three years monks can go back to their home after completing this minimal requirement. I was missing home and thinking of going back because of the hardships in the monastery and being so far away from home. But when I sought permission from my teacher he didn't give it, and suggested it was better to stay in the monastery. At that point I thought, 'Why would my teacher stop me from going back home?' Obviously it was not very comfortable for me in the monastery where food was scarce and the living conditions very poor. So I had to really think, 'Why would I stay on in a monastery? Why would my teacher prevent me from returning home?' Then it occurred to me that the only reason my teacher had for me to continue staying at the monastery would be for me to fully engage in the geshe study program of all the major texts. When that became apparent in my mind, and that this was the only reason my teacher had for preventing me from

returning home, it encouraged me to fully commit myself to the monastery and engage in the geshe studies. Since then I have never turned back, and I didn't return home. For me, when the purpose became clear, it made it easier for my mind to bear the hardships.

We can apply this approach to any practice we engage in which may involve hardships e.g. the *nyung nye* practice. When someone does the *nyung nye* practice there are obvious difficulties such as abstaining from food and abstaining from drink for a day. So the body faces tiredness, heat and cold. With all hardships, if one doesn't constantly remember the purpose of doing the practice (such as the many benefits explained in the *nyung nye* practice) then it would be a case of experiencing a lot of pain, without obtaining much gain. But if one keeps the purpose in mind, and constantly reminds oneself that doing the practice is a way to gain extensive merit and dedicate it to others, then it serves the purpose.

If you are doing the *nyung nye* practice for the first time it may appear quite difficult. However in time one gets used to it and becomes encouraged when one sees the great benefits. The first time I did a *nyung nye*, abstaining from food was the least of my hardships. I did not find it difficult at all. I guess that was because I was never too keen on wanting good food or lavish meals anyway. It is definitely beneficial if one doesn't have strong attachment to food so that when one has to give it up it doesn't become too difficult. If one seeks out delicious meals, the thought of being deprived of them makes it difficult for your mind to consider giving them up. It would seem that having to give up any meal may be difficult for some. The stronger one's determination to renounce a lavish lifestyle and shun worldly desires, the easier it is to engage in a rigorous practice.

I recall Janette in Bendigo who liked to eat fish a lot. Apparently when she couldn't have fish for a while and saw some, she would start to tremble. This is not just a case of desire for fish. When anyone who has strong desire for food doesn't get a meal for a while, they start to tremble in anticipation of having one. The earlier quote is summarised in that explanation.

2.2.1.1.2. *Contemplating the faults of desire*

To give up desires for an object one firstly needs to contemplate the faults of desire itself. What are the faults of desire? This is presented next.

The verse reads:

39. *In this world and also in the one beyond
Desire objects generate great destruction.
Here one will be killed, bound and cut,
In the beyond, hells and so forth are
established.*

The commentary explains:

Because of craving desire objects, they generate great destruction in this world, as well as in the one beyond. Here one will be killed, bound and cut, and in the world beyond hells and so forth will be established.

The commentary highlights that, *Because of craving desire objects, they generate great destruction*, where destruction also implies bringing about faults or suffering. *In this world* means in this life *as well as in the one beyond*. *Here*

indicates in this very life one can clearly see that engaging in killing out of desire, brings about the consequence of being *bound and cut* and beaten and so forth. In this very life one can clearly see the obvious shortcomings of the cravings of desire. *In the beyond*, meaning the world beyond or the next life, the result is to be reborn in the lower realms such as the *hells and so forth*.

The commentary quotes a sutra to back up these explanations:

From the Sutra requested by the girl Supreme Moon:

Due to the cause of desire, sentient beings fall into the lower realms. Due to attachment, they become hungry ghosts and animals.

The meaning of this quotation from the sutra is quite clear.

2.2.1.2. CONTEMPLATING THE IMPURE NATURE OF THE BODY AND SO FORTH

And so forth in the title indicates the body shares an impure nature with other things also of this nature.

This is sub-divided into two:

2.2.1.2.1. Contemplating the faults in relation to the situation of the cemetery

2.2.1.2.2. Contemplating the situation in relation to animate phenomena

2.2.1.2.1. *Contemplating the faults in relation to the situation of the cemetery*

This is sub-divided into six:

2.2.1.2.1.1. There are no results that corpses experience

2.2.1.2.1.2. One is not beyond being cast aside in the cemetery in the end

2.2.1.2.1.3. It is unsuitable to protect others' or one's own body with greed

2.2.1.2.1.4. It is unsuitable to put on ornaments

2.2.1.2.1.5. It is suitable to be very afraid

2.2.1.2.1.6. Attachment to that wearing clothes is unsuitable

2.2.1.2.1.1. **There are no results that corpses experience**

This title tells us that corpses cannot experience any results.

In the following passages it is quite clear what is being presented; it is something that is quite obvious in our world system.

The verses read:

40. *The object of the many requests
Made initially by the male and female
matchmakers,
For whose sake one is unafraid
Of negativity or bad reputation,*

41ab. *Puts oneself into danger
And exhausts one's resources,*

The commentary then explains:

One makes requests repeatedly to the male and female matchmakers saying, "Please organise it that she stays together with me to make a home," without being afraid of negativity and bad advice. If this woman's body, for which one fearlessly disregards harm, puts oneself into harm's way and exhausts one's resources, ...

The first part clearly explains, *One makes requests repeatedly to the male and female matchmakers*. In Tibetan

matchmakers are called go-betweens. They are people who bring messages back and forth to make a match between potential couples. The requests are made by sending gifts or messages and making requests like, *Please organise it that she stays together with me to make a home*. From the male's perspective the request is made to the female, sending messages like, 'Make her consider staying with me'. Such requests are made with strong desire and *without being afraid of the negativity and bad advice*, or a bad reputation, regarding the relationship that may be happening. It continues with, *if this woman's body, for which one fearlessly disregards harm, puts oneself into harm's way and exhausts one's resources*, which is the consequence.

Again, this advice is targeted at the ordained community (in particular a fully ordained monk) to caution them against the pitfalls of a relationship with a woman. It very directly advises that by being attached to a *woman's body*, you are fearlessly disregarding the harm that you put yourself in, and *put oneself into harm's way*, with all the complications of a relationship etc. But also in a practical way, it will *exhaust* your own *resources*. The point here is that one has to spend a lot of money to beautify a wife, as she needs makeup, nice clothing, jewellery and perfume, all of which can be very expensive. These are expenses one would have to bear in order to present the woman with gifts and please her. Shantideva cautions those who might give up their practice, telling them to be careful!

It is clear that when one is under the strong control of attachment then it blinds one to the reality of the situation, and one makes a lot of mistakes. The great master Dharmakirti mentioned that when strong attachment occurs it obscures the faults in the other, and actually exaggerates their qualities. These are very significant points that obviously seem to be the case.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has clearly explained that if one were to ask whether money can get you friends, the answer is 'Yes! With a significant amount of money you might get friends'. But once those friends acquire what they want they will leave you. His Holiness further explains that this is an indication that money cannot buy true and reliable friendship. He then goes on to explain that a reliable friendship is one which will help you regardless of your financial situation. For example when you are in distress or difficult times, those that help you at that time are true friends. This is a reliable and trustworthy friendship. His Holiness says that the kind of friendship we need is not one obtained through our money; rather through our inner qualities. By having inner qualities, one can gain true friendship through kindness etc.

The verses read:

41cd *That, when one embraces it
Makes one very joyful,*

42. *If it is nothing but a skeleton
Without freedom or self,
That one strongly desires and grasps at
intensely,
Why does one not go beyond misery?*

The commentary explains the meaning of these lines:

... the body that generates attachment and that one is so happy to embrace, is but a mere skeleton and

nothing else, from the start without freedom or a self that protects it, and which one purposelessly desires strongly and grasps at intensely, then why does one not go beyond misery? One should abandon attachment and strive in the path to liberation.

The male is attached to the woman's body ... *the body that generates attachment and that one is so happy to embrace.* After a relationship is sought it feels like one possesses the other's body. The very body that one longs for and is happy to embrace is actually nothing *but a mere skeleton and nothing else.* In essence it is only a skeleton from the inside.

The phrase, *from the start without freedom or a self that protects it,* means that from the very beginning the relationship is in that nature, *which one purposelessly desires strongly and grasps at intensely, then why does one not go beyond misery?* When one contemplates the strong grasping at a body, which from its very beginning and in its very nature is nothing but a skeleton, and due to attachment produces so much suffering and agony, *then why does one not go beyond misery?* This rhetorical question implies that one should strive to go beyond misery, rather than being attached to the very object that causes the misery.

The conclusion here is that *one should abandon attachment and strive in the path to liberation.* In summary, if one has attachment and does not give up desire, this prevents one from going beyond misery and achieving liberation. If one wishes to strive for liberation one needs to give up attachment. Here the specific object of attachment is presented as a person of the opposite sex, but it actually means giving up all attachments.

Specific details of the explanation will be presented later on. This part mainly focuses on the technique of meditating on the imperfections of the body to which one is attached. The body here is presented as nothing more than a skeleton. To meditate on the imperfections of the body as an antidote to overcome attachment is more applicable to one's mind when using reasoning and logic rather than just taking it as 'Oh, this is what's been explained in the teachings so I have to meditate on the imperfections of the body'. Rather than taking it at face value and something one has to accept, if one bases one's conclusion on one's own investigation and reasoning, then the practice becomes acceptable and applicable to one's mind.

The reasoning that comes about through investigation is based on analysing the actual body that one is attached to. Initially one may be attached to the exterior such as the skin, but then one goes beyond the skin and what is beyond the beautiful skin is actually flesh, veins and sinews. Then one goes beyond that to fatty tissues etc. and then you go beyond that to the muscles. If you go further into the body in this investigation the reality is that you will come to the bones, and the bones are the skeleton. One does this investigation from the soles of the feet to the very top of the head, going through each and every part of the body. When one analyses the body in this way then the imperfections of the body appear as the nature and reality of the object. It is in this way that one gets the real sense of the imperfections of the body.

Applying the practice of meditation to focus on the imperfections of the body shows that a body which initially appeared attractive, becomes the object of meditation on the imperfection of the body. That is how it is done. As explained earlier, while initially there is an appearance of attractiveness, if one takes a step beyond that to mentally dissect and analyse the body, then one reaches the point where it appears as an actual skeleton.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

24 November 2015

While maintaining the motivation we generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our meditation practice. *[meditation]*

Now we can generate the bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teachings, along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, in order to liberate them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the Mahayana teachings, and put them into practice well.

2.2.1. Meditating on disillusionment for desire (cont.)

2.2.1.2. CONTEMPLATING THE IMPURE NATURE OF THE BODY AND SO FORTH

2.2.1.2.1. Contemplating the faults in relation to the situation of the cemetery

We now move onto contemplating the imperfections of the body as a way of overcoming attachment to the body. Here the specific focus is on desire for a woman's body from a male perspective. However, as I've explained previously, it also applies to a woman who is attached to a man's body. These explanations apply to both men and women.

2.2.1.2.1.2. One is not beyond being cast aside in the cemetery in the end

No matter how attractive a body may appear, at the end it is taken to the cemetery and cast aside. That is its ultimate destination. So we can see that this is also a presentation of impermanence, in particular death and impermanence. Furthermore, it not only applies to the attractive bodies of others, but it also applies to one's own body. That is what we need to keep in mind.

There are two verses under this heading:

43. *When one first raises it with effort
And draws it to oneself, she looks down
bashfully.
Whether one saw it before or not,
A veil covers her face.*
44. *Just as the face of the afflictions
When you see it is obvious to you now,
then, after it is revealed
By the vultures, why do you want to leave?*

The commentary explains:

She looks down bashfully when one first raises her face due to desire and draws it to oneself. Whether one saw it before or not, before going to the cemetery, her face is covered by a veil. Just as the face of the afflictions is obvious to you now, at the time of death, when vultures remove the veil and one can see her face very clearly, why, at that time, do you flee and leave? Also at that time, it is suitable to be attached to it.

The explanation in the commentary relates to the way the bride is traditionally brought to the groom in India. I don't know if there's the same tradition here of the bride having a veil over her face. Because the bride's face is covered, the groom will naturally want to see her face, and when the veil is first lifted the bride will shyly look down. That was often how the bride and groom first met, so the groom has a strong longing to see his bride's face.

As the commentary continues to explain, at that first meeting the groom anticipates unveiling the bride's face with strong longing and desire, but on her death she will be taken to the cemetery. Then, regardless of whether her face is veiled at that time or not, it will be unveiled by vultures at the cemetery. The commentary asks, 'At that time, when its bare nature is clearly exposed to you, why don't you long to see it? If you were strongly attached to the woman it would be appropriate to look at her then, but you run away'. This shows us the contradictions that exist in a desirous, longing mind.

What is clearly being presented here is that contemplating its natural imperfections of an attractive body is actually a method of reducing strong attachment and desire. These are really significant points to contemplate. Being completely obsessed with very strong desire for another person definitely causes mental disturbance and agitation. Therefore, a mind filled with strong desire cannot be calm. So when strong desire and attachment arise, this method is presented as a way to overcome that desire. It would be wise to apply it as a way of appeasing one's mind.

As explained in the commentary, when one meditates on the imperfections of the body, one is actually meditating on the natural defects of the body. Having contemplated the obvious defects first, one then goes further contemplating the defects of the body as it decomposes after death when it decomposes. This is yet another method to overcome strong attachment.

As I've mentioned previously, attempting to meditate on the imperfections of the body, while still holding onto the object as being attractive deep inside one's mind, will not work. For this meditation to actually take effect, one has to develop a firm and stable understanding of the imperfections of the body, and contemplate that. Only after repeated meditation will one be able to let go of the strong attachment. Attempting to meditate on the imperfections of the body while still harbouring a view of the other's body as being clean and attractive, will not do much to remove desire.

This is really a presentation of the ways of overcoming faulty states of mind. Here a distinction needs to be made between seeing the object itself as being at fault or repulsive, and the need to work on one's own mind as a way to overcome strong attachment to that object. Indeed, as presented here, attachment arises when the object appears as attractive and appealing. That mind of attachment exaggerates the qualities of the object, making it appear as being extremely attractive and appealing, and that's when strong attachment arises. In contrast, when the defects of the body are exaggerated and it appears to be completely unattractive and unappealing, then aversion arises in the mind. In both cases, it is the

faulty perception that leads to mental unrest, not the object itself.

The main culprit behind these faulty states of mind is, of course, ignorance. It is as if this ignorance compels the mind to judge the qualities of the object, making it perceive the object as being very attractive, thus leading to attachment. Likewise it is again ignorance that exaggerates the faults of the object, seeing it as being unattractive and thus leading to aversion.

There is a way to overcome these faulty states of mind. Meditating on the imperfections of an object helps to reduce attachment to it. That then enables the mind to settle down. When aversion arises on seeing an unattractive object, then meditating on love and developing compassion towards the object will help to overcome the faulty state of mind that sees only faults and imperfections. Then one can begin to see some of the qualities of the object, which will start to appear as being appealing.

These are really important points to consider, and put into practice. We have the knowledge and understanding of how these meditations can be applied, so if we fail to apply these techniques and instead become overwhelmed with strong attachment or strong aversion then that completely defies the whole purpose of these teachings. It would be a great pity if one doesn't use these methods, despite having access to them.

There's not much that someone who doesn't know anything at all about these methods and techniques can do with a strongly afflicted mind that can completely consume them. But as we do have these methods and techniques, we should use them. I am re-emphasising the points being presented here as a way to exhort you to try to put them into practice.

2.2.1.2.1.3. It is unsuitable to protect others' or one's own body with greed

The verse under this heading reads:

45. *When others look at it
You strongly protect it.
But when it is eaten by them,
Greedy one, why do you not protect it?*

The commentary explains:

When other men look at your woman, you jealously protect her from their glances. Greedy one, when this body of hers is eaten by vultures and so forth, why do you not protect it then? By being attached, it is suitable to be protected.

Again the commentary is using the example of a man being attracted to a woman, in particular his bride or partner. When others even just look at her, the man immediately notices that, and wants to protect her. If that is the case, then, as the commentary asks, 'why don't you protect her when her body is being eaten by vultures? As you are attached to her, it would be appropriate to protect her at that time as well'.

2.2.1.2.1.4. It is unsuitable to put on ornaments

The relevant verse reads:

46. *If vultures and others, upon
Having spotted it, eat this heap of flesh,*

*One is making offerings with flower garlands,
sandal*

And ornaments to the food of others.

Then the commentary explains:

Further, if vultures, coyotes and others eat this heap of flesh upon having spotted it in the cemetery, then why is one making offerings with flower garlands, sandal and golden ornaments to their food? It is unsuitable to offer ornaments even when the body is alive.

This explanation is quite clear. The main thing is that when a beautiful body becomes a corpse, and vultures and coyotes and other creatures start to devour the body, then that beautiful body has become nothing more than food for those wild animals. If that is the case, 'why do you make offerings for beautifying the other's body with flower garlands and sandal and golden ornaments and so forth. It is as if you are offering ornaments to the food of wild animals'.

These passages present different ways to reflect upon the natural defects and imperfections of the body. The more one contemplates these logical reasons, the more that will help the mind to really begin to accept them. Rather than just accepting the words at face value, when one comes to a conclusion using logical analysis the mind becomes very strong and steady, and able to combat the faulty state of mind that exaggerates the qualities of the body, and sees it as being pure. When that occurs, then attachment is naturally reduced. This is how these meditation practices actually work.

2.2.1.2.1.5. It is suitable to be very afraid

The relevant verse reads:

47. *If one is afraid merely by seeing a skeleton,
Even if it does not move,
Then why is one not afraid
If some even move, like zombies?*

As the commentary explains:

If one runs away in fear because one merely sees an unmoving skeleton while being in the cemetery, then why is one not afraid when one sees them even moving about, like zombies, induced by the mind of motivation, while they are alive? It is suitable to be as afraid of them as of zombies, and it is unsuitable to be attached.

Again the explanation in the commentary is very clear. When one sees a body completely exposed, with the flesh eaten away and only a skeleton remaining, one might want to run away out of fear. In fact that skeleton is just lying there and not moving at all, and yet one generates strong fear and wants to run away.

So *why is one not afraid when one sees them even moving about, like zombies*. As explained in the commentary, the movements of living people are basically motivated by a state of mind. It is their motivation that directs their limbs into the act of moving. The commentary asks, 'So when you see them moving, why aren't you frightened of them?' A zombie is a dead body that suddenly stands up and starts to move, and of course if we saw one we would be very afraid, and want to run away. In Nepal the doorways are quite low because, it is said, this will prevent zombies from coming inside as they can only walk while standing up straight. Apparently there were a lot of zombies in Nepal at some point in the past.

The main point here is that if one were to see a zombie then there's no way one would feel attachment to that being. Rather one would run away out of fear. So *it is suitable to be as afraid of ordinary people, as of zombies, and it is unsuitable to be attached*. As explained here, when there's strong fear then there's no place for attachment and no place for anger. What are otherwise strong negative minds such as anger, attachment temporarily cease in the face of fear.

2.2.1.2.1.6. Attachment to that wearing clothes is unsuitable.

A faulty mind might be attached to a body because of the beautiful clothes it is wearing. This heading reflects on how there's no reason to be attached to clothes if it is actually the body that one is attached to.

I have seen on television women who have once been quite beautiful and who are now so thin that their body almost looks like a skeleton. Apparently some are successfully treated, and get back to normal, but I don't know what happens to the others. Looking like a skeleton is not attractive—people need to have some flesh on their body to look appealing.

Just a few days ago there was a report about a very tall but extremely thin young man playing basketball. I don't know what the story was about, perhaps because he was the tallest person, but he didn't look very appealing because he was so skinny.

It seems that there is a faulty state of mind which thinks that it is suitable to be attached to someone because they are wearing attractive clothes. There is this strong notion that if you are wearing nice clothes then others may start paying attention to you. If that is the case and if you want a boyfriend or a girlfriend, or you want others to notice you, then you should wear very nice clothes.

Some go to great measures to beautify their body before they go out, with clothes and make-up and so on, and that can take quite a long time. This reminds me of the time when I was staying with quite a wealthy and very nice family in Perth. The mother was quite interested in Buddhism, and the couple had two daughters and a son. Once when we were about to go out, the son commented on how his mother always seemed to take such a long time to get ready. The family might be ready to go but twenty minutes later she was still not ready. Even though she was no longer young she took time to beautify herself. But, I suppose that when you are from a well-known wealthy family, you want to present yourself well when you go out.

In general, I feel it is a good thing to make yourself presentable by being clean and wearing nice clean clothes. In a way it shows respect for others, and to a certain degree it is socially necessary.

Of course what is being systematically presented here are the various reasons that overcome different kinds of faulty states of mind. If, on seeing a body as being attractive one becomes attached to that body, then this text presents reasons showing how to overcome that faulty state of attachment.

Here the text is dealing with being attached to the attractive clothing on a body, and again presenting

reasons that will show why it is not suitable to be attached to that clothing.

As the verse reads:

48. *If one is attached although it is dressed
Then why not desire it when it is undressed?
If one has no need for it,
Then why embrace it when it is dressed?*

The commentary explains:

When the body that one is attached to although being clothed, has been cast aside at the cemetery, why is one not attached now, despite it being undressed? One should be attached also then. If one has no need for it when being cast aside at the cemetery, then why embrace the dressed body? They are the same in being impure.

As the commentary explains, *when the very body that one is attached to when clothed, is cast aside at a cemetery, why is one not attached to it at that time, despite it being undressed*. What is being implied here is that the body that one was attached to when she wore beautiful clothes, is the same body that it is cast aside at the cemetery. 'So why are you are not attached to the body at that time?' This rhetorical question implies, that *one should be attached also then*.

As it is the same body then one should still be attached to that body. *If one has no need for it when being cast aside at the cemetery, then why embrace the dressed body now?* If one were to argue, 'well there's no reason to be attached to that body at the cemetery, because a body in the cemetery is not attractive. If one argues in that way, then 'why embrace that face and body now because it is *the same* in that it is also an *impure* body. There's no change in the impurity of the body, so why do you embrace it now?' As explained here, *they are the same in being impure*.

2.2.1.2.2. Contemplating the situation in relation to animate phenomena

That is subdivided into three:

2.2.1.2.2.1. It is unsuitable to be attached as the impure becomes obvious

2.2.1.2.2.2. Attachment is unsuitable, as one realises it in dependence upon reason

2.2.1.2.2.3. Hence, stop grasping at the pure

2.2.1.2.2.1. It is unsuitable to be attached as the impure is obvious

This is further subdivided into five:

2.2.1.2.2.1.1. It is unsuitable to be attached to objects of touch

2.2.1.2.2.1.2. Stopping the conception of purity

2.2.1.2.2.1.3. Body and mind are individually not the object of attachment

2.2.1.2.2.1.4. Contemplating these faults by relating them to oneself

2.2.1.2.2.1.5. Shape is not the object of attachment

2.2.1.2.2.1.1. It is unsuitable to be attached to objects of touch

The material under this heading explains ways of overcoming the faulty state of mind we have when we are attached to specific objects. The first verse reads:

49. *If from food alone arise
Saliva and excrement,
And if out of these one does not like excrement,
Why does one specifically like saliva?*

The commentary begins with this comment:

If one says, 'I like the saliva of a woman'.

Then, as an answer, the commentary explains:

Answer: As saliva as well as excrement and urine arise from the same very cause of food, why do you prefer the saliva and dislike the excrement? They are the same in arising from an impure cause and in being an impure result.

The commentary logically explains that if one were to be attached to the saliva of the woman then, as saliva excrement and urine all arise from the very same cause i.e. food, *why do you prefer only the saliva and dislike the excrement? They are the same in arising from an impure cause and thus in being an impure result.*

The next two verses directly relate to attachment arising from touching an object. These logical reasons overcome strong attachment to objects that are impure in nature. When one contemplates these points carefully and relates them to the actual nature of the body, then any strong attachment will definitely reduce, and ultimately one will overcome attachment to that body.

The second verse under this heading reads:

50. *Cushions made of cotton that are soft
To the touch one does not like.
Saying, 'It does not have any bad smell.'
The desirous are deluded regarding impure.*

As the commentary explains,

They discriminate between the cotton cushion that is soft to the touch and the feel of a woman. Saying that foul smells do not emit from a woman's body, when in fact it does, the desirous are deluded regarding the impure and thus act with attachment.

This is another presentation showing the absurd arguments posited by the mind of desire. If the desirous mind claims, 'I like the touch of the woman because it is soft', then the response presented here is, 'if that is your reason then why wouldn't you also be attached to cotton, which is also soft to the touch'.

The main point being presented here is that, *saying that foul smells do not emit from a woman's body, when in fact they do, the desirous are deluded regarding the impure, and thus act with attachment.*

The third verse under this heading reads:

51. *The corrupt desirous that are deluded
Say, "Though the cotton is soft to the touch,
One cannot have intercourse with it",
And become angry with it.*

As the commentary explains:

The corrupt desirous people say that although the cotton is soft when touched, one cannot have intercourse with the cotton, and become angry with it. Hence, they intensely grasp only at that which is distorted. It is unsuitable to be attached to objects of touch.

This is a very clear explanation. The main point is that it is unsuitable to be attached to objects of touch.

2.2.1.2.2.1.2. Stopping the conception of purity

The relevant verse reads:

52. *If there is no attachment to the impure
Then why do you embrace the midst of others,
Who are a bone cage bound by sinews,
Given a face with the mud of flesh?*

The commentary explains that:

If you say, 'I have no attachment for the impure', then why do you embrace the midst of women, who are but a bone cage bound by a net of sinews and given a face with the mud of flesh? It is unsuitable.

As clearly presented in the commentary, if one were to say 'I have no reason to be attached to the impure', then the contradictory nature of the mind of attachment is illustrated in this response, *then why do you embrace the midst of women, who are but a bone cage bound by a net of sinews and given a face with the mud of flesh?* As presented here quite vividly, when we really think about it the basic structure that supports the body is the skeleton. Over the skeleton are sinews interleaved among layers of flesh, which is *given a face with the mud of flesh*. If one were constructing a body, then mud would be used to sculpt the face.

The next verse reads,

53. *Yours alone, which possesses many impurities,
You utilise continuously, and
Out of a thirst for the impure
You desire also other bags of filth.*

And the commentary explains that,

Further, your very body, which possesses many impurities, you utilise continuously, and you also crave and are thirsty for the impurity of other impure bags. If you are not satisfied with your own body, then why do you desire the body of a woman? It is unsuitable.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse very clearly, we do not need to clarify it any further.

2.2.1.2.2.1.3. Body and mind are individually not the object of attachment

Having shown that the body in general is not a suitable object of attachment, this section shows how the body and the mind individually are unsuitable objects of attachment. The first verse under this heading reads:

54. *You say, "I like this flesh."
If you desire to touch and look at it,
Then why do you not desire the
Inanimate flesh?*

The commentary explains:

You say, 'I do not like contact with cotton, but I do like the feel of the body of another'.

Answer: If you desire contact with, and to look upon the body of another, then why do you not desire the flesh of an inanimate dead body? You should like it but as you do not, it is unsuitable to be attached to the body.

This is showing the absurdity of saying 'I like the feel of a body, and there is no reason to be attached to cotton because it is an inanimate object'.

As your reason is that cotton is inanimate and a body is not, *then why do you not desire the flesh of a dead body as*

well? So again the text is showing the absurdity of the reasons one might give for being attached to a body.

The second verse in the section reads:

55. *The mind you desire
You cannot touch or see,
That which you can touch or see is not mind.
What is meaningless copulation good for?*

The commentary starts with the following hypothetical argument:

Argument: 'I am attached to the mind of others'.

The commentary answers that argument:

Answer: You cannot touch or look at the mind you desire, and that which you can touch is not mind. Therefore, what good is it to embrace the meaningless body and be attached to it? As it is not good for anything, it is unsuitable to be attached.

As the commentary clearly explains, 'how can you say you are *attached to the mind* as an object of desire? It is something that cannot be touched. Moreover that which you can touch is not the mind. So why be attached to the mind?

2.2.1.2.2.1.4. *Contemplating these faults by relating them to oneself*

This is another very significant point. Having described the impurity of the bodies of others, one now applies all of these same reasonings to one's own body. *Precious Garland* also gives extensive explanations of the impurities of the body of others, and it too urges one to relate them to oneself.

The verse reads:

56. *That one does not realise the impure nature
Of the body of others is not very surprising,
But that one does not realise
That oneself is impure is very surprising.*

The commentary explains that:

That one does not realise the impure nature of the body of others is not very surprising, but that one does not realise the impure nature of one's own body that continually disintegrates into something impure, this is indeed surprising. This is an ironic statement. Once one understands the impure, it becomes unsuitable to be attached.

This is another very clear presentation. Being unaware of *the impure nature of the bodies of others is not very surprising*, but knowing that one's body *continually disintegrates into something which is impure*, yet not realising its impurity, is quite astonishing.

One is very familiar with the fact that one's body is slowly disintegrating, yet despite this, one does not realise that this disintegrating body is impure. The main point is that once one is able to realise that one's own body is impure in nature, then that understanding can be easily applied to the bodies of others as well.

2.2.1.2.2.1.5. *Shape is not the object of attachment*

The verse relating to this heading is:

57. *Why reject the fresh lotus
With petals unfolded by sunlight unobstructed
by clouds,
And take joy in the impure cage
With a mind grasping for the impure?*

As the commentary explains:

If the pure fresh lotus with petals unfolded by the clear sunlight unobstructed by clouds has all these qualities, then why reject it and take joy in the impure cage due to the grasping for the impure? Since it is unsuitable to like it, it is also unsuitable to be attached to its shape.

As clearly explained here, when a lotus first *opens, with petals unfolded by the clear sunlight unobstructed by clouds, it has all these marvellous qualities*. Rather than being intrigued by, and even attached to this natural beauty, one pays more attention to a body that is impure by nature. Why do you *grasp at the impure?* It is because of the faulty mind of attachment.

The conclusion is that *since it is unsuitable to like it, it is also unsuitable to be attached to the shape of the body*.

These explanations are not obscure and are easy to understand. So the main point is to contemplate them, and then put it into practice.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*



*Shantideva's
Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱུང་ཚུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཟུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Ven. Michael Lobsang Yeshe

2016 Notes

Tara Institute
3 Mavis Avenue
East Brighton VIC 3187
Tel: (03) 9586 8900

A branch of FPMT, the Foundation
for the Preservation of the
Mahayana Tradition, a network of
Buddhist Centres in Australia and
worldwide.

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

9 February 2016

While maintaining the motivation we generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. *[meditation]*

Once again we have this wonderful opportunity of being able to gather together and meet each other.

Over the break I travelled to India with some of you. I had a very fortunate time in India — it was a time like no other. An enormous crowd (I estimated it to be thirty-five thousand people) attended the teachings, and the arrangements were amazing. A free lunch was provided for all, along with free tea and bread in the morning teaching session and tea in the afternoon, and all of it was of good quality. Bottled water was available all the time; in various corners bottles of water were piled up like small hills, so you could take a bottle whenever you needed. Some were only half empty when they were discarded, which shows how plentiful the supply was. Those were just the good external conditions that were in place for the teaching sessions.

Of course the teaching was presented by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, a most extraordinary and unequalled teacher. And the topic of the teaching was the actual words of the Buddha himself. As His Holiness mentioned during the teachings, 'It is incredibly fortunate that we are together for these teachings. Because we are all followers of the Buddha, we definitely have a unique connection with him, and for that reason the Buddha is constantly looking down upon us with particular attention. With this understanding you should have no fears, and feel confident and relaxed'.

This is significant advice from His Holiness, and it is something that we need to always keep in mind throughout our lives. Then, if we can remember, 'As I have been a follower of the Buddha, he is definitely looking upon me with loving care and compassion' in the last moments of our life, just before death, this will provide the best conditions for a peaceful death. That, in essence, is what I can relay to you from the teachings in India that I attended.

In relation to my own conditions, I was definitely very comfortable while I was there. I felt very relaxed and didn't have any major complications or health problems, so I felt very good. It was only when I got back here that I realised how tired I was. For nearly five weeks I woke early, at around three o'clock, and sometimes two o'clock, to do my prayers. During teachings I usually don't eat much during the day, because I fear that it will cause drowsiness. But even though I was waking up very early and going to the teaching sessions two times a day, I noticed that my mind always remained fresh and clear. However all of that seems to have taken a physical toll, because when I got home I started to feel the impact of

the previous weeks. But now I'm refreshed and doing well again.

I'm relaying this account of my trip to India as many of you might have been wondering about my time there, and how things went. I can definitely state that the time I spent in India and the positive effects of all the teachings that I received from His Holiness has had a very, very profound impact on my mind. As recently as last night there was a clear indication of this, when I had a very vivid dream of the Dalai Lama presenting a yellow robe to me. This was a very clear sign of the very auspicious time I spent in India.

The real significance of me relaying all of this to you is to remind you of the main purpose of why we are gathering here. We need to constantly remind ourselves that the main point is to gain the means for cultivating a good kind heart. Both you and the teacher (myself in this case) have to always remember that this is really the main purpose. In fact, when one attempts to generate that kind good heart at every opportunity it becomes the most meaningful action that one can engage in.

I have personally received a lot of profound instructions about methods for generating a kind and good heart from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The significance of acquiring the means for generating a genuinely kind and compassionate heart is not all that obscure. When one thinks about it, it is quite clear that a kind heart is what ultimately contributes to one's wellbeing—it is one's real protector and guide. In every respect, the kind and compassionate heart is the most valuable asset that one can ever possess: it is the ultimate means for gaining personal happiness; it helps one to acquire all the good conditions for personal happiness; as well as removing the conditions for misery and suffering.

Furthermore, by engaging in study and learning how to develop a kind compassionate heart, we are acquiring the means to establish a real protector for ourselves. When that unflinching and trustworthy protector and saviour, that genuine, kind and compassionate heart, is established within us, we will be really genuinely relaxed and settled, and a happy person.

On the other hand, when one lacks these inner conditions for a true sense of happiness and wellbeing, then one constantly looks for an external companion to give that sense of happiness. That is why we are never really fulfilled. We are constantly searching for a trustworthy unflinching good companion or friend, and we are constantly unsettled because of our lack of success in this search.

That is where we take the wrong turn. If we actually believe that a trustworthy and unflinching protector and saviour and companion is somewhere out there, and that all we have to do is keep searching for them, then we are missing the point. Inevitably we won't find what we seek, and end up feeling lonely, and falling into despair. All of that will be eliminated once we establish a inner true friend and trustworthy companion.

For as long as we spend all our time and energy looking for external companions or external good conditions in the belief that this is where happiness lies, we will keep falling short of actually achieving a true sense of well-

being and happiness, and experience one problem after another, and one difficulty after another. If we just change our approach and start spending quality time looking within, searching for, and developing the true unfailing inner friend and companion, then we will begin to notice that our life takes a turn for the better. A true transformation will start to come about and we will begin to become more and more relaxed, more settled, more self-reliant and confident, and genuinely content and happy in life.

When we endeavour to establish these good inner conditions or causes, it is certain that we will achieve positive results from our efforts. Here the positive causes are the development of love and compassion for others, taking their interests into account, which naturally brings about the positive result of experiencing personal wellbeing. As a way of nurturing and maintaining our sense of love and compassion for others, the practice of patience is indispensable. So we need to definitely practise patience as well. When we develop these qualities we will definitely experience the result that we seek.

I regularly emphasise this point again and again, and you should not take it lightly. I feel that I'm presenting something which will be most useful and valuable and meaningful for your own life. If you implement this advice, then it will definitely be incredibly beneficial for your life. If we take the initiative to look within ourselves, and evaluate what is essential for our wellbeing, then we will realise that we must never be separated from love and compassion at any cost. When we begin to acknowledge that love and compassion are indispensable, and that we need to nurture and always maintain it, then we will be keen to apply the methods to protect these qualities.

As mentioned regularly, meditation is a supreme technique that actually helps protect positive qualities from degeneration. Protecting a sense of happiness, a happy mind, a clear mind, and a positive attitude is essential for personal wellbeing. Those meditation practices are none other than the unmistakable methods for protecting one's mind. When we are able to protect our happy and clear state of mind, we will undoubtedly experience mental wellbeing.

At times, of course, we may experience some physical ailments. That is a given fact, and experiencing physical ailments is quite natural. But when we have secured positive inner conditions then, despite physical illnesses or any difficulties we may experience on a physical level, we can maintain a positive outlook and a happy state of mind.

There are, of course, times where we may feel a bit weighed down, and anxious and so forth. These feelings do of course come about, but what we need to recognise is that they are mostly related to unrealistic thoughts, which are called discursive or superstitious thoughts. When unnecessary doubts and fears take over our mind, and we give in to these discursive thoughts, then that is when our mind gets weighed down, and we end up being caught up in this cycle of unease.

However, when we take a strong stance in recognising that the main cause for our mental turmoil is none other than our own disturbing thoughts, then we can start to instil a state of mind where we don't allow disturbing thoughts, particularly irrational fears and doubts, to completely overwhelm us.

Thinking in this way helps to keep us focussed on the right track in life. The Buddha said that we should use this internal investigation as a mirror to see our own mind. The Buddha is quoted as saying that the Dharma serves as a mirror. We use an external mirror to see if our face has dirt on it that needs to be removed, because we cannot otherwise see our own face. Likewise the Dharma is said to be like a mirror that reflects the stains and dirt of our mind. Through seeing that clearly we can then attempt to remove those stains, which are the disturbing thoughts and delusions in our mind. This is paramount for any transformation that we wish to develop.

As I mention regularly, this internal investigation is done by none other than our own intelligence and wisdom. Ultimately it is our own wisdom that serves as the unfailing and consistent guide that helps us to follow the right path in our lives. We should always rely upon our own clear, discriminating wisdom.

I share all of this with you again, as a means of reminding you to reflect upon whatever practice you may be engaging in—whether it's meditation or engaging in the teachings, or studying the Dharma—and be mindful that all of these practices give us the means to clearly recognise and distinguish between what is useful and what is harmful. Then we can adopt what is useful, namely the qualities, and discard what is harmful, which is the delusions that lie within. If we can clearly distinguish between conducive conditions and conditions that are harmful, then it is most likely that we will be able to achieve what we are seeking to achieve.

Some lamas give the very practical advice of first asking the question, 'Why do I need to practise the Dharma?' The simple answer to that is, 'Because I wish for happiness and do not wish to experience any suffering'. This, in fact, encapsulates the real purpose of whatever virtues we engage in—it is because we wish to experience genuine happiness, and do not wish to experience any suffering.

The next question is 'Do I have the ability to practise the Dharma?' The answer is, as presented in the Lam Rim, that one definitely has that ability, because of having all of the necessary **inner conditions**. These are the **physical conditions** of a precious human rebirth with its eight freedoms and ten endowments. We also have the mental ability, which is a clear and discriminating wisdom. Therefore we have the necessary **mental conditions**.

With respect to **external conditions** we have the unmistakable teachers who present the teachings in a precise and clear manner. Of course these teachers need to have the qualifications of a perfect teacher, which is a full understanding and knowledge of the teachings. When we are able to recognise the Mahayana teacher and have faith in him, then that combination provides the

intact external conditions to engage in the study and practice of the Dharma.

Thus one has the necessary internal conditions which encompass one's physical and mental conditions, as well as the external condition of having met with a perfect Mahayana teacher.

By reflecting on these points in the form of the questions and answers that are presented in the teachings, it is said that one will come to the conclusion that, because of having a precious human rebirth, we definitely have the ability to practise the Dharma. However it is not sufficient just to have all the right conditions. One needs to apply the teachings and actually engage in practising them right now. That conclusion comes from reflecting on the precious human rebirth as being extremely difficult to obtain, and very easy to lose.

Contemplating in this way, by raising hypothetical qualms and coming to conclusions based on presentations like that in the Lam Rim, for example, we develop very sound and logical reasons for not only recognising that we have the potential and the ability to practise the Dharma, but that we need to actually act upon it right now. The Buddha very meticulously emphasised death and impermanence as a means to exhort one to actually engage in the practice of Dharma.

One of the main reasons for reflecting like this is to counter laziness. One might recognise that one has good conditions, but laziness will prevent one from actually seizing the opportunity and acting upon it. The laziness that creeps into our life, of thinking that we could do it next month, or next year and so forth, arises from not contemplating death and impermanence.

Going back to the essential point of the need to develop the kind heart, the most purest and most altruistic kind heart that one can develop is bodhicitta. There is no more supreme altruistic mind than bodhicitta. This is what we need to focus on, and attempt to develop.

The most meticulous and thorough presentation of how to develop this precious awakening mind is none other than the text that we're studying now—*The Bodhisattva's Way of Life* by Shantideva. I can safely say that there is no more superior text explaining bodhicitta than what we are studying now. Keeping that in mind we can generate strong enthusiasm and joy about having the privilege of actually engaging in the study of this text, and trying to incorporate it into our lives. Indeed even just holding this text in our hands is said to be extremely fortunate.

This supreme altruistic mind of bodhicitta, the awakening mind, is based upon the genuine wish to benefit others. This genuine wish to benefit others stems from an unbiased love and compassion for others. When one cultivates a genuine unbiased love and compassion focussing on other sentient beings, then that actually becomes the basis on which to develop superior intention. This is the immediate preceding state of mind just before one actually develops the awakening mind itself, bodhicitta.

Superior intention is the state of mind where, based on love and compassion, one takes upon oneself the full responsibility of doing whatever is necessary to actually benefit all sentient beings. The reason why we do the *tong*

len practice (giving and taking meditation), before each session is to further establish that potential within ourselves.

When one develops that superior intention of taking full responsibility for benefitting all sentient beings, to liberate them from all suffering, and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, one reflects upon whether one has the ability to do that right now. Then one clearly sees that only an enlightened being, a buddha, has this ability. When one resolves to achieve enlightenment oneself in order to benefit all sentient beings, then one is utilising the full conditions to develop the awakening mind.

We need to be reminded again and again that the whole purpose of studying this text is so that it establishes the conditions to actually develop the awakening mind, based on all the good conditions that were listed earlier.

As I've mentioned previously, in the technique of developing the awakening mind through the giving and taking practice, superior intention is not specifically mentioned. It is, however, encompassed within the actual practice of giving and taking. When one equalises oneself with others, and gives one's happiness to them, and takes their suffering upon oneself, then that is actually cultivating superior intention. Just because it's not explicitly presented as part of this technique, it doesn't mean that one doesn't need to develop superior intention. Indeed it is of paramount importance, because without developing superior intention, one cannot possibly develop bodhicitta.

Before we conclude the session for the evening let us recite the dedication chapter of *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life* for the late David Brooks who passed away last week. He was a long time friend of many of us. We can dedicate our merit for him to have a peaceful passage onto the next existence.

We can also include in our dedications whoever may be needing help and assistance at this time, those who are directly connected to us, Tara Institute, its members and students, and one's family and relatives. As we recite this text we will see that it includes all beings who are suffering in different ways. That is something we can keep in mind.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

16 February 2016

Based on the motivation we just generated in the refuge and bodhicitta prayer, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice.

[meditation]

Now we can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I will achieve enlightenment, and for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

Just as we did in our meditation practice, we need to periodically remind ourselves of the need to familiarise ourselves with love and compassion; that we need to increase the love and compassion in our hearts; and that we need to see this as an essential practice. Indeed, the giving and taking meditation practice that we have just engaged in is the essential practice of the bodhisattvas.

When engaging in the practice of equalising and exchanging self with others, one begins by contemplating again and again the shortcomings of cherishing oneself, and the great advantages of cherishing others. Through the use of many different reasons and analogies, and thinking of the many shortcomings of cherishing oneself, one contemplates the advantages of cherishing other sentient beings.

Having done that as a preliminary practice, one then engages in actually exchanging oneself and others by giving one's happiness to others and taking upon oneself the suffering of sentient beings. We need to understand that the actual practice of giving and taking is dependent on having contemplated the shortcomings of self-cherishing and the benefits of cherishing other sentient beings.

This, of course, is pith practice of bodhisattvas. As we are inclined to engage in the practices of the bodhisattvas we need to really think about how this practice is related to the bodhisattvas' deeds. We also need to understand how the giving and taking practice essentially encompasses the seven-fold cause and effect technique.

The main point to contemplate is the intent of the deeds of bodhisattvas, which is to benefit sentient beings. When one contemplates what sentient beings wish for, the answer is that they naturally wish for happiness and they don't want to experience any suffering. So benefitting sentient beings needs to be in accord with that wish to bring about happiness and remove their suffering.

When one contemplates in this way one comes to the point where one cannot leave it at a level of a mere wish. Rather, one has to take personal responsibility for ensuring that all sentient beings are placed in happiness,

and that their suffering is removed. This is the point where one develops superior intention.

Then one naturally checks whether one has the ability to do that right now, one acknowledges that one does not, and realises that only an enlightened being has that ability. When one develops the unwavering aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the purpose of liberating all sentient beings from suffering and leading them to the ultimate state of happiness, then one has developed the altruistic mind of bodhicitta, the awakening mind. This is how we need to understand the practice of giving and taking as an optimum means for developing bodhicitta.

The preliminary stage of thinking again and again about the disadvantages and shortcomings of cherishing oneself is, of course, a way to gain personal happiness, although it may still be a temporary level of happiness. That is because unless and until one overcomes the manifest levels of delusions there is no way that one can experience a genuinely settled and happy mind.

Contemplating in this way one should then resolve, 'If I want to experience happiness, I have no choice but to combat the delusions that exist within my mind'. Lama Tsong Khapa gives very clear and precise instructions on antidotes to overcome the manifest level of these delusions. Contemplating and meditating on the imperfections of the object of attachment overcomes attachment; meditating on love overcomes manifest anger; and focusing on one's breath overcomes a discursive mind; meditating on the categories of the constituents is a way to overcome pride; and meditating on emptiness overcomes ignorance.

In presenting these antidotes, Lama Tsong Khapa's specific advice is that one needs to apply the antidote to whatever strong delusion one has at any given time. That is how we overcome intense delusions. So as beginners it is not advisable to choose any random object, but rather to focus on specific objects to overcome specific manifest or intense deluded states of mind.

When one genuinely wishes for others to be happy then one is generating love, and when one genuinely wishes them to be free from suffering then that is how one generates compassion for sentient beings.

So how do we implement this? Of course, when it refers to others in general we need to be skilful in presenting the ways and means for others to be happy and how to alleviate their suffering. When it comes down to individual beings, however, it depends on the individual circumstances. One of the most practical ways to extend one's love and compassion for other sentient beings is to present them with what they most need at that time, which will alleviate their immediate suffering, and provide the conditions that will endow them with happiness.

When, for example, someone is very hungry, the suffering they are experiencing at that moment is hunger. That will be alleviated by providing them with food and nourishment, and then they will be endowed with the happiness of being full again. That is a practical way to extend love and compassion towards that particular being at that particular time. Of course someone who is already full doesn't need food and if you insist on giving

them food you would not benefit them at all. There is no purpose in doing that, as they are not experiencing the suffering of hunger at that time. Indeed, if you were to insist that they eat, then rather than alleviating suffering and bringing them happiness, you might cause them more suffering by giving them a stomach-ache.

There are many practical ways to benefit others, from giving material aid such as food and clothing when it is needed, or uttering soothing speech when they are feeling depressed and unhappy. Then there is the simple act of being with someone when they are in need of company; even pleasant gestures and facial expressions can bring about a certain level of happiness and alleviate a certain amount of suffering.

At our level we need to think about bringing benefit to others in practical ways. We need to really familiarise ourselves with love and compassion as an essential day-to-day practice, and then we can actually engage in benefitting others at our own manageable and practical level. If we are not familiar with love and compassion then the eagerness to benefit others will not arise. For example, some people just walk by, even though they can see that someone is really in need of food. If they don't have that sense of love and compassion they will not take the initiative to benefit such a person, whereas if you have love and compassion for them then you will extend your help by giving them food.

The practice of love and compassion might seem quite simple and it may even sound like a mediocre practice, but I personally feel that there is no greater practice than love and compassion. As I mentioned earlier, it encompasses the pith practice of the bodhisattvas.

When one practises love and compassion it becomes a means to cultivate more patience towards others, extending whatever is needed, in whatever capacity one has, to immediately benefit others. The companionship and camaraderie that one develops with others is based on love and compassion, so we can see that this love and compassion is really the basis for our own wellbeing and happiness. Conversely, the lack of love and compassion is the foundation of unwanted things, like conflict and disharmony with others. All of these unwanted situations in life come from a lack of love and compassion. These are the points that we need to contemplate.

I have previously related an anecdote about love and compassion that I witnessed in Landcox Park. On the weekend people come for picnics to Landcox Park, and they naturally throw the leftovers into the garbage bin. On Mondays the bins are cleared and one of the collectors routinely used to take out the edible scraps and give them to the birds. Whenever he came all the birds would flock around in anticipation of getting food. I immediately admired this man's generosity in taking the initiative to feed the birds. For me that was a clear example of extending love and compassion to animals. However I haven't seen this person coming in recently.

When we really think about it, birds flock around humans, and ants come into kitchens because they are hungry. The ants have no intention of marching into peoples' kitchens and harming them. What is attracting them is food. When one thinks in this way what may

otherwise seem as a nuisance is an opportunity to practise some love and compassion, knowing that they are suffering and in need of assistance and help. With these practical examples we can see how love and compassion benefit other beings.

2. ABANDONING THE OPPOSING FACTORS TO CALM ABIDING

2.2. Abandoning unrealistic thinking

2.2.1. Meditating on disillusionment for desire

2.2.1.2. CONTEMPLATING THE IMPURE NATURE OF THE BODY AND SO FORTH

2.2.1.2.2. Contemplating the situation in relation to animate phenomena (cont.)

2.2.1.2.2.2. Attachment is unsuitable, as one can realise in dependence upon reason

This is subdivided into four:

2.2.1.2.2.2.1. Contemplating that it is impure because of being the source of the impure

2.2.1.2.2.2.2. Contemplating that it is impure because of being the result of the impure

2.2.1.2.2.2.3. Showing the impurity of the body with an example

2.2.1.2.2.2.4. Contemplating that one's own body is impure

It is through a false view of the body as being pure that one develops attachment to the bodies of others. So these contemplations on the impurity of the body are a way to overcome attachment.

2.2.1.2.2.2.1. Contemplating that it is impure because of being the source of the impure

This point is in accordance with the explanations given in the sutras. Because these points are quite clear we don't need to go into detailed explanations. The main condition for developing attachment to the body is by seeing it as attractive or appealing. The first reason to counter this shows how the body is impure because it is the source of impure products. When one contemplates how in fact there is nothing in reality that is really appealing then one will overcome attachment to the body.

The root text under this heading reads:

*58. If one does not desire contact
With a place and smeared by the impure,
Then how can one desire contact
With the body from which the impure came
from?*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je gives this explanation of the meaning of the verse:

If one does not desire contact with a place that has been smeared with impure things, such as filth or vomit, then why does one desire contact with the body from which the impurity came? It is unsuitable.

As clearly explained here, if one does not want to come into contact with something such as a cloth or a place that is smeared with filth, then it is reasonable to contemplate why one would want to make contact with a body that is the source of the filth such as vomit and so forth.

If we think about our own clothing being smeared with, for example, excrement, then we would consider it to be so dirty that we would not even touch it. We would rather hold our nose so we can't smell it, and move it away with a stick. This clearly shows that we do not

really like to come into contact with anything that we consider to be filthy.

So the first part of the explanation is that the body is impure because it is the source of that which is impure.

2.2.1.2.2.2.2. Contemplating that it is impure because of being the result of the impure

59. *If you do not have attachment for the impure,
Why do you desire to copulate with others
Coming from the impure field,
Generated by its impure seed?*

As just mentioned, we have no desire to be in contact with anything that is filthy, regardless of whether it is the source, or the product of what is impure. It is actually a matter of looking at the body in a different way. If we take a superficial view and don't think about it, the body may seem to be quite pure.

As the commentary explains:

If one does not have attachment for the impure, then why do you desire to copulate with the body of others that came from the impure field of the mother's womb, generated by the impure seed of the father's semen and mother's blood? It is unsuitable to be attached.

Normally we want to be clean, and we don't want to come into contact with anything that is filthy. Some may even be a bit snobbish, and say, 'I don't like anything that is unclean, and I certainly don't want to come into contact with anything that is unclean'. If we have the notion that we don't want to come into contact with anything that is filthy, we would naturally not want to be attached to anything that is filthy. Rather than attachment, we would actually want to keep our distance from it.

What is being presented here is *if one does not have attachment for the impure then why do you desire to copulate with the other's body which is impure?* If one truly does not want to come into contact with anything that is impure, then it would be absurd to be attached to it. We need to understand the logic being presented here. When we perceive something as being impure or unclean, we naturally don't want to come into contact with it. Attachment to something arises because we are not perceiving it as being unclean and impure. This is the logic that is being presented here.

The commentary poses the question *why would one desire to copulate with the body of others that came from the impure field of the mother's womb.* Here the mother's womb is presented as being analogous to a field where the crops are grown. The body that we (and others) possess is really none other than what has been cultivated from the seed, that comes from the father's semen and the mother's blood, (egg in western terms), which are also impure. Both the source, the field, and the seed, which matures into the body are from sources that are naturally impure.

So if you do not want to come into contact with anything that is filthy, then why would you desire to copulate with a body whose very source, along with itself, is impure? The response being presented here is that it is unsuitable to be attached.

Here we see the use of meticulous reasoning to overcome strong attachment to the body.

2.2.1.2.2.2.3. Showing the impurity of the body with an example

60. *You do not desire even a small
Insect born from filth, yet
The body in the nature of multiple impurities
You desire, despite being generated from filth.*
61. *Not only do you not disparage
Your own impurity,
You desire others' impure bags
Due to a thirst for the impure.*

The commentary on these two verses reads:

Further, you do not like even a small dirty insect that was born from filth. How can you desire the body that is in the nature of many impurities and was generated from the thirty-six impure substances? Not only do you not disparage your own impure object, you desire the impure bags that are the aggregates of others out of a thirst for the impure. This is unsuitable.

As quite clearly explained in the commentary *if you do not like even a small dirty insect that is born from filth, then how can you desire a body that is in the nature of many impurities and was generated from the thirty-six impure substances?*

The thirty-six impure substances referred to here are listed in other texts that you may have access to. Basically they refer to the organs such as the lungs, the stomach, the bones, the marrow, the lymphatic system, the intestines, and external things such as nails and teeth. When one reflects upon what really makes up the body, especially the internal organs, one finds that there is nothing that is very attractive to be found there.

What one considers to be really attractive basically comes down to the skin, which is just the surface of the body. Based solely on that one may develop infatuation and attraction to the body.

2.2.1.2.2.2.4. Contemplating that one's own body is impure

Having contemplated the bodies of others as being impure the text now turns to one's own body. This is divided into two sections.

2.2.1.2.2.2.4.1. Contemplating the impure body

2.2.1.2.2.2.4.2. If one is attached to it, then it is suitable to be also attached to the body in the cemetery

2.2.1.2.2.2.4.1. Contemplating the impure body

Contemplating the impure body is presented with this verse:

62. *Whether it is something pleasant like camphor
Or cooked rice or vegetables,
When it is put in the mouth and taken out
again,
Even the ground becomes impure and dirty.*

Here the commentary explains:

When pleasant medicines like camphor or cooked rice and vegetables are put into one's mouth and taken out again, then even the ground where they are discarded is impure and dirty. Hence, it is unsuitable to have attachment.

This is another example of how, when pure substances such as fragrances and aromas and delicious food are chewed and then spat out, the place where they are discarded is immediately considered as being filthy. One would not wish to come into contact with such filth. Yet what is considered as being filthy now is none other than

the delicious substances with beautiful aromas and so forth. By virtue of just being chewed and then spat out it becomes filthy. This is proof that the body itself is the source of filth.

As with the earlier point, the fact that anything that comes out of the body is impure is, in itself, proof that the body is impure.

2.2.1.2.2.4.2. If one is attached to it, then it is suitable to be also attached to the body in the cemetery

*63. If one has doubt even though
Such impurity is obvious
One should look at other
Impure bodies discarded at the cemetery.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

If one has doubts and thinks this body may be pure even though it is manifestly impure, then one should look at other bodies that have been discarded at the cemetery. Although one knows that once the body's skin is open it is very frightening, one continues to repeatedly take delight in one's own and women's bodies. This is unsuitable. One should abandon attachment by viewing one's body as equal to the corpse in the cemetery.

When one sees, for example, a dead body being dissected then it is very repulsive. There is no sense of attachment to a dead body whose skin has been opened. Even though that is quite obvious, one continues to take delight in the body—for men that is one's own male form as well as the bodies of women, for women that is one's own female body as well as the bodies of men.

It is obvious that there is nothing attractive when the skin of a body in the cemetery is opened up and the body is dissected.

By contemplating in this way one overcomes attachment to one's own body and the body of others. If one contemplates in the way that has been presented here, it will definitely have an effect of overcoming strong desire or attachment to the body.

2.2.1.2.2.3. Hence, stop grasping at the pure

2.2.1.2.2.3.1. The body cannot be cleansed by effortful means

2.2.1.2.2.3.2. The body is not beyond the nature of being frightening

2.2.1.2.2.3.3. Contemplating it as an object of disillusionment

2.2.1.2.2.3.1. The body cannot be cleansed by effortful means

This is subdivided into two:

2.2.1.2.2.3.1.1. The impure body cannot be made pure by scents such as sandal

2.2.1.2.2.3.1.2. There is no reason to be attached to an unrelated smell

We can start this section in the next session.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་རྒྱུད་པ་ལ་འདུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

23 February 2016

While maintaining the motivation we generated during the prayers, we can engage in our regular meditation practice. [*meditation*]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

When one generates such a motivation, whatever positive action one engages in will indeed become a cause to benefit other sentient beings.

Having covered the subdivisions of the next outline last week, we come to the first of these categories which is:

2.2.1.2. CONTEMPLATING THE IMPURE NATURE OF THE BODY AND SO FORTH

2.2.1.2.2. *Contemplating the situation in relation to animate phenomena (cont.)*

2.2.1.2.2.3. Hence, stop grasping at the pure

2.2.1.2.2.3.1. *The body cannot be cleansed by effortful means*

2.2.1.2.2.3.1.1. *The impure body cannot be made pure by scents such as sandal*

The verse is presented with the hypothetical argument or query: "Although the body is impure it is suitable to be attached to it when scents such as sandal are applied to it."

This hypothetical query or question arises in conjunction with the notion the mind of attachment has, which is that, while one may agree that the body is impure by nature, it is still a suitable object to be attached to when beautiful scents like sandal and so forth are applied to it. This is how the mind of attachment works.

The verse and a half relating to this outline are:

65. *The scents applied to the body
Are among others, sandal, and nothing more.
Why be attached to another
Due to a scent separate from it?*

66ab. *If it naturally has a bad smell,
Is it not befitting not to be attached to it?*

The commentary explains:

The scent applied to the body can be, among others, camphor or sandal, and does not belong to the body. For what reason are you attached to the body of others due to a smell separate from that body?

The meaning of the next two lines are presented as a rhetorical question:

"If the body naturally has a bad smell, then is it not befitting not to be attached to it?"

The answer to this is:

"Indeed if one is attached to the body, it causes many sufferings."

As presented here, the faulty mind of attachment may present faulty reasons for being attached to a body. While acknowledging that a body may be impure in nature, the mind may trick one into believing that if that body were beautified with various scents — sandal, camphor, musk and so forth — it would become a suitable object of attachment.

However, as presented here, that reasoning is absurd. Since the body by its very nature is impure and has foul smells, why see it as a suitable object of attachment when scents that do not naturally occur in the body have to be applied to it? The fact that scents need to be applied to a body shows it doesn't have a naturally good smell; one has to apply these external scents to make it smell good.

As the commentary explains, *the scent applied to the body can be, among others, camphor or sandal, and does not belong to the body*, so when one smells the scent it is not coming from the body itself. Therefore, *for what reason are you attached to the body of others due to a smell separate from that body?* The commentary is basically showing the absurdity of being attached to an object due to an external factor making it smell nice.

The meaning of the next two lines is that due to the natural bad smells of the body, it is proper not to be attached to it. As the commentary explains, it is indeed proper not to be attached to the naturally foul smelling body because being attached to it causes many sufferings.

2.2.1.2.2.3.1.2. *There is no reason to be attached to an unrelated smell*

The next verse and a half relates to this heading.

66cd. *Why do those who crave the meaningless
Transitory world, apply nice scents?*

67. *As the scent belongs to sandal
How can it become that of the body?
Why be attached to something
Due to a scent that does not belong to it?*

The commentary that explains the meaning of this verse reads:

Those who crave for the meaninglessly transitory world apply scents such as sandal to their body in order to generate attachment for it. However, if the pleasant scent is a quality of the sandal, then how can it become a quality of the body? As it is not in any way a quality of the body, why be attached to something due to a scent that does not belong to it? It is unsuitable.

The presentation here is quite clear. The main point is to really reflect on and contemplate this meaning. The text is presenting the objects of meditation – the imperfections of the body — as a means to overcome attachment to the body. The explanation asks us to reflect on the act of applying scents to body out of attachment — out of pure vanity, wanting to beautify the body, just to become an object of attachment for others.

When we take the eight Mahayana precepts during the *nyung-nye* practice, for example, one of the precepts entails avoiding applying scents and perfumes. This specifically requires one to refrain, for the specified time, from applying scents and perfumes out of attachment to beautifying the body. This also implies that to apply scents and perfume without strong attachment is fine —

for example, as part of one's daily personal hygiene routine. However, one must avoid doing this out of attachment when one takes precepts.

As stated here, *those who crave for the meaninglessly transitory world apply scents such as sandal to their body in order to generate attachment for it* — thus this implies that when one takes precepts, one must avoid this attitude.

However as explained further, if the pleasant scent is a quality of the sandal, then how can it become a quality of the body? So, if the nice smell coming from the body is, in fact, due to the sandal that was applied on the body, how can it be a quality of the body itself? That is a rhetorical question implying that it is not a quality of the body.

As it is not in any way a quality of the body, why be attached to something due to a scent that does not belong to it? It is unreasonable and thus unsuitable.

2.2.1.2.2.3.2. *The body is not beyond the nature of being frightening*

When the body is left in its natural state, it can indeed appear frightening. So it has to be beautified in order not to appear frightening.

The hypothetical query or argument presented to explain the meaning of the verse is that *the body is an object of desire once hair, nails and so forth are cleaned up and made nice.*

The body is not naturally beautiful — that's why we have to spend so much money on beautifying it. How much money do we spend just on beautifying the hair? Apparently a lot of money also goes into polishing fingernails to make them look nice! Then there are our teeth.

What is being pointed out here is the fact that one has to go to great lengths to beautify the body. If it was left in its natural state it wouldn't appear beautiful, but rather quite frightening.

The verse and a half which relates to this reads:

68. *If the nature of the naked body
With long hair and nails, yellow teeth
And anointed with the scent of foul
smelling mud
Is only frightening,*
- 69ab. *And if it is like a weapon that harms me,
Why do I clean it with effort?*

The commentary explains:

If the hair and nails are long, the teeth are yellow and body has the smell of unpleasant smelling mud, then the naked body is frightening. If it harms me like a weapon that is killing me, then why do I clean it with effort? It is unsuitable.

If the body is left ungroomed, in its natural state — for example, if we were to let our hair grow extremely long and it became matted so that our body was covered just with our matted hair — it wouldn't be a pleasant sight. Furthermore, if our nails were not trimmed, they would grow really long and look frightening. If one didn't clean one's teeth, one's mouth would have a foul smell. It is quite frightening to picture a body with long matted hair, long nails and yellowish teeth. Then there are the unpleasant foul smells that ooze from the body if it's not cleaned. So the unkempt naked body can definitely look

frightening — some might even run away thinking it was a ghost!

What we need to understand is that while we should not beautify the body out of attachment, we must of course clean the body and take care of it, for the sake of hygiene and of our health. Otherwise, the reality is that if the body is left in its natural state, it can be a frightening object.

The presentation here clearly shows that to make the body presentable and to further beautify it, one has to rely on external sources (to clean it, apply scents, and so forth). When one doesn't apply these external measures to beautify the body and it is left in its natural state, it emits natural foul smells and appears frightening. These are referred to as the body's natural imperfections.

When we cover up these natural imperfections, they are not apparent, we don't see them. But here the text presents logical reasons, based on the reality of the body, for the existence of its natural imperfections.

The text goes on to say that, *if it harms me like a weapon that is killing me, then why do I clean it with effort?* The analogy used here is that of polishing and cleaning a weapon that will be used to kill us; it would be absurd to take care of such a weapon. Similarly, if one beautifies the very object that causes one attachment, it is as if one is taking care of something that is destroying oneself. Thus *it is unsuitable.*

The reality is that we need to care for our body for hygiene and health reasons. For example, we need to bathe regularly, and of course nourish our body with food. So for our survival we need to engage in these deeds.

So, if we generate the proper motivation while engaging in actions involved with caring for our body, then those actions become meaningful — they can even become a practice. For example, when bathing and cleaning the body, one can think: "I'm cleaning away the stains and dirt to keep my body healthy so as to benefit other sentient beings". Further, when nourishing one's body with food and drink, as mentioned many times previously, it can become a means to create a great amount of merit by offering the food and drinks first. Then when one consumes it, one can be mindful one is consuming it to nourish one's body so that one can be of service to other sentient beings, that one is using one's body to achieve one's ultimate goals of liberation and enlightenment. So then that becomes a highly purposeful and meaningful practice.

As I have mentioned previously many times, we need to ensure that our everyday activities — such as eating, drinking, sleeping and walking — become a means to engage in virtue and accumulate merit. If we engage in these daily activities with mindfulness and a positive motivation, even seemingly normal activities become a means for one to accumulate virtue.

I personally see this as being much more practical than sitting down rigidly with closed eyes for a set time, and assuming that one is engaging in meditation. It is good to know that sitting down with closed eyes is not the only way to practise; with the proper motivation, one can transform normal activities into a means of accumulating virtue and collecting merit.

In fact, for an ordinary person practising at an ordinary level, I doubt whether sitting down with closed eyes and sitting rigidly would be a means to accumulate much virtue if the mind is distracted. I can say from my own experience that at a beginner's level it is extremely hard to have a concentrated and focused mind. Even if our body is sitting rigidly and our eyes are closed in a seemingly meditative posture, at best the mind may remain focused for a few moments, but then it can become completely distracted with thoughts of worldly concerns. So one is not engaging in the practice of accumulating virtue at that time. I'm not referring here to the great, advanced meditators who have reached a level where their concentration is sound and firm. They can actually keep their mind single-pointedly on a virtuous object for a prolonged period. Rather, at a beginners' level, I know from experience it is extremely difficult to have a really focused mind.

Therefore, a more practical approach would be engaging in practices such as prostrations, making offerings, and other practices involving more physical activity. When one does prostrations to purify one's negativities it becomes a highly meaningful and purposeful practice. With the proper motivation, the very physical activity of prostration in fact purifies a lot of negativity. This will then help the mind to become clearer and sharper. Such activities are a more practical means of engaging in practice, as I've shared in the past.

Also, out of worldly concern, one might sit rigidly in a meditative posture for an hour or two in the presence of others. That is possible. However, one needs to be careful that if one resorts to this as a way to impress others, in fact it only becomes a worldly dharma, not a real Dharma practice. One needs to be mindful of this.

2.2.1.2.2.3.3. *Contemplating it as an object of disillusionment*

The next two lines and the verse relate to this:

69cd. *Through efforts deluded with regard to self,
The crazed completely disrupt this place.*

70. *If one becomes disgusted with the cemetery
Because of seeing only skeletons,
Can one delight in the cemetery of the city
Filled with moving skeletons?*

The commentary explains:

In this way, through efforts deluded with regards to the self, people are crazed because they are mistaken with regards to the continuum due to afflictions. They completely disrupt this place and are everywhere.

If one becomes disgusted with the body in the cemetery due to seeing only skeletons, then how can one be delighted in the town that is a cemetery filled with skeletons moving around through motivational impulses? It is unsuitable to be delighted.

In other words, when people are deluded by ignorance, they perceive an inherently existent self when in fact there is no such self. Likewise, due to the deluded mind, even if an object doesn't have any attributes to make it appealing, people will see it as appealing and thus develop attachment to it. This is all the consequence of having a deluded mind.

Thus, as mentioned here, people are indeed 'crazed' with the delusions, particularly attachment. We can clearly see in the world that it's as if people are crazed with attachment, doing unthinkable things and going to great lengths to pursue their attachments.

They are *crazed because they are mistaken with regards to the continuum due to afflictions*. So, *they completely disrupt this place and are everywhere*. With a crazed mind — that is, one affected by the delusions — it is as if everything around it is polluted by that deluded mind.

Next the text says: *if one becomes disgusted with the body in the cemetery due to seeing only skeletons, then how can one be delighted in the town that is a cemetery filled with skeletons moving around through motivational impulses?* As explained here, if we saw a skeleton in a cemetery, it would be an object of fright and we would be repulsed by it, especially if some bits of flesh were still stuck to it.

Yet other human beings and the beings we are attached to are like live skeletons moving about due to some motivational impulse. Sometimes on TV we see shows with skeletons moving around, just like this. When we think about the structure of our body, it really is as if we are skeletons moving about. The only difference is that we are moved about by some motivational impulse from within the mind, whereas a dead body cannot move because it does not have these motivational impulses.

By using the analogy presented here — of not taking delight in seeing skeletons in a cemetery — one needs to reflect upon the unsuitability of having strong attachment to other living human beings. That is the main point being presented.

2.2.1.2.3. *Contemplating that it will give rise to much that is unwished for*

That is subdivided into two:

- 2.2.1.2.3.1. Showing
- 2.2.1.2.3.2. Explanation

2.2.1.2.3.1. **Showing**

The next verse relates to the *showing* or presenting, which is:

71. *Thus, this impure object
Is not obtained without a price,
As one works for it one is exhausted
And receives the harms of the hells, among
others.*

The commentary which explains the meaning of this verse reads:

Thus, the impure body of a woman is not obtained without paying a price of wealth and so forth. As one builds up one's wealth for one's own body, among other things, in this life one will be exhausted due to hardship, and in the next life, one will receive the harms of the hells, among others.

As explained here explicitly with the example from a male's perspective, the *impure body of a woman is not obtained without paying a price*. If you're a male that is the reality — a woman's body is not something you get freely, it is something that you have to pay a price for. At the very minimum, you can't take a bride without presenting a ring!

Whether it may be from the man's or woman's perspective, the object of attachment does not come without a price. The commentary implies that there are many other prices one has to pay, apart from wealth, to obtain the object of one's attachment. In relation to the accumulation of wealth, *as one builds up one's wealth for one's own body, among other things, in this life one will be exhausted due to hardship* — this is where many seem to succumb to the strong pull of attachment to wealth.

Many people have the grand idea that if they were to acquire wealth, they would use it for a good purpose. While they may initially have such good intentions, as ordinary beings, these intentions soon get forgotten. In fact, when one actually does acquire some wealth, one may blindly pursue even more wealth. Far from using that accumulated wealth in a meaningful way for the purpose of others, one may not even use it for one's own kin, such as one's own children or relatives. Instead such a person may only use that wealth as a way to accumulate more, or to gain a more beautiful partner and so forth. We can see many examples of this — people using their wealth only to fulfil their desires, rather than using it in a meaningful way.

For those with a real, sustained Dharma motivation, when wealth is acquired it can be definitely used for a good purpose, to help and benefit others beginning with close relatives and so forth. But often it is hard for ordinary beings to maintain their initial good intentions and act upon them. The main point here is that if wealth is not utilised properly, it can be a source of one's downfall. While the text clearly explains this, it's good to also reflect on these points.

As explained here, when one exerts one's energy for the mere sake of gaining more wealth to satiate one's desires, one becomes *exhausted due to the hardship*. Apart from the loss of experiencing great hardship in this life, this exertion will not benefit, but will in fact harm one's next life.

2.2.1.2.3.2. Explanation

The explanation is subdivided into two subdivisions:

2.2.1.2.3.2.1. One does not attain one's wishes

2.2.1.2.3.2.2. One will be inseparable from many things one does not desire

2.2.1.2.3.2.1. One does not attain one's wishes

This is subdivided into four:

2.2.1.2.3.2.1.1. There is no time to rely on desire objects

2.2.1.2.3.2.1.2. One cannot rely on desire objects due to exhaustion

2.2.1.2.3.2.1.3. Difficulty meeting the desired object as it is far

2.2.1.2.3.2.1.4. One receives many undesired hardships as one will be under the control of others

2.2.1.2.3.2.1.1. There is no time to rely on desire objects

The verse relating to this is:

72. A child cannot increase wealth

And what happiness will it give in the prime of life?

After having spent one's life accumulating wealth,

What is one to do with desire in old age?

The commentary explains:

When one is a young child one cannot achieve wealth for the purpose of finding a woman and when one is in the prime of life one does not find a woman, so what happiness will wealth give then? Once in the prime of life, if one passes one's life with accumulating wealth, what is one then to do with one's desire in the end of one's life, when one is old, as one is not able to rely on desire objects then?

The first part of the explanation is obvious. *When one is a young child one cannot achieve wealth for the purpose of finding a woman*. That is true because a child may be hardly capable of accumulating wealth for their own purpose, such as to feed themselves.

Then *in the prime of life*, such as when one is in one's youth, *one does not find a woman, easily*. Having reached the prime of life in one's youth and middle age, one may exert oneself in accumulating expansive wealth. But then *if one passes one's life with accumulating wealth, what is one then to do with one's desire in the end of one's life* — at the end of one's life, even if one has desirable objects, due to old age *one is not able to rely on or utilise those dire objects*. So, at the end of one's life, again wealth does not serve its purpose of bringing one real happiness.

As mentioned earlier, the presentation and the meaning of the verses are not that obscure or difficult to understand. The main thing is to try and derive real meaning from it, then apply that understanding in one's practice.

This year I intend to go back to the normal schedule we've had in the past of doing exams and discussions in six-week blocks (of four-week teaching periods.) This is because when we reach the ninth chapter, in particular, it will be good to leave time for discussion to help students gain a better understanding of the chapter's material.

With this chapter that we are studying now, the eighth chapter, we can have the discussion after six teaching sessions, excluding the first one, because we didn't really have a teaching on the first session. So today would be the second teaching session in this block. Then after six teachings on the text, we'll have a discussion and exam. Then there might be two more sessions where we can complete the eighth chapter.

These verses and explanations, as I mentioned, are quite clear and don't rely too much on further discussion. However, while I might be going through these verses quite quickly, when we reach the point of discussing the exchanging-self-with-other technique of generating bodhicitta, then I will make a point to emphasise and explain that in further detail.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

23 February 2016 week 2

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

1 March 2016

Based on the motivation that we have just generated in the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer* we can now engage in our meditation practice.

[meditation]

Now you can generate the motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teachings and put them into practise well.

The wish to benefit others is crucial, so we need to give careful consideration to generating such a motivation. It is because of this genuine wish to benefit others that we have just engaged in the giving and taking meditation practice.

Finding that one's mind has become clearer, gentler and more positive as a result of one's meditation practice is a positive sign. Furthermore, when one finds that one's faith in the Dharma and one's guru is becoming stronger and firmer, that is a true sign of one's meditation practice taking positive effect. The hallmark of a positive effect of a practice is when the mind is transformed in such a positive way.

If one does not ensure one's practice actually brings about that result, then rather than experiencing a clearer and more positive state of mind, you may find that the mind is becoming duller and duller. There are those who comment that this has, in fact, been their experience, even though they had engaged in meditation practice for a long time. We need to understand that this is not the fault of the meditation practice itself, but rather the result of not having engaged in the meditation practice properly.

As I emphasised in my teaching last Sunday, we already have the basis of the fundamental practice of developing love and compassion within ourselves. It is not a practice that is alien and out of your reach, because you already have the basis within you. Personally, I have found that my attempts to engage in the practice of cultivating love and compassion have definitely benefited me. You have that basis within yourself and if you actually make an attempt to engage in this practice you will definitely reap the benefit. So I am giving you very practical advice, which many others have also found to be very useful. I'm certainly not claiming that I am engaging in some high level practice that is beyond the reach or capacity of others. You really do have the basis for practising in this way yourself.

You also need to give careful consideration to engaging in those practices for which you already have a basis, rather than trying to reach for high level practices that are

beyond your capacity. You need to engage in practices that are within your reach and capacity right now. It would be pretentious to claim that you are doing high level practices when you are not, in fact, capable of doing them. That is contrary to Dharma practice. These are really important points to keep in mind.

Coming back to the text, we have previously explained the faults of attachment and the way to overcome those faults by examining the imperfections of objects of attachment such as the body.

2.2.1.2.3. CONTEMPLATING THAT IT WILL GIVE RISE TO MUCH THAT IS UNWISHED FOR

2.2.1.2.3.2. Explanation

2.2.1.2.3.2.1. One does not attain one's wishes (cont.)

2.2.1.2.3.2.1.2. One cannot rely on desire objects due to exhaustion

The relevant verse from the root text reads:

73. *A lowly desirous person
Is tired out from working all day long.
Upon coming home his exhausted body
Lies down like a corpse.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

A lowly desirous person such as a servant is tired out from working all day long and upon coming home in the night his exhausted body lies down like a corpse. He does not remember his attachment and cannot act on it.

This explanation quite clearly relates to the circumstances of most people engaged in worldly activities. Even though it refers to *a lowly desirous person such as a servant* it is, of course, addressing the situation of those who work like slaves at their job.

Even though they may not actually be servants or slaves, they have to rise very early in the morning to get to work. Driven by their desire for wealth and material possessions they spend all day slaving at their work, expending so much time and energy that when they return home in the evening they are exhausted. They are so tired their *exhausted body lies down just like a corpse*.

After a long day's work, they can't even think about engaging in an act of desire, let alone act upon it. Being driven by their desire to gain wealth, they engage in working all day long, and are so exhausted that they are not able to engage in any acts of desire. You might be able to relate this explanation to your own experiences.

2.2.1.2.3.2.1.3. Difficulty meeting the desired object as it is far

This indicates that it is very difficult to meet an object of desire when it is far away from you.

The verse relating to this reads:

74. *The deluded who go abroad,
They who suffer far away,
Although they desire women,
They do not even see a woman to embrace for
many years.*

As the commentary explains:

They who are deluded and suffering, who go abroad into places far away from home, although they desire to meet a woman, they will not even see the woman they want to embrace for many years. What need is there to mention acting upon their desire?

They who are deluded, refers to those who are overcome by greed. They *go abroad into places far away from home* in order to acquire wealth; this can refer to those on business trips, and thieves who travel far away to steal. These people suffer because they are separated from loved ones who are far away. Although they may desire to have contact with a woman, they will not see the woman who they really *want to embrace for many years*. There is no *need to mention acting upon their desire*, indicates that there is no opportunity for them to engage in actions driven by desire.

These situations actually do occur, and they show the futility of being overly obsessed with the opposite sex. These are very useful points to consider as means to overcome excessive desire and lust.

2.2.1.2.3.2.1.4. One receives many undesired hardships as one will be under the control of others

The verse relating to this is:

75. *As those wishing to benefit self are deluded,
Although they sell themselves for a purpose,
They do not achieve it and are driven
By the meaningless wind of others' actions.*

The commentary explains the meaning as follows:

Those wishing to benefit self, as they are deluded with regards to the method, even though they sell their body for the purpose of gain, do not even get a bad wage. Driven without freedom by the wind of others' actions, which are without meaning for self, they experience suffering in this and the next life and do not achieve their desires.

Those wishing to benefit self relates to selfish personal gain. *They are deluded with regards to the method* means that they don't understand the correct way of obtaining what they want for themselves. Even if *they sell their body for the purpose of gain*, describes a situation where people work for such a low wage that it is as if they are selling their body to others. Furthermore, they might not be paid for a while or in a timely way. During that time they are labouring like a slave, experiencing a lot of hardship and difficulties, without actually gaining anything in return. They are entrapped by their situation.

The commentary further explains that they are *driven without freedom by the wind of others' actions*. They *experience suffering in this and the next life* yet they *do not achieve their desires*. If one is working like a slave for others without being paid regularly, one is in a situation of being driven without freedom by the wind of the actions of others. One may spend one's whole life without liberty or any gain.

Without meaning for the self means that one might not even gain what one wants to achieve, despite having put in so much effort.

So not only is there a lot of suffering in this life because people are driven by desire, but the consequences of that desire will also be experienced in the next lifetime. So this life is ruined as well as the next one as well, and we don't even achieve what we desire!

This is a presentation of the disadvantages of the mind of desire. Out of strong desire, either lust for the bodies of others or for material gain, we are hindered from engaging in more meaningful and purposeful activities.

So here we are being encouraged to pay heed to putting time and energy into the practice of the Dharma, which is much more worthwhile. The gains from that are much more purposeful and meaningful, so we are being advised not to completely be consumed by worldly desires.

The point, *they do not achieve their desires*, is that the whole purpose of engaging in work and so forth is to obtain what one desires. But even that is not obtained. We have all seen people who are consumed by their work for material gain and so forth, but who don't have the time to enjoy any of those gains.

As I have explained in the past, some people have related to me that although they have accumulated a sufficient amount of wealth they still feel that they need to go to work. They can't leave their job and when they do go to work there is a daily routine of anxiety and worries and problems. They don't seem to feel content with what they already have, and feel a need to acquire more, but that doesn't seem to bring them any sense of happiness. They are driven to accumulate more and more wealth – a million dollars is not sufficient, they want another million dollars and so forth.

Then there are those who, having reached a significant level of success in their life, start to realise that what they have isn't fulfilling. Despite all the wealth they have accumulated, they feel they are missing something – that their life is empty - and then a sense of despair begins to arise. They have spent so much time and energy accumulating their wealth and so forth yet they are not really contented or happy.

When worldly people comment about how they feel empty and lack contentment and inner happiness, you can't tell them that the reason they are not fulfilled is because of the desire in their mind, and that there will never be real contentment while that desire remains. They won't be inclined to hear about the disadvantages of desire and attachment and the advantages of engaging in the practice of Dharma. You can't do much for them other than just acknowledge their predicament, and sympathise with them.

However the point for us is that as we do have some understanding of the Dharma, and we also have the conditions to engage in the practice of Dharma, we need to make every attempt to put some time and energy into the practice of Dharma. We know that we should not allow ourselves to be completely consumed by the accumulation of wealth and the desire to accumulate more and more. As explained very clearly here, the end result of being consumed by desire is that one will not be fulfilled in this life, let alone experience happiness and joy in our future life. These are really important points to consider.

We need to attempt to put into practice the pith advice of the teachings, which is to have less desire and to practice contentment. If one has many desires and lacks contentment, one will eventually experience great distress and despair. As the great Indian master Asvaghosa mentioned, 'the greatest mental pain is the pain of discontentment', where one aims for more and more, even though one already has quite sufficient.

True wealth is found in contentment. As the great master Nagarjuna mentioned, 'the purpose of wealth is to feel content'. Indeed if one does not experience contentment then one is always going to be impoverished. No matter how much wealth one has accumulated, one feels that one does not have enough. In contrast, when one practices contentment one will feel a sense of satisfaction, and then one would have utilised one's wealth wisely, and it would have served its purpose.

2.2.1.2.3.2.2. One will be inseparable from many things one does not desire

This heading has five subdivisions:

2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1. One is without freedom and will quickly have to give up one's life

2.2.1.2.3.2.2.2. One will fall under the control of others and continually have many different sufferings

2.2.1.2.3.2.2.3. It obstructs liberation and exhausts the freedoms and endowments

2.2.1.2.3.2.2.4. Having contemplated the shortcomings, generating the mind wishing for liberation

2.2.1.2.3.2.2.5. Contemplating that attachment to sense objects is the source of all shortcomings

2.2.1.2.3.2.2.1. One is without freedom and will quickly have to give up one's life

There are two verses under this heading, the first of which reads:

76. *Some sell their bodies
And are ordered about without freedom.
When the companion becomes pregnant
Birth will be at the foot of a tree or a random
isolated place.*

The commentary on this verse reads:

Some sell their bodies as servants and are ordered around without freedom by others. When on top of this their companion becomes pregnant, as there is no home, she has to give birth at the foot of a tree or some other random isolated place where she happens to be.

Some sell their bodies as servants and are ordered around without freedom by others, refers to the earlier point that there are those who engage in contracts where they effectively become a slave to others, often without receiving their due wages. If, in such a situation, their companion or partner becomes pregnant then, since they have no home, she might have to give birth at the foot of a tree or some other isolated place where she happens to be. Similar dire circumstances still occur in many parts of the world.

The following verse relates more specifically to the heading:

77. *The foolish who are deceived by desire
Say, "I desire and shall make a livelihood,"
They enter wars despite danger to their lives
And go into servitude for profit.*

Here, the commentary explains:

The foolish deceived by desire wish to achieve gain, planning to live a long life through gain. Though they are in fear of their lives, they go to war in order to obtain gain, thinking, "I shall live by gain." For profit, they go into servitude and experience many different sufferings.

The foolish deceived by desire indicates that those who under the control of desire are blinded to what is safe or good for them. Although their intention is to have a long life, with a good income and all the conditions intact, they risk their lives for gain. Under the strong influence of the desire for a profitable return, or influenced by family members and friends, they join the army, for example, in spite of knowing that they could be sent to war and risk their life. Their intention is to gain a good income, but they end up in servitude.

2.2.1.2.3.2.2.2. One will fall under the control of others and continually have many different sufferings

The verse relating to this heading reads:

78. *Some desirous even cut their bodies,
Some are impaled from beneath on wooden
stakes,
Some are pierced by daggers,
And some are seen being burned.*
79ab. *Through the suffering of accumulating,
preserving and losing
Understand wealth to be infinite destruction
and faults.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Some, for the purpose of their desire, cut their bodies. Some receive the sentence from a king to be impaled from below on a wooden stake. Some are pierced by daggers and swords and some are seriously burned by fire.

As the accumulation, protecting and lastly losing of wealth are all suffering, one should understand wealth to be the root of infinite destruction and faults.

Some, for the purpose of their desire, cut their bodies implies that some people engage in actions such as theft or robbery or sexual crimes out of desire for wealth or lust, and that when they are caught they will be punished. As the commentary explains, *Some receive the sentence from a king to be impaled from below on a wooden stake. Some are pierced by daggers and swords and some are seriously burned by fire.* So, the end result of engaging in criminal deeds driven by strong desires is suffering.

The commentary then reminds us that, *As the accumulation, protecting and losing of wealth all lead to suffering, one should understand wealth to be the root of infinite destruction and faults.* We have all seen criminals, some of whom are quite influential or wealthy, having to face punishment for their crimes. We see them on TV, engaging in lengthy legal battles over their crimes of sexual misconduct and so forth, and becoming completely consumed by their predicament.

Even those who are wealthy or famous are not spared from suffering when they act out of desire. One example that comes to mind is the well-known Australian comedian who migrated to England. When I saw this on TV I felt sorry for him. I wondered why they were bringing such an old man to trial and putting him into such difficulty. Then I was told that he been found guilty, and that it didn't matter what his age was, he still had to serve his sentence. This is a clear example of someone being deceived by desire, and having to experience the consequences.

2.2.1.2.3.2.2.3. It obstructs liberation and exhausts the freedoms and endowments

If one follows a mind of desire then not only will that obstruct the achievement of liberation, it will waste the freedoms and endowments, meaning the precious human life. The relevant lines of verse read:

79cd. *Those distracted by attachment to wealth
Have no opportunity for liberation from the
sufferings of existence.*

80. *The desirous have these and many
Other disadvantages and insignificant
happiness,
Like the ox pulling the cart,
Eating occasionally a little grass.*

The commentary explains the meaning of these lines of verse:

Those with a mind distracted by many different objects due to attachment to wealth take rebirth again and again through the force of karma. Hence they have no opportunity to attain liberation by freeing themselves from the sufferings of existence.

The desirous who crave only the purposes of this life experience the faults of, among others, the many sufferings explained before and insignificant happiness. For example, like an ox that, while pulling the cart, can grab a bit of grass from time to time, to work to achieve happiness and clear away suffering only in this life is something even animals stronger than humans do; it is something the ox also does.

Having a *mind distracted by many different objects* is also a point that we need to reflect upon. As I have mentioned many times in the past, if one engages in the practice of meditation with a mind that is occupied with the distractions created by desire, then one will not achieve any significant focus on the object itself. You might assume a meditative posture, but if your mind is constantly distracted because of desire, you are not actually engaged in a genuine meditation practice. These are points that you really need to keep in mind. You need to ensure that you are fully engaged in your meditation practice.

On Wednesday night teachings I have emphasised that when engaging in meditation practice one needs to ensure that one completely withdraws from all objects of distraction, and places one's focus fully on the object itself. I have also emphasised that if you allow your mind to be occupied with distractions you will not be able to really focus on the object. This is the same point that Shantideva is making here. So what I have been emphasising on Wednesday evenings is backed up by Shantideva.

Indeed, when the *mind is distracted by different objects due to attachment to wealth then, as a consequence one takes rebirth again and again through the force of karma. Hence they have no opportunity to attain liberation by freeing themselves from sufferings of existence.* If one is driven by temporary pleasures and enjoyment then that will be a hindrance to achieving one's greater goal.

The desirous who crave only the purposes of this life experience the faults of, among others, the many sufferings explained before and insignificant happiness, indicates that there is no real long-lasting happiness, just fleeting pleasures.

Shantideva uses the example of an ox which, *while pulling the cart, grabs a bit of grass from time to time.* This is a very vivid example where we can imagine an ox experiencing the suffering of pulling a cart with a heavy load. Yet as it pulls along the heavy cart it seems to take pleasure in trying to grab a bit of grass at the side of the road. In comparison to the suffering it is experiencing from its heavy task, the pleasure of eating a bit of grass is very insignificant, just like the pleasure that we find in pursuing distractions such as wealth and so forth. The emphasis here is that if one allows one's mind to be distracted with these pursuits then that will be an obstacle to liberation and freedom from suffering.

The really important point here is to not allow ourselves to be deceived by small benefits or pleasures, which lead to great suffering in the future. The literal translation of the Tibetan word is not to follow 'that which brings small benefit but great suffering' in the end. By allowing ourselves to be deceived and consumed by fleeting pleasures we fail to understand the karmic consequences of long-lasting suffering in the future. The old man mentioned earlier, who is now in prison for his crimes, experienced only fleeting pleasures from his sexual misconduct. But the consequence is being imprisoned most probably for the rest of his life. We can learn a lot from this example.

When one engages in misdeeds such as sexual misconduct, theft and so forth then these are negative deeds in relation to the Dharma – not only has one broken the rules relating to moral conduct from the Dharma point of view but one has also broken the law. So one loses out twice – one will have to experience two sets of ill-effects; one from a Dharma point of view and the other from the legal system. There are legal consequences in this life, as well as negative consequences to be experienced in future lifetimes as well.

These are points for us to really consider. We need to be particularly mindful at times when we might be driven by desirous impulses. Contemplating and thinking about the disadvantages that will arise from these actions in this life, and most importantly in future lives, will help one to apply restraint, and not act upon those desirous and negative impulses.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

8 March 2016

Maintaining the motivation we generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [meditation]

We can now generate the bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I will achieve enlightenment, and for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

Generating such a motivation, even for a few moments, will definitely establish a very strong positive imprint in our mind.

Following from our last session, we were explaining the verses under the following heading:

2.2.1.3.2.2.3. *It obstructs liberation and exhausts the freedoms and endowments*

Having covered the first verse and a half under this heading, now we come to the second verse which reads:

81. *For the purpose of insignificant happiness,
Which is not rare and even an ox can attain,
Those tormented by karma destroy
The difficult to find freedoms and endowments.*

The commentary explains:

... to work to achieve happiness and clear away suffering only in this life is something even animals stronger than humans can do; it is something the ox also does.

Those tormented by the actions of craving for false objects for the extremely insignificant happiness of this life, which is not rare and even an ox tries to achieve, exhaust and destroy the perfect freedoms and endowments found in this life, which are of great purpose and difficult to attain. Contemplating these faults one should strive to take the essence of this basis with the freedoms and endowments.

In other words, if we are not mindful and engage in meaningless worldly activities, we will allow our incredibly fortunate state of having the eight freedoms and ten endowments to completely go to waste. As explained in the commentary, the work or effort put into achieving some happiness and clearing away some temporary suffering merely in this life is something even animals can do. In fact, some animals can do it better than us, because they are stronger and have greater capacity to protect themselves from danger and maintain their security.

The main point is that if we are not mindful of how we spend our lives, we will merely focus on this life, mindlessly putting our efforts into attaining some temporary happiness and removing some temporary suffering. Even if we claim to know and practise Dharma, if we are not mindful, this is exactly what our situation

will be. This logical explanation is a really significant point for us to contemplate.

As further emphasised, *those tormented by the actions of craving for false objects for the extremely insignificant happiness of this life, which is not rare and even an ox tries to achieve, exhaust and destroy the perfect freedoms and endowments found in this life, which are of great purpose and difficult to attain.*

These are significant points for us because at this time we have obtained such conditions as having the freedoms and endowments. When we think about our life so far, on the surface it may seem that we have led a life in the Dharma, but in fact we have spent most of our time and energy engaging in worldly or non-virtuous activities. We have spent a big part of our life idleness.

This is how our life is being exhausted moment by moment; every moment, our life is getting shorter. If we don't apply ourselves to the actual practice of Dharma and just give into worldly activities, our life will eventually come to an end without having achieved any great purpose. Being completely distracted by frivolous activities and sensual, or desire objects is what obstructs us from engaging in true Dharma practice.

While we have the conditions to engage in Dharma practice, we need to take the essence of this precious life. These freedoms and endowments are difficult to obtain. We are incredibly fortunate to have come in contact with the Mahayana teachings and unmistakable Mahayana teachers. Thus, we have access to the teachings of the Buddha, such as the three baskets of the Buddha's teachings, and the practices such as the three higher trainings of morality, meditation and wisdom. But if we don't utilise this opportunity now, while we have access to the teachings and practices, we are wasting these extremely rare and precious conditions.

Here the text is encouraging us to thoroughly investigate and ask ourselves, "Until now, how have I spent my life? What essence have I taken from it? What meaning or purpose have I achieved from my life thus far?" If one cannot find evidence of achieving much purpose in one's life, then one needs to start putting the teachings into practice.

If we were to develop a sense of disenchantment with this life's affairs and really engage in the practices of morality and so forth, we would definitely secure the results of the practice of the small scope – a good rebirth for our next lifetime – thus deriving significant purpose and meaning from our practice.

Better yet, we could develop a sense of renunciation, becoming disenchanted not only with this life's affairs, but with all of the pleasures and sufferings of cyclic existence. If one develops such disenchantment with cyclic existence and strives to obtain liberation and engages in practices with this intention, one will have secured the practice of the medium scope.

Further, even if we are unable to fully embrace the practice of achieving enlightenment right now, if we can develop a bodhicitta attitude based on love and compassion to the best of our ability, and engage in practices with a bodhicitta motivation, then we will have

definitely secured a practice that is in line with the Mahayana practice of the great scope.

As explained in the teachings, this is how we need to take the essence of our precious human life. This is what is being explained when the commentary says *contemplating these faults one should strive to take the essence of this basis with freedoms and endowments*. When one's practice is free from the stains of merely focusing on this life's gains, it becomes purposeful.

A more specific example of a practice that can become more meaningful, is the meditation practice of giving and taking that we did earlier. When we do the *tong-len* practice of giving and taking on the basis of a pure altruistic motivation – a genuine wish to benefit others, which is free from the stain of self-interest – it then becomes highly purposeful and meaningful. The motivation for the practice needs to be accompanied with the determination “I will fully engage in benefiting sentient beings by leading them to the state of happiness and freeing them from all suffering, and I will do this myself.”

In our sessions here, we are actually studying a Mahayana text. However, whether our study becomes highly meaningful or mediocre depends on our motivation; if it is focused only on this life's interests, our study does not even become a Dharma practice. Therefore, as I regularly emphasise, our motivation is extremely important, both from the teacher's side as well as from the listeners' side. When a bodhicitta motivation is secured from both the teacher's and the listeners' sides, then our study becomes a proper Dharma practice.

Generating a positive motivation is a way of being clear about the goal we intend to achieve. Each time we generate a positive motivation, it helps reinforce the goals we have set ourselves. This is how we also need to understand the significance of cultivating a proper motivation.

Indeed, generating a proper motivation sets our conduct in a proper way. If someone presents a teaching, for example, with the motivation of merely acquiring fame and gain, that individual then would only be willing to teach those who are wealthy and who can pay more, and might not consider giving a teaching to someone who cannot afford to pay, or make grand offerings. When an individual chooses what kind of students they're going to teach based on how many offerings they will get, that clearly shows a flawed motivation. This is really important for us to keep in mind. While you might not be in immediate danger now, there will come a time in the future when you are in a position of presenting the Dharma and regarded as a spiritual teacher. So, it is important to prepare yourself now, as way to protect yourself from misleading others.

Of course, I'm not claiming that I'm doing high level practices or that I'm completely pure and stainless. However as far as my motivation is concerned, because of the danger of a stained motivation, I make every effort to generate the most positive motivation for presenting the teachings. I make a specific effort to present the teachings without seeking reward such as fame and gain, with the intention only that the teachings may be of benefit for

whoever comes to listen to them. Generating such a motivation helps me. I don't personally feel that I have an attitude of seeking gain and fame; I don't really like that sort of approach. However, there are many who seem to make it a priority to become more famous or well known, to get more followers so they can gain more wealth and so forth. This is something I consider as poison, but maybe there are others who don't really see it like this.

Some may think I've gone astray and lack the proper approach. However I don't feel I've gone down the wrong path; when I present the teachings it only makes my mind happier and more joyful rather than feeling anxious and troubled. If one's motivation was tainted by seeking only fame and gain, then after some time they end up having a more troubled mind due to that corrupt mindset.

2.2.1.3.2.2.4. *Having contemplated the shortcomings, generating the mind wishing for liberation*

The verse under that reads:

82. *The desires are certain to disintegrate
And throw one into the hells and so forth,
Just merely a fraction of the effort of
The great effort endured*
83. *For the always meaningless,
Will achieve the very enlightenment.
The desirous have more suffering than those
Practising the path to enlightenment, and no
enlightenment.*

The commentary explains the meaning as follows:

In addition, the desired sensual happiness, such as that of a prince, is certain to disintegrate, and by being attached to it one falls to lower realms such as the hells. One can easily attain enlightenment with just a fraction of the difficulty and effort that one is subject to since beginningless time in attaining the always meaningless. Those attached to the vile, do not act in such a manner. The suffering of the desirous, desiring to attain their wishes, exceeds the suffering of those engaged in the practices to attain enlightenment, and they also do not have the desired result of enlightenment.

The main point here is the reality of impermanence. No matter how much one may have accumulated in terms of wealth or gain, it will naturally start to disintegrate; indeed, one's own life is coming to an end moment by moment. There is nothing we label as valuable that lasts or is permanent.

As related in the teachings, the end of all meeting is separation, the end of all accumulation is dispersion, and the end of all high status is to fall to the low. So meetings, such as relationships, eventually end in separation. And no matter how much wealth one accumulates, the end result is that it will be used up: it will be dispersed. Also, while high status in society may last for a certain period of time, the end result of it is returning again to a lower rank. We do not need to think of this situation necessarily happening only in this life. For example, while we may enjoy the high status of a human existence now, there's no certainty that we will not fall into a lower realm, such as the animal realm, in the next life. So, falling from a high status is a reality when we think of it happening over a period of time.

The main point here is that whatever worldly happiness we experience will eventually have to come to an end. There is no everlasting samsaric happiness.

Further, being attached to such worldly sensual pleasures will cause one to fall into the *lower realms such as the hells*. *One can easily attain enlightenment with just a fraction of the difficulty and effort that one is subject to since beginningless time in attaining the always meaningless*. In other words, although we have spent much time and energy in trying to achieve meaningless, fleeting pleasures over countless lifetimes, the effort it would take to become enlightened is only a fraction of that amount of time and effort. Thus, as the commentary exhorts, *those attached to the vile – meaning those who are attached to the meaningless affairs of this life – do not act in such a manner*. Contemplating the pitfalls of samsara and not being attached to samsaric pleasures will ensure that we do *not act in such a manner*.

As the text further explains, those who pursue their desires and worldly goals don't even achieve the ultimate, desirable goal – enlightenment — because of being completely consumed by worldly affairs.

2.2.1.3.2.2.5. *Contemplating the faults of desire*

The verse relating to this is:

84. *Contemplating the sufferings of hells and such,
Even weapons, poison, fire
High cliffs and enemies
Do not suffice as examples for the desirous.*

The commentary explains:

Having contemplated the sufferings of the lower realms such as the hells that arise from the negativity that one created for the purpose of desire, even examples such as weapons, poison, fire, high cliffs and enemies cannot suffice as examples for the harm of desire the desirous experience. Therefore, one should not be attached to sense objects.

Here, contemplating the *sufferings of the lower realms such as the hells that arise from the negativity that one created for the purpose of desire* is presented as an essential way to develop renunciation. As the teaching points out, without suffering one cannot develop renunciation. These are essential points. While we don't wish to experience suffering, contemplating and meditating on suffering encourage us to be free from cyclic existence.

Some examples of suffering we can relate to in this life include people being maimed by weapons; experiencing great agony after consuming poison; being scorched by fire; jumping from high cliffs and enduring great injuries; or having harm inflicted on them by their enemies. However, such sufferings are nothing compared to the sufferings experienced in the lower realms; all the extreme sufferings we can think of in relation to our human existence amount to nothing compared to the sufferings experienced in the lower realms as a consequence of desire. The conclusion in the commentary is *therefore, one should not be attached to sense objects*.

For example, we would consider it to be extreme suffering and a great calamity if someone perished in a fire. However, that person may have previously created positive karmas and had positive imprints in their mind that might, for example, result in them being reborn in

the god realms in their next life. So while we are focused on the great misfortune and suffering experienced by the individual when consumed in the fire, we may not be able to see that shortly after they perish, they have the karma to be reborn in a higher realm such as the god realms, where they experience great pleasure.

On the other hand, there may be others who may have led quite a luxurious and seemingly comfortable life now but, as a consequence of desire, will experience the much more extreme suffering of the hell realms in their future life.

The suffering of perishing in a great fire may be uncomfortable in the moment, but that in itself – perishing in the fire – does not become a cause to take the individual to the sufferings of the lower realms, such as the hell realms. Whereas being attached to desire objects will be a cause leading one to such extreme suffering.

2.2.2. *Meditating on affinity for isolation*¹

If one were to contemplate the faults of desire, especially the consequences of desire, one would develop the strong wish to go into isolation where one is not consumed by desire and can practise non-attachment.

This heading is subdivided into two:

2.2.2.1. Showing

2.2.2.2. Explaining

2.2.2.1. **SHOWING**

This is presented with the first two lines of the next verse.

*85ab. Thus, one should be weary of desire
And generate a liking for solitude*

The commentary [missing in the draft text] explains:

As explained earlier, one develops disenchantment with desire and generates the joy for isolation and thus establishes mental stabilisation.

As explained, the text is encouraging us to rely on isolation in order to develop mental stabilisation, which is basically calm abiding.

2.2.2.2. **EXPLAINING**

There are three subdivisions:

2.2.2.2.1 The distinction of place and so forth

2.2.2.2.2. The quality of independence

2.2.2.2.3. The quality of satisfaction

The three subdivisions are meticulously presented: the distinction of place, meaning the explanation of what would be a conducive place for going into isolation; the quality of independence, meaning the great virtue of being independent when going into isolation; and the quality of satisfaction or contentment that one develops.

2.2.2.2.1 *The distinction of place and so forth*

The second two lines of the earlier verse, followed by the subsequent verse, are presented. These are preceded by this query or hypothetical question:

Query: In what kind of isolated place should one remain?

The verses which relate to that as an answer:

¹ This heading was introduced on 17 November 2015 as *Meditating on Joy for Solitude*. This was the second part of *Abandoning Incorrect Conceptualisation*.

85cd. *Devoid of strife and afflictions.*

The fortunate contemplate the purpose of others

86. *And wander about in the peaceful forest
On cool wholesome abodes of vast flat stones,
Joyful and refreshed by moonlight and sandal,
Quiet, where peaceful forest breezes move.*

As the commentary explains:

Answer: Just like the wheel-turning king who has no competition and enjoys the happiness of the senses, the yogi abides in the peaceful forest free from the distractions of outer strife, and the afflictions of attachment and anger by others. Like previous fortunate beings, practicing the good actions in a cool place refreshed by moonlight and anointed by sandal, on vast flat stones equalling wholesome abodes, joyful and without unpleasant sound to the mind, in a place beautified by the movement of a soft and peaceful forest breeze.

There the yogi does contemplations for the purpose of others, such as meditating on the mind of enlightenment, and wanders around. Relying in such a way on solitude the yogi's happiness is superior to any kind of worldly happiness.

Just like the wheel-turning king who has no competition means there is no one who experiences the joys or pleasures of the senses as much as the wheel-turning king. The wheel-turning king is the ultimate example of someone who experiences great sensual joys.

Beyond that, *the yogi abides in the peaceful forest free from the distractions of outer strife, and the afflictions of attachment and anger by others* – in other words, going into isolation naturally means the meditator is free from others' harms, and not subject to others' attachment or anger.

The commentary then mentions *previous fortunate beings*, which can refer to bodhisattvas, or those who have had the great fortune to have all the conditions intact to engage in practice in solitude. Like them, the yogi practises *good actions* in cool places *refreshed by moonlight and anointed by sandal, on vast flat stones equalling wholesome abodes*. Here the analogy is that of beautiful, shimmering, celestial palaces where the floors are lit by moonlight and the air is perfumed. These abodes are considered to be very luxurious and comfortable. Similarly, for an individual who has gone into solitude, the dwelling place in their mind would be as comfortable and beautiful as what is described here.

Then, *on vast flat stones equalling wholesome abodes, joyful and without unpleasant sound to the mind, in a place beautified by the movement of a soft and peaceful forest breeze* refers to the further qualities of being in solitude, where there is no sound like the hustle and bustle of towns or other distracting sounds to disturb one's mind. Also such a dwelling is beautified by a peaceful forest breeze. These are the qualities of the abode itself, which is isolation.

In such a place with all of these conducive conditions, *the yogi does contemplations for the purpose of others, such as meditating on the mind of enlightenment*. So the actual object of the meditation would be the mind of enlightenment, with the pure wish to benefit other sentient beings.

With such a motivation, the yogis *wander about* in solitude, and *relying in such a way on solitude the yogi's happiness is superior to any worldly happiness*. Indeed, when

the mind of such an individual is really attuned, with all the external and internal conditions intact, they enjoy great happiness, which far exceeds any kind of worldly happiness that one may be familiar with.

These are points for us to acquaint our minds with and put into practice. While we may not have all the necessary conditions right now to go into solitude and remain in isolation, we can acquaint our mind with the great advantages of this. Even if we have the ability to have some quiet time for just one or two days to acquaint the mind with virtue and contemplate the Dharma, we are actually acquainting ourselves with acquiring the conditions in the future.

As also emphasised here, *the yogi does contemplations for the purpose of others*, meaning that for a Mahayana practitioner, the intention or motivation to be in solitude would be to benefit other sentient beings. With that positive motivation, of course, they will also personally experience great joy from being in solitude. With no desire objects, there's no immediate cause for the mind to follow distractions, so solitude becomes really conducive for the mind itself. This is where we can also understand how our mind gets so easily distracted when we are around desire objects.

2.2.2.2. *The quality of independence*

This refers to the advantage of being independent when one goes into solitude. The verse relating to this is the next verse:

87. *Abiding as one wishes
In empty houses, at the foot of trees and caves,
Abandoning the suffering of keeping,
Enjoying without care and independently.*

The commentary explains:

Abiding in houses abandoned by others, at the foot of trees and caves for as long as one wishes, abandoning the suffering of keeping and protecting many possessions. They abide carefree, independently from fears and worries.

Of course, as mentioned here one needs to be careful not go into houses that are actually occupied by others, and do what you may call squatting! The text emphasises houses that are completely abandoned, where's there's no fear of others coming and disturbing one.

The reference to abiding in abandoned houses or at the foot of trees and caves *for as long as one wishes* refers to setting a fixed time, for example, if one wishes to do retreat. This is significant. Setting a fixed time will ensure one abides in isolation, in retreat mode, for that period. If one comes out of retreat prior to the fixed time, it might be like breaking the retreat commitment. The main point here is to set a time for oneself, with the intention of remaining in that retreat for the duration.

Then *abandoning the suffering of keeping and protecting many possessions* means that when one goes into solitude, one has only the basic, bare essentials. Because one does not have many belongings, one is free of the sufferings associated with having a lot of belongings. If one has many possessions, one has to worry about how to keep, preserve and protect them. Such worries and suffering are naturally reduced when one doesn't have many possessions. Therefore, such individuals *abide carefree*,

independently from fears and worries of such frivolous ways and fears.

The significance of mentioning abandoned houses, caves and the foot of trees as abodes for one's isolation is to protect one from becoming attached to a certain place. If one goes into solitude and remains in one place for a long time, and then starts to become attached to that place, one's intention to make that place even better and more comfortable will become stronger.

So the way to actually practise abiding in solitude is, in summary, to practise having less desire and more contentment. To protect his disciples from attachment, the Buddha forbade fully ordained monks from having possessions, and required that they adopt meagre clothing. But for certain fully ordained monks who were prone to anger, the Buddha permitted them to have nice food and clothing. That is actually very skilful. If you provide someone who is prone to anger, or easily irritated and upset with nice things, food and so forth, this can help to calm their mind.

This is good practical advice for those living in partnership with others. If your partner is inclined to become easily upset and angry, then give them a nice meal to help calm them down. Or maybe buy them some nice clothing; this can also help their mind to settle down. This is practical advice that we need to put into practice. Often when a partner or companion is upset, rather than trying to find means to appease them, you might aggravate them more. This happens all too often. Rather than seeking ways to appease their anger so they don't become more upset and angry, one seems to make them even more upset. This is how conflict arises.

I notice that people often go out and start telling others about such problems, and may even exaggerate them, saying, "Oh my partner or companion is very upset and is always angry". So rather than trying to make the situation better and resolve it between themselves, one goes out and announces to others that one's partner is upset or is a very angry person. This doesn't help the situation.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© *Tara Institute*

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

15 March 2016

Based on the motivation that we generated during the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, we will now engage in our meditation practice.

[meditation]

Now we can set our motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teachings and put them into practice well.

The very text that we are studying introduces bodhicitta – the mind of enlightenment – showing us how to develop and further nurture it. It is important to periodically remind ourselves of this aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, and to familiarise ourselves with bodhicitta again and again on a regular basis.

Generating the bodhicitta attitude as a motivation should not be confused with actually generating the mind of enlightenment. However, such a motivation definitely plants a seed that will develop at some time in the future – familiarising our mind with bodhicitta now will definitely leave a very strong imprint.

As His Holiness mentions, while chapter eight explains how to develop concentration and thus calm abiding, it is presented in the context of instructions on how to develop the mind of enlightenment. So the presentation is not just about how to develop calm abiding, but more specifically on developing bodhicitta. For those of us who are already familiar with the bodhicitta attitude, the following verses in the text show the optimum way to develop this mind of bodhicitta.

As I have mentioned previously, the first two chapters in the text are specifically related to the benefits of the mind of enlightenment, while the middle three chapters present techniques to prevent the degeneration of the mind of enlightenment, and chapters seven to nine specifically explain how to further develop the strength of the mind of enlightenment. So we can see the really meticulous organisation of the text. His Holiness the Dalai Lama praises this text as being one of the most supreme presentations of how to generate bodhicitta, develop it and further increase it. It is indeed a supreme text.

2.2.2. Meditating on affinity for isolation

2.2.2.2. EXPLAINING

2.2.2.2.2. *The quality of independence*

This heading relates to the quality of the satisfaction that one gains from being in solitude. The verse relating to this heading reads:

88. *Acting independently and without attachment,
Having no relation to anybody,*

*Enjoying the happiness of contentment,
This is difficult to find even for the powerful.*

Gyaltsab Je gives this explanation of the meaning of the text:

The happiness of independently enjoying place, possessions and so forth as one wishes without attachment to them, of abiding in a place with no relation to anybody, with the happiness of being content with meagre food and clothing, is a happiness that is even difficult to find for gods and influential humans. Hence, those skilled should make an effort to rely on solitude.

What is clearly presented here is the need to develop contentment, and in explaining the benefits of contentment, it is also showing the faults of not practising contentment. All the positive qualities that are presented here are the consequence of practising contentment, which is one of the main prerequisites for developing calm abiding. *The happiness enjoying place, possessions and so forth* means that when one is in solitude one is able to enjoy the place and its conditions. *Independently* refers to not having to rely on or be dependent on others, i.e. one is able to enjoy that place of abode because one does not have to depend or rely upon others.

It is possible to enjoy the place and possessions and so forth because one is not attached to them. When one overcomes attachment to one's own body, the place one dwells in and one's possessions then one is able to fully utilise and enjoy them. In contrast, when we are still attached to our body, possessions and place, then although we may claim otherwise, we are, in fact, not able to really enjoy our possessions and so forth because of that strong attachment. It is attachment that prevents us from fully enjoying the attributes of our body, possessions and place. In addition to enjoying the place and so forth, there is also *the happiness of being content with meagre food and clothing*.

Having *no relation to anybody* refers to not being constricted by others. Having no need to please relatives or friends or people of high or low status, one can completely focus on one's practice. Indeed, it is our strong attachment to relationships that keeps us circling in samsara as we try to please those to whom we are attached, and overpower those who try to oppose us. It is these kinds of relationships that keep us circling in samsara over and over again.

The joy that is being explained here is the joy of contentment. When one practises having few desires and contentment then it brings great satisfaction. We really need to pay attention to the great advice that is being presented here.

It may sound presumptuous, but from my own experience I can say that I have found real satisfaction with my attempts at having less desire and practising contentment. In my early twenties I spent some significant time practising having less desire and contentment. I arrived in India with no possessions and no money – just the clothes I wore. Yet over the next couple of years, despite real hardship, I was not unhappy because I practised contentment with my situation. My mind was happy, and as a result of practising in this way, I had no worries. I am not sure if I was swayed by the

worldly dharmas, but I do recall feeling a great sense of satisfaction with this practice.

Although having less desire and practising contentment is a paramount practice for Dharma practitioners, anyone who practises contentment will definitely reap the benefit, and experience an inner sense of joy and satisfaction. Nagarjuna said that being contented is a true mark of wealth. As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary, finding the happiness of contentment *is difficult even for the gods and powerful, influential humans*. Nothing in samsara – wealth, pleasurable objects, sensual pleasures – will make them happy when they lack contentment in their heart.

In simple terms, practising contentment means being happy with what one has, and thinking, 'I am happy and contented with what I have, and I am happy and contented with the friends that I have, even they are few in number', regardless of whether we are in solitude or not. We can apply this practice to our everyday life, wherever we may be.

As the text indicates, when all the conditions come together for one to be able to go into solitude, then it should be utilised to further develop the mind of enlightenment. Indeed, there is no greater joy and satisfaction than in doing that.

Then the commentary concludes with this exhortation: *Hence, those skilled should make an effort to rely on solitude*.

One cannot underestimate the great value of contentment as that is what brings a true sense of satisfaction. When one is contented, any wealth one has will bring a sense of joy and happiness. Without contentment however, no matter how much wealth one has, there will be no satisfaction and no real happiness. Those who practice true contentment seem to be really happy wherever they may be. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has noticed that the focus of a certain order of Christian monks and nuns is contentment. They don't have any possessions or savings; they forsake everything and concentrate on a single-pointed focus on God. Even though they don't have anything, they seem to be really happy because they are contented. We can see from this example how the practice of contentment definitely brings a sense of joy to those who practise it.

When one is contented, one's living conditions and so forth will work out quite well. Whereas if one lacks contentment then that leads to dissatisfaction with one's surroundings and living conditions, and then conflicts and so forth arise. We really need to pay particular attention to this point.

However, the emphasis on practising contentment should not be misinterpreted as meaning that one has to get rid of all one's wealth and possessions. That is not the point. Rather, one needs to reduce attachment to wealth and possessions. If one does not explain this to others properly, and they misunderstand what you say, then they may get the impression of, "Oh, if you are a Buddhist then you have to completely divest yourself of all your wealth and possessions". Being contented is not suggesting that we have to live in very poor conditions. Far from that, it is actually saying that we should be contented and happy regardless of the situations we

encounter, and that reducing attachment to one's possessions and wealth brings satisfaction and contentment.

3. THE WAY OF MEDITATING ON CALM ABIDING¹

This is the third major section of the chapter, and it has two subdivisions:

- 3.1 The way of meditating on equalising self and others
- 3.2. The way of exchanging self and others

Here we can note that the method for developing calm abiding is presented within the context of meditating on equalising and then exchanging self with others. There is no separate explanation of the way to develop calm abiding.

What is calm abiding?

We also need to take note that calm abiding (*shi-ne* in Tibetan) and mental stabilisation (*sam-ten*) refer to the same thing. As I have explained many times, the definition of *calm abiding is the meditative equipoise that is able to single-pointedly focus on its object for as long as it wishes, which is combined with the bliss of physical and mental pliancy*. Calm abiding is a meditative state of mind that is able to focus single-pointedly on an object for as long as one wishes, and this is associated with the bliss that arises due to physical and mental pliancy. The methods for developing calm abiding will be presented in more detail later on, but it is good to have some understanding of the topic at this point.

The reason why the explanation of calm abiding is embedded in the subject of the text, rather than being explicitly introduced and explained, is perhaps because the teaching was presented to listeners of sharp intellect. Because of that intellect we're able to derive an understanding of this topic from other sources of the Buddha's teachings.

Coming back to the method for developing calm abiding, having chosen an appropriate object one needs to focus on that chosen object without wavering. Focussing single-pointedly means focussing on that object without distraction, free from the obstacles of laxity and excitement.

One continuously engages in this single-pointed focus, free from the faults of laxity and excitement, again and again, and thus familiarises one's mind with the object. Then, having engaged in that mental training, the mind becomes free from defects like wandering off, or resistance to focussing on the object. Thus the mind becomes serviceable, and it is at this point that one obtains mental pliancy.

Because one is able to focus on the object without mental effort, it helps the wind energy to flow freely through one's body. Any physical resistance to sitting for too long, to the distractions caused by aches and pains and so forth subsides, and so the physical body also becomes serviceable. At that point one obtains physical pliancy.

¹ This section of the text was introduced on 29 September 2015. The other two major sections under the heading Explaining the Text of the Chapter, are Advice to Meditate on Mental Stabilisation, and Abandoning the Opposing Factors to Calm Abiding

Due to that physical pliancy there is no resistance whatsoever at a physical level, and one is able to sit for as long as one wishes. That induces a blissful feeling throughout the body, which is called physical bliss. Experiencing that physical bliss then induces a mental bliss.

When a meditator experiences this combination of physical and mental bliss, and further familiarises themselves with the object of focus, then they are able to focus unwaveringly on that object, free from all faults, and for as long as they wish. At that point the meditator has obtained calm abiding. This, in short, is what reaching calm abiding entails, and it is a significant result of the practice of meditation.

Although further explanations are presented later on, it is good to have this summary of what calm abiding means. This understanding will resolve any doubts about the benefits of engaging in the practice of meditation, or its end result that you or others might have – it is that physical and mental bliss of remaining in single-pointed focus on an object.

The three higher trainings

Following the attainment of calm abiding, one then obtains special insight, which is the real force that overcomes our delusions. In order to obtain special insight one has to have first obtained calm abiding. In other words, special insight cannot be developed without having previously developed calm abiding.

The first condition for being able to develop calm abiding is practising **morality**, which serves as the basis for the other two higher trainings of concentration and wisdom. So morality is really the fundamental basis. As you know, one of the qualities of a Mahayana teacher is that they are endowed with morality; this indeed is one of the most important qualities of a Mahayana teacher. The definition of morality and so forth is explained in detail in *Liberation in the Palm of your Hand*, so you can refer to that for more information.

Morality serves as the root of all virtues. Just like a seed is the basis from which all plants grow, morality is the basis for the development of all virtue. Practising morality acts as a restraint to engaging in the gross levels of external distractions.

Inner distractions can be divided into gross and subtle distractions. The gross level of inner distraction is basically laxity and excitement. As a means to overcome these gross inner distractions of laxity and excitement one applies the training of **meditation**.

Subtle inner distraction refers to grasping at true existence or grasping at a self. To overcome this grasping one needs to apply the **wisdom** realising emptiness. The wisdom realising selflessness, or the realisation of emptiness is the means to overcome the most subtle levels of inner distraction, and thus eliminate all distractions.

It is good to have this overview of how gaining an understanding of the three baskets of the teachings of the Buddha can be subsumed into the three higher trainings of morality, meditation and wisdom, and how that serves as a means to overcome gross and subtle distractions and

obscurations. Having this overall view can be very helpful for understanding the structure of the Buddha's teachings.

Having given you an overview of what calm abiding entails, its benefits and so forth, we now return to the text.

3.1.1. Brief explanation

This section is explained in two verses.

*89. Having contemplated the qualities of solitude
In these and other aspects,
One should pacify disturbing thoughts
And meditate on the mind of enlightenment.*

The commentary on this verse explains:

Having contemplated in the aspects outlined before, and in other aspects, the qualities of remote places isolated from outer excitement and other distractions, one should then pacify the disturbing thoughts that are aspiring to sense and other objects, and meditate on the mind of enlightenment.

When the commentary states *Having contemplated in the aspects outlined before, and in other aspects, the qualities of remote places isolated from outer excitement and other distractions*, it is referring to places that are isolated from external distractions such as friends and relatives, and the hustle and bustle of daily life. So the abode needs to be an isolated place like a forest or a cave where you are free from external distractions.

The next type of isolation is isolation from inner distractions, which are *the disturbing thoughts*. As mentioned previously, it is not sufficient to exist in an isolated place free from external distractions if the mind is still distracted. No conducive external conditions can help if one is constantly affected by disturbing thoughts. Therefore, you need to be isolated from inner distractions, i.e. disturbing thoughts.

... and other aspects refers to being isolated from self-interest. The very purpose of going into isolation is to develop the mind of enlightenment. If you are affected by self-interest and a self-cherishing mind, there is no way that you can develop the mind of enlightenment, which is primarily the wish to benefit other sentient beings.

So one should *pacify the disturbing thoughts that are aspiring to sense and other objects*, and then use the external conditions to meditate on the mind of enlightenment. That is the real purpose of conducive conditions.

The second verse under this heading reads:

*90. At first, strive in meditating
On equalising self and others.
Since they are the same in happiness and
suffering
Look after others like yourself.*

The commentary is presented in the form of hypothetical questions and answers.

Query: With which method should one meditate?

Answer: At first, strive in meditating on equalising self and others.

Query: How?

Answer: Since others have the same acceptance and rejection of happiness and suffering as oneself, and try to establish their happiness and clear their suffering in the same way as one tries to establish

one's happiness and stop one's suffering, one should look after all sentient beings, cherishing them like oneself.

In response to the hypothetical query, *With what method should one meditate?* the commentary states, *At first strive in meditating on equalising self and others.* This is an essential point, because without first equalising oneself with others there is no possibility of being able to engage in the actual practice of exchanging self with others. So the practice of exchanging self with others has to be preceded by equalising oneself with others.

The hypothetical question following on from this is *How?*, and then the commentary goes on to explain that one needs to see all beings as being equal in wanting happiness, and not wanting any suffering.

All beings equally have this fundamental aspiration or wish to be happy and not to suffer. We might wonder how all beings can be equal, but when we think about it we see that regardless of whether they are rich or poor, whether they have high status or power like a king or minister, or if they are a simple person, all living beings, including animals such as cats or dogs are alike in wanting happiness, and not wanting to experience suffering. So as explained in the commentary, one needs to first strive in meditating on equalising self and others.

When the commentary explains that *others have the same acceptance and rejection of happiness and suffering as oneself* it is saying that as we too have this wish for happiness and want to avoid suffering, we are all alike. This is how we are equal. Since that is the case, we need to *try to establish their happiness and clear their suffering in the same way as one tries to establish one's happiness and stop one's suffering.* Without first generating the mind of equalising oneself with others, there is no possibility of developing love and compassion.

Thus, the commentary concludes, *one should look after all sentient beings, cherishing them like oneself.*

[Symbolically, there was a pause here as a lost frog that had made its way into the gompa was collected to be returned to an appropriate habitat. We recited the OM MANI PADME HUM mantra, followed by the Four Immeasurables.]

3.1.2. Extensive explanation

This has four subdivisions:

3.1.2.1. Explaining the meaning of equalising self and others

3.1.2.2. The way of meditating on equalising self and others

3.1.2.3. The benefits of meditating on it

3.1.2.4. If one meditates on equalising self and others, one can develop it

3.1.2.1. EXPLAINING THE MEANING OF EQUALISING SELF AND OTHERS

This hypothetical question precedes the verse.

Argument: As there are infinite different sentient beings, and it is not suitable to generate the mind thinking 'I' with regards to them, how can the acceptance of their happiness and the rejection of their suffering possibly be one's own?

The verses that we have covered are essential for our practice. Therefore, it is good to really familiarise ourselves with them, reading and rereading them and thinking about their meaning. Just reading them once or twice doesn't help to move the mind, and without that there will be no transformation. But by reading them again and again and thinking about their meaning we can derive real benefit from them – it can bring great solace.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

22 March 2016

While maintaining the motivation generated during the refuge and bodhicitta prayer, we will now engage in our regular meditation practice. [meditation]

We can generate the bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

Generating such a motivation, even for a few moments, will definitely establish very strong positive imprints in one's mind.

This part of the text explains very profound ways of engaging in the actual practice of exchanging self with others, which becomes very meaningful when we put it into practise.

The earlier verses explained how one needs to overcome strong attachment to desire objects To overcome strong desire for sensual objects, one needs to rely on solitude. This pacifies one's physical and mental defects, making them serviceable for applying single-pointed meditation on developing bodhicitta.

3.1.2.1. EXPLAINING THE MEANING OF EQUALISING SELF AND OTHERS

Firstly, the commentary presents this hypothetical argument:

Argument: As there are infinite different sentient beings, it is not suitable to generate the mind thinking 'I' with regards to them. How can the acceptance of their happiness and the rejection of their suffering possibly be one's own?

What is being presented here, in the form of an argument or doubt, is that *there are infinite different sentient beings*, if one cannot possibly regard all sentient beings as oneself, then how could it be possible for one to accept their happiness and reject their sufferings?

The verse reads:

91. *Although there are many parts such as hands and so forth,
They belong to the same body that is the object of protection;
Likewise, the happy and suffering migrators
All equal oneself in desiring happiness.*

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse, which serves as an answer to the earlier hypothetical argument:

Answer: Although the body has many parts such as the feet and hands, they are all the same in being parts of the one body that is regarded as 'mine' by the person. Likewise, although there are many different migrators, such as gods and humans, their happiness and sufferings are not different. Focusing on how they are the same, one beholds all others as oneself, holds them as self, and thinks, "I shall establish that happiness and I shall clear away this suffering." This is the meaning of meditating that all of them are equal to oneself.

The first part of the commentary presents the analogy, *although the body has many parts such as the feet and hands, they are all the same in being parts of the one body that is regarded as 'mine'*, which means that although there are many distinct parts to our body such as the arms, the legs, the head etc. the reason we cherish and protect all parts is because of clinging to them as 'mine'.

This is an analogy to illustrate that although there are an infinite number of distinct sentient beings, *such as gods and humans etc.*, they are all the same in wanting to experience happiness, and not wanting to experience any misery or suffering. As there is no difference between one's own likes and dislikes and their likes and dislikes, if one begins to cherish all beings it is possible to regard their suffering as one's own suffering, and their happiness as one's own happiness. One then takes the initiative to establish their happiness and eliminate the suffering of all sentient beings.

As will be presented further on, the key point is to develop the mind that cherishes other sentient beings. When one develops this mind then it is possible to establish their happiness and remove their suffering, just as one would for oneself.

3.1.2.2. THE WAY OF MEDITATING ON EQUALISING SELF AND OTHERS

This is subdivided into two:

3.1.2.2.1. Refuting that the acceptance and rejection of happiness and suffering is unsuitable to be the same

3.1.2.2.2. Explaining the reason why it is suitable to meditate on it as equal

3.1.2.2.1. Refuting that the acceptance and rejection of happiness and suffering is unsuitable to be the same

What is being established here is that it is suitable to regard the acceptance of happiness and the rejection of suffering in others as being the same as, or equal to, oneself. Without first accepting this, there is no possibility of being able actually engage in the practice of exchanging self with other.

The practice of exchanging self with other depends upon first accepting others' suffering and happiness as being equal to one's own. What is being explained here is that not accepting this is unsuitable.

The next two verses explain this point. The next hypothetical argument presented is:

Argument: Since other's sufferings do not harm one's body, and one's own sufferings do not harm the body of others, it is invalid that the clearing away of their suffering equals the clearing away of one's own suffering.

This hypothetical argument represents a doubt that arises in most of us, where we think, 'How can I be equal to others?'

The next two verses provide the answer:

92. *If, 'One's sufferings
Do not harm the body of others.'
Yet, they are one's sufferings,
Holding them as mine, they are unbearable.*
93. *Similarly, others' sufferings
Do not fall upon oneself.
Yet, they are one's sufferings,
Holding them as mine, they are difficult to bear.*

The commentary further explains:

Answer: There is no fault. Even though one's suffering does not harm the body of others, and the suffering of others does not harm oneself, their suffering is one's own suffering. By grasping at oneself as 'self' one

finds one's own suffering unbearable. Similarly, by meditating on holding other sentient beings as self, even though their sufferings do not fall upon oneself to experience, their sufferings become sufferings to be cleared by oneself, because by holding sentient beings as one's own self, if they experience sufferings, they become difficult to bear for oneself.

In relation to the earlier argument, what is being presented here as an answer is, *even though one's suffering does not harm the body of others, and the suffering of others does not harm oneself, their suffering is one's own suffering*, because one is affected by it. Of course others' physical suffering is obviously not one's own suffering. In other words, when someone else is suffering from a physical ailment, it is not as if we experience the actual pain of that ailment in our own body. While it is true that the suffering of someone else's body does not harm one's own body, nevertheless their suffering is akin to one's own suffering, because one is affected by it. Thus, one needs to overcome their suffering, which is the main point.

By grasping at oneself as 'self' one finds one's own suffering unbearable. This confirms that in relation to oneself, the suffering one experiences is due to a strong grasping at the self, and so one's suffering becomes unbearable.

Similarly, by meditating on holding other sentient beings as self, even though their sufferings do not fall upon oneself to experience, their sufferings become sufferings to be cleared by oneself. This acknowledges that while others' sufferings are not experienced by oneself, when others are experiencing suffering, if one holds them as self, then their suffering becomes one's own suffering.

In reality we do experience this. For example, when close and dear ones are experiencing pain and suffering, even though we do not actually experience their pain, it is unbearable to see them suffering, because of our strong bond with them. In contrast, if a stranger, or someone we feel indifferent towards, experiences pain and suffering, it doesn't affect us very strongly. That is something we can see through our own experience.

What is also apparent is that while we feel close to someone their suffering can be unbearable for us, however when they start to become distant their suffering becomes less unbearable to us. Once it was unbearable, but then it becomes less unbearable. We might even feel glad that they are suffering now.

The main point here is that just as one's own suffering is due to strong clinging to one's own self, clinging to others also produces suffering for oneself when they experience suffering. *Their sufferings become suffering to be cleared by oneself.* If this is the case, one cannot reject their suffering by saying, 'It's not my suffering. I don't experience this suffering so it doesn't concern me.' Rather one needs to resolve, 'Because this suffering affects me, it is a suffering that I need to overcome'. When one holds sentient beings as dear as oneself, then it becomes difficult for one to bear their suffering; this is the point. The logical reasons meticulously explained here, show that it is reasonable to clear away the sufferings of other sentient beings.

We have personal experience of this reasoning. When we are not able to bear the sufferings of others then we are more inclined to remove that suffering, and if their suffering is not unbearable, then we will not be inclined to do anything to clear away their suffering. We notice more readily that when those very close us are suffering, we take the needed action because it's unbearable for us to see them suffer. That's why

we take the initiative to do something to remove their suffering. So even though their suffering is not one's own suffering, their suffering does become a concern because it is unbearable for us to see.

When we apply this on a practical level, first we need to feel that their suffering is unbearable, then that becomes the initiative for one to actually act to clear away the suffering of other sentient beings.

We need to relate this first to a close friend or relative, then we can understand this on a larger scale, in relation to all sentient beings. We will be able to see that this is very true and reasonable. These sentiments are very meaningful and a practical way to put good attitudes into practice.

While we many not yet be anywhere near developing actual bodhicitta, if we can practice by really seeing how, just like oneself, other sentient beings do not wish to experience any suffering, and wish to only experience happiness, then we will be able to recognise others as being exactly the same as ourselves.

We need to contemplate how 'It is reasonable for me to have concern for other sentient beings and take initiative to do something to help them be free from suffering and endowed with happiness'.

On a more practical level, one would take into consideration the genuine concerns of those that we live with, and those who we deal with every day, if one had a strong feeling for their wellbeing. The point is thT when you see the other suffering and you cannot bear it, you will take initiative to help clear away their suffering. Similarly, when the other is deprived of happiness, doing something to establish them in happiness is an initiative one would take. This is indeed a very practical and meaningful strategy to foster better relationships with others.

To make one's mind familiar with these positive attitudes one needs to take initiative to actually contemplate and meditate on this points. I can definitively share with you that in my regular practice, after reciting the Prayer of the Four Immeasurables, I pause for a while to contemplate on the sentiment I need to devote myself to, in order to bring about happiness for other beings and remove their suffering.

Just thinking on that, making that resolve in my mind and spending a few moments meditating on this is, I feel, akin to generating superior intention. And on the basis of developing superior intention, one can easily develop the aspirational mind of enlightenment.

While I cannot claim of doing great practices, these are the points I really pay attention to and try to spend some time on. As I mention regularly, just making this strong resolve in the morning 'today I will not intentionally harm any living being, I will only engage in benefiting other sentient beings', and spending a few moments on it in the morning, is very meaningful, and in itself quite a powerful practice. To start the day with this intention is indeed very meaningful.

3.1.2.2.2. Explaining the reason why it is suitable to meditate on it as equal

That is again subdivided into three:

3.1.2.2.2.1. Extensive explanation

3.1.2.2.2.2. Short summary

3.1.2.2.2.2. Refuting objections

3.1.2.2.2.1. Extensive explanation

This is then subdivided again into three:

3.1.2.2.2.1.1. Stating the reason

3.1.2.2.1.2. Establishing the pervasion

3.1.2.2.1.3. Clearing away obstructing thoughts of 'It is unsuitable to meditate on equalising self and others'

3.1.2.2.1.1. Stating the reason

The verse reads:

94. *I shall clear the sufferings of others
Because they are suffering, like my own
suffering.
I shall benefit others
Because they are sentient beings, like my body.*

The commentary explains:

Take the subject 'the sufferings of other sentient beings': they are suitable to be eliminated by oneself—because they are suffering, e.g. like one's own suffering.

It is appropriate for one to establish the benefit and happiness of others—because the other person is a sentient being, e.g. like establishing the happiness of one's body.

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse in the form of a syllogism.

- *Take the subject 'the sufferings of other sentient beings' is the subject;*
- *they are suitable to eliminate by oneself is the predicate;*
- *because they are suffering is the reason;*
- *The example is, like one's own suffering.*

In the example, one understands that it is suitable to remove one's own suffering for no other reason than it is suffering and unbearable.

It is the same when one establishes that upon others, i.e. it is suitable to eliminate the suffering of others because, like one's own suffering, their suffering is also unbearable. That's the first part of the syllogism.

The next part is the predicate, *it is appropriate for one to establish the benefit and happiness of others*, for the reason *because the others are sentient beings*. Again using oneself as an example, just by virtue of the fact that one is a sentient being, one naturally wishes to establish benefit and happiness for oneself. Likewise because others are also sentient beings, with the same wishes as oneself, it is appropriate to establish benefit and happiness for them as well.

The example is that just as one wants to establish the happiness of one's own body, it is the same for others; they wish to experience happiness, and that is the reason to establish it.

These points are meticulously presented as topics to contemplate and meditate upon. When one can read these verses, quote this reasoning, and then really reflect upon them, they are not difficult to hold as an object to meditate on, they are quite easy to relate to. Just contemplating it can bring great release to a stressful state of mind and make it more relaxed.

3.1.2.2.1.2. Establishing the pervasion

That is subdivided into two:

3.1.2.2.1.2.1. The actual pervasion

3.1.2.2.1.2.2. Clearing away obstructions

3.1.2.2.1.2.1. The actual pervasion

This statement is presented first in the commentary:

It follows that it is appropriate to equally reject and accept upon having focused on the happiness and suffering of self and others—

The verse then reads:

95. *When both self and others
Are the same in desiring happiness,
What difference is there to me,
Why do I strive only for my own happiness?*

The commentary then explains:

That is because when both self and others are the same in desiring happiness—then what difference is there between others and myself? There is no difference whatsoever. For what reason do I strive only for my own happiness? It is unsuitable not to strive for the happiness of others.

As presented here, *when both self and others are the same in desiring happiness — then what difference is there between others and myself?* Being a hypothetical question, it explicitly implies, that *there is no difference whatsoever*.

So therefore, *for what reason do I strive only for my own happiness?* Again this implies that there is no real reason to strive selfishly only for one's own happiness. *It is unsuitable not to strive for the happiness of others*. The main factor that prevents one from not striving for the happiness of other sentient beings, and only working to alleviate one's own suffering, is not yet being able to replace self cherishing with the attitude of cherishing other sentient beings.

When one is able to reverse self-cherishing, then it becomes possible for one to completely embrace the need to strive for the wellbeing other sentient beings.

In practical terms, understand that one must change one's attitude in whatever one does, particularly when engaging in accumulating virtue. Without a clear motivation directed towards others it just becomes a means to focus on one's own benefit.

However if one's attitude is that 'I'm engaging in this virtue not just for myself, but to create a cause to benefit all beings', then due to the power of the motivation, the virtues and positive deeds one engages in actually become a means to benefit other sentient beings.

We need to think in these practical terms rather than thinking that one has to actually engage with others, and become really busy in order to benefit others. Without this practical approach one may not even see that it's possible to actually benefit other sentient beings. If, at our level, one can just focus on the motivation to be of benefit to other sentient beings, and make sincere dedications, then whatever positive deeds one engages in become a cause to actually benefit other sentient beings.

For your daily practice, take heed of Shantideva's advice and remind yourself: I'll generate positive motivation to engage in positive deeds for the benefit of other sentient beings; and at the end I'll make sincere dedications. In this way, when one dedicates whatever virtues one accumulates, to the aspiration to ultimately benefit sentient beings to achieve enlightenment, then that definitely secures all one's own virtues to become a cause towards that end. These are really important points to understand on a personal level for one's personal practice.

The next verse reads:

96. *When both self and others
Are the same in not desiring suffering
What difference is there to me?
Why do I protect myself but not others?*

The commentary then explains:

When both oneself and others are the same in not desiring suffering, what difference is there between others and myself? There is no difference. For what reason do I work for my own happiness, and protect my own happiness from degenerating, but do not protect the happiness of others? It is suitable to work for the happiness of others, as both are equally the same.

The commentary highlights, *when both oneself and others are the same in not desiring suffering, what difference is there between others and myself?* Insofar as not wishing to experience suffering, *there is no difference whatsoever.*

This being the case, then the logical argument is that, *for what reason do I work for my own happiness, and protect my own happiness from degenerating, but do not protect the happiness of others?* Following these reasons, it is unsuitable just to work for one's own happiness. The conclusion presented here is that *it is suitable to work for the happiness of others, as both are equally the same.*

3.1.2.2.1.2.2. Clearing away obstructions

The verse reads:

97. *If, 'I do not protect them
Because their suffering does not harm me.'
Since also the future sufferings
Do not harm, why protect from them?*

The commentary explains the meaning of this verse with another hypothetical argument:

Argument: If one were to say, I do not protect sentient beings when they experience suffering because their suffering does not harm me.

Then it presents the answer:

Answer: This is highly unsuitable. Otherwise, it would also be unsuitable to accumulate wealth when young out of fear of suffering in old age, or to engage in the morning or in the day in a method to avoid suffering in the afternoon or tomorrow, since the later future suffering does not harm the earlier person. Even if one fears there could be suffering, it would be inappropriate to protect oneself.

The commentary answers the hypothetical argument *I do not protect sentient beings when they experience suffering because their suffering does not harm me.* We often hold on to the very narrow and self-centred view 'If the suffering doesn't concern me, I don't have to do anything about it. Why should I care about other beings' sufferings?'

The commentary explains that this is a misconception and that the reasoning is flawed. If it were the case then, *it would also be unsuitable to accumulate wealth when young out of fear of suffering in old age.*

The reasoning here is a way to refute the earlier argument that it is a common practice in youth to accumulate wealth to secure your wellbeing in old age. However, with this line of reasoning, one would have to say 'Oh, since the old person being deprived of wealth doesn't affect me in my youth, why would I need to accumulate wealth to make that old person more comfortable? In effect it is saying that the old person is not the same being as the young person, and that

that they are completely different people. Although it is true that the old person's suffering doesn't affect the youth now, is it really unsuitable to accumulate wealth for the old person?

This is the same as the earlier argument: that one does not need to consider others' suffering because it doesn't harm oneself. This example overcomes that doubt.

We need to understand how the very meticulous reasoning presented here is a way to counteract that flawed reasoning, that we don't have to strive to work for other sentient beings to remove their suffering, because their suffering doesn't harm us. If that were so, then someone in their youth would not engage in accumulating wealth to relieve the suffering of their old age. Why? Because, according to the argument presented here, that older person's suffering doesn't affect the young person now.

Using this reasoning, you would not take measures in the morning to relieve the likely sufferings to be experienced in the evening. Why? Because the suffering you might experience later in the evening doesn't harm you now. Likewise you would not relieve sufferings for the next day because those sufferings don't harm you today.

Here we can see the meticulously logic showing that just because something doesn't affect one now, that no reason not to take measures to relieve one's sufferings in the future. Likewise, one should also strive to relieve the sufferings of all sentient beings even though they are separate from us, and don't affect us directly.

The commentary further explains, *since the later future suffering does not harm the earlier person, then even if one fears there could be suffering, it would be inappropriate to protect oneself.* So, the absurdity being pointed out here is, even if one were to fear one would suffer in the future, following that flawed reasoning it would be inappropriate to protect oneself. This points out the absurdity of that earlier hypothetical statement that one need not protect the other beings from suffering because it doesn't affect oneself.

Then this hypothetical argument is presented:

Argument: If one would not wonder in this life whether one could experience suffering in a later life, then one would have to experience sufferings in the later life. It is therefore appropriate to make an effort to prevent that situation.

Again, what is being presented is the absurdity that if one were to follow this flawed reasoning one would think that one does not need to work on relieving the sufferings of future lives because it doesn't affect one now. This follows from the previous hypothetical argument.

The verse reads:

98. *The conceptual thought thinking,
'I will experience this,' is wrong.
The dead person that takes rebirth
As another, is another.*

Basically, the meaning presented in the verse which serves as an answer is:

Answer: The conceptual thought thinking that the self of this life experiences sufferings in the later life is distorted. This would be like a dead person that takes rebirth as another person in a later life. This later person is not suitable to be the same as the earlier person.

This was a refutation of the unsuitability of one to eliminate the sufferings of another with the reasoning

of the similarity of the earlier and later different moments. The meaning of the text is not that it is a refutation based on the ultimate.

The commentary indicates that *the conceptual thought that the self of this life experiences sufferings in the later life is distorted*, because, of course, there is a different person. The individual person of this life and the individual person in the future life are separate and distinct. What is further explained is the absurdity that a dead person that takes rebirth as another person in a later life, is not suitable to be the same as the earlier person.

This is a refutation of *the unsuitability of one to eliminate the sufferings of another with the reasoning of the similarity of the earlier and later different moments. The meaning of the text is not that it is a refutation based on the ultimate.*

The reasoning is that the need to remove the suffering of the future is not because they are the same person. Rather, because of the continuity from moment to moment, one does actually affect the later person. From moment to moment one affects the next moment. So in this way we actually see how they are related.

The verse reads:

99. *When something is suffering
And one protects another,
The suffering of the foot is not that of the hand
Why should it protect it?*

The commentary explains:

Further, when one part of the body needs to eliminate the suffering of another body part and protect that body part, since the suffering of a foot pained by a thorn is not the suffering of the hand, why should the hand eliminate this suffering of the foot? It would follow that it is unsuitable.

What is being presented here is that if the flawed reasoning is that one does not take the initiative to remove the suffering of another just because it is separate, then it is also true that if, *the suffering of a foot pained by a thorn is not the suffering of the hand, why should the hand eliminate this suffering of the foot?* This shows the absurdity of not following logic. While the foot is separate from the hand, if there is pain from a thorn in the foot, then even though the hand is separate from the foot, it can eliminate the suffering of the foot by taking out the thorn.

We can see how the reasoning in relation to the first hypothetical argument has been meticulously presented. If one sees that just because others' suffering is not one's own as a reason not to eliminate their suffering, then all this reasoning is presented to show this is a flawed conception.

The next reads:

100. *If, 'though unsuitable, here
It engages due to grasping at self.'
This unsuitable self and other,
What can they do? They are to be abandoned.*

The commentary explains it as an argument:

Argument: Even though it is inappropriate for one to eliminate unrelated suffering, here it is appropriate for one to eliminate the sufferings of the other because the bodies of earlier and later lives, and earlier and later moments of this body are all held by one person as mine due to familiarisation.

Then provides an answer:

Answer: What can that unsuitably held as independent self and other accomplish? They are

suitable to be abandoned because the grasping at the self of person is mistaken and generates all faults.

This presents a way to back up the earlier hypothetical argument. In thinking it is not necessary to remove the sufferings of sentient beings because it is unrelated to oneself, the reason presented is that it is not the same here, because here the suffering to be removed is related to oneself from this life to the next life, and from earlier moments to the next moments, because this body *is held by one person as mine due to familiarisation.*

As a way to refute that counter argument, the commentary explains, *what can that unsuitably held as independent self and other accomplish?* This means that what you hold as being related from this life to the next life, and from earlier moments to the second moments, as an independently existent self. The 'experiencer' is seen as being one independently existent self that is experiencing the sufferings from this life to the next life, and from earlier moments to later moments.

If we hold onto the individual self, i.e. the person as an independently existent self, then what can that independent self accomplish for others? This means that you cannot actually accomplish anything by grasping at an independently existent self.

What is explained in conclusion is, *they are suitable to be abandoned because the grasping at the self of person is mistaken and generates all faults.* This very notion of an independent self that experiences suffering from earlier moments to the next moments, from one life to the next life, is in fact the misconception of grasping at an independent self which is the root, and fundamental cause, of all faults. It, *generates all faults* and thus is what has to be completely abandoned. Holding onto such misconceptions is completely wrong.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱུང་རྒྱུ་མེད་མཁའ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྟུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

12 April 2016

With the positive motivation that we generated during the Refuge and Bodhicitta prayer in mind, we can now engage in our meditation practice. Once the motivation is set, the practice becomes really worthwhile.

[meditation]

As usual, we can set the motivation for receiving teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the Buddha's teachings, as there is no more supreme method than the Mahayana teachings. Then, having listened to the teachings, I will put them into practice well.

3.1.2.2. THE WAY OF MEDITATING ON EQUALISING SELF AND OTHERS

3.1.2.2.2. *Explaining the reason why it is suitable to meditate on it as equal*

3.1.2.2.2.1. **Extensive explanation (cont.)**

3.1.2.2.2.1.3. *Clearing away obstructing thoughts of 'It is unsuitable to meditate on equalising self and others'*

First the commentary presents this argument:

These two situations are not the same as two different people are unrelated, but the hands and feet of one person belong to the same group, and the old and young person and the earlier and later life belong to the same continuum. In the latter situation, it is appropriate for one to help the other, but in the first situation it is inappropriate.

These two situations are not the same as two different people are unrelated, refers back to examples that were presented in our last session: the hands can help the feet when they are sore, and the person in the earlier part of their life helps the person in the latter part of their life.

Here the argument is that *the hands and feet of one person belong to the same group and the old and young person and the earlier and later life belong to the same continuum. In the latter situation it is appropriate for one to help the other, but in the first situation it is inappropriate.*

There is also a connotation of refuting the non-Buddhist view that the same self goes from the morning until the evening, as well as from this life to the next life. In fact we regularly hold this misconception ourselves. We have no qualms about thinking that the person who wakes up in the morning is the same person in the afternoon and late in the evening, and that there has been no change from morning to night. We have this notion due to the misconception of viewing the person as being permanent. When one lacks an understanding of impermanence - specifically subtle impermanence - then it does appear that it is the same person. We instinctively think that the person who came in through the door earlier is the same

person sitting on the cushion now, but in fact the moment of the person who came in through the door earlier has already ceased to exist, and there is a new moment of the person now. Thus, we are changing from moment to moment. This misconception that it is the same person from morning to night arises from not understanding subtle impermanence.

Then the following verse is presented as an answer to that qualm.

101. *That called continuum and collection
Are false, like the rosary and army,
There is no-one suffering,
What should they abandon belonging to whom?*

The commentary then explains the meaning of this verse:

Answer: It follows there is no independent group or continuum, because that called continuum and group are falsities labelled on the earlier and later parts of that possessing the continuity, and on the parts of the group; like the rosary and army that are a falsity labelled on their different parts.

As explained in the commentary, *it follows that there is no independent group or continuum, because that called continuum and group are falsities labelled on the earlier and later parts of that possessing the continuity, and on the parts of the group.* The examples given here are *the rosary and army.* What is labelled as rosary is completely dependent on the many beads that make up the rosary — you don't call one bead a rosary; likewise with an army — you don't call one soldier an army. A rosary is dependent on the many parts that are many individual beads, and an army is also dependent on the many parts that are many individual soldiers. This shows that there is no independently existent rosary or army, because each has to depend on many other parts.

A continuum is also dependent on earlier parts and later parts. For example, establishing morning depends on an afternoon and an evening — without an afternoon and an evening one cannot refer to morning. Likewise evening is dependent on earlier parts of the day, such as afternoon and morning. Establishing night depends on there being a morning. Since they are dependent on each other they cannot be truly existent. As they are designated or imputed phenomena they are a falsity and not truly existent. That is what is being clearly explained with these examples.

Next, the commentary presents a further hypothetical argument:

If you say 'Since they are contained by the mind of one person, they fall under the control of that person and therefore, even though they are different from the point of view of object and time, the suffering of one is eliminated by the suffering of the other'.

Then the answer to that argument is:

Because there is no self of the person that is suffering, there is also no happiness or suffering that is controlled by any controller. For this reason, there is no independent possessor engaging suffering and hence, all sufferings of self and others have no distinction. However, there is the suffering of self and other who are nominally dependent on each other, and therefore it is appropriate to eliminate one's suffering.

This again relates to the point that there is *no* independently existing *self of the person who is suffering*. Therefore *there is also no happiness or suffering that is controlled by any independent controller*.

The next two lines of the verse serve as an explanation of this point:

*102abc. Without a possessor of suffering
Everything is without distinction*

The explanation of these two lines, as presented in the commentary, is:

For this reason, there is no independent possessor engaging suffering, and hence all sufferings of self and others have no distinction. However, there is the suffering of self and other who are nominally dependent on each other, and therefore it is appropriate to eliminate one's suffering.

Since *there is no independent possessor* who has the experience of *suffering*, there is no *distinction* between the suffering of oneself and the suffering of others in that sense. As there is no independent possessor of that suffering, there is no difference between oneself and others. However, while there is no independent possessor of suffering, there is the suffering of *self and others, who are nominally dependent on each other*. So there is suffering, which arises in dependence on other causes and conditions and, as that is the same for oneself and others, *it is appropriate to eliminate one's suffering*, as well as the suffering of others.

Because suffering is nominally existent, it is possible and thus suitable to eliminate suffering. If suffering were to exist inherently and independently, in and of itself, or from its own side, then it would not be possible to abandon suffering. However, while suffering does not exist independently it does exist nominally, which indicates that it exists in dependence on its causes.

By identifying the causes of suffering one can eliminate the causes, and then suffering will naturally cease. This is the crux of the point, which is that because suffering is dependent on its causes, and not independently existent, one can overcome suffering. Thus it is possible and appropriate to abandon suffering.

When this is understood with respect to one's own suffering, then it can be related to the suffering of others. Just as one's own suffering is dependent on causes and conditions, and thus appropriate and suitable to be overcome, the suffering of others is also dependent on causes and conditions, and thus appropriate and suitable to be overcome.

3.1.2.2.2. Short summary

The relevant lines of verse read:

*102d. Because it is suffering, it is to be eliminated.
What use is this definiteness here?*

*103. The statement 'Why should one eliminate
The sufferings of others?', is not up for debate.
If one reverses, then one reverses all,
If not, then one is like sentient beings.*

Then the commentary explains the meaning of these lines:

Therefore, because the suffering of others is suffering, it is suitable to be eliminated by me. What use is the concrete division into self and other? Since one needs

to eliminate all the suffering of others, there is no argument like, 'Since it does not harm me why should one reverse the suffering of others?' If one reverses one's sufferings because one does not desire them, then it is appropriate to reverse the suffering of everybody. If the sufferings of others are not to be eliminated, then one's own sufferings also become something not to be eliminated, like the sufferings of others. Therefore, because the suffering of others is suffering, it is suitable to be eliminated by me. What use is the concrete division into self and other? Since one needs to eliminate all the suffering of others, there is no argument like, 'Since it does not harm me why should one reverse the suffering of others?' If one reverses one's sufferings because one does not desire them, then it is appropriate to reverse the suffering of everybody. If the sufferings of others are not to be eliminated, then one's own sufferings also become something not to be eliminated, like the sufferings of others. Hence, one should put great importance into eliminating the sufferings of others by cherishing others as one cherishes oneself.

The first part of the explanation presents the absurdity of the very concrete distinction we make between self and other. What is being presented here is that as there is no difference between the need to eliminate suffering within oneself and the suffering of others, one needs to definitely consider removing the suffering of others.

If one reverses one's sufferings because one does not desire them then it is appropriate to reverse suffering of every living being. If the sufferings of others are not to be eliminated then one's own suffering also becomes something not to be eliminated, like the suffering of others. What is being explained here is that if one thinks there is no need to eliminate the sufferings of others, then the same reasons should apply to oneself as well; i.e. that there is no need to eliminate one's own suffering.

However the fact is that we do strive to remove any suffering that we experience. *Hence, one should put great importance into eliminating the sufferings of others by cherishing others as one cherishes oneself.* The point here is that the instinctive wish to remove one's own suffering arises because of self-cherishing. There is no reason for striving to overcome one's own suffering other than not wanting to experience that suffering. And this is true regardless of whether we are engaging in Dharma practice or in mundane activities — whenever we experience pain we recognise it as something to be overcome.

That instinctive wish to overcome suffering is due to self-cherishing. So if we can change that attitude to cherishing others just as one cherishes oneself, then removing the suffering of others will become as instinctive as removing one's own suffering.

So we can see that this is very precise advice, using reason and examples. We can see how the text is meticulously presenting the practice of equalising and exchanging self with others, and we need to incorporate these reasons and explanations into our actual practice.

To give an example to illustrate the point, when those close and dear to us suffer, we take the immediate initiative to remove their suffering. The wish to remove their pain and suffering arises in part because they are

related to me, i.e. one has a strong notion that they are my husband, wife, child or relative. Because of that we feel “I need to remove their suffering”. So our compassion and love and wish to remove their suffering and establish them in happiness is mixed with a self-cherishing attitude. Although there is a level of self-cherishing, we take the initiative to remove their suffering. So we are extending our concern beyond our immediate self. By using this example we can understand that it is definitely possible to generate the wish to remove the sufferings of others by merely focusing on their suffering. The very gross level of self-cherishing focuses merely on one’s own needs. But here we see that although there is some level of self-cherishing, one is extending one’s focus beyond oneself onto the need to remove the suffering of one’s partner, children and so forth.

With this illustration we can see that since it is possible to extend our concerns towards those who are related to us, it is definitely possible to also extend a genuine wish to eliminate suffering and establish happiness for those who are not related to us. This wish can arise when one contemplates the fact that they are suffering and deprived of happiness.

Right now, of course, due to our habituation and strong self-cherishing attitude we may not yet be capable of extending the wish to eliminate suffering and establish happiness much further beyond ourselves. However, if we train ourselves in thinking like this, then through familiarity, it will eventually be possible to generate this attitude: Because others are suffering, I need to take initiative to eliminate their suffering, and because others are deprived of happiness I need to establish them in happiness.

This is a really profound method. As Shantideva explains, the main reason for taking the initiative to eliminate the suffering of others arises from contemplating the fact that they are suffering, and just like oneself, they do not wish to experience suffering; and the main reason to establish happiness for others is because they are deprived of happiness and are in need of happiness, just like oneself. If we really contemplate this point and train our mind in thinking along these lines, then the more we find this to be sound reasoning, the more our mind will be attuned to actually taking the initiative to eliminate the suffering of others, and establish them in happiness.

[Establishing a broad perspective]

Of course at this stage in our training we will feel that we don’t have this capacity, and that we cannot do much. However, through training our mind by contemplating these points again and again, we are leaving a very strong imprint that carries on from this life to the next life. Because we have implanted a strong imprint of wanting to eliminate the sufferings of others and establish them in happiness, the attitude of cherishing others will be more spontaneous and natural in the next life. Further training in the next life will then strengthen that wish so that it becomes stronger and stronger.

We have to understand that as beginners we cannot expect to develop this in just one lifetime, so we need to establish the basis to engage in the training over many successive lives. By employing this method, even though

we may not see an immediate transformation taking place, every effort we make will eventually be accumulated into obtaining a significant result. We need to understand the importance of not having immediate big expectations of our Dharma practice. Rather we need to see that every small effort that we make now leads to big results in the future. When we have this attitude then we will definitely experience the benefit of the practice in this life as well.

When we view our practice as progressing gradually along the path, we will see that whatever practice we engage in comes down to acquainting ourselves with the means of overcoming self-cherishing, and establishing the mind of cherishing others. This practice not only brings about benefit in this life but implants a positive imprint that helps to establish the basis to engage in this practice over many lives.

As we progressively improve from life to life, we are working towards reaching the ultimate state of perfection, where we have completely eradicated all our negativities or defilements, and acquired all possible qualities —the perfected state of enlightenment. Reaching that state comes about from the practice of familiarising our mind with cherishing others, and then working towards eliminating their suffering and establishing them in happiness to the best of our ability.

We establish the causes for obtaining our goal of liberation and enlightenment by continuing with our meagre efforts in the practices now; it is through continual practice that we accumulate the causes for reaching liberation and ultimate enlightenment. This is how we need to understand the ultimate purpose of our practice.

It might seem that this is a bit of a side-track, but I feel that these are very important points to keep in mind. Accepting that there has been past life and that there will be future life gives our Dharma practice a real purpose. We are not practising the Dharma for some immediate gratification. Rather, we are practising in order to establish the conducive conditions for future lives that will enable us to further progress along the path to liberation and enlightenment.

In order to establish that basis, we have to obtain a good rebirth such as a human rebirth. It is not possible to progress along the path if we take rebirth in a lower realm. It is only on the basis of a higher rebirth and higher status - such as a precious human rebirth - that we can further progress along the path.

Securing whatever practice of Dharma we do now will, at the very least, establish the basis for one to obtain a good rebirth in the next life, which further establishes the means to create the causes and conditions for obtaining liberation and enlightenment. It is important to understand this.

Contemplating in this way will definitely assist us as we approach our death. At that time the only thing that we can rely upon is the Dharma practice that we have established in our life. We are moving further and further away from our possessions and friends in this life, and getting closer and closer to the conditions of our next life, including possessions, Dharma friends and so forth. The

reality is that we are approaching death, so it is really worthwhile to establish the causes for good conditions in our future life. When we contemplate in this way then we can see the real purpose of the Dharma.

So it is good to have a very clear picture of how we are progressing towards establishing good conditions for our next life, in accordance with the explanations in the Dharma.

As explained in the teachings, the practice that will prevent one from falling into the lower realms is the practice of **morality**. We are all capable of practising morality, and in fact, because we intentionally avoid engaging in the ten non-virtues we are already engaging in that practice. When we establish the practice of intentionally not engaging in the ten non-virtues, then that is the practice of morality. Then there is no question that we will be protected from falling to the lower realms in the next life. So we need to assure ourselves with the firm belief that due to practising morality and so forth, we will definitely be protected from falling into lower realms in the next life. Having strong faith in this way will further encourage us to continue to practise morality and so forth.

The practice that is a cause for one to acquire good conditions to sustain oneself in the next life, such as wealth and so forth, is the practice of **generosity**. That is also something that we are capable of practising now. Generosity is defined as the mind of giving. So we can definitely engage in the practice of generosity. Of course, we need to be generous with material things to whatever capacity we can give, but the main point is to familiarise ourselves with the mind of giving.

The cause that secures a good entourage of friends and companions in the next life is the practice of **patience**, which we can also practise now. That which helps one to create the causes to be able to accomplish what one sets out to do is the practice of **joyous effort**, while the practice of **meditation** develops sound concentration. As you will recall, the chapters of the text present the six perfections, and we need to practise them in order to secure good conditions for our next life.

[The real protector]

The real protection against an unfortunate rebirth in the next lifetime is, as the teachings present, the Dharma. Here it is essential that we understand that the Dharma is a quality that is developed within one's own mind. For example, that which protects one from the lower realms is the morality that one observes now by avoiding the ten non-virtues and abiding by the ten virtues. The practice of morality is none other than within one's own mind stream. We make a decision to be moral and our observance of morality is what we develop within our own mind. That which prevents us from poverty is the generosity that we practise now, which is also developed within our own mind stream.

We shouldn't have lofty ideas about Dharma being an external protector. The Dharma is that which is developed within one's own mind. Ultimately, therefore, the real protector is something we have to establish within ourselves. It is essential that we understand that, otherwise we might be misled.

As presented in the teachings on the Three Jewels, the ultimate Dharma Jewel is true cessation and the true path. However true cessation and the true path are only found within the continuum of arya beings. So how can the Dharma Jewel protect us if it is only found within the continuum of arya beings?

We do, however, have a more immediate understanding of how the Buddha Jewel and the Sangha Jewel help us. The Sangha Jewel helps us when the Sangha give us direct assistance, advice and teachings and so forth. So we can see that we receive direct benefit from the Sangha Jewel. Because of our obscurations we may not be able to actually see the Buddha yet, but we are inspired by him and we definitely benefit from the advice and the teachings that he presented. So we can definitely see that we receive benefit from the Buddha Jewel.

However, it is a bit harder to see how the ultimate Dharma Jewel, the true path and true cessation within the continuum of aryas, actually helps us directly. While we may not have yet developed true cessation and the true path, we are nonetheless able to observe morality and practise generosity and patience and so forth. So these practices help us to protect ourselves, we need to view them as being the Dharma Jewel at our level. This is, I feel, a significant point for us to understand.

The beneficiary of the Dharma Jewel within the arya continuum, which is true cessation and the true path, is of course the aryas themselves, and other beings who are able to directly relate to the aryas, and receive teachings from them. The oral teachings of the Buddha are, of course, part of the Dharma Jewel, and that benefits us, since the transformation that slowly takes place within our mind is made possible by the advice and guidance we receive from the teachings of the Buddha.

Although the oral teachings of the Buddha are Dharma, they are not presented as the ultimate Dharma. The ultimate Dharma, which is the real protector, is true cessation and the true path, which are developed within one's own mental continuum.

It is good to understand how this works in relation to oneself.

3.1.2.2.2.2. Refuting objections

This is subdivided into two:

3.1.2.2.2.2.1. Refuting that bodhisattvas become overwhelmed by their own suffering through contemplating the suffering of sentient beings

3.1.2.2.2.2.2. The need to contemplate suffering

3.1.2.2.2.2.1. Refuting that bodhisattvas become overwhelmed by their own suffering through contemplating the suffering of sentient beings

Here the heading is presenting a significant doubt as to whether *bodhisattvas become overwhelmed by their own suffering through contemplating the suffering of sentient beings*.

This is something that we experience at our level. When someone who is close to us experiences difficulties, or hardships, or illness, we feel uncomfortable, and because of our unease and discomfort we take the initiative to help them. Even though their problems make us feel uncomfortable it gives us the initiative to benefit them.

While we experience some discomfort when others are ill and suffering, that is not what the bodhisattvas experience. They are never overwhelmed by the suffering of others, and they feel no sorrow.

Another significant point is that training one's mind and developing compassion, beginning with those who are close to oneself, is also one of the supreme ways of purifying one's own negative karma.

The verse that relates to this heading reads:

*104. If, 'Since sufferings increase due to compassion,
Why generate them with urgency?'
If one contemplates the suffering of migrators,
How can suffering increase due to compassion?*

The commentary on this verse begins with a hypothetical argument:

If you say 'out of compassion one makes all the sufferings of others one's own, then, one's sufferings become more. Thus, why generate suffering with intensity instead of abandoning it?'

The answer is:

When bodhisattvas contemplate the suffering of migrators, it follows that their suffering does not increase due to compassion, because this compassion eliminates all their feelings of suffering.

The commentary begins with the hypothetical argument, *If, out of compassion, one makes all the sufferings of others one's own, then one's sufferings become more. Thus why generate suffering with intensity instead of abandoning it?*

Bodhisattvas are constantly thinking about the sufferings of other sentient beings, and they are constantly contemplating how to eliminate the sufferings of sentient beings, so it would be absurd for them to be disturbed by that suffering. Thinking about the suffering of others does not cause bodhisattvas any suffering. On the contrary, it actually benefits them.

Initially when one contemplates the sufferings of others it may bring some discomfort, but when one actually forsakes that personal discomfort and thinks about the benefit of contemplating the suffering of others, then that makes the discomfort acceptable.

The commentary then explains that *when bodhisattvas contemplate the sufferings of migrators it follows that their suffering does not increase due to compassion, because the compassion eliminates all their feelings of suffering.*

In fact, contemplating the suffering of sentient beings actually counteracts one's own suffering. From our own limited experience we know that when we take a moment to contemplate the sufferings of others it can definitely help to eliminate our own suffering, because it takes our mind away from our own problems. When one thinks about the plight of others, it definitely helps one to alleviate any immediate discomfort one may be experiencing. If, even at our very ordinary level, we recognise the truth of this, then we can imagine how wholeheartedly and continuously working for the welfare of sentient beings will be a cause to bring great joy and happiness for bodhisattvas.

3.1.2.2.2.2. *The need to contemplate suffering*

The point here is that because contemplating the suffering of others can ultimately benefit oneself and help others, there is a definite need to contemplate suffering.

We can leave this for the next session.

A further practical point about how developing compassion for other beings can help to alleviate one's own suffering and bring more mental ease, is that it can definitely reduce anger towards others, as well as reduce jealousy, competitiveness and pride.

These defilements within our mind can cause us a lot of sorrow and angst, but by developing compassion we can reduce anger and relieve jealousy and so forth. When we feel compassion for someone then, rather than feeling jealous, we feel glad when things go well for them, and when things don't go well for them we feel sorry for them. Without compassion, however, the opposite will occur: we start becoming angry and upset when things go well for them, and if things don't go well, we might even be glad.

So we can see how, even at our level, generating some feeling of compassion definitely alleviates negative emotions. And of course the effect on bodhisattvas who continuously benefit other sentient beings will be far greater than anything we experience.

As mentioned in the teachings, the antidote to harmfulness is compassion. When one generates compassion then any thoughts of harm will definitely be overcome. When one does not have harmful intention then one is in a happy state of mind; because there is no intention to go out of the way to hurt and harm others, one's mind will be very comfortable and relaxed. So we can see that how a mind that does not harbour ill-will and harmfulness is a happy mind, and as a consequence the person is a happy person.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱུང་རྒྱུ་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

19 April 2016

Based on the motivation we have generated, we can now spend a few minutes for our meditation practice.

[meditation]

As usual, we can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: for the sake of all mother sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will engage in listening to the Mahayana teachings, and put them into practice well.

3.1.2.2. THE WAY OF MEDITATING ON EQUALISING SELF AND OTHERS

3.2.2.2.2 Explaining the reason why it is suitable to meditate on it as equal

3.1.2.2.2.2. Refuting objections (cont.)

3.1.2.2.2.2.2. The need to contemplate suffering

In the text we are covering the need to contemplate suffering. This point follows from an earlier qualm that, if one generates compassion for others it will cause one suffering, so what purpose does it serve? The response presented here is that, for bodhisattvas, the more they contemplate the suffering of others, the stronger their compassion becomes. For bodhisattvas, generating compassion serves to eliminate their own suffering, rather than causing them more suffering. As I mentioned previously, whenever we feel compassion for another person, at that time there is no possibility of feeling anger towards them. As this was explained earlier, I don't need to go over it again. For those who are keen to put what they hear into practice, when a point is repeated, there is no problem as it is a pleasure for them to hear it again. But for those who do not put what they hear into practice, it may sound like an unnecessary repetition and hurt their ears!

The main point here however is that, although this advice is intended for bodhisattvas, the practices that enabled them to become bodhisattvas were taken step by step. This is also the approach we need to take. Instead of thinking 'Oh, these practices were intended only for bodhisattvas', if we put whatever level we can now into practice, then gradually, we will reach the stage of becoming a bodhisattva.

The step by step presentation here is in itself a guide to developing our practice and, most importantly, it provides us with a means to skilfully present the teachings to others, ensuring we do not present anything unsuitable for their current level of practice and state of mind. One may think one has to present all the profound and extensive teachings to others; however, instead of benefiting them, this might overwhelm them and cause more confusion. We need to remember how, when we were beginners in the Dharma, everything was new and at times seemed overwhelming. Then as we progressively began to understand, slowly, slowly, things became clearer and clearer to our mind. Thus, we need to present the Dharma to others in gradual steps.

The two verses that relate to this heading are:

105. *If through one suffering
Many sufferings became non-existent,*

*Then it is only suitable for self and other
That suffering is generated out of affection.*

106. *Even though Supushpa Chandra
Knew the suffering caused by the king,
He did not eliminate his own suffering,
In order to exhaust the suffering of many.*

The commentary explains:

If it were the case that one insignificant suffering eliminates the many samsaric sufferings of the infinite migrators then, since it has a great purpose, it is only suitable for oneself and others to generate this suffering out of affection.

As it is stated in *The King of Concentration Sutra*, even though the bodhisattva Supushpa Chandra knew that he would receive the harm of being killed by the king, he did not eliminate his own suffering but accepted it, as he saw that this would alleviate the suffering of many sentient beings, and proceeded to the town. He did not listen to his entourage, who tried to stop him.

The main point here is that if one's own experience of suffering becomes a cause to eliminate great suffering for other sentient beings, then it is worthwhile to endure that suffering and willingly take it upon oneself. As the root text states *If through one suffering* presents the fact that when just one suffering becomes a means to eliminate the suffering of infinite migrators, then it becomes worthwhile to willingly accept it, because it serves a great purpose.

This presentation also gives us an insight into the great qualities of bodhisattvas, who willingly endure extensive difficulties and hardships for the benefit of sentient beings. The capacity of bodhisattvas to extend themselves in such great ways to benefit sentient beings, of course, comes from love and compassion. Thus we can see that love and compassion are the basis for bodhisattvas to acquire all their great qualities. When the commentary continues *it is only suitable for oneself and others to generate this suffering out of affection*, the main point is that when one's intentional acceptance of suffering becomes a means to generate compassion for other sentient beings, then it is suitable for one to experience that suffering.

The example presented here is from *The King of Concentration Sutra*. It relates the story of a great bodhisattva by the name of Supushpa Chandra, who resided mostly in isolation and didn't spend much time in towns and so forth. This bodhisattva knew it was time for the people in the town where the king ruled to hear the teachings. However, through his clairvoyance, he knew that if he did so, the king would become enraged and punish him with death. The bodhisattva knew that if he did not go into the city to give teachings, those people would not be free from suffering and obtain happiness. On the other hand, if he gave Dharma teachings, they would be able to be liberated from suffering and obtain happiness. So with this insight, the bodhisattva went into the city to present the teachings to the people for seven days. He taught continuously during the day and in the evenings he circumambulated a reliquary stupa. He didn't have to partake of food and drink because, having reached a high level of concentration, he was sustained by the food of concentration, so therefore didn't need to eat and drink. After the bodhisattva gave the teachings, as he foresaw, the king became enraged and gave orders to kill him. However, it is said that later the king developed great regret and built a reliquary stupa as means to purify his heavy negative karma.

As the commentary explains, even though the bodhisattva Supushpa Chandra knew he would receive the harm of being killed by the king, *he did not eliminate his own suffering*, meaning he disregarded his own suffering *as he saw that this* (that is, giving Dharma teachings) *would alleviate the suffering of many sentient beings, and proceeded to the town. He did not listen to his entourage, who tried to stop him*: his entourage also knew that the king would be enraged and punish him. However, he didn't listen to them but went ahead. This shows his great compassion. One of the greatest sufferings anyone can experience is the treat to one's life, yet out of compassion, the bodhisattva still went into the town for the sole benefit of other beings. Hearing stories like this, of great bodhisattva's deeds, should instil admiration within us and encourage us to make aspirational prayers such as: 'May I also be able to engage in extensive deeds like the great bodhisattvas to benefit sentient beings'. When I read stories like this myself, it instils in me the strong aspiration, 'May I be able to follow these examples of the great bodhisattvas to benefit sentient beings, if possible in this life, and in many lives to come'. At our level, making a strong aspiration is of great significance, as it leaves a strong imprint in our mind. This is one way we can put these teachings into personal practice.

3.1.2.3. THE BENEFITS OF MEDITATING ON IT

There are five subheadings:

3.1.2.3.1. Those dedicated only to the purpose of others do not have great sufferings

3.1.2.3.2. Working for the purpose of others as its happiness is superior

3.1.2.3.3. One's pride will be pacified

3.1.2.3.4. Not depending on reward and ripened results

3.1.2.3.5. For those reasons it is suitable to meditate on equalising self and others

We can derive some meaning from these headings themselves:

Those dedicated only to the purpose of others do not have great sufferings. Here, the text is being honest, admitting that while there might be some suffering when one dedicates to the purpose of others, it would not be so great compared to other sufferings.

Working for the purpose of others as its happiness is superior. Because the happiness one derives is superior, it is appropriate to work for others for that purpose.

One's pride will be pacified. As mentioned earlier, when one has compassion for others, negative afflictions such as anger, and as mentioned here, pride, will not occur. Thus when anyone exhibits pride or contempt for others, it is a clear sign they don't have compassion for others. When one has compassion for others, there is no room for contempt or pride to arise.

Not depending on reward and ripened results. This refers to benefiting others with no ulterior motive of receiving a reward or gaining the ripened result of that action at some time in the future. Rather, the text indicates that we should benefit others solely from the intention to alleviate their suffering and bring them happiness, and not for one's own personal gain.

For those reasons it is suitable to meditate on equalising self and others. In relation to this, we can reflect on how the teachings explain that, of the two different techniques for developing bodhicitta – the seven-fold cause and effect technique and the exchanging self with other technique presented here, – this technique is said to be much more

profound and powerful. The explanation here is that we willingly take others' suffering upon ourselves for the purpose of benefiting sentient beings. That is what makes it very powerful.

3.1.2.3.1. Those dedicated only to the purpose of others do not have great sufferings

We usually have this doubt: 'If I work for the purpose of others I might suffer greatly'. This way of thinking prevents us from developing strong compassion. For bodhisattvas, this would not be a concern, but for us at our level, it seems to be a great concern. As a way to remove that doubt, the following advice is presented.

*107. When the continuum becomes thus acquainted
One takes joy in pacifying the suffering of others.
Like ducks entering a lotus pond
One will even enter the hell without respite.*

The commentary to this explains:

If one's continuum becomes habituated to the meditation of equalising self and other as explained before, then one takes joy in pacifying the sufferings of others. In order to destroy the sufferings of others one will disregard one's own sufferings and happily enter even the hell without respite just like ducks into a lotus pond. One will not have any mental suffering working for the purpose of others.

Thus, one familiarises one's mind with the practice of equalising self and other again and again by contemplating the great benefits and virtues of the practice. Then, through repeated contemplation and familiarisation, one reaches a point of feeling confident that exchanging one's own happiness for the happiness of others is possible. As beginners and ordinary beings, we may initially feel daunted by the prospect of exchanging our own happiness for the happiness of others, i.e. exchanging the focus from oneself to solely focusing on the wellbeing and happiness of others. But that is because we have not acquainted our mind with this practice. The point presented here is that, through acquaintance, it becomes possible to develop this state of mind.

The actual meditation of equalising self and other involves exchanging one's previous focus – of working solely for one's own happiness, and eliminating suffering just for oneself – to that of working solely for the happiness of others and removing their suffering. This is the state of mind that one needs to familiarise oneself with. When one actually reaches that state through acquaintance, *then one takes joy in pacifying the sufferings of others.*

Furthermore, *in order to destroy the sufferings of others one will disregard one's own sufferings and happily enter even the hell without respite.* The example given here is *like ducks entering a lotus pond.* If there is a beautiful pond with lotuses, ducks will have no hesitation – they will immediately want to enter the pond where the water is nice and cool. We can see for ourselves how ducks will waddle together and joyfully head straight for water. This example illustrates how, when bodhisattvas see the sufferings of others, they willingly and joyfully attempt to help those who are suffering.

The last line of the commentary for this verse is *one will not have any mental suffering working for the purpose of others.* We might have some experience ourselves of experiencing physical suffering without our mind being greatly affected and disturbed, thus enabling us to avoid mental suffering.

3.1.2.3.2. Working for the purpose of others as its happiness is superior

108. *If one liberates sentient beings
One has an ocean of joy.
Is this not superior?
What use is it to desire liberation?*

The commentary explains:

If one liberates sentient beings from cyclic existence then one will be filled by an ocean of joy that accomplishes all one's wishes, and one will be satisfied. Is this not superior? What use is it to desire liberation only for oneself? Remembering that all sentient beings have been one's mother, one should strive for their purpose.

This shows again that what brings the greatest joy for bodhisattvas is when they see other beings free from the suffering of cyclic existence. Bodhisattvas are indeed blessed and noble beings – their only wish is for sentient beings to be free from suffering. When they see other beings free from suffering, it fills their mind with *an ocean of joy* and accomplishes their wishes, so they are satisfied. Here, the rhetorical question, *Is this not superior?* is presented to indicate that this is indeed a superior state of mind. Then the commentary asks another rhetorical question: *What use is it to desire liberation only for oneself?* If that state of mind is indeed superior, then what use is it to desire liberation just for oneself? This part of the commentary concludes, *remembering that all sentient beings have been one's mother, one should strive for their purpose.* When one remembers the kindness of one's own mother then relates it to all beings having been one's mother, it becomes an impetus for one to naturally and spontaneously want to bring them happiness and remove their suffering, as a way to repay their kindness. This is the point of contemplating the kindness of beings as having been one's mother.

The first step in the seven-fold cause and effect sequence of developing bodhicitta is recognising all beings as having been one's mother. When one reflects upon one's own mother's kindness and really brings it to heart then, as we expand the scope of that meditation, it becomes possible to see all beings as being extremely kind as well. So, based on the recognition of one's own mother's kindness in this life, one can then relate that to all beings, and see them as being as kind as one's mother because of the kindness they have shown to us in the past.

The main point is that one would be able to relate to other sentient beings in the same way as one would relate to one's own mother. When one sees one's own mother who has been kind, one feels great joy and naturally wishes her to be happy; likewise it is possible to relate to all other beings in the same way.

As a meditation practice, contemplating the passages and points here even for few minutes can really settle one's mind. It will definitely have good effect.

3.1.2.3.3. One's pride will be pacified

We need to take this presentation as a personal instruction and reflect on how, when one engages in the actual practice, one's pride will be pacified. In contrast to this, when one learns a bit about the teachings and Dharma, if it serves as means to increase one's pride and a sense of contempt over others, then it has defeated the purpose. This is when the Dharma becomes poison instead of being a remedy, which is really unfortunate. All of the Buddha's teachings are said to be a means to overcome pride. So when those very teachings

become a cause for one's pride to increase, then one will not have benefited from the teachings. This is a real loss. So it is important for us to constantly try our utmost not to allow pride to take over our mind.

109ab. *Thus, though one works for the purpose of others
There is no vanity or astonishment.*

The commentary explains:

Thus, as one takes great joy in the purpose of others, even though one works for the purpose of others, one will not be vain, thinking 'I have nurtured them with kindness,' or feeling astonished with one's deeds.

Referring again to the bodhisattva practices, when one takes great joy in the purpose of others while wholeheartedly benefiting them without any ulterior motive, there is no sense of vanity such as the thought, 'I have nurtured them with great kindness'. This counteracts our normal worldly way of thinking. Normally, we may think 'Oh, I have done such wonderful things for others', 'I have gone out of my way to do great things for them'. Such thoughts of vanity arise due to the self-cherishing mind. When we say 'I have nurtured them with kindness', there is a strong emphasis on the 'I' which focuses very much on one's own sense of fulfilment. In addition, we also have a feeling of astonishment with our own deeds, 'oh, all the wondrous things that I have done'. Such feelings need to be eliminated. One would not have such feelings when one works solely for the purpose of others.

Thus, when one is free from self-interest and solely works for the benefit of others, this completely counteracts any sense of pride; likewise with anger, jealousy, a sense of competitiveness and so forth.

3.1.2.3.4. Not depending on reward and the ripened results

109cd. *As one singularly takes joy in others' purpose,
There is no hope for a ripening result.*

As one only likes to accomplish the purpose of others there is no hope for a ripening result.

Again, this is emphasising that when one works solely for the purpose of others, it should be without any self-interest of seeking a reward, or hope of a ripening result either in this life, or in future lives. Often we lament, 'I have done so much for them, but look how they treat me' [laughter]. If one were free from self-interest, there would no such complaint or lamentation.

3.1.2.3.5. For those reasons it is suitable to meditate on equalising self and others

110. *Therefore, just as one protects oneself
From slight unpleasantness,
One should generate the mind of compassion
And protect others.*

Since it is appropriate to meditate on equalising self and others, one should generate a mind of compassion and protect others from their undesired suffering just as one protects oneself from even just a few unpleasant words.

Having explained the benefits of equalising and exchanging self with others, the commentary continues *since it is appropriate to meditate on equalising self and others.* What comes next in the Tibetan text is the line *just as one protects oneself from even just a few unpleasant words.* We all can relate to this. When someone utters something that offends us, or others accuse us of something we feel we haven't done, we immediately become defensive saying 'How could you say this to me? How could you accuse me?' Even the slightest

remark like this can hurt us, and we become protective of ourselves. So, just as one has that natural inclination to protect oneself, one should generate the mind of compassion and protect others from undesired suffering. The main point here is that one should develop the mind of compassion that extends to other sentient beings, and wishes to protect them from suffering.

3.1.2.4. *If one meditates on equalising self and others, one can develop it*

This is a significant point to counteract our qualms or doubts about whether this practice is possible or not. We might at this point think, 'Exchanging self with others sounds noble, but how could I possibly achieve it or meditate on it?' Here, the text is saying that if one meditates on it, meaning that if one acquaints one's mind with that, then it is definitely feasible.

As a way to explain the verses, the commentary presents this hypothetical doubt or argument:

Argument: Since one does not generate the thought that thinks of the other's body or eye as 'my body' or 'my eye,' how could one generate the awareness that accepts and rejects others' happiness and suffering as one's own?

The answer to this is presented in the next two verses:

111. *Although others' drop of semen and blood
Does not become an object¹,
Through familiarisation,
One says, 'mine' and knows it as such.*

112. *Likewise, why does one not hold
The body of others by saying, 'mine?'
By replacing one's body with that
Of another, there is no difficulty in this regard.*

As the commentary explains, the meaning of these verses serves as an answer:

Answer: Without familiarisation, then this would be correct. But, if one is able through familiarisation to know and grasp at the drop of the father's and mother's semen and blood as one's own object, saying 'this is mine,' then why should one not be able to hold the body of others as one's own through familiarisation? One should be able to. If one meditates, then one generates the mind thinking of it as one's own. Hence, having contemplated the benefits of eliminating the sufferings of others one should strive to eliminate them.

Then, if one purposely stops cherishing one's body and meditates on substituting another, it will be without out difficulty, like meditating on cherishing self.

What is being explained here is that *through familiarisation*, one holds onto the concept of one's body, which is none other than the product of the *father's semen and the mother's blood* [or ovum]: in other words, separate substances. We have no qualms about holding onto this body as my body. We not only call it 'my body' but we also have strong clinging to it. This comes from familiarisation or habituation, which makes us instinctively grasp at this body as 'my body'. Habituation is similar to what we call instinct. A newborn baby instinctively recognises its mother; we can also see examples of animals having a strong sense of clinging to the mother and immediately recognising them.

Then, as we grow up, we identify strongly with our own body as being 'mine'.

Thus if, through familiarity, we can hold as 'mine' an object such as one's body, which originates as substances from others, then *why should one not be able to hold the body of others as one's own through familiarisation?* While the text may literally seem to be advising one to hold others' bodies as 'mine', it actually means that, just as we cherish our own body, it is possible to cherish other beings. That is the main point. Again we have a rhetorical question, 'why is it not possible?', meaning that indeed it is possible if one meditates or familiarises one's mind by cherishing others just one cherishes oneself. *Hence, having contemplated the benefits of eliminating the sufferings of others one should strive to eliminate them.*

In conclusion, *thus, if one purposely stops cherishing one's body and meditates on substituting another, it will be without out difficulty, like meditating on cherishing self.* So just as we now have a natural and spontaneous attitude towards cherishing oneself, through familiarity it will be possible for us to cherish other beings. So we will be able to substitute cherishing oneself with cherishing other sentient beings.

Having explained the benefits and the possibility of exchanging self for others, one may question, what is the method of exchanging self and others?

3.2. The way of exchanging self and others

Here there are two main sections:

3.2.1. In brief

3.2.2. Extensive explanation

3.2.1. In brief

Again, there are two subdivisions:

3.2.1.1. The way of exchanging self and other

3.2.1.2. The reason why it is suitable to meditate on it

3.2.1.1. THE WAY OF EXCHANGING SELF AND OTHER

113. *Understanding that self is faulty
And that others are an ocean of qualities,
Meditate on completely rejecting self-grasping
And on accepting others.*

Since cherishing oneself is the source of all shortcomings it is faulty and needs to be abandoned with great purpose, and since cherishing other sentient beings is the source of all that is good, it has an ocean of qualities. Understanding this, one should meditate on completely abandoning cherishing self and accept cherishing others.

Here, the text specifically presents the faults of cherishing oneself and the qualities of cherishing others. Without recognising the faults of cherishing oneself and the benefits of cherishing others, there is no way one would even consider generating this mind of exchanging self with others. So, to engage in the practice, one needs to remove the obstructions, which are cherishing oneself and neglecting others.

Since cherishing oneself is the source of all shortcomings it is faulty and needs to be abandoned with great intent which means with great purpose – and since cherishing other sentient beings is the source of all that is good, it has an ocean of qualities. As I have expounded in other teachings, the shortcomings one experiences now are said to have all come from cherishing just oneself. There is no gain but only loss when one solely cherishes oneself, whereas cherishing other beings is the source of all that is good.

¹ Gyaltsab Je: In some translations the line 'although not becoming an object' does not exist.

We can readily relate this to our current situation. For us, having a sound body, and all the other good conditions intact is the result of cherishing others. For example, not causing harm to others, such as taking their life, is the cause for one to have a sound human body. And by having engaged in acts of generosity in the past, one now experiences good conditions and resources. Thus, we can see that all the good qualities we have now are the result of having engaged in virtue: first of all, refraining from harming others; and then having the intention to benefit them. So, leaving aside the ultimate benefit of obtaining liberation and enlightenment, and the benefits of a fortunate rebirth in future, even now we can directly relate to the positive consequences and the benefit to oneself of cherishing others.

3.2.1.2. THE REASON WHY IT IS SUITABLE TO MEDITATE ON IT

Argument: Since sentient beings are of infinite number, it is impossible to hold them as self.

This doubt may occur to us because there is an infinite number of sentient beings. How could one possibly cherish them all as one cherishes oneself? The verse that serves as an answer to this doubt is:

*114. Just as the hands and so forth
Are asserted as parts of the body,
Why does one not assert
Embodied beings as limbs of migrators?*

Answer: Even though the hands and feet are different, because they are parts of the body one desires to protect them. Likewise, although embodied sentient beings are many, if one meditates on cherishing them, then why should one not wish to cherish the migrating beings, just like cherishing the limbs of one's body? It is suitable to desire so.

When we separate the body into different parts, there are quite a lot of them. For example, when we talk about our hand, each of the hands has five fingers so altogether there are ten fingers; our feet have ten toes, and so on. There are many parts to the body, yet we protect them all equally because they are part of 'my body'. *Likewise although embodied sentient beings are many, if one meditates on cherishing them, then why should one not wish to cherish migrating beings just like cherishing the limbs of one's body? It is suitable to desire so.* In relation to the infinite number of sentient beings, the way that I understand it is that, in meditation, we extend our aspiration to all sentient beings; in our mind, we extend to all beings the wish to benefit and cherish them. However, in practice, one can only benefit those in our vicinity, the beings we come into contact with. If we think that in order to cherish other beings, we have to physically benefit them, then that would be impossible. For example, if we think that helping others means giving them money, the number of human beings alone on the planet now is more than 7 billion! I wonder if anyone has enough money to give even one dollar to each human? It would be hard enough to find someone in Australia who could give one dollar to each of the 24 million living here.

So, as I understand it, the way to practise is that first we develop the keen wish to benefit others. Then, whoever we meet, and whoever is in our vicinity, we will be able to help to the best of our ability. This is something we are capable of doing. We can extend help to those around us. So while we develop the thought of cherishing others in our mind and extend it to all beings, at a practical level, we benefit those with whom we come into contact. This is how we put

exchanging self with others into practice. We need to remember, however, to train one's mind not to forsake any living being.

Just like we protect our limbs, we need to protect other sentient beings, for the very reason that just like oneself they do not wish for any suffering and wish to experience happiness. That, in itself, becomes a reason why all sentient beings are like parts of our self. They are exactly the same, they have the same sentiments as we do, wishing to experience happiness, and not wishing to experience any suffering. With that in mind, we can extend our attitude of cherishing all other beings.

We recite the Tara Praises this evening to dedicate for Ross's success in his treatment. It is good for us as Dharma friends to pray and extend our prayers to help each other. This is something really significant and worthwhile for us to do.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱུང་རྒྱུ་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

26 April 2013

While maintaining the motivation generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. *[meditation]*

During the meditation practice we would have been further strengthening our motivation. However, just as a reminder, let us generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and for that purpose I will engage in listening to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practice well.

Generating such a motivation, even for a few moments, will definitely establish very strong positive imprints in our mind.

We have been covering a very meticulous presentation of how to engage in the practice of exchanging self and other. Just last Wednesday I spent about an hour contemplating these points and it occurred to me what a very profound presentation it is. The term exchanging self and other refers to changing an attitude of cherishing just oneself to an attitude of cherishing others.

Earlier, the text described this in terms of exchanging one's happiness and suffering. Previously one focused only on one's own happiness and removing only one's own suffering, and this is exchanged with a focus on establishing others in happiness and removing their suffering.

Following that, the text explained how, just as one previously cherished one's own body as being very precious and held it as 'mine', one can, through familiarity and training, exchange that view with one that cherishes others in the same way.

Although it's not specifically mentioned in the text, I feel that it is appropriate to include the accumulation of virtue and the shunning of negativity into the practice of exchanging self with other as well. Whereas previously one would have engaged in accumulating virtues just for oneself, and shunned negativity just for one's own purpose, this is exchanged with accumulating virtue and purifying negativity for the sake of other sentient beings.

So you can see how, when we really think about these very meticulously presented points, we can expand our way of thinking with this very profound practice.

These are of course the actual practices of bodhisattvas, but they are also intended for us to engage in according to whatever capacity we have now. When we think about these profound practices we also gain an insight into the incredibly noble and amazing deeds of the bodhisattvas. They are perpetually engaged in these very practices solely to benefit other sentient beings, so their presence is truly marvellous.

Of the two techniques of developing bodhicitta, the seven-point cause and effect sequence, which has been presented in other teachings, and this technique of exchanging self and

other, it is the one presented here that is said to be much more vast and profound.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama praises this often. He praises the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* as being the most supreme text presenting the methods for developing bodhicitta and explaining the deeds of bodhisattvas. In particular he praises this practice of exchanging self and other as the most profound method for developing bodhicitta.

It is good to really take this to heart. We have the opportunity to understand and engage in these practices, so it is important that we don't waste it.

3.2.1. Extensive explanation

This presented with the following three subdivisions:

- 3.2.1.1. Explaining the way of exchanging self and other
- 3.2.1.2. The way of following up in thought
- 3.2.1.3. The way of following up in action

3.2.1.1. EXPLAINING THE WAY OF EXCHANGING SELF AND OTHER

This is subdivided into two:

- 3.2.1.1.1. Extensive explanation
- 3.2.1.1.2. Brief summary

3.2.1.1.1. Extensive explanation

This has three further subdivisions:

- 3.2.1.1.1.1. Meditate on cherishing others
- 3.2.1.1.1.2. Abandoning cherishing self with effort
- 3.2.1.1.1.3. Contemplating the faults of holding self as the most important, and the benefits of holding other as the most important

We can see how profound the topic is just from these outlines. The very meticulous presentation also shows us how to engage into the practice in a gradual way.

3.2.1.1.1.1. Meditate on cherishing others

There are five ways of meditating on cherishing others.

- 3.2.1.1.1.1.1. It is possible to exchange self and other, and vanity is pacified
- 3.2.1.1.1.1.2. Advice to make an effort to meditate without hope for a ripening result
- 3.2.1.1.1.1.3. Giving even greater purpose to the benefit of others
- 3.2.1.1.1.1.4. If one meditates, one is able to generate it
- 3.2.1.1.1.1.5. Meditate on exchanging self and other because both self and other wish to be freed from suffering

3.2.1.1.1.1.1. It is possible to exchange self and other, and vanity is pacified

This hypothetical doubt is raised:

Argument: I am not able to meditate on exchanging self and other.

This relates to the doubt 'I'm not able to meditate on exchanging self and other' that we may have.

The following lines of verse respond to that doubt:

115. *Just as one generates through familiarity
The awareness of 'mine' for a body lacking self,
Why should one not generate the awareness of
'mine'
For other sentient beings through
familiarisation?*

116ab. *Thus, producing the purpose of others
Vanity and grandiosity do not arise,*

The commentary explains the meaning of these lines as follows:

Answer: Through familiarity, one generates the grasping at 'mine' for the body, even though the body lacks a self. Likewise, why should one not be able to generate the awareness of 'this is mine' through familiarising oneself with cherishing other sentient beings? If one meditates, one can definitely generate it.

As this meditation on holding all sentient beings as self accomplishes the purpose of others, one does not generate feelings of vanity and grandiosity.

As the commentary explains, while in reality our body lacks a self, we instinctively hold the body as self because of our familiarity with that view. That being the case, as the commentary explains, *why should one not be able to generate the awareness of 'this is mine' through familiarising oneself with cherishing other sentient beings?* This rhetorical question implies that if one meditates, one can definitely generate this awareness. Just as one instinctively cherishes oneself now, it is definitely possible to cherish other sentient beings through becoming familiar with the thought of cherishing them.

When the commentary states, *as this meditation on holding all sentient beings as self accomplishes the purpose of others, one does not generate feelings of vanity and grandiosity*, it is saying that because one is totally dedicated to benefitting others, there is no room for vain and grandiose thoughts such as 'Oh, I am so important as I am doing such a great service for others'. That sort of pompous pride will not arise.

3.2.1.1.1.2. Advice to make an effort to meditate without hope for a ripening result

This means that one's practice is to be done without any hope for a good result for oneself. So working for other sentient beings should be free from any thoughts about the ripening of good karma in the future.

The following verses and explanations in the commentary are quite clear. The verse relating to this heading reads:

*116cd. Similar to not expecting a reward
When eating food¹.*

*117. Hence, when protecting self
From some small unpleasantness
Meditate on the mind of protection
And compassion for migrators.*

As the commentary explains:

For example, it is similar to not expecting a reward for eating one's food. Since it has infinite benefits, one should meditate on compassion and protecting migrators from suffering just as one would protect oneself from even small unpleasant words.

The example presented states that one doesn't eat a meal in expectation of a reward. One eats the meal just for the sake of needing to eat. In the Tibetan text the first part of the presentation is *one protects oneself from even a small unpleasant word*. This means that we instinctively protect ourselves from criticism or even the slightest unpleasant words from others. So, just as one protects oneself, one should also protect other sentient beings in the same way, with the understanding that there's infinite benefit in doing so.

The point of meditating *on compassion and protecting migrators from suffering* is that just as one protects oneself from the slightest suffering, likewise out of compassion one needs to protect other sentient beings from experiencing suffering. The point is that it has to be based on compassion, because

without compassion for others, one would not generate the wish for them to be free from suffering.

What is being presented here in simple terms, is that if we wish to know how to protect other sentient beings, then the method is to protect them with a compassionate heart, just like we protect ourselves.

The example presented here is that just as we protect ourselves from hurtful words, likewise we need to protect others. We also need to take the initiative to protect other sentient beings from our own harsh and hurtful words. If we don't like hearing even the slightest unpleasant remark, then this is exactly the same for other sentient beings. So we need to be very careful not to utter hurtful words to other sentient beings. Why? Because just as we are hurt, they are also hurt.

We find many instances of how unskilful and harsh speech causes a lot of hurt and disharmony. Therefore we really need to pay attention to this point. These practices aren't just some sort of explanation to be heard and perhaps forgotten; rather, if we actually apply them in our own practice, then we can derive the intended benefit from these teachings.

3.2.1.1.1.3. Giving even greater purpose to the benefit of others

The verse relating to this outline reads:

*118. The protector Chenrezig
Blessed therefore even his name,
Out of great compassion,
To eliminate migrators' sufferings of cyclic
existence.*

The commentary then explains:

Since one needs to protect sentient beings from even small suffering, the protector Chenrezig blessed out of great compassion even his name to eliminate also the slightest of the frightening sufferings in cyclic existence: 'By thinking of my name may the frightening sufferings of cyclic existence become non-existent.'

In the *Array of Stalks Sutra* it explains it as remembering the name trice.

As explained here, Chenrezig (or Avalokiteshvara), is said to have made extremely powerful aspirations when he was a trainee on the path. When he was a bodhisattva training on the path to enlightenment, out of great compassion and not being able to bear the sufferings of sentient beings, he made very powerful aspirations such as, 'May even merely hearing my name become a means to eliminate the sufferings of sentient beings'.

Due to that combination of great compassion and such powerful aspirations, along with great wisdom, it is said that when Avalokiteshvara became enlightened, merely reciting his name brings great solace for sentient beings. As the commentary says, this is mentioned in the *Array of Stalks Sutra*. Reciting Avalokiteshvara's name is a very powerful mantra, and many people take it upon themselves to recite the Chenrezig mantra regularly as a means to generate compassion and help to eliminate the sufferings of other sentient beings.

I've mentioned previously how, at our level, we also need to take heed of the importance of making strong aspirational prayers. If we think, 'Oh, I'm good for nothing; I cannot possibly achieve anything', then the more we think in that way the less competent we will feel. Regardless of our actual state now, we can definitely have the capacity to generate the grandest aspirations to benefit other sentient beings.

¹ Needs to be read in the context of the first part of the verse.

Such aspirations have great significance. Enlightened beings are equal in being free from all faults, having an omniscient mind and compassion for all beings. However it is said that due to the strong aspirational prayers to benefit other beings when they were training on the path, and the merit accumulated at that time, when they become enlightened they are able to serve specific purposes to benefit sentient beings.

By thinking of my name may the frightening sufferings of cyclic existence become non-existent. Because of the combination of such strong aspirations based on great compassion, having accumulated extensive merits, and generating the great wisdom of omniscience, mantras such as the name of Chenrezig become a very powerful means to eliminate the suffering of sentient beings.

This is actually the meaning of the Tibetan word *jin-lab* that is translated as blessing. *Jin* means to bestow, and *lab* has a connotation of transforming the mind. So when people say 'I received blessings from a deity or holy objects such as statues and so forth', we need to understand that the real blessing is received when the mind transforms into a more positive and peaceful state.

3.2.1.1.1.4. *If one meditates, one is able to generate it*

While the word meditate is used here, the connotation of the Tibetan term is familiarity. So when one becomes familiar with it one is able to generate it, or if one meditates on it one is able to generate it. The next verse is preceded by this hypothetical doubt or argument:

Argument: Although there are many benefits, it is difficult to meditate on exchanging self and other.

At this stage one may acknowledge that there are many benefits from engaging in the practice of exchanging self with other, but think that it is very difficult to practise. One may feel, 'How could I practise it?'

The next verse is one of those verses that is quoted often, which people find to be very significant and powerful advice.

119. *Do not be turned off by difficulty.
Through the force of familiarity
The one whose name instilled fear when hearing
it,
Becomes the one without whom one is joyless.*

The commentary explains:

Answer: One should not be turned off by the difficulty of meditating on it because if one meditates, then one can realise it. Through familiarisation even the enemy whose mere name instilled fear in us when hearing it, becomes later a friend without whom we are joyless.

This presentation is clearly intended to counteract a very familiar mindset that we have that prevents us from engaging in various practices and virtues: 'Oh, it's too hard; too difficult'. The presentation here is that even though something may be difficult, one can master whatever one wishes to accomplish through familiarity.

We need to refer to these points again and again. We can acknowledge our limitations and faults and shortcomings, but we do have a mind, which carries the potential to change and further develop. When we become familiar with something, it is possible to change and adopt it. That is the point we need to remind ourselves of.

If one meditates on or becomes familiar with something then one can generate or realise it. The example to illustrate this is an enemy whose name initially instilled fear in oneself – just

hearing their name instils fear. Yet even with such an enemy, if one attempts to gradually and slowly become familiar with them, then it becomes possible that the enemy will turn into a friend. One can become so close to them that one feels unhappy if they're not present.

Here a complete transformation has taken place: an individual considered to be an enemy, whose presence once instilled a lack of joy and unhappiness, and whose absence caused happiness, becomes so close that without their presence one feels unhappy and joyless. In the past I've shared with you that I've had personal experience of this transformation into friendship through acquaintance and familiarity.

The reverse of this is also true. You might be so close to someone that you could not bear to be separated from them. But later on, even after having been together for ten or fifteen years, now you cannot bear to be in their presence and it makes you unhappy if they're close by. This is due to familiarity with focusing on their faults. When one starts to focus on the faults of others, the mind becomes more and more acquainted with seeing only faults, and that's when the other becomes an arch enemy who one cannot bear to see.

As the great master Atisha very succinctly said: proclaim your faults and hide your qualities; proclaim the qualities of others and hide their faults. This is very profound advice that we need to put into practice.

Indeed, if one starts to become acquainted with seeing the faults of the other, one may reach a point where one doesn't see any qualities. One even starts to actually look for faults in the other, which may very well be just a projection of one's own faults onto them. In either case one may reach a point where one does not see any quality in the other, which causes animosity and anger.

3.2.1.1.1.5. *Meditate on exchanging self and other because both self and other wish to be freed from suffering*

This is again a very logical presentation of how it is reasonable to exchange self with others because oneself and others all wish to be free from suffering.

The verse relating to this is:

120. *They who wish to rescue quickly
Self and others
Should practise the secret advice
Of exchanging self and other.*

The commentary explains:

For those reasons, they who wish to rescue quickly self and others from the faults of existence and peace should practise exchanging self and other, which is the secret Mahayana advice on the ultimate meaning of meditation, which is kept from those who are not a vessel.

In the first sentence, *the faults of cyclic existence* refers to samsara, and *peace* refers to the personal liberation of the lower vehicles. Those who wish to *rescue quickly self and others should practise exchanging self and other, which is the secret Mahayana advice.* Here *secret Mahayana advice* doesn't refer to secret tantric teachings, but rather a secret not to be disclosed to those who have very strong self-interest and thus are not able to relate to these teachings. This also relates to the self-interest of the practitioners of the lower vehicles.

As mentioned further, the *ultimate meaning of meditation is kept from those who are not a vessel.* Here an unsuitable vessel refers the hearers and solitary realisers whose ultimate goal is to achieve personal liberation. For those who have a very

strong self-interest these teachings will not be suitable, because they would not be able to relate to, and practise them.

The ultimate meaning of meditation on exchanging self with other, as presented here, is that it serves as the very foundation of the practice of generating and developing bodhicitta. It is likened to the life-wood, which is the central piece of wood placed in a statue or stupa. Just as the life-wood serves as the central piece of a statue, the practice of bodhicitta is the very centre and life force of the Mahayana and the lamrim teachings.

It is as presented in the beginning of the *Three Principal Aspects of the Path*:

The essential meaning of the Victorious One's teachings,
The path praised by all the holy victors and their children,
The gateway of the fortunate ones desiring liberation

3.2.1.1.1.2. Abandoning cherishing self with effort

This is subdivided into two:

3.2.1.1.1.2.1. Self-cherishing is the cause for all fears

3.2.1.1.1.2.2. It is that which induces all harmful actions

3.2.1.1.1.2.1. *Self-cherishing is the cause for all fears*

The verse relating to this heading is:

121. *Out of those that generate fear for a small object
Due to attachment to their body,
Who would not abhor, like an enemy,
This body that generates fear.*

The commentary further explains:

If due to attachment to one's body, without having exchanged self and others, one generates great fear for even small objects of fear such as scorpions and poisonous snakes, then who that is skilled would not abhor this body like an enemy? It is unsuitable to cherish it.

The commentary explains that, *due to attachment to one's body, which is without having exchanged self and others, one generates great fear for even small objects of fear such as scorpions and poisonous snakes.* We have an instinctive fear of these creatures because of our strong self-cherishing. As that is the case, *then who that is skilled, meaning who that is knowledgeable, would not abhor this body like an enemy?* This is referring to cherishing the body. Obviously we need to have a body, but the implication here is that cherishing it is not suitable.

3.2.1.1.1.2.2. *It is that which induces all harmful actions*

Here 'that' refers to cherishing one's body, which is another way of being attached to one's body. This is what induces harmful actions. The relevant lines of verse are:

122. *Desiring to practise the ritual of curing
The afflictions of the body's hunger, thirst
And the like, one kills birds, fish,
Animals and hides in ambush.*

123ab. *They who, for profit and praise
Even kill their father and mother*

The commentary which relates to these lines is:

Those who cherish self, and out of the desire to practise the ritual of curing the body's afflictions of hunger, thirst and the like, will burn in the hells without respite because they kill birds, fish and

animals, ambush travellers and steal the wealth of others.

In order for the cherished body to receive profit and praise, they even kill their father and mother.

The commentary clearly explains the negative consequences of strong self-cherishing out of the desire to protect one's body. *The ritual of curing the body's afflictions*, refers to protecting one's body from *hunger, thirst and so forth*. To do this individuals engage in negativities such as *killing birds, for food, or fish and animals, ambush travellers and steal the wealth of others*. Then as a consequence of these deeds they *will burn in the hells without respite*. Their negative deeds definitely ripen into this suffering.

As further explained, *in order for the cherished body to receive profit and praise, they even kill those who have been very kind to them, like their own father and mother*. This refers to actual events that have occurred in the past; the king who was killed by his son. There is also another story of the son who killed his mother as a way to gain profit. In fact these events also occur today.

We saw the recent tragedy in Nepal where the whole royal family was assassinated by a prince. He would have been influenced by his uncle or someone else saying, "If you kill your father then you can become king". These unthinkable acts that are perpetrated on those who have been extremely kind to oneself arise from self-cherishing. The desire for gain and profit blinds the perpetrator to the fact that they are harming those who have been extremely kind to them.

We hear on the news about children killing their parents, or parents killing their children and we need to understand that these are the results of the fault of self-cherishing. We cannot think, 'Oh this will never occur to me!' These extreme situations were caused by self-cherishing, and are a reminder that we need to be mindful and careful about our own self-cherishing.

While we can use these explanations to be cautious and mindful about protecting ourselves from a self-cherishing mind, it can also become a means to generate compassion for others when they engage in such negative deeds. Because we know that they are blinded by their own self-cherishing, we extend our compassion to those who engage in such negative deeds. The teachings present many methods for thinking about the faults of self-cherishing.

The remaining lines of verse under this heading read:

123cd. *Or steal offering from the Triple Gem
Burn in the hell without respite*

124. *Hence, who that is wise would not view
This body that is desired, protected
And made offerings to,
As an enemy, and deride it?*

The commentary further explains:

Further, they will steal offerings from the Triple Gem and thus they will also burn in the hells without respite. Thus, who that is skilled will not view this body that is desired, protected and made offerings to on the basis of cherishing it, as an enemy, who will not deride it? One needs to stop all forms of self-cherishing.

They will steal offerings from the Triple Gem, and thus they will also burn in the hells without respite refers to the consequences of cherishing oneself or one's body. *Thus, who that is skilled will not view this body that is desired, protected and made offerings to on the basis of cherishing it, as an enemy? Who will not deride it?* These are rhetorical questions which imply that one really

needs to see self-cherishing as an enemy. The conclusion is that *one needs to stop all forms of self-cherishing*.

We need to understand this explanation in its proper context. Protecting and making offerings to one's body as a means of sustaining one's body in order to benefit others is of course most suitable. The *Four Hundred Verses* mentioned that by understanding this body as being a vehicle to benefit others, one needs to sustain, and nourish it. One definitely needs to protect this body, which has been acquired through the practise of morality, as a means to benefit others. The longer we can sustain this body, the more opportunity we will have to practise morality and so forth.

3.2.1.1.3.1.3. Contemplating the faults of holding self as the most important and the benefits of holding other as the most important

This is subdivided into two:

3.2.1.1.3.1.1. A list of the faults and benefits of cherishing self and other

3.2.1.1.3.1.2. It is appropriate to abandon self-cherishing

3.2.1.1.3.1.1. A list of the faults and benefits of cherishing self and other

Here there are two subdivisions:

3.2.1.1.3.1.1.1. Extensive explanation

3.2.1.1.3.1.1.2. Short summary

3.2.1.1.3.1.1.1. Extensive explanation

This is subdivided into five:

3.2.1.1.3.1.1.1.1. From the point of view of generosity

3.2.1.1.3.1.1.1.2. From the point of view of harm

3.2.1.1.3.1.1.1.3. From the point of view of praise and fame

3.2.1.1.3.1.1.1.4. From the point of view of inducing action

3.2.1.1.3.1.1.1.5. From the point of view of benefit and happiness

3.2.1.1.3.1.1.1.1. From the point of view of generosity

The verse relating to this is:

125. *Saying, 'If I give, what shall I use?,'
Is the way of ghosts; the egotistical thought.
Saying, 'If I use, then what will I give?,'
Is thinking about others; the Dharma of gods.*

The commentary explains:

The way of ghosts, the egotistical thought, where out of miserliness one thinks, 'If I give my wealth to others, then what will I use?' generates fear. The thought of, 'If I use it, then what will I give to others?' is only about the welfare of others. It is the Dharma of the gods and gives rise to all that is good and perfect.

Everyone is afraid of *ghosts*, and here they are used as an illustration of something that causes fear. *The egotistical thought, where out of miserliness one thinks, 'If I give my wealth to others, then what will I use?' generates fear.* This fear of having nothing left if we were to give to others is a thought that brings about miserliness. This prevents generosity, and thus prevents one from accumulating the virtue and merit that, in the long run, will be beneficial for oneself. That is a thought that should generate fear!

Whereas *the thought of, 'If I use it, then what will I give to others?'* is the thought that equals the beneficial thoughts of *the gods*. There are those who are concerned that if they consume too much themselves they will have nothing left to give to others; such genuine concern arises from a mind of cherishing others and wishing to benefit them. So they don't use too much for themselves for the fear of not having enough to share with others. Some even have a hard time

eating, thinking 'If I eat this then how could I feed others, who are much more disadvantaged than me?' There are people who think like this, and these noble thoughts are equal to the gods.

3.2.1.1.3.1.2. From the point of view of harm

The verse reads:

126. *If one harms others for the purpose of self
One will fall into the hells and the like.
If one harms self for the purpose of others
One will attain all good perfections.*

The commentary explains:

If one inflicts harm on others, such as killing, in order to attain happiness for oneself, one will fall into the hells and the like. If one harms and gives up one's body and wealth for the happiness of others, then one will attain all good perfections.

This is basically an account of cause and effect, and the consequences of karma. As mentioned here, *if one inflicts harm on others, such as killing, in order to attain happiness for oneself*, then while the intention might be happiness the consequence will be falling into the hells and suffering. Rather than happiness, one will in fact, only experience suffering.

From a worldly perspective, giving up *one's body and wealth for the happiness of others* may be even seen as a foolish act. "How foolish of them to give away their *body and wealth* to others". But when done with the proper intention, with the mind of cherishing other sentient beings, *then one will only attain the good perfections*. So the benefit of cherishing others is, as explained here, good consequences and results.

While these explanations are quite clear, the main point is to take them as a personal instruction and put them into practice; then they will become more meaningful. Often people comment, 'Oh, I've studied Buddhism for a while but how should I practise?' The answer is 'Put into practice what has been presented here'. When we actually put this reasonable and practical advice into practise, then that is when we derive the greatest benefit from the teachings.

Even spending some time reading and contemplating the meaning of this text, will definitely bring great solace to one's mind, making it calmer and more subdued. So, there is great benefit in doing that.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་མེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

3 May 2016

Based on the motivation we generated during the refuge and bodhicitta prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [meditation]

During the meditation practice we will have further strengthened our motivation. Generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practice well.

Generating such a motivation, even for a few moments, will definitely establish very strong positive imprints in our mind.

3.2.1.1.1.3. Contemplating the faults of holding self as the most important and the benefits of holding other as the most important

3.2.1.1.1.3.1. A list of the faults and benefits of cherishing self and other

3.2.1.1.1.3.1.1. Extensive explanation (cont.)

3.2.1.1.1.3.1.3. From the point of view of praise and fame

The verse reads:

127. *Due to the wish to attain it oneself
One will have lower rebirth, inferiority
and stupidity.
If one transfers it to others,
One will attain honour in a happy rebirth.*

The commentary explains:

Wishing to be elevated by praise and fame, one will take a lower rebirth in the next life. Even if one takes rebirth as a human, one will be of low caste, bad appearance and stupid. If one habituates oneself in transferring the wish for elevation to others, one will have a happy rebirth in the next life where one will receive perfect praise and honour.

Wishing to be elevated by praise and fame relates to wishing to be elevated by praise and fame just for oneself. When one has this attitude, the text explains the result is that *one will take a lower rebirth in the next life*. Then *even if one takes rebirth as a human, one will be of low caste and bad appearance*, which means not having an appealing appearance, and have a *stupid* mind.

What needs to be understood from this explanation is that when the focus of *wishing for elevated praise and fame* is merely for oneself, and while it may not seem like such a bad thing, what occurs when one focuses mainly on oneself when pursuing elevated praise and fame, is that a lot of afflictions arise in one's mind and thus one creates negativity. For example, out of jealousy one criticises those who are doing well or doing better than oneself; one sees others as one's rivals and a sense of

competitiveness arises; one has contempt towards others and puts them down and feels a sense of pride toward those who appear to be inferior to oneself. This is how we create negativity as a result of pursuing praise and fame merely for oneself. If the intention of pursuing praise and fame is a means to benefit others, that's different. But here the commentary emphasises the consequences of the negativities that occur when one pursues this aim only for oneself.

Most of our faults actually arise from a wish to become famous or well known or to be praised. This becomes a downfall for us because in pursuit of fame and praise a lot of the other negativities follow.

We need to take heed here of Shantideva's very succinct and precise advice on how to engage in a practice that will benefit oneself ultimately and not harm oneself. Again, many may wonder about what's wrong with being famous or being praised, but the key point to understand is that when the focus is merely on one's own gratification, one's own selfish gain, then the pursuit of that incurs many negativities.

The consequences are explained in that, *one will take rebirth in the lower realms in the next life, and even if one were to be reborn as a human* then all of the following disadvantages would occur. This is similar to what Shantideva mentioned earlier in the text when he said, 'while wishing to be free from suffering, beings run towards the very causes of suffering. And although they wish for happiness, they destroy their own happiness like an enemy'. These same points are being presented here, which is in essence a succinct presentation of karma.

When one focuses just on oneself, then even though one wishes for a good outcome, the actual consequences one experiences are negative. But if one practices the opposite (explained next in the commentary) and, *if one habituates oneself in transferring the wish for elevation to others*, i.e. wishing praise and fame for others, one actually transfers the focus to others and the consequences are that *one will have a happy rebirth in the next life, where one will receive perfect praise and honour*.

When one engages in the practice of offering praise to others, and wishing fame for them, this stops a lot of negativity from arising in our minds, because there's no chance for jealousy etc. to arise when one truly wishes others to have praise and fame. For example, when others are doing well one would be very happy for them, because that is exactly what one has wished for.

Jealousy arises when one is not happy with others' good fortune, when good things happen for them such as praise and fame. If we are keen to actually practise Dharma we need to put into practice offering praise and fame to others. At first glance this concept may sound strange, however one will begin to understand that when one engages in a selfish pursuit one creates a lot of negativity, and if one practises the opposite and wishes wellness for others, then that is when one actually practises virtue. This is the main point.

We need to understand this very good advice, given to us in very simple terms. It points out that if you harbour feelings based on selfish interest, it will only bring about negative results rather than good ones. However, if you

harbour good attitudes and positive states of mind, this allows one to accumulate virtuous deeds, which ultimately brings about good results for yourself. This is the very compassionate advice being presented to us by Shantideva.

3.2.1.1.1.3.1.4. From the point of view of inducing action

This heading refers to the type of actions one takes.

The verse reads:

128. *If one commands others for the purpose of self,
One will experience being a slave and the like.
If oneself works for the purpose of others,
One will only experience being a lord and
master.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

If one enslaves others, taking their freedom, for the purpose of self, then one will experience later inferior status; being a slave and the like. If one works and commands oneself for the happiness and benefit of others, one will later be a lord and master, and experience higher status, having a good appearance and the like.

Again this explanation relates to the disadvantages of cherishing just oneself and the great advantages of cherishing others. We can see that this situation, *enslaving others and taking their freedom, for the purpose of self*, occurs a lot even in these times, where people completely take advantage of others. Employers at times take complete advantage of their employees, making them work for many extra hours with minimal or no extra pay.

So at this time and age there are still those who are enslaved, basically working for almost nothing, required to do too much work and under too much pressure. Unfortunately we see this taking place. So when this is done out of self-cherishing, the consequence is that, *one will experience later, an inferior status, and being a slave and the like* in the future oneself.

The opposite is, *if one works and commands oneself for the happiness and benefit of others, one will later be a lord and master, and experience higher status, having a good appearance and the like*. This explains that good attributes will come about naturally and spontaneously without exerting oneself, when one puts oneself into the service of other sentient beings with an attitude of cherishing them.

You may feel like this explanation doesn't relate to you now because you're not a master enslaving others and making them work, thus there is no danger of these negativities. But one needs to keep in mind that this can occur at any time. If one reaches such a position of being in charge under whatever circumstances, then this is when the danger of misusing power and taking control of others can occur. Therefore one needs to be mindful and engage in practices now so that in the event one gains power one will avoid mistreating others.

A prevalent fault or downfall is where we become obsessed with getting higher status, wanting to be recognised, and having a high calling. When we think about the various types of problems we have, and the different suffering we experience, it really does stem from a strong clinging on to me: my individual happiness; I want things to be my way; I have to achieve my goals; I want everything to be perfect just for me.

When we harbour such attitudes, the stronger we hold the feeling of wanting things to go well just for me, harbouring the attitude of – me, me, me all the time, then when things don't go our way and our expectations are not met, we feel totally overwhelmed with disappointment and suffering. All the problems we experience are really due to a singular focus just on oneself.

If you were to make an attempt to actually shift your focus and think about the welfare of others, how they also need happiness and want to be free from suffering, and contemplate their sufferings, then the moment you actually shift your focus you will find from your own experience that you get an immediate release. Your mind becomes much more expansive, and as your own problems start to become less significant you get a release from your own problems.

If one doesn't pay attention, and continuously thinks about one's own problems and difficulties, and whether things have been going according to your own wishes, then the problems just perpetuate, and it's one problem after another. However, while we may not have overcome the root of our problems yet, when we shift our focus onto others, even that temporary release we get gives us some solace and some space to think more clearly. We gain courage and insight from that experience, and this gives us the impetus to practise further. This is how we see the benefit of the practice.

We experience difficulties and problems that are clearly created by our own self-cherishing mind. In this abundant country we all have a nice place to live in and have food at our table every day. None of us here have to worry about not getting our next meal, or not finding a place to stay. So in terms of the general external conditions for our sustenance, everything is adequate. However we all have complaints of one sort or another and how things are not right. This shows that the problems are caused by an ego-centric self-cherishing mind not getting its own way and never satisfied; in essence, being obsessed with one's own needs and wanting things to be one's own way.

In a relationship between two people, if one partner starts to have an attitude that things have to be their way, when the other makes a suggestion they reject it feeling it 'doesn't accord with my wishes'. When one person asserts their strong, opinionated mind then that's the moment conflict arises. Conversely, the moment a partner says, 'If it's OK with you then it's fine with me' and is happy with that, the potential friction immediately subsides and there is no room for conflict or agitation.

We can see clearly from this example that the moment there's a strong opinionated mind where a person won't accept something the other wants, because it doesn't accord with their own personal wishes, then that creates conflict. We can learn something from the simple statement: 'if it's OK with you then it's fine with me' because the opposite 'even if it's fine with you, it's not ok with me' is how problems begin. This is the point to keep in mind.

To share one incident, last Thursday on my regular visit to the sea-baths, as I was bathing there, one elderly

person came to me and commented, 'you're a Buddhist monk aren't you?' And I said yes. Then he said 'I've actually seen you on many occasions from a distance and seen you are very joyful and happy. It occurred to me that it might be because you are a Buddhist. I thought if I could be like you, who always seem to be happy and joyful, then that would be really good. I'd be fulfilled if I could be happy as you are'. Then he said, 'I actually started going to a Buddhist centre to go to some teachings'. Actually it turns out to be one of the Kadampa centres.

So although he didn't confirm that he's a Buddhist he said he'd started to go to a Buddhist centre. He was showing a genuine interest, and that is the point. The moral of this incident is that when people use their intelligence, they want to follow the example of someone who is happy and joyful, rather than wanting to be rich and famous.

Previously I've also shared a story about a merchant who sells fruit and his comments to me. I used to occasionally go to Southland and have coffee at a particular cafe. Opposite to where I sat down and had coffee was a merchant selling fruit; I think he was of Italian background. He would smile at me and occasionally come up and greet me and say 'Hello, how are you?' Once when he greeted me, I asked him 'How are you?' he said 'Oh, not so good'. I asked him if business was going well. I thought maybe he had financial problems. He said 'No, business is going quite well, but I'd rather be like you. That would be nice'.

I have many such stories about people just coming up to me and sharing their thoughts and telling me about their life. Someone came up to me in the Southland Shopping Centre once and said 'I haven't seen anyone as nice and as happy as you', and shook my hand.

All these anecdotes illustrate the main point presented here which is that if one starts to really familiarise one's mind with cherishing others, then that's something that brings a great sense of joy within oneself. It attracts others and they seem to acknowledge you and be happy in your presence. These are the positive results we start to gain when we make a genuine attempt to practise cherishing others and overcome self-cherishing.

3.2.1.1.1.3.1.5. From the point of view of benefit and happiness

The verse reads:

129. *Whatever happiness is found in the transitory worlds
Came from the wish for the happiness of others.
Whatever sufferings are found in the transitory worlds
Came from the wish for self to be happy.*

The commentary explains:

In short, whatever happiness there is in the transitory worlds, it all came from the wish for others to be happy and from working for others. Whatever sufferings there are in the transitory worlds, they all came from the self-cherishing that wishes happiness for the self. Therefore, one should stop the self-cherishing with effort.

The commentary again emphasises the point that all the happiness seen in the world is actually the result of

working for the sake of others, from cherishing others. Whereas *whatever sufferings* one experiences in the *worlds* actually comes from the *self-cherishing* mind, which is in essence presenting the natural cause and effect sequence of karma – how one experiences the results of all the karma one creates.

3.2.1.1.1.3.1.2. Summary of the meaning¹

Shantideva is saying here: I do not have to elaborate too much on the faults of self-cherishing and the advantages of cherishing others; the following example clearly illustrates the difference between the two.

The verse reads:

130. *What need is there to say a lot?
The childish work for their own benefit
And the Able One works for the benefit of
others,
Look at the difference between the two.*

The commentary goes on to explain:

What need is there for extensive elaborate explanations? The childish receive all they do not wish for because they cherish their own well-being, while the Able One works for the welfare of others and perfect all that is good. Just look at the difference between these two and generate belief.

The point the commentary explains here is that without having to use *elaborate* and *extensive explanations*, by simply looking at the difference between the *childish*, or ordinary beings, and the *Able One*, who is the Buddha, we can see the clear difference.

It indicates that once the Buddha was an ordinary being like us, with all the faults and shortcomings we now have. However through engaging in the practice, particularly the attitude of cherishing others and developing bodhicitta, this path led the Buddha to become a renowned enlightened being. We can see how the Buddha is completely free from all these faults and endowed with all great qualities. Whereas we ordinary beings are still harbouring self-cherishing attitudes, and experiencing all the shortcomings and sufferings of the negative consequences of our actions.

This clearly shows the disadvantages of self-cherishing and the great advantages and benefit of cherishing other sentient beings. When one looks at it in this way one will be able to *generate belief*, meaning that one will strongly believe in the advantages of cherishing others and the disadvantages of cherishing oneself.

3.2.1.1.1.3.2. It is appropriate to abandon self-cherishing

This is subdivided into four:

3.2.1.1.1.3.2.1. The unseen faults

3.2.1.1.1.3.2.2. The faults that one can see

3.2.1.1.1.3.2.3. A summary of the faults

3.2.1.1.1.3.2.4. It is suitable to give up self-cherishing

3.2.1.1.1.3.2.1. The unseen faults

The verse reads:

131. *If one does not perfectly exchange
One's happiness for the suffering of others
One will not achieve enlightenment*

¹ Last week this heading was introduced as 3.2.1.1.1.3.1.2. Short summary

And one will also lack happiness in cyclic existence.

The commentary explains:

If one does not exchange perfectly the happiness of self for the suffering of others and reverse from the initial attitude of working for the happiness of self and eliminating the suffering of self, by cherishing others, i.e., working for their happiness and striving with effort to eliminate their suffering, then one will not achieve enlightenment.

One may think, 'Even if I do not achieve enlightenment and remain in cyclic existence that would be OK', but one will also lack perfect happiness in cyclic existence.

The first part of this explanation states, *if one does not exchange perfectly the happiness of self for the suffering of others and reverse from the initial attitude*, which as explained earlier, is giving one's happiness to others and taking the suffering of others upon oneself. The commentary then further explains the exchange of one's own happiness for the suffering of others where it reads that, *and reverse from the initial attitude of working for the happiness of self and eliminating the suffering of self, by cherishing others, i.e., working for their happiness and striving with effort to eliminate their suffering*, meaning that if one does not engage in that *then one will not achieve enlightenment*.

From this one may start thinking that, *Even if I do not achieve enlightenment and remain in cyclic existence that would be OK, but one will also lack perfect happiness in cyclic existence*. If one were to think 'it's fine to remain in cyclic existence joyfully and with happiness', as mentioned here, *one will also lack perfect happiness in cyclic existence*. Thus one will not experience any true happiness while remaining in cyclic existence.

The phrase, lacking perfect happiness in cyclic existence, refers to uncontaminated true happiness. We experience general happiness as humans, and the god realms also have a certain level of happiness, but the happiness the text is referring to here is ultimate happiness.

I wonder if there's a difference in the term 'happy' and 'happiness'. There was a comment made in the Happiness conference by one speaker who said 'I don't really know what happiness means'. That just brought to my mind that maybe happiness is something that is a little bit more obscure, whereas happy, we can talk about being happy or sad.

3.2.1.1.1.3.2.2. The faults that one can see

This refers to the most obvious faults one can relate to even in this life.

The verse reads:

*132. Leaving aside the world beyond,
Servants and helpers will not work and
Masters will not pay wages,
One will not even achieve the purpose of this
life.*

The commentary explains:

If one does not meditate on giving up self and cherishing others, then, leaving aside the faults of future lives, also in this life one's servants and helpers will not work and the master one did work for will not pay wages. One will not achieve even the purpose of this life.

The meaning of this verse is that, *if one does not meditate or familiarise on giving up self and cherishing others, then, leaving aside the faults of future lives*, which means leaving aside the consequences to be experienced in future lives, even in this very life, the disadvantages would be for example that, *servants and helpers will not work and the master one did work for will not pay wages*. So *one will not achieve even the purpose of this life*.

This example illustrates that the master needs workers (or employees) to work for them, and if they don't work, the master's purpose will not be fulfilled. Also, as the servants' goal in life is to achieve wages to live, if they are not paid then their purpose is not achieved. In short, if you don't change your attitude these are the consequences to be experienced. My interpretation of this example is that if from the workers' side they only work with minimal interest, and are negligent and not putting their heart into it in order to fulfil the master's wishes, and are only interested in getting their wages, then of course the master will be unhappy and not pay their wages. Therefore the servants will lose their wages and lose the goal they wished to achieve. Whereas if they changed their attitude and took a genuine interest in their work and did it wholeheartedly to fulfil their duties, with the attitude of making the other happy, they would naturally get their wages. That is something that one would gain as a by-product of the work. So from the servants' side if they changed their attitude toward the work, and did it more willingly and wholeheartedly, then they'll fulfil their own purpose too.

If the master is miserly about paying the wages and tries to avoid paying the workers in a timely manner, then of course the servants won't be happy either. Therefore if the master maintains that attitude they will lose their workers or servants and their purpose will not be fulfilled. However if their attitude changes and wages are given willingly and in a timely manner, then that would make the servants happy and the master would fulfil their own purpose. The example is about the need to change one's attitudes to gain the ultimate benefit.

3.2.1.1.1.3.2.3. A summary of the faults

The verse reads:

*133. One gives up the perfect bliss and happiness
That establishes the seen and unseen happiness.
Due to the cause of harming others,
They are deluded and take on frightening
suffering.*

The commentary explains:

As one does not put great purpose into the welfare of others one has given up exchanging self and other; the method for achieving happiness in this life and in future lives. Thus, one has thoroughly abandoned perfect happiness. The childish that are deluded with regards to what is the method for happiness and suffering, due to the cause of inflicting the harm of suffering onto others, have taken into their continuum frightening and difficult to bear suffering.

It is quite clearly explained here that, *as one does not put great purpose into the welfare of others one has given up exchanging self and other; which is the method for achieving happiness in this life and in future lives*. If *one does not put great purpose into the welfare of others and gives up*

exchanging self and other, then the consequences are that, *one has thoroughly abandoned perfect happiness*, as one has actually abandoned the very cause of one's happiness.

So, *the childish that are deluded with regards to what is the method for happiness and suffering, due to the cause of inflicting the harm of suffering onto others, have taken into their continuum frightening and difficult to bear suffering*. It's as if they've taken upon their own suffering by accumulating the causes of suffering.

Earlier there was mention of being mistaken about what one wishes for, and the causes for achieving it. While one may wish for something, one often fails to engage in the appropriate causes to achieve it.

3.2.1.1.1.3.2.4. It is suitable to give up self-cherishing

The first verse reads:

134. *Whatever harm there is in the transitory worlds,
Whatever danger and suffering come into existence,
If all that arises from self-cherishing,
Then what does this demon of self-cherishing do for me?*

The commentary to this verse reads:

If all the human and non-human harm in the transitory worlds, all the mental fears and physical sufferings that come into existence, arise from self-cherishing, which has taken the self as object, then what good is this great demon of self-cherishing for oneself? It causes all that one does not desire, and one should abandon it.

This reiterates what was presented earlier but provides more detail on how all the fears of *humans and non-humans* in this world, such as *the mental fears and physical sufferings that come into existence, arise from self-cherishing*. So we can see that even the fear generated by a small insect, like an ant for example, when you start shaking something near it, it immediately starts running away to protect itself, due to its self-cherishing.

It is said that this is true for every kind of fear and every kind of mental or physical agony we experience – all arise from self-cherishing. This verse further emphasises the faults of self-cherishing.

If one has caused others fear or pain etc., as a consequence it returns as your experience of mental agony. All fear stems from the self-cherishing mind.

It emphasises that, as all the fears and unwanted sufferings arise from that, then what use is self-cherishing to oneself? This is a rhetorical question implying that there is no use whatsoever.

The next verse reads:

135. *If one does not give oneself up completely,
One will not be able to abandon suffering;
For example, if one does not let go of fire
One is unable to stop being burned.*

The commentary explains:

If one does not completely give up cherishing oneself then one will not be able to eliminate the suffering of all sentient beings. For example, like not being able to stop being burned if one does not let go of fire in one's hand.

The example here shows that if you have something hot and burning in your hand, such as fire, if you don't let go of it then your hand will be burned. If you want to protect your hand from the burning you have to let go of the fire. The moment you let go your hand is protected from being burnt.

What is being explained here is that as long as one holds on to self-cherishing, one will not be able to eliminate the suffering of other sentient beings. In order to eliminate others' suffering one actually has to let go of one's own self-cherishing attitude. As soon as one does it will be possible to eliminate their sufferings. This is the point. When it's so hard to give up self-cherishing it's no wonder that it's so difficult to become a buddha.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

10 May 2016

Engaging in the *tong len* meditation practice is highly meaningful. Of course, it is good to reflect on the actual meaning of the practice. The text that we are studying here meticulously and succinctly presents logical reasons to think about why we need to benefit others. Basically it is because we have not thought to benefit others that we have experienced so much loss, so many problems; all because of the lack of that positive attitude.

What has one gained from merely focusing on one's own purpose until now? Nothing but more problems and difficulties! Our present condition is the result of thinking only about fulfilling our own purpose. This clearly shows the great disadvantage of thinking in this way. We can see that the great enlightened beings, on the other hand, have achieved the ultimate state of enlightenment because of having solely contemplated the purpose of others.

In terms of the *practice*, as we recall from earlier presentations, we first generate the mind that wishes to benefit others, followed by the wish to achieve enlightenment; whereas, in terms of actually *achieving the goal* one first attains enlightenment, whereby one is able to fulfil the purpose of others.

As presented in the seven-fold cause and effect sequence for developing bodhicitta, the preceding causes – particularly developing great love, great compassion and the superior intention – are all methods for developing the wish to fulfil the purpose of others. Based on having developed these minds one then generates the mind of bodhicitta, the determination to achieve enlightenment to fulfil the purpose of all living beings. Thus one must first fulfil one's purpose – which is to attain enlightenment – so that one is able to completely fulfil the purpose of other sentient beings, which is to be free from all suffering and established in the ultimate state of happiness.

Based on this systematic and logical presentation we need to utilise the good conditions we have right now to familiarise the mind with the wish to benefit others, to fulfil their purpose. As mentioned earlier in the text (verse 130), leaving aside elaborate explanations, one can understand the disadvantage of cherishing oneself by looking at the difference between ordinary sentient beings and the Buddha.

Referring back to the seven-fold cause and effect sequence, the six causes are preceded by the foundation practice, the development of equanimity. Equanimity is where one generates an unbiased mind towards all living beings. One further strengthens this basis by generating the mind that recognises all beings as having been one's mother, followed by remembering their kindness, and then generating the wish to repay that kindness. These

first three of the six causes are the foundation for fulfilling the purpose of others.

Next, one strengthens the wish to benefit all mother sentient beings by contemplating that the best way to repay their kindness is to remove all their sufferings and establish them in the ultimate state of happiness. When one develops the intense mind of genuinely wishing all beings to be endowed in happiness, this is known as heart-warming love. Then, when one wishes all beings to be completely free from suffering, one will have developed great compassion.

One further enhances that great love and compassion by going beyond the mere wish for others to be endowed with happiness and free from suffering, and actually taking personal responsibility to free all beings from suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness. This is when one develops superior intention. Having developed superior intention, one questions whether one has the ability to free all beings from suffering right now. It becomes evident that one is lacking that ability. When one further investigates who may have that ability, one sees it is not the foe destroyers who have reached the state of self-liberation – such as the hearers and solitary realisers – neither do bodhisattvas who have reached even the highest level, such as the tenth ground. It becomes clear that it is only the Buddha, the fully enlightened being, who has the full capacity and ability to fully benefit sentient beings.

At this stage, one makes a strong resolve to achieve enlightenment for the purpose of all sentient beings, to free them from suffering and lead them to ultimate happiness. When one develops that mind unceasingly and spontaneously, one has actually developed bodhicitta. This is how we need to understand the stages.

Most of you already know this presentation quite well, but I am reminding you so that you put it into practice; that is what I feel is most essential. The main point is to integrate what you have learned into your practice. While I cannot claim to have advanced a great deal in my practice, I can assure you that from the very beginning of my attempts at study, I have always been keen to try and put whatever teachings possible into practice. As a consequence of that, I naturally have a strong inclination to put whatever I learn into practice, rather than just gaining knowledge from the teachings of the texts.

When students comment 'I have done a lot of study, now what should I practise?', this is a clear sign that, from the start, their study was never really done with the intention of doing practice. If one intended to put one's study into practice as a priority from the very start then, as one studied, one would have naturally found ways to put what one learned into practice. As one's knowledge of the teachings progressed, one's means for developing one's practice would have naturally increased. The main point here is to put whatever one has understood into practice: do not leave it for later on, but apply it in one's daily practice right now.

As you will have noticed, I have emphasised again and again in Study Group on Tuesday nights, and also on Wednesday evenings the need to put whatever one understands into practice. This is my only concern. I

don't have any great concern that you won't understand or learn, but I am reminding you to put your understanding into practice.

As I mentioned in a recent teaching at the Drol Kar Centre, I practice what you already know. I am not engaged in any profound practices that are beyond your conception and understanding. We are not deprived of the lack of understanding of the Dharma, but we do lack the habit of putting it into practice. Indeed, all of you have already gained quite a good understanding of the Dharma, in relation to others in this country who have no access to the Dharma. What may be lacking though, is actually putting your understanding into practice.

When we put our understanding into practice, it will definitely help subdue our mind, and when the mind is subdued, the mind is much happier and gentler. Otherwise there could be the great fault that the knowledge we have gained only becomes a means to increase our delusions, such as pride, anger or attachment. What could be worse than for a follower of the Dharma to be obsessed with attachment? As practitioners, we need to be mindful of this. If one has attachment to one's own beliefs, and aversion towards others' views for example, that is a big downfall, whether it is towards other religious seekers or others in general. This is what poisons the mind. Individuals who hold this sort of mindset cannot be called true practitioners. I am constantly careful about falling victim to these kinds of negative states of mind myself. I feel it is really important that, as true Dharma seekers, we remain mindful of not allowing the knowledge we have gained to become a poison for our mind, rather than a remedy to subdue the mind and overcome the delusions.

Now we come to the next heading in the text. More elaborate explanations were given last time about the preceding verse, which explains that if one does not completely give up the focus on oneself, one will not be able to abandon suffering. The example given is that if one does not let go of fire, one is unable to stop being burned. These are good, practical analogies given to illustrate the need for us to abandon suffering.

3.2.1.1. EXPLAINING THE WAY OF EXCHANGING SELF AND OTHER (CONT.)

3.2.1.1.2. Brief summary

3.2.1.1.2.1. The way of exchanging self and other

136. *Thus, to pacify harm to oneself
And to pacify the suffering of others
One should offer oneself to others
And hold others as oneself.*

The commentary explaining this verse is:

Since disregarding others and cherishing self is the source for all that is undesired, one should give up cherishing self and cherish others as oneself, offering oneself for the purpose of all sentient beings, so as to pacify harm to self and the sufferings of others.

The commentary explains the meaning quite clearly. To emphasise the points we need to put into practice, the first part mentions: *Since disregarding others and cherishing self is the source for all that is undesired.* In other words, cherishing oneself is the source of all our misery and shortcomings. In relation to experiencing difficulties and

problems, we often hear people ask, 'Why me? Why am I suffering?' If one is really keen to know, then when one investigates it becomes clear that one's problems arise because of self-cherishing. In fact, it is the combination of self-grasping and self-cherishing: it is said that self-grasping is likened to a king and self-cherishing is like the king's minister. Just as a minister would follow the king's every command, similarly the self-cherishing mind follows every command given by the self-grasping mind.

In this way, the self-cherishing mind engages in a lot of negative deeds under the command of the self-grasping mind. As a consequence one experiences a lot of suffering, problems and difficulties. So, as mentioned here, this mind is the source of all that is undesired, thus *one should give up cherishing self, and instead cherish others as oneself, offering oneself for the purpose of all sentient beings.* Spending some time contemplating these points by reading this verse and reflecting on the meaning becomes a practice in itself. I would consider this a real form of meditation. Putting it into practice is what we need to do after gaining some understanding.

This explanation is presented quite succinctly. First, the faults of self-cherishing are explained as the source of all that is undesired and all our problems. This is followed by the actual practice of exchanging self and other: one gives up cherishing self and instead cherishes others. Just as one cherished oneself previously, one exchanges that by focusing on others. That is the actual exchange that one does in the practice of exchanging self with others.

The next verse under the same heading reads:

137. *I say 'I am under the control of others.'
Mind, understanding this with certainty
You shall from now on think about nothing else
But accomplishing the welfare of all sentient beings.*

'Mind, you should understand with certainty that from now on I am under the control of others. From today onwards you shall think only about accomplishing the welfare of sentient beings and not about other things such as accomplishing only the purpose of self.'

Having presented the need to exchange self with others and to engage in the practice of cherishing others, the text reprimands one to be really mindful. Once one has committed to cherishing other sentient beings more than oneself, then one puts oneself in the service of others, allowing one to be under their control. Here it is suggesting pointing the finger at oneself, saying, *From today onwards I shall only think about accomplishing the welfare of sentient beings and not about other things such as accomplishing only the purpose of self.* The advice here does not suggest going around instructing others, but rather taking this practice upon oneself. It is about adopting this mindset and making the resolve oneself to serve other sentient beings. This is really a pith instruction for bodhisattvas' practice, so we need to be inspired to follow the example here and put it into practice as much as we can. When we take this advice as personal instruction, it serves its purpose: it becomes meaningful by enhancing one's practice of compassion.

The points presented here again emphasise how one should integrate Dharma practice in one's own mind. If

the practice is left on one side, and oneself on the other side, then one falls short of really utilising what is being presented here.

3.2.1.1.2.2. Stopping wrong actions upon having done the exchange

Having made a resolve to exchange oneself with others, one needs to back that up by stopping all wrong actions. This is what is being presented next.

138. It is unsuitable to accomplish the welfare of self

With eyes and the like that belong to others.

It is unsuitable to mistreat them with the eyes

And the like that are for their purpose.

If one dedicates oneself as a servant for sentient beings then it is unsuitable to use one's eyes and the like to mistreat them. It is unsuitable to look angrily at sentient beings with the eyes that belong to them or to use these eyes to achieve only one's own welfare. One needs to achieve their purpose.

Since it is unsuitable to mistreat sentient beings with eyes and the like that belong to them, if one recognises that one mistreats them with the three doors, one needs to restrain oneself again and again upon contemplating the faults.

As the commentary explains, after having exchanged self with others, one needs to dedicate oneself to being a servant of sentient beings. This is in line with comments I have made on Wednesday night that, as far as my motivation is concerned, I see myself as someone who is in the service of you, the listeners. While I may be sitting up here on the throne, as far as my motivation and attitude are concerned, I am down there with you, serving you. We can see that Shantideva is emphasising this point here.

When one has entrusted oneself as a servant to other sentient beings, one should not mistreat them, for example, by looking inappropriately at them: *it is unsuitable to look angrily at sentient beings with the eyes that belong to them*. In other words, having dedicated oneself to benefiting others, one does not use one's eyes to give them dirty looks, or use one's limbs, arms or legs to make inappropriate gestures, by hitting, pushing or kicking others and so forth. If one has taken to heart the commitment to cherish other sentient beings, these ways of mistreating others are totally inappropriate.

Instead, one should use one's eyes to only look compassionately and gently upon others. As mentioned in one of the earlier verses, the mere sight of other sentient beings should immediately cause one to recall that 'it is by this very sentient being that I shall become enlightened'. Shantideva mentions how when one sees other sentient beings one should look upon them with a compassionate attitude. If we are not careful, when we have a disagreement with someone or when someone happens to pass by, it is easy to give them a dirty look or make an inappropriate gesture. We need to be mindful of this. As the commentary continues, when *one recognises one has mistreated them with the three doors* – that is through one's physical actions, one's speech or one's mind – at that time one should *restrain oneself again and again upon contemplating the faults*. This is how we need to guard our three doors.

While not mentioned here specifically, mistreating others occurs when we engage in any of the ten non-virtues, so a succinct way to remember how to guard our three doors is to restrain oneself from the ten non-virtues – such as not engaging in covetousness, harmful intention or harbouring wrong views, in relation to the mind. Whenever one notices any of these states of mind arising, one should recognise it and restrain oneself.

It is good to note again the difference between restraint and protection. When any of one's three doors are already engaged in a harmful activity, one needs to apply restraint. Protection, on the other hand, means not allowing one's mind to go towards that negativity from the very beginning. As the text on moral conduct, the Vinaya explains, among the restraints, restraining one's mind is supreme, because when one restrains one's mind, one naturally refrains from all the non-virtues of body and speech. When one is not able to restrain one's mind, one finds oneself engaging in physical and verbal misdeeds.

To give an illustration, if one is unable to restrain one's mind from the influence of anger, due to that angry mind one would not hesitate to use harmful speech against others, hit, or even kill them. However, if, from the very beginning, one doesn't allow the anger to dominate the mind, this will naturally protect one from verbal and physical misdeeds. When we derive the essence of the text, we can then find ways to put that meaning into practice.

3.2.1.1.2.3. Practising faultlessly

139. Then, having to put sentient beings first,

Whatever is observable on one's body

By stealing from it

One uses it for the benefit of others.

For this reason, having to put the purpose of sentient beings first, one views without forgetfulness the food, clothing and others that one observes on one's body by stealing from it - that is giving up grasping at these objects as mine, one uses them for their benefit, as a servant would use the food, clothing and other resources of the master.

As the commentary explains, after one has made the resolve to serve other sentient beings, whatever one normally uses them for to sustain one's body such as food, clothing and the like, as if stealing from one's own body, one uses it only to serve other sentient beings. As the commentary further clarifies, this means giving up grasping at these objects as 'mine'. So while one still needs to use resources, one uses it with the attitude that it is for the purpose of other sentient beings. For example, when the servants of a king partake of the clothing, food and so forth that are provided to them by the king, they have no sense that they own those things. The servants' food and so forth are provided to sustain them as a way to further serve the king. Likewise, when we partake of food and so forth, we need to do so with the attitude that this is a means to serve sentient beings. Even offering one's food and drink is in line with what is being explained here, keeping the attitude always that one is nourishing oneself in order to serve other sentient beings.

The advice presented here is very beneficial, even in everyday life. If we were able to really have consideration

for others, always engage in appropriate gestures in relation to them, and always see oneself as their servant, then from one's own side one will only be engaged in positive interactions. There is no doubt this will create the basis for good relationships and good communication with others.

Of course, there are times when in spite of engaging in the means to benefit others, they are still not happy and may show a lack of respect, appreciation and even distance themselves from one. However although they harbour such attitudes, if one actually puts this advice into practice then at least from one's own side one will not have done anything wrong, and there is no reason for one to feel bad. So regardless of how others treat you, if you engage in the practice as presented here, it makes one's life really meaningful.

I have heard that some couples make agreements to treat the other as 'number one'; some even demand the other 'you have to treat me as number one'. If both sides treated the other as number one, then that would be a good mutual relationship. But if one demands the other to treat them as number one, but in return they don't treat the other as number one, then that is not fair. The main point here is that if there is mutual concern, where both treat the other as a priority, a benefit can be derived.

Indeed, we can see many instances of those who take the initiative to go beyond their own selfish needs and think about others. Some parents have commented that one of their children always shares with others and has concern for others. That child is naturally seen as being very considerate and good. Within families, we can see those who have consideration for other members of the family and have genuine concern about the others' welfare; a family member takes the initiative for the well-being of the family as a whole, whereas others are always thinking about their own selfish needs. Even in worldly society, when someone is seen as selfish and only thinking of themselves, they are not held in high esteem. So we can see that the advice presented here relates to everyday life as well.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

17 May 2016

Based on the motivation we generated during the refuge and bodhicitta prayer, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [*meditation*]

The hallmark of having meditated on exchanging self and other is that the love and compassion in our heart increases. So it is good to check as to how effective the practice has been by gauging how much love and compassion has increased.

While there are subtler levels of suffering that one can focus on, in general it is obvious how sentient beings are experiencing great suffering and are deprived of happiness. Not bearing to see sentient beings deprived of happiness and wishing them to be happy is what is called love, and not being able to bear sentient beings' suffering and wishing them to be free from suffering is compassion. Meditating again and again on cultivating these attitudes, and thus familiarising one's mind with them, brings about a real transformation in one's mind.

When one realises how, despite developing this noble wish, sentient beings are still continuing to lack happiness and experience suffering, a deep sense of personal responsibility for establishing them in happiness and freeing them from suffering begins to develop. One sees that it is crucial to take up the responsibility for establishing sentient beings in ultimate happiness and freeing them from all suffering, because merely wishing them to be happy and free from suffering has not brought about any change to their situation.

For that mind of taking personal responsibility to generate spontaneously, one needs to have first familiarised one's mind with the development of love and compassion. This means meditating again and again on love and compassion, and acquainting oneself with these states of mind. Without first familiarising oneself with love and compassion, the initiative to take on the responsibility for leading all beings to happiness and freeing them from all suffering will not arise.

The most supreme method for enhancing love and compassion is the technique of giving and taking, which is the meditation practice we have just engaged in. Familiarising ourselves with this practice means meditating on giving and taking again and again. Without familiarising and acquainting ourselves with the wish to give, for example, we won't be able to give. Even though we may have the ability to do so, what prevents us from giving is the lack of familiarity with the mind of giving. Similarly, taking the suffering of others upon oneself is also based on familiarising one's mind with that practice. Even if we have the ability to take responsibility to help others to be free from suffering, if we don't do so it is because we lack that familiarity. So familiarising

one's mind again and again with the practice of giving and taking is essential.

Indeed, the practice of giving and taking is really the core practice of the bodhisattvas. It is through acquaintance with this practice that one enhances and strengthens the mind of love and compassion to the point of taking on the personal responsibility for bringing happiness to others, and removing their suffering. Then one will be able to develop what is called the superior intention, which is the mind developed just prior to generating actual bodhicitta.

If, after having meditated on the seven-point cause and effect sequence, one has not yet developed the superior intention, then by engaging in the practice of giving and taking, one will definitely be able to develop this mind. As this is such a powerful practice to benefit others, we can see why it is a core practice of bodhisattvas.

From the very outset the very purpose or goal of meditating on the seven-point cause and effect sequence is to benefit other sentient beings, i.e. to free them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness. That goal is then further enhanced throughout the developmental stages of the awakening mind.

On a personal level it is important to try to gauge whether our practice has produced any fruit, and the extent to which an unbiased love and compassion towards all beings has developed. As we develop our practice we need to further strengthen it, not leaving it at a mere wish. Rather than just wishing, for example, 'it would be nice if I could do the giving and taking practice', it means really developing the sentiment 'I need to be fully taking on that responsibility' from the depths of one's heart. That is the key point.

An example of the difference between a mere wish to practise, and the actual practice is, for example, gauged by our reaction when seeing someone who is deprived of food and who is really hungry. If you have the ability to help alleviate such a person's immediate suffering of hunger by giving them some food, but do not actually take the initiative to do so, then although you may wish them to be free from the suffering of hunger, you have not actually put that wish into practice. That would be a clear sign that your practice has remained mere words, and that you have not really taken it to heart.

This may appear to be a very simple practice. However it is at this level initially that we need to begin our practise. At our level now we don't have the ability to engage in high-level practices like the bodhisattvas, who are able to give away their flesh, their blood and their bodies to others. But we do have the ability to practise giving food to those who are hungry.

Having attempted to meditate on love and compassion, and engage in the practice of giving and taking, it is reasonable to ask whether there has been any actual transformation taking place within our minds. One way to gauge whether a transformation has taken place would be to look at whether our attitudes have changed. For example, prior to our attempts to engage in developing love and compassion, when we saw a disagreeable person experiencing difficulties or undergoing some sort of suffering, we might have spontaneously thought 'Oh, that serves them right. They deserve to suffer'. Rather

than wishing for them to be free from suffering, we added on more suffering in the sense of thinking that it serves them right.

Likewise when a disagreeable person lacked happiness we would have felt that it served them right, and that they were not entitled to any happiness. So rather than wishing others to be established in happiness, we wanted them to lack happiness, and rather than wishing for the other to be free from suffering we might have even wished them to experience more suffering. This is the extent of the negative mind and attitude that we might have harboured previously.

Having then taken the initiative to voluntarily engage in the practice of developing love and compassion one focusses on all beings in an unbiased manner, seeing them equally deserving happiness, and to be free from suffering. One meditates on this point and familiarises oneself with it again and again. The hallmark of this practice having taken effect is when we see that same disagreeable person suffering later on, we feel 'Oh, how wonderful it would be if they would be free from this misfortune or suffering'. And when we see those who are deprived of happiness, we begin to feel how unfortunate it is that they lack happiness, and how wonderful it would be if they could be established in happiness.

When that attitude arises readily, then that is the true sign that a transformation has taken place. At our level we are not yet able to actually generate bodhicitta. However, through familiarity we can definitely acquaint our mind with love and compassion, and develop that to the point of sincerely wishing others to be happy and free from suffering. That is such a wonderful state of mind to be in, and such a radical change from our earlier ways of thinking.

Developing such a mind of unbiased love and compassion towards others, wishing them to be endowed in happiness and free from suffering, regardless of who they are – whether they are disagreeable, or an object of earlier disagreements – will definitely bring great benefit to both oneself and others.

So whilst we have not yet developed the awakening mind of bodhicitta, this incredibly positive transformation of our previous attitude to one of unbiased love and compassion is a very sound foundation for developing bodhicitta. It is good to keep this mind.

When we really think about the benefits of developing such attitudes we can unhesitatingly accept that love and compassion is the root of all happiness, and that it is the very essence of one's life.

In terms of happiness in the world in general, at a societal level and within a community, love and compassion is definitely the basis for true wellbeing. The person who has a mind of love for others will not have any intention to harm others, because the intention to harm cannot arise when there is love for others. Without such an attitude one could defiantly harm others, but when there is true love and compassion, the attitude of harming others cannot arise. The only thought that would arise would be the wish to benefit them. When that attitude is prevalent, how could there be harm and violence in a community?

We need to constantly check the extent to which our love and compassion has developed and increased. With this habit of investigating and employing constant vigilance over our state of mind, our practice will stabilise and become more durable. By practising in his way we are also securing our own happiness. As I've regularly emphasised, the consequence of losing love and compassion is equivalent to the loss of our own happiness. It would be pitiful if we allowed that to happen.

Maintaining a genuine sense of wellbeing and happiness is directly related to generating love and compassion, and then maintaining and further enhancing that love and compassion. This practice will be really meaningful because it is done with logic and reason through tested experiences. Then we will have utilised our intelligence and wisdom appropriately.

If one doesn't utilise one's intelligence to further enhance love and compassion as a basis for one's own happiness and for the wellbeing for others, then our intelligence will not only have gone to waste but could potentially even be harmful. So we need to pay careful attention to this.

Leaving aside the importance of love and compassion on a large scale, we can see the consequences for a couple when love and compassion weakens. That is when harmful intentions start to develop. It may start slowly with bickering and hurting each other with words and so forth, but as that love and compassion and genuine concern further declines, then more extensive harm starts to occur.

3.2.1.1. EXPLAINING THE WAY OF EXCHANGING SELF AND OTHER

3.2.1.1.2. Brief summary

3.2.1.1.2.3. Practising faultlessly (cont.)

Now we need to come back to the text, otherwise we will not cover much of it.

The following explanations give very precise instructions on how to engage in this practice of exchanging self and other. The commentary on verse 139 reads:

For this reason, having to put the purpose of sentient beings first, one views without forgetfulness the food, clothing and others that one observes on one's body by stealing from it - that is giving up grasping at these objects as mine, one uses them for their benefit, as a servant would use the food, clothing and other resources of the master.

The commentary meticulously explains how to put love and compassion into practice for the reasons that have been presented earlier. For *the purpose of putting sentient beings first, one views without forgetfulness the food, clothing, and resources one uses for one's body by stealing from it.* [Other translations use the word 'snatching' instead of stealing.] As the commentary explains, stealing or snatching from the body means giving up grasping at these objects as mine. So one develops the mind of giving up grasping at these objects, one's resources and so forth, which are used to sustain one's body as 'mine', and uses them for the benefit of other sentient beings.

Reflecting on these passages is really a form of meditation, and will really help the mind to settle down. I guarantee that if you are in a disturbed state of mind,

then contemplating these points will help to settle down your mind, and pacify it. It is good to sit down at times to read the text, and reflect on its meaning.

3.2.1.2. THE WAY OF FOLLOWING UP IN THOUGHT

The earlier verses have indicated the necessity of practising exchanging self with other. Having reached the point of actually practising exchanging self with other, this next section explains how to follow it up in thought.

This section is divided into two:

- 3.2.1.2.1. Indicating
- 3.2.1.2.2. Explaining

3.2.1.2.1. Indicating

The verse relating to this is:

*140. Having made those lower and the like into self
And having made self into others,
With a mind free of discursive thoughts
Meditate on jealousy, competitiveness and
pride.*

The commentary explains:

Bodhisattvas focus on other sentient beings that are lower, equal and superior and take them as self and hold the self as other. Having thus exchanged the focus of grasping at self and others, one should induce certainty and meditate, if the meditating bodhisattva's name is Devadatta, with a mind free from doubting discursive thoughts on jealousy for Devadatta, competitiveness if equal and pride if lower.

As presented here, *bodhisattvas focus on other sentient beings that are lower, equal and superior and take them as self and hold the self as other*. Basically the practice that is being presented here is a way to overcome these faulty states of mind of jealousy, a sense of competitiveness, and pride.

When the bodhisattvas engage in practice they use every means and method to apply antidotes to counteract such faulty or negative states of mind. What is being presented here is how to use occasions where one actually feels jealous as a means to overcome jealousy. Likewise, with using occasions when competitiveness arises as an opportunity to apply an antidote for overcoming a sense of competitiveness, and using occasions where pride arises, to apply an appropriate antidote to overcome the negative or faulty state of mind of pride.

Jealousy is a mind that is unhappy about the success of others, unable to bear seeing success, good qualities and achievements of others. With equals, there's a sense of **competitiveness** where one feels uncomfortable when one's equals are doing better, or there is a sense of, 'I should be better than them'. With those who are lower or inferior to oneself in some field, one has a sense of **pride**, and feelings of contempt for them. These are really faulty states of mind that are the causes of negativity. The implication here is that we need to apply antidotes to overcome these faulty states of mind.

The commentary also presents an illustration of how to counteract these three faulty states of mind. To counteract jealousy, one engages in the practice of putting oneself in the place of the other, and assuming the higher place. To overcome the mind of contempt and pride over those who are lower, one places oneself in the lower state. So exchanging one's own position with the object of the deluded thought is the way of counteracting these

negative states of mind: if it is jealousy of one who is higher, then putting oneself in that state; if it is contempt for the lower, then taking the lower position oneself; and it's the same with competitiveness i.e. exchanging oneself with the other.

Of course there's no room for these negative states in the minds of actual bodhisattvas. That's because they've already engaged in the practice of seeing the faults of such negative states of mind. When the bodhisattvas were in the early stage of their practices, if there was even the slightest hint of jealousy they were able to immediately recognise that, and immediately see the shortcomings of jealousy, which counteracted that jealousy. Likewise there is not much room for pride to arise in a bodhisattva's mind. At early stages of their practice if there was the slightest chance for pride to arise, they were able to apply the methods and means to immediately counteract and overcome this negative state of mind.

Of course the practices presented here are for trainees on the bodhisattva path.

3.2.1.2.2. Explaining

Explaining is subdivided into four:

- 3.2.1.2.2.1. The way of meditating on jealousy for the higher
- 3.2.1.2.2.2. The way of meditating on competitiveness for the equal
- 3.2.1.2.2.3. The way of meditating on pride for the lower
- 3.2.1.2.2.4. The results of the meditation

3.2.1.2.2.1. The way of meditating on jealousy for the higher

The way of meditating on jealousy for the higher is subdivided into two:

- 3.2.1.2.2.1.1. The way of meditating
- 3.2.1.2.2.1.2. The way of practise after the meditation

3.2.1.2.2.1.1. The way of meditating

This is how we need to meditate on jealousy. The relevant lines of verse read:

*141. He is praised but I am not,
We do not find gain like him,
He is praised but I am criticised,
He is happy but I have suffering,*

*142ab. I have to do the work
While he abides happily;*

Then the commentary explains:

When the bodhisattva Devadatta meditates on exchanging self and other, Devadatta is praised by others, but having taken sentient beings as self, one is of lower qualities and will not be praised. One does not find necessities for happiness in the same way as Devadatta and although the bodhisattva Devadatta is praised, we sentient beings, are criticised. He is happy and we sentient beings have suffering. We have to do the work of carrying, but Devadatta abides happily.

This is a clear explanation of how jealousy is developed in the mind when another is praised, such as when *Devadatta is praised by others*. *Having taken sentient beings as self, one is of lower qualities and will not be praised*, refers to feeling jealous because we, oneself and others, are not praised. Another example is when the other finds *the necessities for happiness*, and *we sentient beings are criticised*.

We are jealous because *he is happy and we sentient beings have suffering. We have to do the work of carrying, but Devadatta abides happily.* Jealousy develops from thinking, 'How come they get all the good things? That's not fair!'

When we see how jealousy arises, we can see that just avoiding such states of mind overcomes jealousy, and thus it serves as an antidote for overcoming jealousy. This presentation also applies to the way in which pride is developed; the same contemplation also counteracts pride very effectively.

While these are analogies of how jealousy and so forth arise, they do not apply to actual bodhisattvas. Rather they are part of training in how to counteract jealousy and so forth.

The remaining lines of verse presented under this heading are:

- 142cd. *He is great in the world
But I am known for my lack of qualities.***
- 143. *What should one do without qualities?
We are all endowed with qualities.
There are those that are lower than him
And there are those with regard to whom I am
higher.***

The commentary then explains:

This bodhisattva is greatly renowned in the transitory worlds for his ethics, listening and so forth, but I am known for inferiority and a lack of qualities. Through effort you achieved qualities but what should we, the sentient beings without qualities, do? We sentient beings shall all practise to become endowed with qualities.

That we are low and he is high is posited relative to each other. Thus there are occasions in relation to others with superior qualities that these bodhisattvas are inferior, and there are occasions in relation to the other inferior sentient beings that I am superior. Therefore there is no need for us sentient beings to be discouraged and we should practise with effort for complete enlightenment. One should meditate on holding others as self, by thinking in this way.

The first part of the commentary indicates that *this bodhisattva is greatly renowned in the transitory worlds for his ethics, listening and so forth.* The jealous mind thinks, 'Oh, this bodhisattva is renowned for his ethics and his learning and so forth, but I'm only known as inferior and lacking qualities'. *Through effort you achieved qualities but what should we, the sentient beings without qualities do?* is a lamentation: 'We don't have any qualities, so we are shunned'. One way to overcome such sentiment is to think that if *we sentient beings practise*, we will all become *endowed with qualities*.

The earlier part of the commentary is a presentation of an attitude that can wear you down. You feel, 'Oh, he's so renowned, and I don't have any qualities', and when you think in that way then your mind becomes weighed down by a lack of confidence and so forth. The line *we sentient beings shall all practise to become endowed with qualities*, shows us that as we have the ability we can gain qualities. This is a sentiment that will uplift the mind and make it courageous.

As a way of overcoming a mind concerned about him being high and me being low the commentary says, *we are*

low and he is high is posited relative to each other. This presentation shows us that, there is, in fact, no ultimate high position, and no ultimate low position. What is considered as being high or low is all relative to each other. That is the main point here. As specifically explained here, because it is relative, *there are occasions in relation to others with superior qualities that these bodhisattvas are inferior*, and likewise, *there are occasions in relation to the other inferior sentient beings where I am superior*.

Therefore there is no need for sentient beings to be discouraged and we should practise with effort for complete enlightenment. This is followed by the conclusion that, *one should meditate on holding others as self, by thinking in this way.*

This section has dealt with the qualities of hearing, listening, learning, and so forth. Next comes this hypothetical argument:

Argument: You are lower than the bodhisattva Devadatta due to degenerated ethics and view.

Having indicated ways of overcoming feelings of despondency because others have other higher qualities, this hypothetical argument relates to the thought, 'Oh, I'm still *lower than the bodhisattva Devadatta due to degenerated ethics and view.* His ethics and view are so much better, and that's why I'm lower'. In response to this, these two lines of verse are presented:

- 144ab. *Ethics, view and faults
Are out of our control as they are powered by
the afflictions.***

The commentary answers the hypothetical question saying:

Answer: The degenerated ethics and view, faults due to lifestyle and so forth, i.e., degenerated view and action, are due to the power of the adventitious mental afflictions and not faults I created purposely under my own power.

As explained here very precisely, *degenerated ethics* i.e. behaviour and so forth *and faulty view, faults due to lifestyle and so forth*, are *due to the power of the adventitious mental afflictions and not faults I created purposely under my own power.* We need to remind ourselves of these essential points again and again in relation to both others and ourselves. It is not the individual being who is at fault, rather the faults are due to the influence of the mental afflictions. It is the afflictions that are at the fault rather than the individual person, whether it is oneself or others.

This is in line with the explanation in Aryadeva's *Four Hundred Verses* where it indicates that the Buddha does not see other individual beings as faulty; rather he sees the delusions within their mind as the fault. These are essential points. When one reprimands oneself one needs to understand that, 'It is due to the delusions in my mind that I'm engaging in such negative behaviours, or holding faulty views. So if I overcome these delusions, then all will be rectified, and all will be good.

It is, of course, due to delusions that we engage in behaviour that is clearly harmful to ourselves and others. No-one with any intelligence wants to engage in behaviours and acts that are clearly harmful. Yet, uncontrollably, we still engage in such actions or deeds because of the strong influence of the delusions.

When the delusions are overcome then such negative behaviours and faulty views will all naturally subside. The point here is that it is within our own hands: if we do not want to experience the consequences of ill-behaviours and faulty views, then we need to overcome the delusions. Then the negative consequences will pass us by.

Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© **Tara Institute**

The emphasis here is on *the power of the adventitious mental afflictions*. The Tibetan word *lu-pur-wa* - translated here as adventitious - has the connotation that it arises intermittently or occasionally. So by implication these mental afflictions are not permanent, i.e. due to certain conditions they arise, but when the conditions are not met they are not there. Thus, because they arise occasionally, they are not a permanent entity of the mind and can be totally removed.

Amongst several analogies presented in Maitreya's *Uttaratantra*¹, one is that the delusions are like clouds in the sky, in that they arise occasionally and are thus adventitious. Proof that the clouds are not a permanent entity of the sky is seen when the wind blows the clouds away, and the real entity of a clear and blue sky becomes evident.

Another analogy to illustrate that the delusions are adventitious that is presented in the same text, is that they are like murky water. If the particles of the dirt that make the water appear murky were to be one with the entity of water, then they would be inseparable, and the murky water will always remain murky. However the fact that the dirt particles are adventitious means that after some time the dirt settles down, and the water becomes clear.

The delusions are adventitious in the sense that they are not intrinsically one with the mind; they arise due to certain causes and conditions. The main point is that the delusions can be separated from the mind, and therefore the mind can be freed from the delusions.

A contemporary analogy is desalination projects, which are possible because of the fact that salt can be separated from seawater. If the salt and water were not separable then there could be no such projects. I have heard that desalination is quite expensive. The point of the analogy is that if salt and seawater were one entity then the water and salt could not be separated. Likewise, if the delusions were of one entity with the mind then they could not be separated from the mind, and one would always be affected by them.

The main point here is that mental afflictions are adventitious, which means that they can be separated from our mind.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

¹ *Great Vehicle Treatise on the Sublime Continuum*, translated by Jeffrey Hopkins
Chapter 8

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱུང་རྒྱུ་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

24 May 2016

Based on the motivation we generated during the Refuge and Bodhicitta prayer, we can now engage in the meditation practice without being distracted.

[meditation]

We can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings based on the bodhicitta attitude, which in essence is to engage in the teaching for the sole benefit of other sentient beings.

3.2.1.2.2.1.2. The way of practising after the meditation

This part of the commentary follows earlier explanations that identified the kind of thoughts that constitute jealousy, competitiveness and pride etc. to show how a bodhisattva uses the exchange of self with other to apply antidotes to these thoughts when they arise. We need to take this as personal instruction, as harbouring negative states when associating with others and feeling jealous or competitive or proud, which is feeling contempt for others, makes oneself unhappy and others uncomfortable. Therefore, since there are no redeeming qualities in such negative states of mind, we definitely need to find a way to overcome them. The methods presented here are not difficult to understand, or even to adopt, as a way to counteract negative states of mind. When the teachings present the way to counteract such negative states of mind so simply and clearly, if we don't apply them how else will we ever overcome these negative states of mind? What other methods can we hope to find?

We need to take heed of this advice to find the means to counteract negative states of mind because of the distress they cause to oneself and others. When negative states of mind have been clearly identified within oneself it is a matter of applying the antidotes to overcome them. For example, jealousy is a mind unhappy with others' success; competitiveness is a mind unhappy when others do well with the wish to compete with them, and pride is a mind where one feels one is better than others and condemns them. It makes us uncomfortable when others harbour such negative feelings towards us, so we need to take the initiative to overcome our negative feelings as a way for others not to feel uncomfortable around us. It clearly causes discomfort in one's immediate surroundings and with one's associates. In a community or a workplace, there are many who lament that they feel uncomfortable because a colleague is jealous of them or is competing with them. When others act out of jealousy towards us, it means that they are unhappy with our status or whatever good deeds we may be engaged in. They are jealous because they are unhappy with our success, and a sense of competitiveness also arises. Those who complain that they feel uncomfortable when others express such feelings or attitudes should check whether they themselves have such sentiments towards others. When we ourselves think that others are making us feel uncomfortable, it is good to actually check within ourselves: Am I holding such negative attitudes or not?

We need to understand that putting this advice into practice is a way to avoid causing trouble for others, or hurting others. On top of that, if one can benefit them, then it becomes a practice in line with the deeds of a bodhisattva. So while these are presented as practices for bodhisattvas, if one engages in positive deeds with the attitude of benefiting others, combined with bodhicitta - the mind of enlightenment - then a practice such as generosity becomes a deed of a bodhisattva similitude. When one practises morality combined with the bodhicitta attitude, it becomes a similitude of a bodhisattva deed. Likewise, even reciting a mantra such as OM MANI PADME HUM, combined with the attitude of bodhicitta, becomes a similitude of a bodhisattva deed. The deeds of a bodhisattva have been explained extensively in the earlier part of the text. In summary, it is positive deeds such as practising the six perfections combined with the attitude of the awakening mind. Thus, we need to understand that to be inspired to engage in a bodhisattva's deeds, one needs to secure the bodhicitta attitude in one's mind.

When others express negative attitudes toward us, such as jealousy, we should see the faults and not be affected by it, and also take the initiative to overcome it within ourselves. We clearly need to recognise the faults of jealousy and how jealousy affects us, knowing that from beginningless time this attitude has created negative deeds that have propelled us into cyclic existence again and again. When others express such negative attitudes towards us, having clearly seen it as a fault within us, we should find the antidote within ourselves.

This becomes the means to understand that the other is also blinded by the fact of not recognising the faults of jealousy, and how jealousy harms their own mind. When one sees that, rather than their jealous mind harming oneself, one feels compassion for the other knowing that harbouring such negative attitudes only harms themselves. Thus, rather than retaliating and being upset, one can feel compassion for them. This is how we need to engage in the practice in order to derive the real benefit. As mentioned earlier, these are not obscure practices but something which is really possible, and which changes one's attitude. I personally find these practices meaningful. They are very positive states of mind that I try to make part of my normal way of thinking to counteract negative states of mind. It definitely benefits my mind. I find that practising in such ways lessens negative states of mind within myself, and brings a great sense of joy and happiness within my mind. I don't feel any urge or need to go out of my way to cause others trouble. So while it benefits me, it also prevents me from hurting and causing trouble for others, so there is benefit all round. As the great master Atisha mentioned, the best quality is to benefit others. Thus, benefiting others is the best quality that one could ever have. This is very succinct and profound advice; indeed when one engages in any ways or means to benefit others, one is practising true Dharma. This is good to keep in mind.

The first two lines in the verse read:

144ab. *Ethics, view and faults*

*Are out of our control as they are powered by
the afflictions.*

I emphasised in our last session that we can apply this knowledge to the very crucial points being presented here – how not to see one's faults as a condemnation but rather arising due to the afflictions within oneself – to others' faults as well. These are meticulously explained.

Keep these points in mind when the mind is entangled with self-loathing and self-guilt. All this can be overcome by recognising that it is the delusions that are at fault, not oneself as an individual person. This is really profound advice on how to feel courageous, as a way to combat the delusions and not to see oneself as the enemy and beating oneself up. One must understand the crucial point of what causes the real trouble and identify these afflictions. As the teachings state, these are *out of our control as they are powered afflictions*: when we are dominated by them it is as if we have temporarily lost control over our own mind; and this is indeed the case. The Buddha said that, '*an uncontrolled mind is an unhappy mind*' the reverse of which is, *a controlled mind is a happy mind*. When one has control over one's own mind, specifically control over the afflictions, they don't dominate one's mind and thinking, so one definitely has a happy state of mind. This is meticulous advice and something we need to try and apply in our own life. That is what I am encouraging you to do.

This is the second year we have been studying the very profound text *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life* from the beginning. This has such great, profound advice for you who have been coming regularly, paying attention, and working hard to try and understand the teachings. I am not saying that I am really skilled in presenting the material, but I have shared whatever understanding I have with the best motivation. With our combined efforts we have definitely worked hard in covering and studying this text. So now if we were to apply some of this advice and put it into practice then that would have made it really worthwhile. Of course, just coming along, listening to the teachings and studying the text itself has been incredibly virtuous. Understanding this is a great way to implant positive imprints in our mind, so it is definitely a deed to rejoice in. But, the main thing is to try and put it into practice, as this is how we derive the real benefit from the teachings. What I am also saying is that I rejoice in your great attentiveness in listening to the teachings.

This is a way to confirm with you that I only rejoice and feel great joy for all the understanding you may have gained. I need to say this, lest there be occasions where one might wonder if the teacher is starting to feel jealous of the understanding one has gained. As a teacher, there is danger for such feelings to occur, so it is important to guard one's own mind. I can definitely assure you that I don't feel any jealousy at all for your understanding, I only feel great joy and happiness. The more you gain understanding and are able to practice, the more joy and happiness it gives me.

3.2.1.2.1.2. *The way of practise after the meditation*

[*Familiarity* would be a more specific term in this case.] So far the focus has been on how to familiarise your mind with overcoming negative states such as jealousy, competitiveness and pride. The text next explains how to practise after that familiarisation.

The last two lines of the earlier verse and the next verse are presented:

144cd. *I need to be restored as much as possible,
And I also need to accept harm.*

145. *However, I am not helped by him,
So why does he criticise me?
What are his qualities doing for me?
And he has qualities!*

The commentary clearly explains the meaning:

'Bodhisattva Devadatta, if you have compassion, then you have to work as much as possible to repair my faults and I need to accept the harm of the austerities to establishing qualities, then why does he even criticise us? What are the qualities of that bodhisattva doing for me? Even though the bodhisattva Devadatta himself has qualities, they have no benefit for us sentient beings.

As a way to further familiarise oneself, using the example of a bodhisattva called Devadatta who places himself as other, the commentary explains *if you have compassion, then you have to work as much as possible to repair my faults*. The faults refer to the degeneration of ethics or the degeneration of views. *If you have compassion*, implies that rather than merely criticising, you should be working to repair the faults of degenerate ethics and views within me. Likewise, if out of compassion you make genuine attempts to repair my faults, from my side I will accept the harm or difficulties of the austere practices to establish the qualities. For example, there might be occasions where you have to reprimand a person with scolding to prevent them from doing something negative. This is an example of harm or difficult austere practices to repair those faults. What is presented here is that, when out of compassion, certain means and methods are used to point out one's faults, one should make the promise to willingly accept them, because if one does not there will be no way to correct one's faults. This sheds light on how a teacher would guide a student, showing the means by which it is done out of compassion. When a student is willing to accept and learn through stern measures, they see the hardships as a way to get rid of faults and gain more positive personal qualities; there has to be mutual effort put in. From the teacher's side there is genuine effort out of compassion, but the student must bear some difficulties and hardships to acquire the qualities. Nothing can be acquired without putting in some effort. This is another point to understand.

Engaging in the practice this way becomes the means to achieve enduring patience of definitely thinking about the Dharma. This type of patience is required when engaging in austere Dharma practices where one encounters hardships and difficulties. In willingly accepting and enduring those difficulties, understanding that they are only for one's betterment, one generates the mind of patience.

As the commentary further explains, *If we sentient beings do not come into the benefit of having our faults repaired by Devadatta*, then why does he even criticise us? This is saying that if his qualities are not used to benefit us then what use are they?

In other words, if your qualities and compassion are not used to benefit us, then why even criticise us? This implies that if words are not said out of compassion, as a means to benefit, then it may just as well be critical remarks. In summary, the essence of the practice is that if we cannot benefit others then at least we should not harm them. The commentary goes on with, *what are the qualities of a bodhisattva doing for me*, implying that if they are not applied as a means to benefit one, then what use are those qualities? *Even though the bodhisattva Devadatta himself has qualities, they have no benefit for us sentient beings* implies that when there are actual good qualities, then they should be used to benefit others in the best possible way, rather than feeling contempt for others and so forth.

The next verse reads:

146. *He that does not have compassion*

*For migrators abiding in poisonous bad migrations,
Purposely wishes to outdo those proficient
Out of exaggerated qualities.*

The commentary explains:

Further, this Devadatta, who has no compassion for the migrators in the lower realms, who are like being held in the mouth of poisonous snakes and ferocious animals, due to degenerated ethics and views, not only does he not benefit us sentient beings, but he purposely wishes to outdo us proficient sentient beings out of his exaggerated view of his own qualities. It is inappropriate to exaggerate and criticise.

Having placed the mind on sentient beings and taken oneself, the bodhisattva, as others, contemplate that it is unsuitable for him to harm oneself.

Again relating to Devadatta as another, the commentary explains the need of compassion for migrators in the lower realms, *who are like being held in the mouth of poisonous snakes and ferocious animals*. The plight of samsara is illustrated with the grave situation where the danger of perishing from either a poisonous bite or being eaten by ferocious animals is prominent. At any moment one could be captured by their fangs of death. If beings are in the lower realms this is all due to degenerated ethics and views, so by understanding that, when Devadatta (oneself as another) does not benefit us, and criticises us and tries to outdo us with his own exaggerated view of his own qualities, that is totally inappropriate. The point being emphasised is that if one exaggerates one's own qualities and feels contempt for others and criticises them, then there is no worth whatsoever in those qualities.

To summarise this point, Gyaltsab Je concludes:

Having placed the mind on sentient beings and taken oneself, the bodhisattva, as others, contemplate that it is unsuitable for him to harm oneself.

He is emphasising here that having engaged in the practice of exchanging self with other, placing oneself as other and others as oneself, then harming others would be like harming oneself, which is unsuitable. When one places oneself as another, then one could not initiate harm to the other, for that would be like harming oneself.

3.2.1.2.2.2. The way of meditating on competitiveness for the equal

This is subdivided into four:

3.2.1.2.2.2.1. Competing for gain and praise

3.2.1.2.2.2.2. Competing for renown of qualities

3.2.1.2.2.2.3. Competing for the number of qualities

3.2.1.2.2.2.4. Being happy about bringing harm to others

3.2.1.2.2.2.1. Competing for gain and praise

This again is another common fault. What needs to be clarified here is that while a sense of competitiveness is seen as a negative attitude, looking up to others as a role model is a virtue. Here in Australia there is emphasis on the need to have a good role model to inspire oneself. From the Dharma point of view, the Sangha Jewel would be the role models we'd see as exemplary, and also who we'd wish to follow in terms of study and practice etc. Using a contemporary context like academic study, the role models would be those who have gone through all the stages of study and reached proficiency, and who may have good academic careers. These people would be role models in their area of study for those trying to attain a similar sort of achievement.

Another illustration would be if one has a good friend who is doing very well in their studies, and one started to feel like one should put more time and energy into one's own study, just like one's friend, then this is not an instance of feeling competitive, it is using the friend as a role model.

Competitiveness arises when one feels one should be better than one's equals on the same level. This sort of attitude, of wanting to do better than the other, is a sense of competitiveness, which is the non-virtue being presented here.

The main point is to differentiate between seeing others as a role model - and a way to inspire one's study and practice, which is fine - and competitiveness, which is the sense of wanting to be better than them.

The verse reads:

*147. Looking at those equal to me,
To be superior
I thoroughly establish
Our gain and praise, even through dispute.*

The commentary explains it in this way:

We shall compete with the bodhisattva Devadatta, who is equal to us in being a sentient being, for status and the like. So that we sentient beings are superior in gain, praise and the like to the bodhisattva Devadatta, we establish our praise and gain even through dispute with the bodhisattva.

When saying, *we shall compete with the bodhisattva Devadatta, who is equal to us in being a sentient being*, the connotation of *equal* here shows that we don't have a sense of competitiveness with someone known to be superior to us, rather it is with those we consider equal to ourselves. Thus it relates to those who surround us, like fellow Dharma students, colleagues, classmates, siblings etc.

For someone one considers an equal, the commentary says, *we shall compete... for status and the like'. So that we sentient beings [oneself] becomes superior in gain, praise and the like to the bodhisattva Devadatta, we establish our praise and gain even through dispute with the bodhisattva*. This indicates that in order to excel, one may do whatever is necessary, such as dispute, to compete with the other to become superior to them. Apply this practice as a way to overcome such attitudes.

3.2.1.2.2.2.2. Competing for renown of qualities

The verse reads:

*148. I shall make my qualities clear
By any means to all the transitory worlds,
And I shall take care
That nobody hears about his qualities.*

The commentary explains the meaning as follows:

I shall proclaim and make clear our qualities by any means to all the transitory worlds and further I shall take care that nobody hears about the qualities of this bodhisattva.

Again, having exchanged oneself with the other, in relation to others one should proclaim their qualities and hide their faults; and in relation to oneself, one should proclaim one's faults and hide one's qualities. This practice highlights that as ordinary beings, we make our qualities clear to the whole world, whilst doing everything possible to hide our faults. But when bodhisattvas exchange themselves with the other, they proclaim their own faults and hide their qualities.

The practice of proclaiming others' faults whilst hiding one's qualities and proclaiming one's own qualities whilst hiding

one's faults, seems a common practice in Australian politics. We can see that even if the opposition has a good project it is not mentioned, but criticised in every way.

We can see that the practice of ruining another's reputation or proclaiming their faults, especially in politics, becomes a real cause for dispute and confusion. We can see it really confuses people's minds because they are left not knowing who to believe anymore. In Australia we are very fortunate that people are generally good-natured and quite intelligent, so it doesn't bring much chaos. However there are many instances in other countries where this behaviour can cause chaos; not only confusion but chaos, because people get really upset and angry. When they hear about the faults of the opposition they believe it is all true, and this causes a lot of angst, which can cause protests or retaliation etc. So we can see this is a malevolent practice that can cause distress in people's minds.

3.2.1.2.2.3. Competing for the number of qualities

This verse relates to the point I mentioned earlier and reads:

149. *I shall hide my faults,
I shall be made offerings to and he not
I am obtaining today much gain and
I shall be praised, but he should not have these.*

The commentary starts by explaining:

I shall hide our, i.e. sentient beings' faults, but clearly proclaim his faults and in this way we the sentient beings become an object of offering for others and he will not.

Here we can see how, if we engage in bringing out the faults of others and hiding our own faults, the others will not receive offerings, because they will not be regarded as worthy, while we, who have hidden our faults, will receive offerings.

The commentary continues:

I shall strive in this way. I am obtaining today much good food, clothing and the like, and others should praise me, but he shall not receive these benefits.

I shall strive in this way indicates how a competitive mind arises by constantly trying to proclaim others' faults when they have qualities, and proclaiming one's own qualities while hiding one's faults. This is how the negative state of mind works. The competitive mind says, *I am obtaining today much good food, clothing and the like, and others should praise me, but he shall not receive these benefits.* Normally one would like this out of a sense of competitiveness with others. But here it is used as a way to counteract this approach by placing oneself in the other's position then applying this to oneself i.e. exchanging oneself with the other.

3.2.1.2.2.4. Being happy about bringing harm to others

When actually practiced in this way, we can see how all modes of competitiveness with others, and wishing them harm, is what actually brings misfortune, dispute and distress in the world.

The verse reads:

150. *I shall watch joyously for a long time
How he is being treated inappropriately,
I shall take care that he is the laughing stock
Of all migrators and that they abuse each other.*

The commentary explains:

I shall watch joyously for a long time how this bodhisattva Devadatta is being treated inappropriately and is being crushed. I shall take care

that this bodhisattva is a laughing stock for all migrators and they abuse each other by criticising each other's faults.

Having exchanged self and other one thus praises sentient beings and stops to exaggerate one's qualities.

The mind explained here, *I shall watch joyously for a long time how this bodhisattva Devadatta is being treated inappropriately and is being crushed* is indeed a negative state of mind. Feeling joyous when something bad happens to someone you don't like, or when they are suffering in some way, is not good. Furthermore the commentary says *I shall take care this bodhisattva is a laughing stock for all migrators and they abuse each other by criticising others' faults*, so again, when this negative mind arises it harbours an attitude towards others where one feels contempt, or a sense of competitiveness. A way to overcome that is this practice presented by Gyaltsab Rinpoche who summarises the point as *having exchanged self and other one thus praises sentient beings and stops to exaggerate one's qualities.*

3.2.1.2.2.3. The way of meditating on pride for the lower

This has four subdivisions:

3.2.1.2.2.3.1. The aspect of meditating on pride

3.2.1.2.2.3.2. The benefits of meditating on it

3.2.1.2.2.3.3. The way of acting upon having done the meditation

3.2.1.2.2.3.4. Contemplating the disadvantages of lacking such a pride

We will continue with this next time.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

31 May 2016

Based on the motivation we generated during the refuge and bodhicitta prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [meditation]

It would be good to adopt this meditation practice as part of our regular daily practice.

Now let us generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the purpose of all other sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the Mahayana teachings, and then put them into practice well.

Generating such a motivation, even for a few moments, will definitely establish very strong positive imprints in our mind.

3.2.1.2.2.3. The way of meditating on pride for the lower

3.2.1.2.2.3.1. The aspect of meditating on pride

The verse is preceded with this statement:

A bodhisattva should meditate on pride by holding someone with superior qualities to themselves as self.

Then the verse reads:

151. *This afflicted one is known
To compete with me;
How could he equal me
In hearing, wisdom, body, caste and wealth?*

The commentary explains:

If this inferior afflicted bodhisattva Devadatta proclaims that he wants to compete with us sentient beings, then: 'How could he equal me in hearing, wisdom, body, caste and wealth? He does not equal us in any way.' Meditate thus on pride.

This is a presentation on how to overcome pride, which is, as explained earlier, a conceited mind that looks down with a sense of contempt on those who one considers to be inferior. Pride is a faulty state of mind that needs to be overcome and, as the self-cherishing mind is the basis for pride, this presentation is ultimately about overcoming the self-cherishing mind.

As presented in earlier sessions, when exchanging oneself with someone who is superior, one imagines what it would be like to be superior, and that the superior person holds the lower position of oneself. When one exchanges oneself with someone of lesser wisdom etc., then one places oneself in the inferior's place and places the inferior as oneself. With equals there is a sense of competitiveness, and again one places oneself as the other, and the other as oneself. These are ways to counteract the faulty states of mind of jealousy, pride, and competitiveness respectively.

The presentation here shows how the faulty state of mind of pride arises, and the kinds of sentiments it brings up. As the commentary states, *If this inferior afflicted*

bodhisattva Devadatta proclaims that he wants to compete with us sentient beings, then: 'How could he equal me in hearing, wisdom, body, caste and wealth?' Pride is generated by thinking that one is superior to others either in having more knowledge than others, or having more wisdom or understanding than others, or having a better body and physique than others, or by being of higher caste or status, or by having more wealth than others. Through contemplating these characteristics one generates a sense of pride that one is better than the other.

This shows clearly how the mind of pride arises in relation to the status one believes one has. When one contemplates the fault of pride by seeing how such a conceited mind is generated, then *he does not equal us in any way. Meditate thus on pride*, means meditating on pride in this manner as a way to overcome pride.

Thus pride arises as a result of seeing oneself as superior to those who are inferior or disadvantaged in some way.

3.2.1.2.2.3.2. The benefits of meditating on pride

This is presented with the following verse:

152. *Having thus heard of my qualities,
Well known by all,
Enjoy the bliss and happiness
That makes one's hair stand on end in joy.*

The commentary explains:

As I say, 'As they are unequal, enjoy the bliss and joy that makes one's pore's hair stand on end, derived from hearing about my qualities that are far superior to the well-renowned Devadatta.

When others hear of the great qualities of a bodhisattva, such as their vast understanding of the teachings, having great wisdom and so forth, this causes such great admiration that one's hairs *stand on end*. This is an indication of how just hearing about these great qualities can move one's mind to the point where it causes a physical reaction.

This is a concise explanation of the way the great qualities of a bodhisattva bring such great joy to the minds of others.

3.2.1.2.2.3.3. The way of acting upon having done the meditation

The verse relating to this reads:

153. *However much gain he has,
When I engage in the action
I shall give him only enough to live by,
And take the remainder by force.*

The commentary explains:

Although he has gain of food and clothing, if I engage in benefiting sentient beings today I shall give him just enough food and clothing to survive on, and the remainder I shall take by force.

As explained clearly, *although he has gain of food and clothing, if I engage in benefiting sentient beings today I shall give him just enough food and clothing to survive on and the remainder I shall take by force*. Through pride one may engage in acts of giving others only as much as they need, and taking away by force anything that remains. This is another example of the fault of pride, which is being used as a way to encourage us to use whatever we have as a way to benefit sentient beings. If whatever gain one may

have is used to benefit sentient beings, then that gain is worthwhile and well used.

3.2.1.2.2.3.4. *Contemplating the disadvantages of lacking such a pride*

This section explains contemplating the disadvantages of lacking pride. The following two lines relate to this:

*154ab. I shall take him away from happiness
And continuously expose him to my harm*

The commentary explains:

I shall take this bodhisattva away from his bliss of leisure and order him to carry my suffering. I shall continuously expose him to the harm of eliminating the suffering of sentient beings.

This is a further example of the fault of pride. As explained clearly, *I shall take this bodhisattva away from his bliss of leisure and order him to carry my suffering. I shall continuously expose him to the harm of eliminating the suffering of sentient beings.*

3.2.1.2.2.4. The result of the meditation

This section is divided into four:

3.2.1.2.2.4.1. Contemplating the faults of cherishing self

3.2.1.2.2.4.2. The source for understanding the infinite benefits of cherishing others

3.2.1.2.2.4.3. Explaining that it is only beneficial

3.2.1.2.2.4.4. Advice to strive in cherishing others

3.2.1.2.2.4.1. *Contemplating the faults of cherishing self*

This heading is presented in the following six lines:

*154cd. It causes me harm in all of the
Hundreds of cyclic existences.*

*155. 'Mind, because you wish to act for self,
Although hundreds of eons pass,
With this great hardship
You will only accomplish suffering.'*

The commentary explains:

The cherishing of self that wishes oneself to have perfection causes the harm of the hells and other lower realms while circling in cyclic existence in all of the hundreds of lifetimes. 'Mind, you have caused me great hardship that is meaningless even if hundreds of eons pass. You have caused me thus only the suffering of cyclic existence.' The bodhisattva Devadatta should regard himself in such a way.

This explanation in the commentary relating to the faults of self-cherishing is quite clear so there is no need for much elaboration. As explained previously, the self-cherishing mind is a mind that thinks about only having the best for oneself, with everything going one's way for one's own personal benefit. When the commentary states, *the bodhisattva Devadatta should regard himself in such a way*, the connotation is that the bodhisattva called Devadatta needs to think about how the fault of self-cherishing arises in this way.

Devadatta should reprimand his mind thus: *Mind, you have caused me great hardship that is meaningless even if hundreds of eons pass.* That mind of course is the self-cherishing mind, and 'all you have done is cause me great hardship that is meaningless'. The sufferings that we encounter as a result of trivial worldly activities and gains are, as explained here, meaningless. Any hardship or difficulties that one has endured would not have

brought any real happiness. Therefore they have been meaningless, and even after hundreds of eons they have brought no lasting joy. And, as mentioned further, *you have caused me thus only the suffering of cyclic existence.*

Of course if the suffering experienced is from enduring hardships and difficulties for the practise of the Dharma, then that would be meaningful. Enduring hardships for the Dharma would serve a great purpose and definitely have great meaning. However hardship and difficulties experienced merely for the sake of worldly pleasures and so forth are not a cause for true happiness, but a cause for even more suffering in the cyclic existence.

As a way to reprimand oneself, the commentary begins with *mind, you*. It is good to reprimand oneself on a personal level as part of one's own practice, and it is appropriate to use your own name. 'You [my name], look at what you have done so far with your self-cherishing mind. Whilst I wish for happiness, you have only brought me unimaginable sufferings in cyclic existence. Now it is time you brought me benefit'. When the mind is in a positive state it will be a mind that benefits oneself. Referring to the mind in this way differentiates one's self-cherishing mind from oneself.

3.2.1.2.2.4.2. *The source for understanding the infinite benefits of cherishing others*

The verse relating to this reads:

*156. Therefore, engage intensively
In the purpose of others,
And, as the words of the Able One are infallible
You will see the benefits later on.*

The commentary explains:

Thus one engages intensively into accomplishing the benefit of others upon cherishing others. Since the words of the Buddha are infallible with regards to their subject, one will see later on the result of enlightenment, a quality of cherishing others, based on viewing cherishing of self as the enemy.

Having presented the faults of cherishing oneself, the benefits of cherishing others are now presented. Again, this is a very reasonable and logically sequenced presentation.

Having contemplated the great disadvantages of cherishing oneself, *one engages intensively in accomplishing the benefit of others upon cherishing others*. The explanation of the benefits begins with the statement, *since the words of the Buddha are infallible with regards to their subject*. As the Buddha's teachings are true to their words and are infallible, they cannot be contradicted. Therefore, as the Buddha explained, *one will see later on the results of enlightenment, which is a quality obtained by cherishing others, based on viewing cherishing oneself as the enemy*.

3.2.1.2.2.4.3. *Explaining that it is only beneficial*

The verse relating to this heading is preceded with this hypothetical argument:

Argument: Although one has worked for the welfare of others for a long time one has not seen such a benefit.

If one has not seen any benefit from some kind of work or practice, then doubting its value is a very significant doubt. The following verse shows the way to overcome such a doubt.

157. *If one had earlier
Carried out these actions,
It would be impossible to have an occasion
Without the happiness of complete
enlightenment.*

The commentary explains answer to the doubt:

Answer: If you had earlier carried out the action of exchanging self and others then it would be impossible to experience occasions of suffering, without the happiness of enlightenment complete with the two purposes. Regretting having passed time with meaningless actions one should strive in meditating on the mind of enlightenment.

The commentary clearly explains that *if you had earlier carried out the action of exchanging self and others then it would be impossible to experience occasions of suffering*. In other words, if one had carried out the practices of exchanging self with other, and thus cherishing others, one would not be suffering now. *Without the happiness of enlightenment complete with the two purposes* indicates that the ultimate result of cherishing others is perfecting the purposes of oneself as well as the purpose of others. If one is experiencing suffering now, then that is a clear sign that one has not engaged in the practice of exchanging self with others.

Having contemplated this one develops great regret about *having passed time with meaningless actions*, so *one should strive in meditating on the mind of enlightenment*. In essence, one regrets having wasted such time in the past by not engaging in the practices.

3.2.1.2.2.4.4. *Advice to strive in cherishing others*

Again this is introduced with a hypothetical argument:

Argument: If you say, 'I am not able to habituate myself by meditating on exchanging self and other.'

The verse to indicate the explanation of that is:

158. *Hence, meditate on others
Just as you hold as mine
The drop of semen and blood,
Which belongs to others.*

The commentary explains:

Answer: Since the welfare of others has such benefits one should meditate on cherishing other sentient beings by holding them as self, just as one has familiarised oneself with holding this body as mine, which is established out of the impure semen and blood of father and mother, who are other. By meditating in such a way complete the meditation of exchanging self and other.

The hypothetical doubt says *I am not able to habituate myself by meditating on exchanging self and other*. While one may see the benefits that have been explained earlier, one may still feel: 'How could I ever meditate in such a way? How could I actually engage in the practice of exchanging self with others? It's hard to familiarise oneself with exchanging self and other, and thus I'm not able to familiarise myself with such practice'.

As a response to that, the commentary says, *since the welfare of others has such benefits, one should meditate on cherishing other sentient beings by holding them as self*. This can be accomplished through familiarisation. For example, although our bodies came from others we hold

this body as mine, it is established out of the impure semen and blood of father and mother. Although we have no qualms about cherishing this body as mine, it is actually a body that has been produced by substances received from others, i.e. one's father and mother. Through familiarisation one holds this body as being mine, even though it is produced from substances from others. Thus it is possible to adopt this way of thinking through familiarisation.

By meditating in such a way complete the meditation of exchanging self and other.

3.2.1.3. THE WAY OF FOLLOWING UP IN ACTION

This is subdivided into two:

3.2.1.3.1. Actual

3.2.1.3.2. One should take control of one's mind when following up the exchange of self and other in action

3.2.1.3.1. Actual

This has three subdivisions:

3.2.1.3.1.1. Giving one's perfections to others

3.2.1.3.1.2. Sincerely accepting oneself to be lower for the purpose of others

3.2.1.3.1.3. A summary of how to practise

3.2.1.3.1.1. Giving one's perfections to others

This is further subdivided into two:

3.2.1.3.1.1.1. Actual

3.2.1.3.1.1.2. It is suitable to be jealous of oneself

3.2.1.3.1.1.1. Actual

The verse presented under this heading is:

159. *Having given others great consideration,
Whatever you observe on your body,
Having snatched it away,
Put it to use for others.*

The commentary explains:

Having familiarised one's mind in this way 'I shall give the welfare of others great practical consideration' and having trained in this motivation, bodhisattvas advise themselves: 'Having considered whether one is harming others or not, whatever desired objects one observes on one's body, having snatched them away, give up the grasping at mine and put them to use for others.'

What is being explained here is that one first needs to familiarise one's mind with the practice of exchanging self with other. As presented earlier, that is done by thinking of the faults of cherishing oneself in many ways, and thinking about the benefits of cherishing others in many ways. Then, having familiarised one's mind with these thoughts over a long time, one needs to put them into practice. One cannot possibly put anything into practice without first having familiarised one's mind with the practice, and that is the point that is being presented here.

As explained further, the way to engage in the practice is to recall how the *bodhisattvas advise themselves*, as a way of checking their state of mind. What one checks is *whether one is harming others or not*. This means checking 'Am I harming others or am I benefitting them?', and then constantly maintaining that awareness of how one is conducting oneself.

As a way of putting that into practice, one snatches away *whatever desired objects one observes on one's body*. This indicates that one snatches away from oneself one's possessions, clothing and food, and uses them to benefit other sentient beings. In other words, not feeding and clothing one's body just to maintain oneself, but rather using it for the purpose of others. Furthermore, one gives up *grasping at mine and puts them to use for others*. When one has a strong self-cherishing mind, then one considers possessions such as food and so forth as mine. Giving away these possessions means giving up strong self-cherishing, and using these possessions for the purpose of benefitting others.

3.2.1.3.1.1.2. *It is suitable to be jealous of oneself*

This is another technique to change one's attitude. As a way to overcome the self-cherishing mind one develops a sense of jealousy towards oneself.

The verse that relates to this is:

160. *'I am happy, others not,
I am high, others low
I receive benefit, others not,'
Why are you not jealous of self?*

The commentary explains:

Further, one should also meditate on jealousy: 'I am happy but other sentient beings are not happy, I am superior from the point of view of enjoyments and the like but others are inferior in this way. I practise virtue that benefits me but others do not and therefore I am blissful and others are not. What is the use of that?' Why is one not jealous towards myself who is higher? It is suitable to be jealous.

As the commentary quite clearly explains the meaning of this verse, there is no need to further elaborate on it.

When one acknowledges that one is happy and one has a high status, receives benefits, and so forth, then self-cherishing may arise. Reprimanding oneself if there is any self-cherishing will be an impetus to use these qualities to benefit others. If one actually instils more compassion for those who one sees as being deprived of the qualities that one has, such as happiness, high status, and so forth, then rather than feeling conceit over these qualities, they become even more reason to benefit others.

For those with strong self-cherishing, one's qualities only lead to conceit and pride, but they are a means to benefit others for those who overcome the self-cherishing mind.

We can use the remaining time to recite the dedication or tenth chapter of the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*.

Of course our dedication can be focussed on those who are experiencing sickness and other difficulties and problems in general. We can also dedicate it to the welfare of all sentient beings, particularly those with whom one has a direct relationship, such as one's parents. For those whose parents who are still with you, dedicate it for their wellbeing so that they are free of extreme sufferings, illness and so forth, and that they have a happy state of mind. Those whose parents have passed away you can dedicate the recitation for their wellbeing wherever they've been reborn, and for them to continuously experience good conditions. As we have a

strong connection with our parents, dedicating our practice in this way will definitely bring them benefit.

When one takes refuge, for example, one envisions all sentient beings around oneself, with one's parents on either side. That is because of the connection that we have with them.

It is good to keep the specific meaning and purpose of the practice in mind. The direct biological connection we have with our parents is not just some hypothetical connection. Because of the biological connection, when we make prayers and aspirations for our parents and siblings, it definitely has a benefit.

The concise motivation that we generate is: I will engage in this recitation to bring benefit for all sentient beings, bringing them happiness and relieving them from all suffering.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

7 June 2016

Based on the motivation that we generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice.

(Pause for meditation)

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines, 'For the sake of all mother sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will engage in and listen to the teachings'. Generating this motivation is also a reminder of the goal that we're seeking to achieve, which is Buddhahood – thus it refreshes our mind to reflect on what Buddhahood actually entails.

As we attempted in our short meditation practice, we must try to incorporate the *giving and taking* practice in our daily lives, as way to transform and subdue our minds. If we don't use these profound practices and techniques as a means to subdue our mind, then we won't find any other methods – there are no other means.

Following on from where we left off in our last session, we are now on the third sub-heading, which is:

3.2.1.3. THE WAY OF FOLLOWING UP IN ACTION

3.2.1.3.1. Actual (cont.)

3.2.1.3.1.2. Sincerely accepting oneself to be lower for the purpose of others

Here there are three subdivisions:

3.2.1.3.1.2.1. Analysing one's faults

3.2.1.3.1.2.2. Confessing having harmed sentient beings

3.2.1.3.1.2.2. Diligently take the lower place

It is good to derive an understanding from the outline itself. As presented, it is very reasonable to accept oneself to be lower than others, for if we can't practise taking a lower position, then there's no way that we can actually benefit others.

When we engage in reading a Dharma text, it is good to try to derive an understanding from every angle of the presentation, such as from the outline itself. Indeed we can derive the text's essential meaning just from the outline, which is intended to summarise the main point being presented. Here, the main point is accepting oneself to be lower for the purpose of benefiting others. Contemplating this point for a while can move our mind, and thus one derives more benefit from what is being presented in the text.

3.2.1.3.1.2.1. Analysing one's faults

161. *I shall separate from my happiness
And attach the suffering of others to me.
Say, 'Why do you act like this at any time?'
Investigate your own faults.*

I shall separate myself from all my happiness such as food, clothing and so forth, and give them to others. I shall attach the sufferings of others to myself and

accept them. Bodhisattvas should investigate their faults by asking themselves from time to time, 'Why did I do this?'

The first two lines refer to the practice of giving and taking, the meditation practice we attempted to engage in earlier. Essentially the point of the practice, as it says here, is to *separate myself from all my happiness such as food, clothing and so forth*, meaning one will not cherish these things and instead give them to others. In the practice of giving and taking, this is the practice of giving: giving all of the goodness one has. Then *I shall attach the sufferings of others to myself* – this is the taking part. These are the two immaculate presentations of the giving and taking practice.

Next, the text explains that *bodhisattvas should investigate their faults by asking themselves from time to time 'Why did I do this?'* In other words, those training as bodhisattvas should investigate their minds by regularly asking themselves about the intentions behind their thoughts and actions. The main point of this practice is to detect any faults that may arise in the trainee's mind.

We need to take this as a personal instruction; we need to be familiar with the practice of checking our mind for any faults that may arise. Even just reading these words and contemplating them for a few moments, and then investigating the mind can be an essential meditation practice.

Occasionally one may feel a bit down, unhappy and so forth. At that time, rather than letting our unhappy, depressed mind carry on unchecked, it would be far better to take some time to read a text like this. We can first make strong supplications to Shantideva, seeking the blessing to be able to gain the understanding and realisation of these essential points. Spending a few moments contemplating these words would really help the mind to become more settled, to experience a sense of happiness and peace.

When we apply this technique and contemplate the meaning of the text, it will definitely stop negative states of mind, such as feeling melancholic or feeling down. When this positive effect takes place, we will begin to notice a great difference in our present way of thinking and attitude, compared to before we met the Dharma. We will notice how, previously, we succumbed to negative states of mind, feeling as if there was no way out of our depressed state. But now, having met with the teachings and having contemplated them, we can see that a shift has taken place, and that our mind has become more expansive. This is the benefit of having access to the teachings and the Dharma. But if we don't put this advice into practice, we will not get much benefit from it.

Initially, there is the fault of not knowing the Dharma. But once we know the Dharma and understand it, the next fault we need to overcome is not putting it into practice. We need to overcome both these faults in order to derive benefit from the teachings.

3.2.1.3.1.2.2. Confessing having harmed sentient beings

We should pay attention here to the meticulous presentation of the subject matter. Having taken the advice to investigate one's mind, one checks whether there are any faults or not. In summary, the faults would

be in relation to whether one has harmed sentient beings. If we detect any faults, we need to do what is presented here next – confess to having harmed sentient beings. As soon as we detect that we have engaged in some negative mind or actions that have harmed sentient beings, we need to immediately confess that as a way to purify it.

162. *Although others have created wrongs,
I shall make them my faults.
Although I have committed a small fault,
I shall make it known to many beings.*

163ab. *By proclaiming the renown of others
I will play down my own renown.*

Although others commit faults such as harming one, bodhisattvas should make these their own faults and carry the burden of experiencing the results themselves. Although one has committed small faults with regards to sentient beings, one should make them known to many beings and accept one's faults.

If I hear of the fame of others and hear that they are being talked about pleasantly, I will praise them even more and play down my own renown.

As explained in the first part of the commentary, *although others commit faults such as harming one, bodhisattvas should make these their own faults and carry the burden of experiencing the results themselves.* This is a profound way of implementing the understanding of karma. If one experiences harm from anyone, that harm is none other than the result of one's own previous karma. If we had not created the karma to experience harm, then no one would be able to harm us. If one implements that understanding of karma, then one can see harm from others as being one's own fault: that is, if someone harms us, it is basically the ripening of our own previously created negative karma.

We can also implement our understanding of the practice of patience here, particularly the patience of not retaliating. When others harm us, normally the intention to retaliate arises: we feel that this harm is unjust, that the other is harming us without any particular cause or reason from our side. But again, if we implement our understanding of karma – that the harm we experience from others is the result of the ripening of karma that we have created previously – then this can prevent us from immediately seeing the other as being at fault, and thus prevent us from generating the wish to retaliate and become angry with them. We should take the initiative to put this into practice, as it is the optimum way to protect one's mind. In the event that others cause us harm, even if it's just hurtful words, then our mind will not be disturbed and will remain peaceful if we employ the practice of patience of not retaliating. That is how we get the benefit.

We can also relate to a good analogy presented in Geshe Chekawa's Seven-Point Mind Training teachings, which I think we did in a course last year, of an arrow hitting a target. As explained in the analogy, if there were no target set up, there would be no way for the arrow to hit the target, so the arrow hitting the target is based on the fact that a target was set up. It's as if it is the target's fault that the arrow hit it, because if the target hadn't been set up, the arrow wouldn't have been able to hit it. So this analogy shows how we experience the results of karma ourselves – if we hadn't created the karma, we wouldn't

experience the harm. When we create the karma of harming others in the past, we 'set up the target', and the harm we now experience from the other is like the arrow hitting the target. Contemplating in this way, one takes the initiative to carry the burden of experiencing the results oneself.

The commentary continues, *although one has committed small faults with regards to sentient beings, one should make them known to many beings and accept one's faults.* This is again presenting the practice of proclaiming one's faults, even though they are minor. Rather than finding excuses or trying to hide our faults, we should proclaim them and make them known. This protects one from concealing these faults and creating more negativity and incurring more faults in future. These are very profound practices, so we should put them into practice.

In a confession ceremony for the ordained, there is a part where the abbot asks: 'Have you seen the faults as faults?' to which the response is, 'Yes, I have'. This is followed by, 'will you commit to refrain from the faults again in the future?', and again the intended response is 'Yes, I will'.

The commentary further explains:

If one hears of the fame of others and hears that they are being talked about pleasantly one praises them even more and plays down one's own renown.

Here again, it is profoundly explained that when bodhisattvas hear of others' qualities, they will take the initiative to even further expand on those qualities, and play down their own. A perfect example is His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who always says, 'I am just an ordinary human being and I don't have many qualities' – taking a lower position from his side, while praising others to great extent. Indeed he goes to great lengths to praise the goodness of others, such as their respective faiths and good deeds. This is a clear sign that His Holiness is putting the bodhisattva deeds into practice.

In relation to the earlier point, even if one's own faults are small, a bodhisattva will take the initiative to proclaim those faults and make them known to all, rather than conceal them, so that others are not misled and deceived. And if others have some renowned qualities, the bodhisattva will make that even more widely known.

If we can incorporate these practices to some extent into our own lives, it will bring great solace to the mind. If we can make it a habit to praise others' qualities, and when others' qualities are talked about, to agree with that, it will help one's own mind be free of negative attitudes such as jealousy, and will bring much more peace to one's mind.

In fact, we need to be very mindful when others' qualities are mentioned, because how are we to know who is, or is not, a bodhisattva? A bodhisattva may be anywhere at any time. We need to be very careful on this point.

3.2.1.3.1.2.2. *Diligently take the lower place*

163cd. *I shall order myself to achieve
Every purpose, like the lowest of servants.*

164. *Since his nature is faulty,
Do not praise partial adventitious qualities,
Just as nobody knows, although they are
there,
Any of their qualities.*

I shall order myself to achieve every purpose of sentient beings without pride, like the lowest of servants that is ordered to carry the greatest of burdens.

Think of yourself as being in the nature of having faults and if the thought arises to praise oneself for at least some small partial qualities of listening and so forth, think: Just as nobody can see the qualities of the bodhisattvas they look at, I shall not praise even a partial adventitious quality. I shall not proclaim my qualities.

What is being explained here is that, for the purpose of benefiting sentient beings, one needs to relinquish any sense of pride when engaging in activities to serve them. When doing activities that may be considered lowly, such as taking care of the elderly or sick, there might be occasions where one has to clean them after they have defecated, for example. If one generates the mind, 'I can't do that. It is not my job. I am not the sort of person who would do this sort of thing', that sense of pride will prevent one from engaging in that service. So, if one is in a position of caring for the elderly or one's own parents, one carries out any task to serve them without any sense of pride, not hesitating to clean up a mess, or clean dirty sheets. One will be willing and glad to do that. This is an example of how, when one takes this teaching to heart and does not hold a sense of pride, one is able to engage in any activity without thinking it too lowly. If one has a sense of pride, it will prevent one from engaging in practical ways of benefiting others according to their needs. It can really prevent a lot of beneficial deeds and acts that we can do for others.

The commentary then says *think of yourself as being in the nature of having faults*. This is again a means of overcoming pride. As soon as one thinks, 'I am someone who has faults', it will lessen any contempt for others or pompous feelings about oneself. If the thought arises to praise oneself, or that others should praise one for smallest partial quality of listening, or the small good deeds one has done, or the partial good qualities one has, then one should think, 'Just as nobody can see the qualities of the bodhisattvas they look at, I shall not praise even a partial adventitious quality of mine. I shall not proclaim my qualities.' This is the practice one needs to adopt.

3.2.1.3.1.3. A summary of how to practise

165. *In short, whatever harm you inflicted on others,
For the purpose of self,
May that harm fall upon me
For the purpose of sentient beings.*

In short, mind, whatever harm you have inflicted on sentient beings since beginningless time for my purpose, may that harm fall upon me in order to accomplish the purpose of sentient beings.

Here, the commentary explains that one reprimands one's own mind, saying that since beginningless time one has inflicted so much harm upon others. Keeping this in mind one makes the aspiration, *may that harm fall on me, in order to accomplish the purpose of sentient beings*. This is implementing the earlier practice of giving and taking, where one takes the suffering upon oneself. It is another way of seeing the appropriateness of taking the harm of sentient beings upon oneself.

The next verse is prefaced by the hypothetical query, *one may think: 'I cannot carry the burden of others' suffering.* The verse which serves as an answer to that is:

166. *One should not make it aggressive
And wrathful
But bashful, shy and controlled
Like a young bride.*

One may think: 'I cannot carry the burden of others' suffering.'

Answer: 'The bodhisattva should not make their mind aggressive and wrathful but bashful, shy and controlled like a young bride.'

Query: How then should the mind abide?

Answer: Like a new bride it should be bashful, afraid of the criticism of others and of controlled behaviour. In the *Great Commentary* it is translated as *rough*.

The commentary's presentation of this hypothetical doubt is reasonable, because earlier it was advised that one should take the harm of all sentient beings upon oneself for the purpose of benefiting them. However one may then think, 'How can I carry that burden of others' suffering?' and feel overwhelmed. Thus the text explains that, *The bodhisattva should not make their mind aggressive and wrathful but bashful, shy and controlled like a young bride*.

I don't know if it's the tradition here in the west, but in Tibet, when a new bride is brought out of the house to meet the groom, she is very shy and bashful. This example illustrates how one should be timid when it comes to faults, always being mindful to maintain the quality of shyness, knowing that if one were to engage in a fault, it would be really shameful. As the commentary further explains, *like a new bride it should be bashful, afraid of the criticism of others and of controlled behaviour*.

All eyes look upon a new bride, seeing every minor mishap or mistake, so in order to prevent that, she would have a controlled demeanour. Likewise, to prevent one from engaging in faults, one should engage in the practice of what is called shame and embarrassment. Shame is felt in relation to one's own mistakes. If one knows about one's faults, it would be a really shameful admission, so one practises shame. Whereas embarrassment – some translations use the term consideration for others – relates to one not bringing about disgrace to others. Practising refraining from faults ensures that we do not embarrass others.

The earlier point that one should be like a new bride 'bashful, afraid of criticism of others and having controlled behaviour' incorporates the two points just mentioned: practising shame and embarrassment. In fact, without incorporating these two aspects of shame and embarrassment, there is no way one could properly avoid incurring faults.

To further illustrate this point, as explained in the *Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*, both shame and embarrassment are essential to protecting one's commitments and vows and not incurring faults. Consider how it is not befitting for oneself to break the vows and commitments one has taken. One reminds oneself, 'I should not engage in this great misdeed'. By having shame for one's misdeeds, one avoids creating negativity. Further, when one thinks about all the gurus, buddhas and bodhisattvas being witnesses, engaging in

this negativity would be inappropriate in the presence of these great beings, who always know what one is doing. By thinking about how this misdeed would be a disgrace to all one's gurus, buddhas and bodhisattvas, one will avoid it – this would then be practising what is called embarrassment.

Of course, this is why, when we take vows and commitments, we envision all the buddhas and bodhisattvas being present, as a way to remind oneself in the future that all buddhas and bodhisattvas have been witness to one taking those commitments and vows. So if one were to breach these commitments and vows, it would be a disgrace to all those buddhas and bodhisattvas. Contemplating this helps us to refrain from misdeeds and negativities; if we have engaged in negativities, this reminds us to practise confession.

It is good to bring that awareness of the presence of the buddhas and bodhisattvas at all times when engaging in practices, such as offering water bowls, when we visualise that these great beings are actually present, and offer them the offering substance. I personally feel a bit uncomfortable when I offer cold water in the winter, so I try to make it a little bit warm! This is mentioned in some of the practices, where in very hot weather, one imagines that the *argham* or drinking water is cooling; then, when it is cold, imagine that the water – or the substance one transforms into nectar – is warm. Otherwise, we will just go through the rituals, saying *argham*, *padyam*, and so on, but not really have much feeling for what we are doing, and not derive real benefit from it. Of course, it won't make much difference to the objects of our offerings, the buddhas and bodhisattvas, but from one's own side it is a good way to take the initiative and make offerings that would be appropriate at the time. Some who may not be aware of why this practice is done might be critical saying, 'How come you are offering warm or hot water in the water bowls?'

3.2.1.3.2. *One should take control of one's mind when following up the exchange of self and other in action*

Here again, the commentary outline is meticulously presented. When engaging in the practice of exchanging self and others, one should be mindful of having control over one's state of mind.

This is subdivided into four.

3.2.1.3.2.1. How to subjugate abiding with excitement

3.2.1.3.2.2. The faults of working only for one's own purpose

3.2.1.3.2.3. Investigating the faults of the body

3.2.1.3.2.4. Taking control of one's mind

3.2.1.3.2.1. How to subjugate abiding with excitement

167. *Do this and abide like this.*

Do not act like that

Take control of it like that

If it transgresses then subjugate it.

One should think about the benefit of others and abide with one's actions accordingly. Like taming a horse, make yourself suitable to practise virtue. 'Mind, if you do not desire to act in this way, then I shall take control of you with mindfulness and introspection.' If the mind transgresses these antidotes then subjugate and subdue the mind.

The analogy here likens making oneself *suitable to practise virtue* to the task of taming a wild horse: when an untamed horse is finally tamed, it becomes really serviceable. You can then put that horse to any task and it can perform the task well. This analogy shows us how to control the mind and make it serviceable through the technique of developing calm abiding.

When we engage in the practice of focusing the mind, we will eventually reach a state where the mind becomes serviceable. At this point, you can put the mind to the task of maintaining a single-pointed focus on an object. This is what is being mentioned here. If the unruly mind starts to misbehave and refuses to listen to one's commands, one should reprimand it by saying, '*Mind, if you do not desire to act in this way then I shall take control of you with mindfulness and introspection*'. The two mental factors presented here as the most essential tools for taming the mind are mindfulness and introspection. Earlier, the text presented shame and embarrassment as the two essential tools that provide the means for us to conduct proper physical behaviour. As presented in many other teachings, mindfulness and introspection are the two most essential tools we require to control the mind.

I regularly emphasise these two states of mind, mindfulness and introspection, as most essential for maintaining the integrity of one's positive thoughts and a virtuous frame of mind. As explained in the teachings there is no way that one can have adequate control over one's mind without these two essential tools.

As I have presented many times previously, mindfulness is the state of mind that maintains a constant awareness of the object and does not forget it. Introspection is the state of mind that maintains vigilance over whether the mind is maintaining that focus or not. If it is found that the focus on the object is not maintained, it will bring the focus back. That is the function of introspection. These are the two essential tools to be incorporated within our practice in meditation and outside of it. The commentary concludes here, *if the mind transgresses, then apply the antidotes and subdue and subjugate the mind*.

The next verse relating to this heading is:

168. *Mind, if you do not act like this,*

Despite having been advised,

Then all faults arise from you.

Hence you need to subjugate it.

'Mind, if, despite advising yourself in this manner, you do not act accordingly with the excuse that you are under the control of the afflictions, you need to subjugate it, because the self-cherishing mind becomes the basis upon which all present and future faults rely upon.'

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse quite clearly: as a way to reprimand one's mind, one engages in a dialogue with it. I have previously shared my opinions and advice on how talking to oneself is a way to be mindful. Here my advice is being backed up by this presentation, which advises one to reprimand one's mind by saying, '*Mind, if, despite advising yourself in this manner, you do not act accordingly with the excuses that you are under the control of the afflictions, you need to subjugate it...*'.

Often we might think, 'Yes, I do agree I need to control my mind, I have no qualms about that, I see the value of it, but my mind is influenced by attachment and anger and there is nothing I can do about it'. So sometimes one uses the afflictions as an excuse not to subdue the mind.

The advice being presented here is that when the self-cherishing mind acts cunningly like that, using excuses, saying 'Oh well, the afflictions are too strong and powerful so I can't do anything about it', 'I cannot help feeling angry and attached', then at that point you need to become even sterner with your self-cherishing mind. The meaning of subjugate here is of being stern. First, we need to try to talk to the mind kindly, but if that doesn't work, then we may have to take stronger measures and be stern with it. That is how the advice to be stern is being presented.

What is clarified in the text is that the referent mind is the self-cherishing mind, as it reads - *because the self-cherishing mind becomes the basis upon which all present and future faults rely upon* – so it is the self-cherishing mind that needs to be tamed and subjugated. We try to tame it gently first with nice words and try to appease it, but if the self-cherishing mind is still reluctant and tries to put up a fight, finding excuses to go on causing you trouble, you have to subjugate it.

The ways of subjugating it are presented next; not allowing it to find excuses and using other logic presented in the next verse, which will be covered in the next session. The essence of this is that one says to oneself: 'Previously, I did not recognise you as being a devious, faulty state of mind, and you had complete control over me. You did whatever you wanted and brought me only trouble. But now I have seen you for what you are. You are a troublemaker! You can't fool me anymore, and I am going to now take control over you. I am not going to allow you to control me any longer and destroy me as you did in the past. In the past, I did not know any better, but now I am a different person. Now I know how you have been devious and have cunningly harmed me.'

So in this form of dialogue, just as we would have with someone else when we argue with or admonish them. It is quite common, in a conflict, for people to start off by trying to talk and negotiate. Occasionally, however, one might say, 'OK, I've reached the point where there are no more words or explanations left to be said, and I cannot reason with you anymore'. That is when that person might start using force, being stern. This is the approach to apply to overcome one's faulty, self-cherishing mind.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱུང་རྒྱུ་མེམས་དཔའི་ལྷོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

14 June 2016

Based on the motivation generated during the refuge and bodhicitta prayers we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [meditation]

The practice we've engaged in is incredibly worthwhile, so we should familiarise ourselves with it again and again. The teachings present that initially the way to engage in the practice of the ton-glen is to familiarise oneself with the words. Thus we recite the verse and contemplate the meaning. It is essential to engage in this practice as much as possible as it serves as an optimum means to overcome negative states of mind that cause so much turmoil.

3.2.1.3.2. One should take control of one's mind when following up the exchange of self and other in action

3.2.1.3.2.1. How to subjugate abiding with excitement (cont.)

Verse 168 highlights the need to subjugate the self-cherishing mind. By reading these words, and reflecting on the meaning, the way to take personal instruction from it is to acknowledge the fault of one's own self-cherishing mind.

The suggestion here is to look within oneself to pinpoint the faults caused by one's own self-cherishing mind; not to find fault in others. Faults include afflictive minds such as anger, attachment, jealousy, pride and competition. The self-cherishing mind is the cause for all of these negative minds to arise. When one takes the initiative to look within, and acknowledge the self-cherishing mind as the actual cause of all one's mishaps, one begins to really embrace the reality of this. That's when our mind begins to shift and a real transformation takes place.

3.2.1.3.2.2. The faults of working only for one's own purpose

This is subdivided into three:

3.2.1.3.2.2.1. Giving up establishing only one's own purpose after understanding the faults

3.2.1.3.2.2.2. Putting it to work for the purpose of others

3.2.1.3.2.2.3. Short summarising explanation

3.2.1.3.2.2.1. Giving up establishing only one's own purpose after understanding the faults

The next verse and a half read:

169. *The time when you destroyed me
Is past; it was another time.
Now that I see, wherever you go
I shall destroy your arrogance.*

170ab. *I will destroy the thought of:
'I still do have my own purpose.'*

The commentary explains:

The time when I did not see that you—my self-cherishing—are the root of my problems and when you destroyed me, is past and another time. It was when I

did not understand this. Now that I see you as the root of all faults, you will be powerless in generating faults as I shall destroy your arrogance wherever you go.

If there is the thought 'I still have the power to achieve only my own purpose', I shall destroy and completely eradicate that thought.

This passage shows that the way to subjugate the self-cherishing mind is by having a dialogue with it: *the time when I did not see that you — my self-cherishing — are the root of my problems and when you destroyed me, is past and another time.* What is being explained here is that up until now one has experienced continuous difficulties and problems by not having recognised the self-cherishing mind as the root cause of all faults. It goes on, *it was when I did not understand this*, meaning that when I did not previously see the self-cherishing mind at fault I was influenced by it and became a victim to it. This created many negativities, the consequences of which I had to experience.

Now that I see you as the root of all faults implies that through the aid of the Mahayana teachings in general, and in particular through this incredible text by Shantideva, I now clearly see self-cherishing as the root of all faults. Without relying on such a text as this it would be very difficult to recognise the self-cherishing mind as a fault. As such, studying and contemplating this text is a most powerful way to reveal the self-cherishing mind as the main cause of all faults. The commentary concludes thus, *you will be powerless in generating faults as I shall destroy your arrogance wherever you go.*

To re-emphasise the point I made earlier, when it indicates *now that I see you as the root of all faults*, the referent 'I' here is oneself, not others. It is not suggesting that we lecture others saying 'you need to recognise self-cherishing as the root of all your faults', rather it is directed to oneself, seeing one's own self-cherishing as the root of all faults. Having accepted the self-cherishing mind as the cause of all faults, the commentary recommends a stern affirmation dealing with it: *you will be powerless*, 'you', meaning the self-cherishing mind, will not have power over me. 'You' will not dominate me anymore and be a cause for more faults because *I shall destroy your arrogance wherever you go.* This means that having seen 'you' as a fault, I am not going to give you power anymore, and I'll completely destroy you. This is the way to subjugate the self-cherishing mind.

To ensure the self-cherishing mind is made powerless, the commentary further emphasises, *If there is the thought 'I still have the power to achieve only my own purpose'.* Here we can see that the dialogue with the self-cherishing mind is presented very meticulously as if you were dealing with someone you're attempting to overpower. 'If you still think you've got some power over me to achieve your own purpose *I shall destroy and completely eradicate this thought'.* One takes a strong stance in not giving the slightest chance for the self-cherishing mind to become dominant.

When we contemplate these points, we see that it is through the dominance of the self-cherishing mind that we have engaged in so many misdeeds and pursued actions with only our own self-interest in mind. It has

prevented one from engaging in benefitting others because the self-cherishing mind only seeks to engage in activities which benefit one's own self interests. Thus, recognising that, one takes a stance to completely eradicate it.

It is good to take note that the faults of the self-cherishing mind are presented here in a similar way to the faults of grasping to the self. While there is a distinction between them, the faults that incur from these two states of mind are actually the same. This analogy can help us to understand the distinction between self-grasping and the self-cherishing mind; self-grasping is like a king, whereas the self-cherishing mind is like the minister who carries out every command of the king. The incurred faults are the same because they ultimately come from the same source. The Lam Rim confirms this presentation.

3.2.1.3.2.2.2. Putting it to work for the purpose of others

The next six lines of the two verses read:

170cd. *I shall sell you to others and thus
Offer my ability without any mind of regret.*

171. *If, due to lack of conscientiousness,
I do not offer you to others
You will definitely hand me over
To the guardians of hell.*

The commentary explains:

Know that I have sold you to others and thus offer without any mind of regret my ability to sentient beings in any way they desire. If I do not offer you to sentient beings due to lack of conscientiousness and think of my own purpose alone, then you will definitely hand me over to the guardians of hell through the karma of negative actions. Hence, my dear self-cherishing, I will destroy you.

The opening line says, *know that I have sold you to others*. Again, in dialogue-form, you tell the self-cherishing mind, *know that I have sold you* - meaning that one has given oneself completely up for the benefit of other sentient beings. I offer myself *without any mind of regret my ability to sentient beings in any way they desire*, is saying that having engaged in the practices of exchanging self with other, one has completely given oneself to others. Having exchanged oneself with others, one takes others' benefit into account rather than one's own self-centred needs.

The next part of the explanation explains further and refers to the consequences of not offering oneself to other sentient beings, *if I do not offer you to sentient beings due to lack of conscientiousness and think of my own purpose alone, then you, (the self-cherishing mind), will definitely hand me over to the guardians of hell through the karma of negative actions*.

This dialogue with the self-cherishing mind is effectively saying that 'if you claim that you have concern for my welfare then it is best to offer me to sentient beings, because if you don't, then due to a lack of conscientiousness, and starting to think only of one's own purpose again, you (self-cherishing) will actually be handing me over to the guardians of hell where I'll experience extreme sufferings. The best option therefore is to offer myself to other sentient beings. Hence, my dear

self-cherishing, having seen the faults I will destroy you. This again emphasises the main point.

3.2.1.3.2.2.3. Short summarising explanation

This is presented with two verses, and the first reads:

172. *Therefore, because you offered me thus,
I suffered for a long time.
By remembering the past with vengeance,
Destroy the thought of only self-purpose.*

The commentary explains:

Therefore, since previously you offered me to the hell guardians, in this way I experienced suffering for a long time. Now I remember my previous grief and with the thought of reaping vengeance I will destroy you, the thought of sole self-purpose, which is the root of all faults.

The explanation here is quite clear; it is from the faults of the self-cherishing that one has to experience the ill effects of the sufferings of being reborn in the hells etc. for a long time. In recalling that, one takes a stance and resolves, 'having seen the faults that you have created in the past, I will completely destroy you'. Once you have reached the point of recognising self-cherishing as the root of all one's problems, then the explanation given here will be very clear.

The next verse reads:

173. *Hence, if one desires joy
One should not make oneself happy.
Hence, if one wishes to protect oneself
One should always protect others.*

The commentary explains:

Hence, if you desire to have perfect joy and happiness for a long time, then you should not make yourself happy on the basis of cherishing self. Hence, if you wish to protect yourself from suffering, you should always protect other sentient beings on the basis of cherishing them.

This means that if for all the logical reasons presented earlier, if you desire perfect joy and happiness for a long time, then you should not make yourself happy on the basis of cherishing the self, as this approach only leads to experiencing the opposite - unhappiness and faults. Therefore, if you desire to have real joy and happiness, you need to avoid engaging in your own purpose with the self-cherishing mind.

Accepting, with all the logical reasons presented previously, that one wishes to protect oneself from suffering, the text further exhorts, *if you wish to be protected from suffering, then you should always protect other sentient beings on the basis of cherishing them*. This is the succinct summary of the disadvantages of cherishing oneself and the advantages of cherishing other sentient beings.

Again the dialogue is meticulously presented in a similar manner to resolving a conflict with an unreasonable and irrational person. When it states, *hence, if 'you' desire to have perfect joy*, it is saying to the self-cherishing mind that if it really wants to make oneself happy, *experiencing perfect joy and happiness, then it should not be on the basis of cherishing self*.

Furthermore, *if it wishes to protect one from suffering*, then one should always protect other sentient beings on the basis of cherishing them.

The way that we relate to the self-cherishing mind, is that it appears as though it is actually protecting us, by taking care of one's needs and fulfilling one's desires. Thus, we believe in, and are completely submissive to, the demands of the self-cherishing mind. As such we are not to blame for blindly following it without question.

However having now seen the disadvantages and faults of self-cherishing, one needs to take a stance and not allow it to dominate and control oneself.

It would be very useful if we can remember this dialogue whenever we feel the self-cherishing mind starting to take over and dominate us. The way to overcome negative states of mind is to adopt the opposite positive state of mind, which serves as an antidote to overpower it. For example, the mind of grasping at the self is overcome by understanding selflessness. For other manifest levels of delusions, for example miserliness, one should think about the disadvantages of miserliness and the advantages of generosity, the mind of giving. When we start thinking about the advantages of generosity, then miserliness will naturally reduce.

Likewise when a mind of anger manifests, we need to think about the virtues of patience. The combination of thinking about the disadvantages of anger and the advantages of patience makes one begin to see the real value of patience and the faults of anger, and then the mind of anger naturally subsides. Similarly, to overcome the mind of harmfulness, we need to think about the advantages of morality, refraining from harming others, then the mind of harmfulness will be overpowered. When the faulty mind of laziness occurs, one needs to overcome it by contemplating the virtues of enthusiasm or joyous effort. In thinking about the benefits of joyous effort, the mind of laziness starts to decrease and one naturally starts to feel enthusiastic again. The teachings indicate that the fault of laziness is that whoever is consumed by it will not accomplish whatever they set out to do; laziness prevents one from achieving one's goal. Similarly they will not attain any results in Dharma. Thus, by applying joyous effort one overcomes laziness.

Likewise if one is consumed by corrupt wisdom one needs to apply the correct wisdom or intelligence as a way to overcome it. If one is consumed by distractions, one needs to practise concentration, which will help to overcome the distracted mind.

Thus, when one thinks about the benefits of these virtuous states of mind they become specific antidotes for overcoming the opposite faulty state of mind, and one naturally becomes encouraged. By thinking in this way and applying it to the best of our ability, we get the benefit. If we were not presented with these means from the teachings, then we cannot resort to doing anything about it and will continue to be at the mercy of the negative states of mind.

The way to deal with the afflictions that arise in our mind is succinctly explained in the *Eight Verses of the Mind Training*, where it reads: "as soon as afflictions arise, endangering myself and others, may I firmly face and avert them".

The great masters of the past advise us to protect ourselves from the destruction caused by the afflictions

by nipping them in the bud. So as soon as an affliction arises, one should immediately recognise it and apply the antidote.

Previous masters have presented the ways and means of engaging in practices to overcome faulty states of mind, from their own experience. Having applied the antidotes and seen the results clearly, they have found them to be great means to overcome the afflictions. As such we need to try to apply this ourselves and find the means to overcome the afflictions in our own mind.

3.2.1.3.2.3. Investigating the faults of the body

This is subdivided into three:

3.2.1.3.2.3.1. The fault of not knowing contentment

3.2.1.3.2.3.2. The fault of being motionless

3.2.1.3.2.3.3. The fault of being deluded

3.2.1.3.2.3.1. *The fault of not knowing contentment*

This is further subdivided into two:

3.2.1.3.2.3.1.1. The faults of craving the body

3.2.1.3.2.3.1.2. Thus, it is appropriate to meditate on non-attachment for the body

3.2.1.3.2.3.1.1. *The faults of craving the body*

The commentary starts with a hypothetical argument:

Argument: Since one wishes to work for others one should support the body on the basis of craving.

The verse reads:

174. *However much we work
At supporting this body,
That much it falls
Into a state of extreme fragility.*

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse by providing an answer to the hypothetical question:

Answer: This is unsuitable. However much we work at supporting this body with food and such, on the basis of cherishing it that much through craving, while not achieving the slightest of one's wishes, one will in fact receive great suffering. It will be very hard to support it because one falls into the very stage of extreme fragility that makes it hard for it to bear even small sufferings.

This hypothetical argument is a continuation of the dialogue with the self-cherishing mind. Here the self-cherishing mind is saying that *since one wishes to work for others one should support the body on the basis of craving*. In other words, it is saying that craving and providing ones self with beautiful clothes, nice food, and taking care of one's every need is good, because it supports one in benefitting others.

This is a strategic move from the self-cherishing in saying 'oh, I'm being considerate. There's a reason why I'm craving these good things, such as nice food and clothing etc. – it is to help others.' This perspective does occur to us. We may start thinking that if it's for the benefit of others then it must be fine to crave good things.

The answer of course is that it *is unsuitable* to crave things in order to take care of the body. The commentary explains that it is unsuitable because *we work at supporting this body with food and such, on the basis of cherishing it*. This means that we will strive to support the body with the most pleasant food we can possibly acquire - the most tasty, the most nicely presented, nice smelling, nice

tasting and with clothing that looks nice, and feels soft and pleasant on one's body - while all the time the mind of craving just wants the best for the sake of gratification.

So *while not achieving the slightest of one's wishes, one will in fact receive great suffering*. The point here is that when the mind of craving desires the best of everything (food, clothing, dwelling etc.), whilst it does not achieve even the slightest of its wishes, one will instead experience great suffering. This is the point emphasised here. It is very true that through the mind of craving we are so used to wanting the best for ourselves that when the slightest thing goes wrong, it causes so much discomfort and unhappiness in the mind.

To further emphasise the point the commentary explains that *it will be very hard to support it*, meaning support the body with craving, because one *falls into the very stage of extreme fragility that makes it hard for it to bear even small sufferings*. So as a consequence of craving the best for oneself, when the slightest thing goes wrong, we immediately cannot bear it and so experience great suffering. Then, when something goes well, we feel elated. So we go through these extremes of either elation or disappointment and unhappiness. The state of going through these extremes comes from the strong craving we have for sustaining ourselves.

The next verse reads:

175. *If the desires of
That fallen thus cannot be fulfilled
By all the whole world,
Then who can fulfil its wishes?*

As the heading indicated, these are the faults arising out of craving for the body.

The commentary again explains the meaning with a hypothetical question:

Question: If asked, how will it be then?

The meaning of the verse is presented in the answer:

Answer: Having increased the craving of that fallen thus, even all the enjoyments on this earth cannot fulfil their desires. If that is so, then who can fulfil the desires of this craving? There is no satisfaction in craving sense objects. For example, the King Mandhata had use of the four continents and half of Indra's seat, yet he was not satisfied.

The commentary's question queries how would it feel in that fallen state of not being able to be satisfied and feeling fragile. How would it be when one falls into that state of fragility?

The commentary explains, *having increased the craving of that fallen thus, even all the enjoyments on this earth cannot fulfil their desires*. It explains that there is no way to fulfil the desires. If by experiencing sensual desires one could be satiated and feel content, then it may be reasonable. But the fact being explained here is that those desires cannot be fulfilled.

The passage, *if that is so, then who can fulfil the desires of this craving?* implies that there is no-one or nothing that can fulfil the desires of craving. To illustrate this point it explains, *for example, the King Mandhata had use of the four continents and half of Indra's seat, yet he was not satisfied*.

This shows how a king, with access to much wealth, could still not be satisfied. A point to be emphasised in

the next verses is that if one doesn't practice contentment there'll be no end to one's desires and no amount of wealth etc. would make one feel satisfied.

The next two lines from the verse read:

176ab. *One cannot, yet desire generates afflictions
And degenerated thoughts.*

The commentary explains:

One cannot fulfil desire, yet by craving desire objects the afflictions such as anger and attachment are generated, thoughts belonging to the virtuous side degenerate and only mental unhappiness is produced.

A hypothetical question asks, who can fulfil these wishes or desires? And the response explains, *that one cannot fulfil desire, yet by craving desire objects the afflictions such as anger and attachment are generated*. So while the desires cannot be fulfilled, in craving for them, afflictions such as anger and attachment are generated. All the faulty states of mind are generated, and while afflictions are generated, positive thoughts on *the virtuous side degenerate and only mental unhappiness is produced*. This is the consequence of craving.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་རྒྱུད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྟུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

21 June 2016

As usual we can spend some time in meditation.
[meditation]

Now let us generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines; For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teachings, and put them into practice well.

In our meditation session we attempted to familiarise our mind with love and compassion, which is essential if we are to fully develop these attitudes. Indeed these very positive states of mind are essential assets for personal wellbeing. Acknowledging this, we need to ensure that we are never separated from love and compassion, which of course is done by familiarising our mind with them again and again. To remind you, love is a state of mind that cannot bear to see others being deprived of happiness, and wishing them to be endowed in happiness; compassion is the state of mind of not being able to bear seeing others suffering, and thus wholeheartedly and sincerely wishing them to be free from every type of suffering.

When we understand this spontaneous wish for others to be happy and free from suffering, we can see that is the basis for a genuine concern for others, which contributes to their wellbeing. We know the value of love and compassion when others express genuine concern for us, wanting us to be happy and free from suffering. From our own experience we know that when we feel this great affection from others we respond in a very positive way; it makes us feel appreciated and very comfortable and trusting. If it brings such wellbeing to us, then we can understand that it will be the same for others as well. So when we really think about the value of love and compassion, we can see its essential value as the best companion that one could ever have.

The way to really familiarise our mind with love and compassion is by constantly investigating how best to further develop these states of mind. How does it develop and how is it expressed? How does love increase? How can compassion increase? Investigating in this way, we need to find the best conditions to increase the mind of love and compassion within ourselves. How is it received by others? How does it make oneself feel? The more we investigate along these lines, the more we will see the core value of love and compassion, and the more we will be inclined to embrace and develop it further.

The reason why I emphasise these points again and again is so that we can all see the value of love and compassion. However the most important thing is to actually put it into practice. Indeed, for us who consider ourselves practitioners, there is no more important practice than

developing love and compassion, not to mention it being the essence of the Mahayana practice. If one wishes to subdue one's mind, there is no greater practice than acquainting one's mind with love and compassion. If one wishes to overcome delusions, to purify negativities and accumulate merit, there is no greater practice than developing love and compassion.

If you want your Dharma studies to serve as a means to subdue your own mind, then it essential to embrace the importance of developing love and compassion and treat it as your core practice. But if you treat the Dharma like a normal academic study for grades and qualifications, as a means to further increase pride, and a sense of competitiveness with others, to increase anger, jealousy, attachment and so forth, then you need not develop love and compassion. If one's Dharma study becomes a means to further increase the delusions, then rather than overcoming them, it completely defeats the real purpose of that Dharma study.

We need to really understand the crucial benefits of love and compassion – if there was no-one with love and compassion, then there would be no-one to provide help in times of real difficulty and strife. Indeed, the only person who does come to one's aid is someone who has a genuine concern for one's wellbeing, and thus genuine love and compassion. Those who lack love and compassion will not come to one's aid. So we can see how love and compassion serve as the basis for the wellbeing of all.

Of course I am not implying that you are not making any effort to develop love and compassion; I am just emphasising these points as a way to further encourage you, based on my own meagre attempts of putting this into practice myself. I am not claiming that I have developed any great realisation of love and compassion, but nevertheless I take it as the essence of my practice. On a daily basis, I spend significant time trying to develop these states of mind. For example, when doing the prayer of the Four Immeasurables in any practice, I spend some time thinking about each of these points, followed by developing a mind of superior intention, and then I try to really focus on that for a while.

I try to do my best to put these noble intentions into practice on a daily basis, and I see a definite benefit even from my meagre attempts. I find that it can really move my mind, which brings me great solace. I feel it is worthwhile to share this experience with you as a reminder. As someone who is getting on in years I am sharing the experiences and value I have gained from my practices over the years; although you might already be quite advanced and more skilled than me. It may well be the case where the students are more advanced than the teacher!

There are people who come up to me and say, "Oh, I want to be like you". These are just ordinary people who I don't normally associate with or are even people I know. I'd like to respond by saying, 'If you really want to be like me then you could try doing the practices that I do'.

The practice of love and compassion is not unique to Buddhism; indeed it is common to all religions and

universally embraced as being an essential quality. Every religion has the message of serving others, being good to others, and bringing benefit to others. All religions commend serving others, being kind, acting morally and so forth, in order to benefit others, make them happy, and release them from fear and suffering. While I am not sure if they would extend that notion to all living beings, it definitely applies to all humankind. Without love and compassion how could one ever bring about happiness for others, and generate the wish to remove their suffering? Because of their intention to benefit others, to bring them happiness and remove their suffering, we can see that love and compassion is definitely expressed and practised in other religions. As Lama Tsong Khapa mentioned, if one wishes to benefit others, one has to have the wish for others to be happy and free from suffering. So he is effectively saying that without wishing other's to be happy and be free from suffering, there is no way that one will generate the intention to benefit others. Thus, there is no way that one can truly benefit other sentient beings without generating unconditional love and compassion.

Therefore developing the mind of love and compassion is essential for benefiting others. In essence, we need to recognise that our most valuable inner asset is the basis for developing love and compassion. If one's love and compassion increases then one can be sure that one's practice is hitting the mark, and that one is deriving the essence from one's practice. As Lama Tsong Khapa also mentioned, the true sign of one's practice taking effect is when one notices that love and compassion is increasing in one's heart. Then delusions will decrease, and the mind becomes more subdued, and one generates stronger faith in the deities, one's guru and the buddhas, and thus the mind becomes more attuned to the Dharma. These are all clear signs of one's practice taking real effect.

3.2.1.3.2.3. Investigating the faults of the body

3.2.1.3.2.3.1. *The fault of not knowing contentment (cont.)*

3.2.1.3.2.3.1.2. *It is appropriate to meditate on non-attachment for the body.*

We can see that the advice given here specifically applies to the ordained community. Indeed, when Shantideva first gave this teaching it was to an assembly of ordained Sangha. So the very profound advice presented here is for ordained Sangha to put it into practice. The relevant lines of verse begin with:

**176cd. They who are independent from everything
Do not experience a cessation of their
perfection.**

The commentary on these two lines explains:

A person with less desire and with knowledge of contentment, who is independent from everything such as body or possessions, will not experience the cessation of the qualities of their perfections. It is impossible for them to lack the necessities of life.

This emphasises that when one practises less desire and has an understanding of contentment, then one actually experiences an unceasing abundance of the qualities of the perfections, wealth and so forth. By implication, those with strong desire and a lack of contentment will be deprived of real wellbeing, specifically they will be

deprived of a happy state of mind. This is really very direct advice.

If desire and attachment and a lack of contentment were to bring about an abundance of things, and wellbeing and enjoyment and a happy state of mind, then we would have to be the perfect example of that. But are we contented? Do we lack for nothing? Do we have an abundance of happiness and joy and perfections? In fact we are not experiencing any great sense of joy or happiness at all.

Indeed, as explained in the teachings, the more we crave, the more we want. The analogy presented in some teachings is it is like trying to scratch an itch; the more you scratch, the more you feel the itch. Likewise, when one lacks contentment and has a lot of desires, then that only brings more turmoil and dissatisfaction. The point being presented here is that those who have less desire and who practise contentment are much happier and joyous.

We can see that this is really relevant for ordained communities of monks and nuns. We can see that those who practise sincerely, such as Christian monks and nuns, definitely have less desire and a great deal of contentment. Apparently monks and nuns in some Christian orders have no personal belongings at all, not even a bank account, and they rely upon whatever the community has. They live a very simple life. I personally know a nun who used to live here.¹ She is a bit older than me and I used to see her in the past, although I haven't seen her for a while. She told me that she became a nun when she was seventeen years old, and then dedicated her life to service for others and caring for them. I was very inspired, and told her, 'You can feel totally confident that you have led a very, very good and admirable life'. We can see that when you put being contented and having less desire into practice, it does indeed bring a great sense of joy.

The Kadampa Mind Training teachings give these specific instructions. 'There are four conditions for arya beings to practise simplicity: less desire, knowing contentment, easy sustenance, and easy fulfilment'.

'The first is not to desire abundant and nice things for one's livelihood, and to abandon all wants.' This implies not having strong craving for, or attachment to, things in general, and one's belongings in particular. Again, this advice is being specifically directed to ordained Sangha.

'The second is to be content with bare necessities.' Knowing contentment means being content with the bare necessities.

'The third is to be sustained by meagre robes, bedding and food.' This refers to being happy with meagre belongings such as one's robes, begging bowl and other things of poor quality, and with what is just enough to sustain oneself.

'The fourth is to be satisfied with meagre alms, material gain and respected service.' The three previous points referred to sustenance in relation to actual things, like belongings and so forth. This specifically refers to being content with offerings and praise and service.

¹ Sr. Maeve O'Brien

This is a description by the Kadampa masters of how to be content with meagre belongings, and meagre sustenance, such as food and alms and service. The lay community can also learn from this advice. Through being content with the basic requirements for sustenance, life becomes much easier, and there are fewer disturbances in life. We can see that the more we need, the more hectic our life becomes, and that is because we are not content with just meagre sustenance. We want more and more things, and that brings more and more turmoil. These are very important points.

If one does not apply the antidote for overcoming desire, then the consequence is that desires will just increase more and more, to the point where they cannot be satiated. When one allows desire to run rampant then there is no fulfilment. The only outcome is to desire more and more, and thus one never finds an opportunity to feel contented and happy. So although these instructions are specifically for ordained Sangha, they can also be applied to the lay community.

The main advice is to practise contentment with one's life. Although you may not be able to practise to the extent of ordained Sangha, you can generate the mind 'I am quite content, and I am happy with what I have', and not aim for more than meeting one's basic needs. By practising in that way, even just a bit, one begins to feel quite grateful and content with what one has, or what one is earning. That brings a sense of ease and can reduce a lot of stress and anxiety. So this is a very worthwhile practice to implement.

The next verse under this heading reads:

**177. Therefore one should not give
The physical desires a chance to increase.
Not apprehending anything attractive
Is a wholesome phenomenon.**

As the commentary explains

Therefore, since the desire that craves enjoyment for the sake of the body increases further and further if one does not rely on the antidote, one should not give craving for sense objects a chance. The non-apprehension of an attractive object to which the mind would be attached to is a wholesome phenomenon that is the supreme wealth.

This is similar to the advice in the Kadampa text, which mentions that the best wealth is to be content with what one has. Really, the essence of what is being presented here is that the very purpose of wealth is to be satisfied with it. Contentment is the supreme wealth. That is the point.

3.2.1.3.2.3.2. The fault of being motionless

The verses under this heading are:

**178. Its final conclusion is to separate,
It is motionless but moves through the force of
others.
The impure body is terrible,
Why hold on to it as your own?**

**179. Irrespective of whether one is alive or dead,
What does this illusory machine do for me?
What difference between it and a heap of earth?
Alas, you do not eliminate pride.**

The commentary explains:

This body will reach the final conclusion of becoming ashes, at which point it ceases. It cannot move by itself but has to move through another, i.e., the thoughts. Since the physical aggregate of impure flesh, blood and so forth is the source for many terrible frightful dangers, why do you hold on to it as your own?

Since one even needs to experience the sufferings of the lower realms if one holds on to it as one's own, irrespective of whether one is dead or alive, what does this illusory machine of a body do for one? It does not have the slightest use. What difference is there between an immovable heap of earth and this body? Oh dear, since you cannot bear craving for the body, alas, why do you not eliminate the pride that is a smug mind arising in relation to the body? Abandon pride in all its aspects!

The body will reach the final conclusion of becoming ashes refers to the disintegration of the body into ashes when it is cremated, which is a reminder of death and impermanence. *It cannot move by itself but has to move through others*, refers to the importance of thoughts or the mind. Indeed the body cannot function without the mind.

Furthermore, *the physical aggregate of impure flesh, blood and so forth are the source of many terrible frightful dangers*. Pointing out the faults of the body like this reduces strong attachment to the body. So if this body is nothing more than just a combination of flesh and bone and so forth, and is the source of frightful sufferings, *why hold on to, or grasp at it?*

Since one needs to experience the sufferings of the lower realms if one grasps on to it as one's own refers to the fact that when one grasps at the body strongly, then that produces the sufferings of the lower realms. The implication of *whether one is dead or alive, what does this illusory machine of a body do for one?* is that ultimately the body is of no use. So *what difference is there between an immovable heap of earth and this body?*

Then as words of lamentation, the commentary says, *Oh dear, since you cannot bear craving for the body, alas, why do you not eliminate the pride that is a smug mind arising in relation to the body? Abandon pride in all its aspects!*

3.2.1.3.2.3.3. The fault of being deluded

This is subdivided into four

3.2.1.3.2.3.3.1. Deluded with regard to what is good and what is harmful

3.2.1.3.2.3.3.2. Deluded with regard to what is high and what is low

3.2.1.3.2.3.3.3. Refuting arguments in this regard

3.2.1.3.2.3.3.4. Although craving for the body is the source for many faults, it needs to be protected to take the essence of the freedoms and endowments

3.2.1.3.2.3.3.1. Deluded with regard to what is good and what is harmful

The verse relating to this reads:

**180. By following the advice of the body
One accumulated needless suffering
And generated attachment and anger.
What to do with that which is like a piece of
wood?**

The commentary explains:

Mind, by following the body's advice for admiration and praise, you accumulated many needless

sufferings. Although supporting the body that generates much attachment and anger in relation to benefit and harm, since this body is like a piece of wood that cannot repay the kindness, what use is attachment to it? It is unsuitable.

The explanation in the commentary is presented as a dialogue with the mind. Saying that you – mind - put so much time and effort into sustaining and caring for this body but a lot of attachment and anger arises as a result. There is attachment to what seems conducive for the body, and anger or aversion to that which is not conducive. So in the process of trying to care for this body one engages in actions influenced by strong attachment and aversion or anger. Therefore, in caring for one's body one has accumulated a lot of negativities. But *the body itself is like a piece of wood*, meaning that having put so much effort into sustaining the body, what do we get in return?

This explanation is not hard to understand; the main point is for us to try to put it into practice.

Then the commentary explains:

Although one has supported it with enjoyments, it is suitable to be even the food for vultures and the like. Since it has no attachment or anger towards the benefit or harm it receives, why does one have attachment for it? It is unsuitable.

As clearly explained here, *although one has supported it with enjoyments* i.e. various types of sensual pleasures, in the end *it is only suitable as food fit for the vultures and the like*. This means that at the end, one's dead body is fit only for food for animals. Furthermore *it has no attachment or anger towards the benefit or harm*. The body itself does not express any attachment or aversion; it has no sentiments when it receives benefit or harm. So 'Mind, why do you have attachment and aversion? If the body has no sentiments when it is benefited or harmed why, mind, do you respond in that way?' This is a logical rhetorical dialogue with the mind to reduce attachment and desire.

When we actually contemplate these points and see their logic and reasoning then it can definitely help to reduce any strong attachment we have to our body. That is the significance of this point.

With the remaining time we will read Chapter 10 of *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life* dedicating it to our friend Catherine Waters' mother, who passed away recently, and to others who have requested prayers.

We often pray for the kin of those associated with Tara Institute. Even though they don't come along themselves, parents of students are often very appreciative of the changes they see in their children since they have become Buddhists.

In the past I have given an elaborate explanation of how to visualise benefit for all sentient beings in general, and one's parents in particular. There are many whose parents may not be with us at this time, but there is definitely significant benefit in dedicating this practice to one's parents, and others who have requested prayers. Basically, to dedicate means to develop a strong wish for whatever aspirations one has to actually become true. So

the simplest way for us to generate the most positive aspirations is to recite the tenth chapter, and strongly wish for all these aspirations to be fulfilled exactly as intended.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷོ་མེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

28 June 2016

While maintaining the motivation we generated during the prayers, we can engage in our meditation practice.
[meditation]

We can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: "For the sake of all mother sentient beings, I will need to achieve enlightenment. For that purpose, I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well to further develop my meditation practice".

When one generates such a motivation, whatever positive action one engages in will actually become a cause to benefit other sentient beings.

3.2.1.3.2.3.3. *The fault of being deluded (cont.)*

3.2.1.3.2.3.3.2. Deluded with regard to what is high and what is low

The verse relating to this is:

182. *Angry when derided due to something
And happy when praised due to something;
But if it has no awareness of this,
For what does one exhaust oneself?*

The commentary explains:

One becomes angry when this body is criticised due to a fault, and one is happy if it is praised due to a quality. But if the body has no awareness of this praise and criticism, mind, to what end do you exhaust yourself with attachment and anger? It is pointless.

The point here is that, when the body is criticised it makes one's mind unhappy, so one becomes angry. When the body is praised, due to attachment one's mind becomes happy and elated. Therefore, being overly attached to the body makes the mind either angry due to criticism, or makes the mind elated due to strong attachment.

However, the body itself has no awareness of the praise and criticism that the mind experiences. Because the body itself is not a consciousness, it is not able to have this distinct awareness: basically the body itself is an inanimate object which does not experience praise or criticism. So why unnecessarily strain the mind with anger or attachment when the body is criticised or praised? When the mind is unhappy, that is when it is most prone to becoming angry. Whereas, when the mind is feeling elated and joyous – by experiencing worldly pleasures – that's when one is most vulnerable to developing attachment.

The teachings on equalising and overcoming the eight worldly dharmas explain that, when difficulties arise, one should welcome them so that one's mind does not become unhappy. This prevents anger from arising. And when good conditions arise, one should be wary and not

become too elated, because that will cause attachment to arise.

The practice of equalising and overcoming the eight worldly concerns is, in fact, a profound practice. Some of you may take it lightly and think 'Oh, the eight worldly dharmas. That's a common teaching'. In fact, I personally consider the practice of counteracting the eight worldly dharmas as very important, the pith of one's practice.

As I have explained previously many times, the way to counteract the eight worldly dharmas is by 'equalising and exchanging'. So when you experience conditions that would normally cause you to feel happy and elated, you practise not being joyous; and when you experience problems that cause you distress, you actually welcome those problems and become happy with that situation. This is how you counteract the eight worldly concerns; this is what you need to understand. Indeed as the Lam Rim explains, until one has overcome the eight worldly dharmas, one will not be able to practise the Dharma purely.

3.2.1.3.2.3.3.3. Refuting arguments in this regard

The verse which relates to this heading is:

183. *If, 'I desire this body
And I am friends with it.'
As everybody likes their body
Why does one not like them as 'mine'?*

[While we see the terms *argument* and *answer* here in this translation, they are not in the actual Tibetan text. I think the translator has put them there for emphasis.]

Argument: Although the body itself does not understand this, I desire this body, and find it attractive because we are both friends. Therefore I like it.

The next part of the commentary serves as the answer:

Answer: As all sentient beings desire their body, why does one not regard the body of others and its happiness as mine? It is unsuitable to be attached to one's body and deride the body of others.

As mentioned earlier, the body itself has no way of comprehending or understanding praise and criticism. After we accept that point, the commentary offers a further rationale as to why one would desire the body: *I desire this body, and find it attractive because we are both friends. Therefore I like it.* This is how we normally think and relate to our body; we consider it as a close friend and good companion. So, our worldly mind works to find excuses for attachment to the body.

As the commentary further explains, *why does one not regard the body of others and its happiness as mine?* Since you say you desire and like your body because it is your friend, then since all sentient beings similarly desire and like their bodies, so why do you not consider their bodies as mine as well? If one finds a reason to be attached to one's body because one likes it, then it would be reasonable to cherish other's bodies as well and not deride it.

This reasoning relates to the earlier presentation of the practice of exchanging self with other. When one takes up the practice of equalising and exchanging self with other, one carries the attitude towards others' bodies that one previously had towards one's own body. There's no

difference. If one finds one's body attractive, by that same reason, one should find others' bodies attractive as well and cherish them. Thus, since one engages in the practice of equalising and exchanging oneself with others, *it is unsuitable to be attached to one's body and deride the body of others.*

3.2.1.3.2.3.4. Although craving for the body is the source for many faults, it needs to be protected to take the essence of the freedoms and endowments.

It is good to derive the meaning from the heading itself, as clearly presented here. *Although craving for the body is the source of many faults* – one should overcome desire and attachment to one's body because it is the source of many faults – however, *it needs to be protected to take the essence of the freedoms and endowments.* Because of the great purpose - of what we can achieve having obtained this body with the *freedoms and endowments* - one has to protect it.

The verse relating to this outline:

*184. Therefore, without attachment
I shall give up this body to the purpose of
migrators.
Then, although it has many faults,
I shall protect the body in its actions.*

As the commentary explains:

Therefore, as it is unsuitable to have attachment for one's body, without attachment I shall practise generosity with my body for the purpose of migrators.

From the *Four Hundred Stanzas*:

One views the body of course as an enemy,
Yet one looks after it.
From living long according to the rules
Many merits will be generated.

Since one achieves a lot of the purpose of others in dependence on this body, although it has many faults, it needs to be protected for the purpose of others, just like worldly beings grasp on to a chariot and use it to carry a burden.

As presented in the commentary, while overcoming attachment to one's body, one sees the purpose of benefiting others, so one needs to protect one's body and engage in the practices of generosity, and so forth.

As I have said before, whenever we nurture our body by partaking of food and drink, we can practise generosity by always first offering it to one's gurus and the Three Jewels. When partaking of food and drink and so forth, we need to always remember: By nurturing my body, I will use it for the benefit of the Buddha's doctrine and of sentient beings". Furthermore, we can utilise this body to engage in the practices of great purification, such as doing prostrations and so forth; and in the practices of collecting merit, such as making extensive offerings and so forth.

The meaning of the verse from Aryadeva's *Four Hundred Stanzas* is quite clear. When one uses one's body as a means to accumulate merit and avoid non-virtue – such as avoiding the ten non-virtues and engaging in the ten virtues, and thus benefiting sentient beings — then this body serves a purpose.

In my personal practice, I always think of how, by nurturing this body so that it can be used to benefit other

sentient beings, it will be worthwhile for me to live as many years as possible by sustaining and feeding it, but without the mind of attachment. As soon the mind of attachment arises, whatever one does to nurture one's body becomes a non-virtue. But if one can constantly remind oneself that the purpose of nurturing and sustaining the body is to benefit sentient beings then, as mentioned in the teachings, whatever actions one does, accompanied by the bodhicitta attitude, will become an optimum means to accumulate merit.

The line in the *Four Hundred Stanzas* that refers to living *according to the rules* basically refers to observing morality. Observing morality serves as the ground or basis for our spiritual development. Just as we need fertile ground to grow crops, one needs to observe morality as a way to generate all the other qualities and realisations. If one leads an ethical life by practising morality and has a long life, one can accumulate a lot of merit and benefit other sentient beings.

The commentary further explains that this body *needs to be protected for the purpose of others, just like worldly beings grasp onto a chariot and use it to carry a burden.* In this analogy, the chariot itself may not have much actual value, but because it is useful for carrying and transporting a burden, human beings will value and look after it. Similarly, while the body itself may not have much value, as a way to benefit other sentient beings, it can be utilised to achieve a great purpose.

3.2.1.3.2.4. Taking control of one's mind

3.2.1.3.2.4.1. Reversing the obstacles to virtue

3.2.1.3.2.4.2. Generating the method of striving in the antidote

3.2.1.3.2.4.3. Placing the mind in single-pointed equipoise on a virtuous object

3.2.1.3.2.4.1. *Reversing the obstacles to virtue*

*185. Therefore, being fed up with childish actions,
I follow those proficient.
Mindful of the advice on conscientiousness
I stop sleep and fogginess.*

As the commentary reads:

Therefore, being fed up with the actions of the childish, who engage in the obstructing conditions for calm abiding such as craving for sense objects, covetousness, harmful intent and the like, I follow the buddhas and bodhisattvas, who are proficient in what has to be done and what has to be abandoned. Mindful of the advice to be conscientious of virtuous dharmas I strive in pacifying and abandoning the obstacles to calm abiding such as sleep, fogginess and the like, as explained in the *Letter to a Friend*:

Mental excitement, regret, harmful intent and
fogginess,
Sleep, aspiration for sense objects and doubt,
These five obscurations are the thief that robs
The wealth of virtue.
Hence know them well.

As explained clearly here, having reflected on the earlier points, one generates a sense of disenchantment for *the actions of the childish* or worldly beings *who engage in obstructing conditions for calm abiding, such as craving for sense objects, covetousness, harmful intent and the like*, so *I follow the buddhas and bodhisattvas, who are proficient in what*

has to be done and what has to be abandoned. One develops this mind of completely overcoming such cravings. So *mindful of the advice to be conscientious of virtuous dharmas I strive in pacifying and abandoning the obstacles to calm abiding such as sleep, fogginess and the like.*

The need for being conscientious was explained extensively in Chapter Four. The advice here is a way to further overcome the *obstacles to calm abiding, such as sleep, fogginess and the like* – one practises *as explained in [Nagarjuna's] Letter to a Friend.*

3.2.1.3.2.4.2. *Generating the method of striving in the antidote*

As a way to overcome these obstacles, one needs to generate the mind of applying the antidote. The verse relating to this heading is:

186. *Like the great compassionate ones
I shall start suitable actions.
If I do not practise continuously day and night,
Then when shall I leave suffering behind?*

As the commentary explains:

Think: Like the great compassionate ones I shall start suitable practices that generate the power of the antidote. If I do not practise continuously day and night, then when shall I leave suffering behind?

One should strive in meditating on the common and uncommon kinds of calm abiding.

This is clearly presented, so there is no need for further explanation. 'Think' here means one makes the resolve: *like the great compassionate ones I shall start suitable practices that generate the power of the antidote* for overcoming all the obstacles to developing calm abiding.

If I do not practise continuously day and night, then when shall I leave suffering behind? This rhetorical question implies that if one wishes to leave suffering behind, one needs to practise continuously, day and night.

Then, one *should strive in meditating on the common and uncommon kinds of calm abiding* — 'common' here being the calm abiding practices common to some of the non-Buddhist schools and tenets, while the uncommon ones belong specifically to the Buddhist presentation.

3.2.1.3.2.4.3. *Placing the mind in single-pointed equipoise on a virtuous object*

187. *Therefore, to eliminate the obscurations
I take the mind away from wrong paths
And place it continuously in equipoise
On a correct object.*

The commentary explains:

Therefore, in order to eliminate all afflictive obscurations and obscurations to knowledge, one needs to generate superior insight. Before that, one needs in turn to achieve calm abiding, and therefore I turn my mind away from all wrong paths, such as disturbing thoughts of sense objects, which obstruct the generation of calm abiding. By way of the eight abandoning recognitions I shall place the mind continuously in equipoise on a correct object.

Having contemplated the reasons presented earlier, one strives to *eliminate* both the *afflictive obscurations* – which include the six root delusions of attachment, anger, pride, ignorance, wrong views and doubt, and the seeds of those delusions, as well as the *obscurations to knowledge,*

which are the latent imprints of the obscurations.¹ To do that one needs to generate *superior insight* in order to overcome the seeds of the delusions, as well as their imprints. *Before that, one needs to in turn achieve calm abiding, and therefore I turn my mind away from all wrong paths.*

The point here is that one needs *to generate superior insight*, which is to be presented in the next chapter, and before that, *one needs in turn to achieve calm abiding.* So, having been presented with all the conditions for developing calm abiding, *I turn my mind away from all wrong paths, such as disturbing thoughts of sense objects.*

Further, one turns one's *mind away from all wrong paths, such as the disturbing thoughts of sense objects, which obstruct the generation of calm abiding.* The actual method for developing calm abiding is referred to here; *by way of the eight abandoning recognitions I shall place the mind continuously in equipoise on a correct object.* The eight abandoning recognitions are as presented in the Lam Rim.² As I have presented earlier, the definition of calm abiding is: a concentration that is able to focus single-pointedly on a chosen object for as long as one wishes, and which is combined with the bliss of physical and mental pliancy. Then Gyalsab Rinpoche advises:

In short: How to attain the common calm abiding is explained extensively in the Hearer Grounds and the way of attaining the uncommon calm abiding is explained in this text and in Master Kamalashila's *Stages of Meditation.* Understanding the method from these texts and by contemplating the benefits of meditating on calm abiding and the disadvantages of not meditating on calm abiding, one should strive in meditating on calm abiding by way of the eight stages of calm abiding and so forth.

The eight stages of calm abiding and so forth are presented very clearly in Lama Tsong Khapa's great and medium Lam Rim texts.

Indeed, many years ago [when I taught on the extensive Lam Rim], I presented in detail what calm abiding means, its definition, and how to develop it, as well as what special insight entails. Of course, if I were to repeat those presentations it might serve some purpose, especially to refresh the mind of the older students, and for the newer students. However, since it has been presented earlier, you can refer to that. I will not go into further detail here.

In fact, when His Holiness the Dalai Lama teaches he often says, "I will repeat this point again, even if you have heard it before". His intention is for the newer students to be able to comprehend and understand it, and for older students not to just go to sleep thinking they've heard it already! These are important points His Holiness is mentioning; there is always a need to hear these points again, so this repetition serves a purpose.

Basically, as presented here it is the three higher trainings that are the basis for our development. Morality, which includes the precepts we take, is the very basis, like the ground or foundation. The next training is meditation, specifically the development of calm abiding. Finally, the

¹ Also known as obscurations to omniscience

² *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, pp. 653-66

training in wisdom enables us to develop special insight. Again, we will not go into much more detail now.

The summarising verse by Gyaltsab Je himself succinctly presents these points.

SUMMARISING VERSE

The destruction of the two obscurations from the root
With superior insight to which reality is obvious,
Depends in turn on immovable concentration.
Hence, one should first become proficient in attaining
calm abiding.

Here, *the two obscurations* refer to the deluded obscurations and the obscurations to omniscience. To completely overcome them *from the very root*, we need to develop *superior insight to which reality is obvious*; with superior insight one obtains the direct perception and realisation of emptiness. Thus, developing superior insight becomes the ultimate means to destroy the two obscurations. Achieving that, in turn, *depends in turn* on developing *immovable concentration*, or indestructible concentration. *Hence, one should first become proficient in attaining calm abiding*. So this is the point of this pith instruction.

II. THE NAME OF THE CHAPTER

This is the eighth chapter called Explaining Mental Stabilisation from the Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas.

This is the commentary on the eighth chapter called Explaining Mental Stabilisation from the commentary on the *Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas*, called *The Entrance for the Children of the Conquerors*.

This concludes the Eighth Chapter. In the next sessions, we will continue with the Ninth Chapter. I think the Ninth Chapter is a bit longer than the Eighth Chapter, with a few extra verses, but otherwise almost the same length. I have also taught on the Ninth Chapter, as many of the older students are aware.

So far we have done very well with going through the text, and my intention is to try to complete the text this year. If we can do that, it would be good.

The exam we can leave for August, when I'm doing a retreat. It will be good to do the exam at that time. Also, there's the seminar coming up in August, so it's good for you to do your preparation for that now.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© *Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་སྐྱོད་མེད་པའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྒྱལ་མོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

5 July 2016

As usual, let us spend some time in our meditation practice. [*meditation*]

As done regularly, we can generate the motivation for receiving these teachings along these lines: for the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will engage in listening to the Mahayana teachings, and put them into practice well.

Familiarising our mind with the wish to benefit others is indeed a very noble intention, which serves a great purpose. To do this one can generate the very strong intention "I will not harm any living being, and I will extend benefit to any living being that I come across". As we familiarise our minds with this intention, our way of thinking becomes more and more imbued with that sentiment. Then it is definitely possible to reach a stage where we actually embrace the quality of only benefiting others and not harming others in the slightest.

Leaving aside the fact that this noble intention is a cause for enlightenment and buddhahood, just on a human level how wonderful it would be to be someone who does not harm any living being, and whose only intention is to benefit other sentient beings! And it is definitely possible to become such a person. Through familiarity, this motivation will carry on from one life to the next. As we progress through each life, familiarising ourselves more and more with this noble intention, we will definitely become an embodiment of love and compassion.

The reality is that we will not live forever. In fact we are getting closer by the day to the end of this life, which means getting closer to our next life. At death we don't disappear into nothingness; we will actually take rebirth again. So if we ensure familiarity with this noble intention through our practice, then we can secure being reborn as human again with these noble intentions. If we have this inborn quality in our next life then that will be wonderful. This is how we can prepare for our next life, which will come much sooner than we think. It will also ensure that our practice becomes a pure Dharma practice.

As explained in the presentation on refuge, there are two types of refuge: causal refuge and resultant refuge. The resultant refuge is the future states of one's own liberation and enlightenment. No-one else can bestow these resultant states of liberation and enlightenment on us; we have to create the causes to achieve that resultant state ourselves.

Although aspiring for enlightenment in order to benefit sentient beings is a noble intention in itself, that aspiration has to be in relation to one's own resultant state of enlightenment. The significant point here is that one aspires to achieve the resultant state of enlightenment oneself in order to benefit other sentient beings.

[To explain the context of the next chapter we need to return to the subdivisions introduced in chapter 1.¹

2. THE ACTUAL EXPLANATION OF THE STAGES OF THE PATH

2.2. The method for taking the essence

2.2.2. Explaining the individual meanings²

2.2.2.2. THE WAY OF TRAINING IN THE PRACTICES OF GENERATING THE TWO MINDS

2.2.2.2.2. *The Way of Training in the Actions, the Perfections*

2.2.2.2.2.1. The way of meditating on conscientiousness, the limb preventing the degeneration of the training in the mind of enlightenment³

2.2.2.2.2.2. Explaining the way of training in morality, by relating it to introspection and mindfulness, the methods for keeping virtuous dharmas pure⁴

2.2.2.2.2.3. Explaining the way of training in the remaining four perfections:

This is subdivided into four:

2.2.2.2.2.3.1. The way of training in patience⁵

2.2.2.2.2.3.2. The way of training in enthusiasm⁶

2.2.2.2.2.3.3. The way of training in the common and uncommon mental stabilisations that are contained in calm abiding⁷

2.2.2.2.2.3.4. The way of training in wisdom that is the nature of superior insight

CHAPTER 9: THE WAY OF TRAINING IN WISDOM THAT IS THE NATURE OF SUPERIOR INSIGHT

What is the nature of superior insight? More specifically, what is the entity of superior insight? What does it actually mean?

We have just completed the chapter with the presentation on calm abiding. What is the nature or entity of calm abiding? As presented earlier, the entity or nature of calm abiding is a concentration that is obtained by relying on the nine stages of developing mental stabilisation, and which is able to focus on a chosen object for as long as one wishes, accompanied with the bliss of physical and mental pliancy.

The nature of special insight is, based on calm abiding, an analysis on the focused object, which induces the bliss of physical and mental pliancy. Some mistakenly refer to special insight as a state of mind that sees something more or extra than calm abiding. This is a wrong interpretation. Both focus on the same object: calm abiding is merely stabilising the mind single-pointedly on the object and that single-pointed focus on the object induces the bliss of physical and mental pliancy; while abiding on the object single-pointedly special insight is able to simultaneously analyse and investigate the object, which induces the bliss of physical and mental pliancy.

The chapter has two parts

I. Explanation of the chapter

II. Explanation of the title

¹ See the teaching of 26 March 2013

² Introduced in the teaching of 2 July 2013

³ Covered in chapter 4, introduced on 25 February 2014

⁴ Covered in chapter 5, introduced on 20 May 2014

⁵ Covered in chapter 6, introduced on 23 September 2014

⁶ Covered in chapter 7, introduced on 12 May 2015

⁷ Covered in chapter 8, introduced on 29 September 2015

I. EXPLANATION OF THE CHAPTER

The explanation of the chapter is subdivided into three:

1. Showing that those wishing to attain liberation need to generate the wisdom realising suchness
2. The method of how to generate the wisdom realising suchness
3. Therefore an advice to strive in generating this wisdom

1. SHOWING THAT THOSE WISHING TO ATTAIN LIBERATION NEED TO GENERATE THE WISDOM REALISING SUCHNESS⁸

This is subdivided into two.

- 1.1. General meaning
- 1.2. Auxiliary meaning

1.1. General meaning

In the Tibetan version of the text the verse is not quoted directly under this heading, and the words 'argument' and 'answer' are not specifically used in Tibetan text. These have been added by the translator of the text. We need to pay careful attention to the material in this heading as it explains a succinct point.

Argument: Because we need to attain enlightenment, to pacify all suffering in the continuum of others, we need to realise suchness. But if one wonders why would one need to realise suchness to merely pacify the sufferings in one's own continuum?

The answer to that hypothetical query is:

Answer: The protector Nagarjuna said,
For as long as there is grasping at the aggregates,
For that long there is grasping at 'I'.

This, of course, is a well-known quote from Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*, which we studied some years ago. As I explained at the time, it is used in many teachings, and we see it here again. It is a very important point.

As the commentary explains, Nagarjuna is saying that:

For as long as there is true-grasping at [or grasping at the true existence of] the aggregates, for that long one will not stop the transitory view grasping at inherent 'I' and 'mine'.

Nobody here asserts that hearer and self-liberator arhats have not completely abandoned the transitory view, but as one needs to stop true-grasping at the aggregates to that end, it is asserted that they realise the non-true existence [some translations use the term 'lack of true existence'] of the aggregates.

This master [referring to Shantideva] also asserts as well that one needs to realise suchness in order to pacify the sufferings of cyclic existence, which is explained further below.

As explained here, *for as long as there is true-grasping at the aggregates*, which is grasping at the true existence of phenomena, one will have the *transitory view grasping at the inherent existence of 'I' and 'mine'*, which basically refers to grasping at the inherent existence of the individual self. What is being explained is that without overcoming the wrong conceptions of holding onto the inherent existence or the true existence of phenomena, one cannot possibly overcome the wrong conception of grasping at the inherent existence of the individual self or 'I'.

Grasping at true existence of the aggregates is the misconception that perceives the aggregates as being truly existent. This is our normal perception of the aggregates. Rather than seeing the aggregates as being an entity that is dependent on many parts, their causes and conditions, we perceive them as being independently existent, existing from their own side, without depending on anything else for their existence.

As the aggregates appear to us in this way we apprehend the aggregates as being truly existent without depending on causes or conditions or parts and so forth. Believing in that perception is called true-grasping at the aggregates. Grasping at the aggregates as being truly existent then leads onto grasping at the self and 'I' and what belongs to me as 'mine'.

The complete verse from *Precious Garland*, part of which was quoted earlier reads:

For as long as there is grasping at the aggregates,
For that long there is grasping at 'I'.
For as long as there is grasping at the 'I'
One creates the karma.

We need to understand how grasping at a truly existent 'I' produces grasping at 'mine'. From 'mine' comes my friends and my enemies and strangers. Strong grasping at my friend then produces the state of mind of attachment, and through that strong attachment a lot of negativities are created. Thoughts of 'my enemy' give rise to anger or aversion, and out of that aversion or anger one also creates a lot of negativity. In relation to strangers one generates a mind of indifference and lack of interest for their wellbeing.

As the commentary further explains

Nobody here asserts that hearer and self-liberator arhats have not completely abandoned the transitory view, but because one needs to stop true-grasping at the aggregates, to that end it is asserted that they realise the non-true existence [or lack of true existence] of the aggregates.

In order to overcome grasping at the true existence of the 'I,' one has to overcome grasping at the true existence of the aggregates. As indicated in the commentary, arhats have definitely overcome grasping at the true existence of the aggregates. One needs to try to understand this explanation as best as one can, because this really is the pith of the unique presentation that makes the Buddhist tenets different from non-Buddhist tenets.

In Buddhist doctrine **the view is selflessness** while the **conduct is non-violence**. Other doctrines practise non-violence, but the view of selflessness is unique to the Buddhist tenets, and within Buddhism there are different presentations of this view of selflessness. There was no presentation of the view of selflessness before the Buddha's time in this world.

The way to understand selflessness is that all things that are produced can be understood as having causes. Most would understand that the suffering that everybody experiences must have its causes; there must be reasons and causes for suffering. Some might assert random suffering without a cause, but most logicians and realists would accept that there are causes for suffering.

⁸ The numbering recommences with the new chapter
Chapter 9

As presented in the Lam Rim, the suffering that one experiences depends on karma, karma depends on afflictions, and afflictions in turn depend on the ignorance of grasping at true existence. So when we look into the causes of suffering we find that the root of all suffering is grasping at a self.

Having identified the root cause of suffering, which is grasping at a self, what then needs to be examined is whether grasping at a self can be eliminated. If grasping at the self can be eliminated, then by default the product of that grasping at the self, which is suffering, will also naturally cease. This is how it should be understood.

In this investigation, one investigates whether this state of mind of grasping at a self is a correct perception, or whether it is a false perception. The way to understand that this grasping at a self is a faulty perception - and thus is not based on any truth - is that it is not supported by reality. Once it is understood that the self does not exist in the way that it is perceived by the self-grasping mind, then it can be asserted as being a faulty perception. Then one comes to understand that the grasping at a self is a faulty state of mind, or false perception, because what it perceives does not exist in that way.

When one understands that what is perceived does not exist as perceived then, at that point, one is coming to an understanding of selflessness. The self that is perceived by the self-grasping mind does not exist, and therefore it is void of a self.

One thus comes to understand that the wisdom realising selflessness is what destroys the faulty mind of grasping at a self. When that realisation of selflessness and emptiness becomes very vivid and strong, then that becomes the antidote that overcomes this false perception of grasping at a truly existent or inherently existent self. When that faulty perception of grasping is completely eradicated, then the very root cause of our sufferings is completely eradicated. Then the negativities, afflictions and so forth that arise from that misconception will all cease as well. This is how one needs to understand the view of selflessness and emptiness as being the ultimate antidote for overcoming the afflicted states of mind and all that they produce i.e. suffering and so forth.

One needs to actualise this understanding of selflessness and emptiness in relation to one's own grasping at one's own individual self. Grasping at a truly existent self needs to be overcome on a personal level. Thus the selflessness and emptiness of one's individual being has to be understood. Gaining just a mere intellectual understanding may have some weight, but it does not really serve as means to completely eradicate and overcome the erroneous view of grasping at a self. In order to overcome the erroneous view of grasping at a self, one needs to fully actualise and realise selflessness in relation to oneself. That then becomes the ultimate antidote for overcoming all the mental afflictions. This is the uniqueness of the Buddha's presentation of the ways and means to overcome suffering.

In this way one can understand how suffering is something that can be overcome, because it depends on causes and conditions. When those causes and conditions are overcome, then suffering naturally subsides. If

suffering were to occur randomly without any causes and conditions there would not be much one could do to avert it. But because it depends on causes and conditions, which can be identified, one can apply the antidotes for overcoming those causes. Then one can eradicate suffering. So this is how it should be understood.

Of course the logical assertions for establishing selflessness and emptiness will be presented further on. As the commentary presents:

Those that wish to understand this presentation more extensively should do so in dependence on the great commentary by the great divine omniscient Lama Tsong Khapa, who is the guide of all the worlds, on the *Introduction to the Middle Way*.

Of course, we studied *Introduction to the Middle Way* in previous classes.

Please dedicate the recitation of the Tara Praises recitation to David Hope, an old student and Member who worked very hard for Tara Institute in its early years. Apparently he is going to be having surgery soon.

Because of his connection with Tara Institute, the students of Tara Institute and myself, when we dedicate our prayers for the successes of his treatment, it can definitely be of benefit. Keep that in mind.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

12 July 2016

Based on the motivation we generated during the refuge and bodhicitta prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [meditation]

Now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and for that purpose I will listen to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practice well.

Generating such a motivation, even for a few moments, will definitely establish very strong positive imprints in our minds.

It is essential that we regularly pay attention to the noble intention to benefit others, uphold this intention as most essential at all times, and not be separated from it. One should even resolve that 'I will not allow the noble intention to benefit others to ever degenerate; I will never allow my mind to be separated from this intention'. This approach would be most beneficial.

When we ensure we uphold this noble intention at all times, and make every attempt to strengthen and maintain it, that in itself becomes one way of fulfilling the purpose of studying this text on the bodhisattvas' deeds. The text presents profound ways of practising this noble intention and generating bodhicitta. If we can put time and effort into studying these profound instructions, it can actually help us generate this noble intention, maintain it, and provide a purpose for studying this text.

To adopt a practical approach to generating a virtuous mind, and as a means to accumulate extensive virtue, consider the example of saving money. If we took the initiative to save one dollar a day, by the end of the month we would definitely have saved thirty dollars. Think about accumulating a stock of virtues in the same practical way by undertaking small virtuous deeds daily. If we can ensure we put effort into accumulating *some* virtue daily, then after some time that will accumulate to become a great stock of virtuous merit.

The buddhas and great masters have given very practical advice as a means to accumulate virtues and shun negativity. The Buddha said: 'Don't neglect small virtues thinking that there is no benefit; don't adopt small misdeeds thinking that there is no harm'. One should not discard small deeds, good or bad. If we think 'Oh, that's such a small positive deed there's no point adopting it', or 'Oh, it's such a small negative deed there's no problem adopting it', then we are disregarding the power of good deeds, and the gravity of negative deeds.

An analogy presented by the Buddha is drops of water filling a container; where one drop at a time will fill even a large container. This analogy reinforces the point that the small virtues we accumulate can become great virtue in the end. An analogy to illustrate how even small harms can cause great destruction is the way a tiny spark can cause a

huge fire. Even though a spark may be very small, when placed on a stack of hay it can ignite and very soon large flames can completely burn down a stack of hay as huge as a mountain. This is a practical example used to caution us not to underestimate the power of even small good deeds, or the destruction of small negative deeds.

This is how the incomparably kind Buddha gave advice so we can achieve these goals. If we pay attention we can see how significant and beneficial this approach is for us. I'm sharing these points to encourage you to put into practice whatever you have learned, beginning with adopting small virtues and shunning small misdeeds. The very purpose of studying the Dharma is to use it as a means to subdue our minds. If that is the purpose, then without practising the Dharma there is no way to subdue the mind.

When we actually pay attention and start practising what we know, we will definitely begin to see a significant change over time. Contemplating the great value of virtue, and the need to acquaint ourselves with virtue again and again, becomes a means to remind oneself to protect whatever virtuous positive mind one has at any cost. This is essential.

1.1. General meaning (cont.)

The commentary reads:

While various commentaries on this text present it to teach that hearers and self-liberators do not realise the selflessness of phenomena, this being a mistaken meaning of the text is clearly cognised and shall be explained.

As I have presented this previously, as a way to reflect on the meaning of this point, I'd like you to present the reason why it says here that it is a mistake to assert that *hearers and self-liberators do not realise the selflessness of phenomena*. In other words, why do hearers and self-liberators definitely need to realise the selflessness of phenomena? Majola, you can give an explanation.

Majola: One has to realise both - the selflessness of the person and the selflessness of phenomena - not only selflessness of person.

Geshe-la: But this doesn't relate to the main point. The text isn't referring to the selflessness of person; it's talking about the selflessness of phenomena. This is reflected at the start of the text. Damien, you can try to explain the reason? So, basically why do the hearers and self-liberators need to realise selflessness of phenomena? This is the main point.

Damien: Because they conceive the aggregates to be inherently existent it's not possible to realise the selflessness of the 'I'. They have to realise the selflessness of phenomena because if they adhere to conceiving that phenomena are inherently existent or truly existent, then they cannot possibly realise the selflessness of person.

Geshe-la: This doesn't relate to the main point being presented here either! I've explained many times previously why hearers and self-liberators definitely have to realise the selflessness of phenomena. Why is that so? This is the main point here. It is stated here in the commentary that other commentaries mistakenly present that the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* teaches that hearers and self-liberators do not realise the selflessness of phenomena, is mistaken. In other words, it is saying that they have to realise the selflessness of phenomena. Right?

Damien: Because they are liberated.

Geshe-la: It is not referring to those who have attained liberation; it is referring to hearers and self-realisers in general!

I have worked hard to explain these points to you in the past but you seem to have not retained any of the points that I have explained previously! I've mentioned many times – over 100 times – that grasping at the self of phenomena is a deluded obscuration. So is this clear; do you understand the point? It seems that you still haven't understood the point! Perhaps Denis would be better at explaining it!

Denis: In answer to the question I would say that the antidote to ignorance is the realisation of emptiness, which is the lack of inherent existence of self and phenomena.

Geshe-la: That is a much better explanation.

The grasping at the self of phenomena is a deluded obscuration, and in order to overcome it one has to realise the selflessness of phenomena. Without realising the selflessness of phenomena one cannot possibly overcome the deluded obscurations. So, according to the Prasangika, grasping at a truly existent self of phenomena is a deluded obscuration.

What is being presented in this phrase is that *while various commentaries on this text, i.e. the Bodhisattvacharyavatara, teach that hearers and self-liberators do not realise the selflessness of phenomena, this being a mistaken meaning of the text is clearly cognised. This means that it is clearly understood that this is mistaken, which will be explained.* It is clearly saying that hearers and self-liberators definitely have to realise the selflessness of phenomena.

The first line in the verse reads, *the Able One explained all these different branches for the purpose of wisdom.* The commentary explains:

These branches can refer merely to calm abiding which is explained in the eighth chapter, or it can refer to all the remaining perfections starting with generosity. There are these two systems, and although the first system is feasible from the point of view of the relation of the earlier and later chapters, here it is better to follow the second system.

So these branches can specifically refer to how to develop calm abiding (as explained in the eighth chapter), but it can also refer to all the other perfections. What is being presented here is that it is better to follow the system which relates it to all the other perfections. Prior to explaining the meaning of the whole verse, the commentary first explains what 'these branches' refers to.

Having said that, it is good to relate these branches to the other perfections such as generosity and so forth, this doubt is then raised:

The doubts with regards to, 'the branches of generosity and so forth were taught for the purpose of wisdom' are eliminated as follows.

The commentary continues:

In general generosity and the other perfections do not need to precede the realisation of suchness by way of listening and contemplation ...

This is quite clear. Then it further explains:

because although one needs to build up merit to realise emptiness, the practices of a bodhisattva, such as explained here, do not have to be preliminaries.

The commentary clearly says that in order to realise emptiness one definitely has to accumulate merit, but the perfections of generosity i.e. generosity accompanied with

bodhicitta, and so forth, do not have to be the specific preliminaries.

As further explained:

This is similar to the two modes of realising suchness through listening and contemplating as explained by the master Shantarakshita.

The commentary then goes on to explain that:

One also does not need them as preliminaries to generate a mind-transforming experience of emptiness, because then they would also have to precede other realisations such as an experience of impermanence. One also does not need them as a preliminary for the generation of superior insight realising emptiness from meditation, because although they do not first engage in the practices of a bodhisattva, hearers and self-liberators realise suchness in the way that was mentioned earlier.

Next a hypothetical doubt is presented:

If you say: They were taught for the purpose of wisdom, because the wisdom realising emptiness is the substantial cause for the dharmakaya, and the methods of generosity and the other perfections are the simultaneously acting conditions, and one needs the benefit of generosity and the other perfections to achieve the result of wisdom.

Although one does need these causes and conditions to obtain the *dharmakaya*, (a buddha's truth body) the hypothetical doubt raises the issue as to whether the branches of generosity and so forth were taught specifically for the purpose of wisdom for this reason.

The answer encapsulates why this not the case:

Answer: In that case one could also turn it around and say that wisdom was taught for the purpose of the other perfections.

Because the other perfections are also needed to achieve the *rupakaya*, (a buddha's form body) one could say that wisdom was taught for the purpose of the other perfections. When you turn it around it should also apply, but that is clearly not the case.

Having refuted the earlier hypothetical assertions that the branches of generosity etc. were taught for the purpose of wisdom, now the commentary explains the actual reason.

Thus, without the wisdom realising emptiness one cannot exhaust the seeds of either of the two obscurations, and although one does not need to be adorned with infinite merit to eliminate merely the seeds of the afflictive obscurations, one does need infinite merit to eliminate the seeds of the obscurations to knowledge. As this text is mainly from the point of view of eliminating the obscurations to knowledge it says, 'these branches are taught for the purpose of wisdom'.

The purpose of presenting wisdom here is because it serves as a means to overcome the obscurations to knowledge. In order for wisdom to become a means to eliminate the obscurations to knowledge, it definitely has to be backed by the other perfections based on bodhicitta. In this way we need the practices of the perfections of generosity, ethics, patience, and so forth.

While the realisation of emptiness is needed to overcome both the deluded obscurations as well as the obscurations to knowledge or omniscience, one does not need the backing of extensive merit such as the six perfections to overcome the deluded obscurations. The main emphasis presented here is

that the wisdom realising emptiness is not specifically the means to overcome the deluded obscurations, but rather to abandon the obscurations to omniscience. Therefore, the branches, i.e. the perfections of generosity and so forth, are definitely needed as a way to accumulate the extensive merit to overcome the obscuration to omniscience.

The deluded obscurations are, for example, grasping at the true existence of self and phenomena. The imprints of these the delusions, including these misconceptions of grasping to the self of person and phenomena, are said to be the obscurations to omniscience.

The Prasangika specifically explain that due to the imprints of the delusions one still has the appearance of true existence, and these mistaken appearances are actually the obscuration to omniscience.

Let's clarify the difference between deluded obscuration and obscuration to omniscience. With every delusion, such as attachment, there is a distinction between the seed of the delusion and the imprint of the delusion. The seed of delusion is defined as that which serves as a cause for a similar delusion to occur in the next instance. Given the definition of a seed, then for as long as one has the seed of attachment, that attachment will be perpetually generated until the seed of attachment is completely abandoned.

Although one has abandoned the seed of attachment, one still has the imprint of attachment. This is also true for all the other delusions, and it is the imprints of the delusions that cause the mistaken appearance of true existence. Even when one has abandoned the seeds of delusions, there's still an appearance of true existence, up until the point that one completely abandons the imprints of all delusions.

So according to the Prasangika view, all sentient beings' sense faculties will necessarily have this mistaken appearance of true existence because, by definition, a sentient being is a being who has not overcome the imprints of the delusions.

An illustration of when the sense faculty itself is influenced by a mistaken perception of true existence, and how this causes a mistaken appearance, can be seen on a grosser level with the mind of sleep. During sleep we have what is called the sleep consciousness to which all dreams appear. In the dream state we see horses, elephants, houses etc. which are mistaken appearances because they do not really exist. In dreams they appear to the mind as actually existing, but in fact they do not really exist as they appear; they are non-existent.

In syllogisms, the example used for things lacking true existence is that they are like a dream. Things in a dream appear to be real but they actually don't exist. Likewise, truly existent phenomena do not exist.

It is said that it is only a buddha's mind that does not have any mistaken appearances, because a buddha has completely eliminated the very imprints of all the delusions. Thus, for a buddha's mind there is no mistaken appearance whatsoever. For example, an arhat who has overcome the seeds of delusions still has mistaken appearance of true existence, because they have not yet abandoned the imprints of the delusions. So until one achieves buddhahood one has not overcome the mistaken appearances.

Further, the commentary explains that:

It is master Nagarjuna's position that true-grasping is an afflictive obscuration, and this master asserts the same.

It is just as explained.

Next there is a presentation further explaining why calm abiding, in this context, is also a specific prerequisite (or means) to develop special insight.

The commentary explains:

From the *Sutra Perfectly Condensing Dharma*:

If one places the mind in equipoise one knows the absolute, just the way it is.

Also from the *Compendium of Trainings*:

The Able One said, 'in equipoise one knows the absolute, just the way it is'.

From these quotations we can see the specific reference that the way of obtaining special insight in order to know existence *just the way it is*, is dependent on having first developed calm abiding. So we can see why there are commentaries that take this literally and thus don't refer to the other perfections as a cause for developing special insight.

The commentary concludes:

'Equipoise' refers to calm abiding, and 'knowing just as it is' refers to superior insight, and therefore the perfection of meditative stabilisation explained in the eighth chapter is a causal branch for the wisdom explained here.

1.2. Auxiliary meaning

In the text, verse one comes under this heading:

1. *The Able One explained all these branches For the purpose of wisdom; Therefore, those who wish to pacify suffering Need to generate wisdom.*

The commentary explains:

As one wishes to pacify the sufferings of cyclic existence of self and others, one needs to generate the wisdom realising selflessness. The earlier explained branches of generosity and the other perfections, that is, all the collection of causes, was taught by the Buddha for the purpose of generating the wisdom realising emptiness.

In the first sentence, the word 'selflessness' relates specifically to the selflessness of phenomena. Of course it also covers the selflessness of person, but here it specifically relates to the selflessness of phenomena, as explained previously. When one gets the main point, from then on one can relate to the rest of the explanations in the text and derive the essential meaning. That's the way to study the text; first understand the main point then the rest will follow logically.

According to this system, the wisdom realising selflessness relates to the wisdom realising emptiness. Thus, the selflessness mentioned here relates to the way grasping at an inherently existing self is the root cause for all the delusions and sufferings. Because it is the root cause of all delusions it is the root cause of all sufferings. Is this understood? So if *one wishes to pacify the sufferings of cyclic existence of self and others, one needs to definitely generate the wisdom realising selflessness. Why?* Because one needs to overcome grasping at an inherently existing self.

When the commentary refers to *the earlier explained branches of generosity*, it is referring to the earlier chapters e.g. chapter three and four onwards. In summary, the *branches of generosity and the other perfections* refers to all the *collections of causes, which was taught by the Buddha for the purpose of generating the wisdom realising emptiness.*

Having eliminated the presented doubts, one can now gain a clear understanding that while, in general, it is not necessary for the perfections of generosity and so forth to precede gaining the wisdom realising emptiness, they are presented first here, because the ultimate intent of this text is to generate the wisdom realising emptiness that serves as an antidote to the obscurations to omniscience.

We can see how the commentary meticulously presents the meaning of the first verse by providing a comprehensive and complete approach; first eliminating any doubts that may arise in understanding the point being presented here, followed by the actual explanation of the verse.

It is good for us to have gone through this process to uphold an accurate understanding of what is presented here. If we allow various personal doubts to surface then there's no end to it, but to eliminate specific doubts as means to get a clearer understanding of the meaning presented here is really good. The main point is thus emphasised: *As one wishes to pacify the sufferings of cyclic existence of self and others, one needs to generate the wisdom realizing selflessness.* All these branches were explained by the Able One for the purpose of wisdom. So this is clear.

2. THE METHOD OF HOW TO GENERATE THE WISDOM REALISING SUCHNESS

This is subdivided into three:

- 2.1. The presentation of the two truths
- 2.2. Establishing that even just to attain liberation one needs to realise emptiness
- 2.3. Explaining extensively the reasoning that established emptiness

2.1. The presentation of the two truths

This has two subdivisions:

- 2.1.1. Actual
- 2.1.2. Refuting objections of the no-need and no ability regarding emptiness

Again we can see the meticulous way the text is presented with these headings to clarify the structure.

2.1.1. Actual

This is subdivided into three:

- 2.1.1.1. The division of the two truths
- 2.1.1.2. The definition of the two truths
- 2.1.1.3. Identifying the person who has understood both

2.1.1.1. THE DIVISION OF THE TWO TRUTHS

The first two lines of the next verse come under this heading:

*2ab. The illusory¹ and the ultimate
These are asserted as the two truths;*

The commentary reads:

The *Compendium of Trainings* quotes the *Sutra of the Meeting of Father and Son*,

The Tathagata comprehended thus the illusory and the ultimate and exhausted the possibilities for that to be known into illusory truth and ultimate truth.

Because the Tathagata sees perfectly in emptiness, knows perfectly in emptiness, manifests as well in emptiness, therefore he is called all-knowing transcendental wisdom.

As the commentary presents, *that to be known*, refers to objects of knowledge i.e. all existence, since whatever exists

has to necessarily be perceived by an awareness. That which is to be known is understood by the Tathagata, the all-knowing one, *as illusory truth and ultimate truth*. The Tathagata has, *exhausted the possibilities for that to be known*, meaning that he sees that there is no other way for something to exist than either as an illusory truth or an ultimate truth. There is no possibility of a third way of existence for objects of knowledge.

It further mentions, *because the Tathagata sees perfectly in emptiness, knows perfectly in emptiness, manifests well in emptiness, therefore he is called all-knowing transcendental wisdom*. The reason the Buddha is posited as omniscient or all-knowing is because he directly and simultaneously perceives the illusory truths and ultimate truths that encompass all existence or objects of knowledge. Only a buddhas' mind is able to perceive both truths directly and simultaneously at one time. So that's why a buddha is omniscient.

[A part missing from the translation of the commentary, which explains the meaning of these quotations, is inserted here.]

The commentary reads:

From the above quote *comprehended thus* indicates the basis for division of objects of knowledge. *Exhausted*, indicates the definite division into two truths. And because the Tathagata fully comprehends both truths, he is posited as *all-knowing*.

The quote says, *the Tathagata comprehended thus*, which indicates the basis of the division of objects of knowledge. This means that when objects of knowledge are divided, they are divided into two; *illusory truth and ultimate truth*. And the object of knowledge itself is the basis of the division of the two truths.

Thus, the explanations stating that the intention of the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Deeds* is that ultimate truth is not an object of knowledge or that it cannot be known by any awareness are wrong explanations.

The meaning here is quite clear. Then it further explains:

The nature of the division is into a twofold division of illusory truth and ultimate truth.

An example of the two divisions of the two truths would be the aggregates and the person itself. The aggregates and person are examples of illusory truth and the lack of true existence of the aggregates and person are examples of ultimate truth.

It continues:

Although there can be different connotations to a division, here, it is to be of one nature but to be of a different isolate.

And explains:

As both have a nature, it is impossible for them not to be of one or different nature.²

Both illusory truth and ultimate truth *have a nature*, and because of this they have to be in relation to each other, they have to be either *of one* or of a *different nature*.

² Trans: There is a difference between saying *one nature* and *of one nature*. For two phenomena to be of one nature they need to have two different natures, or entities. The two truths are not only two different natures, but two clearly distinct mutually exclusive natures, which are yet of one nature.

Ed2: It is difficult to find an exact translation for the Tibetan term *ngo-wo*, translated as 'nature' in the commentary. Other translations use the word 'entity' rather than 'nature'.

¹ See the discussion of the use of this term in the Translator's Introduction to the commentary.

The commentary further explains:

If the subject is of different nature from the lack of true existence, then the faults outlined in the *Elucidations of the Thought* apply; such as that it would become truly existent. Moreover, if they are not different, then the faults explained there apply as well.

The aggregates, and the lack of true existence of the aggregates, for example, are of one nature.

The next point explains, *Moreover, if they are not different, then the faults explained there apply as well.* Using the example of the aggregates, if the aggregates and their lack of true existence were to be the same, to be one and not separate, then there is falsity there because each has distinct terms.

If we say 'one nature' it may sound like they are actually the same, but this is not saying that they are exactly one.

The commentary explains:

Therefore, they are of one nature but of different isolate, just like produced and impermanent.

The conclusion is that they are of one nature, *but of different isolates*, just like produced phenomena and impermanence.

This sheds light on *The Heart Sutra* when it says, 'form is emptiness, emptiness is form'. It is presenting exactly the same point; that they are of one nature but of different isolates. There are different terms for form and emptiness because they are different isolates, however they are of the same nature. That is why *The Heart Sutra* explains that form is emptiness and emptiness is form.

Likewise produced phenomena and impermanence. When you say something is produced, it also implies it is impermanent. When you say something is impermanent it also implies it is produced. Again, both are of the same nature, but are different isolates.

The commentary continues:

So, the basis for division, object of knowledge, is comprehensively divided into the two truths. The nature of the two divisions is that the meaning found by a nominal prime cognition is illusory truth, and the meaning found by an ultimate prime cognition is ultimate truth.

Before our next session please read a bit and try to go over the points I've mentioned this evening, because I will test you again in the next session.

The point of the presentation is that you start to accumulate understanding, so that when this is taught next time, it is readily accessible to you. If the earlier explanations have not sunk in, then it has not served its purpose.

A classic example of this is presented in the teachings with a saying 'Like a yeti catching marmots!' Apparently a yeti, which is an ape-like creature, attempts to catch and eat marmots. These small animals always look around, then hide under the ground as soon as something comes along. So when the yeti tries to catch marmots for its meal, it goes to the marmot nest and attempts to catch the young ones. After catching one, the yeti sits on it, but then gets up to catch another one. When it stands up the first one escapes. So the yeti keeps catching one marmot after another, but at the end, there is only one left. Let's hope this example doesn't apply to your retaining the meaning of the teachings, letting go of an earlier understanding each time a new one is presented. If

you employ mindfulness on the teaching, you will be able to remember the points.

Let it also not be like the example of a leaky vase as presented in the Lam Rim teachings, where when you have a leak in the vase, then no matter how much water you put in, it just goes out the hole.

Another example from the Lam Rim is to be free from faults like a stained or dirty vase. If you put a nice substance like delicious food into the vase it will be contaminated by the stains. This analogy illustrates how one should be free from the fault of stained motivations, which are basically negative intentions. This means that while one is receiving the Dharma, if one's motivation is stained, or one has negative intentions, then although the presentation is a cause for liberation and enlightenment, because of the stained intentions it misconstrues that information and uses it in an incorrect way, and so actually prevents it from becoming a cause for liberation and enlightenment; that is because it is stained by negative intentions.

A third example from the Lam Rim is not to be like an upturned vase. You cannot pour anything into an upside-down vase. As much as you pour, nothing goes in. This is analogous to being at a teaching place but with one's mind completely distracted outwardly. When in meditation, the mind is going on the market, on friends, on home, on many things. The mind completely goes outside. Completely empty; not emptiness but just empty like the leaky and upturned vase with nothing inside. The main point again is to read the text and prepare yourselves.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

19 July 2016

As usual let us spend some time in our meditation practice. [meditation]

It would be good to generate a motivation for receiving the teachings. As everyone already has some understanding of the bodhicitta attitude, reaffirm the altruistic thought of bodhicitta: In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment myself, and so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

It is very important that we put into practice what we already understand. We are familiar with generating such positive motivations, and we have familiarised our mind with the bodhicitta attitude. When we put it into practice regularly, then we start to become more and more accustomed to it, which is how we begin to embody that sentiment.

Conversely we could put that understanding aside thinking, "Oh, I've understood that" or "I've already learned that so now I want to learn something different, perhaps something more profound". Of course, there's nothing wrong with practising something new and become familiar with it. However, putting aside what we already know and jumping into something completely new, thinking that it is more profound, is a shortcoming. Often when people hastily engage in something more advanced they are not able to maintain or keep up with it. Then, after a while they become discouraged and put all practice aside! This shows the danger of neglecting what one already knows well, while trying to achieve something grander.

We can gain an understanding of the process of how to progress in Dharma practice from the very title *Lam Rim*, which means the *graduated path* to enlightenment. What does graduated mean? It implies actualising the path to enlightenment step by step.

The way to approach personal practice is encapsulated in advice that the late Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey-la once gave to Jampa Ignyen (Dr Ian Coghlan) when Geshe-la was in Sydney. Jampa Ignyen had apparently approached Geshe-la for some advice about practising calm abiding. As Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey mentioned to me later, his advice to Jampa Ignyen was "Well, it is good to endeavour to understand and practise something that you are not yet familiar with. However wouldn't it be better to actually work on maintaining what you already have?" Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey-la was referring to his ordination vows. Others, having heard that advice later, commented that it was very relevant and practical advice that was right to the point. Venerable Fedor also mentioned that this was really good advice. Indeed, upholding vows and commitments is the very foundation of one's practice and an integral part of it.

2.1.1.2. DEFINITION OF THE TWO TRUTHS

It is essential to understand the two truths, as they are the basis for understanding the entire structure of the teachings. This is the second time that we have covered the ninth chapter in our study group. This is the second time we have studied the entire *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* teaching. As you will recall, I taught chapters one to eight on Wednesday evenings.¹ Then, because it was perhaps a little too advanced for some newer students who might be coming on Wednesday evenings, the ninth and tenth chapters were presented to study group.² When we think about it, we have been incredibly fortunate to have been able to go through this incredible and profound text, not just once, but twice! I feel that having the opportunity to present and cover such a profound text serves my purpose for being here. Likewise, being able to listen to the teachings and study the text is your great fortune.

We covered the two truths when we studied the *Madhyamaka*³, Middle Way text, and we have also mentioned them in the previous nine chapters. For those who are studying this text for the second time, it is good to recall the explanations that are given in the *Madhyamaka* (Middle Way) text and compare that with the explanations given here in the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*.

You will also recall that the entire text of the *Four Hundred Verses*, which presents the intent of Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way*, explains the stages of the path based upon the two truths.⁴ The first eight chapters are on the stages of the path based on conventional or illusory truth and the ninth and subsequent chapters are an explanation on the stages of the path based on ultimate truth. The *Madhyamaka*, which also presents the intent of the *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way*, explains the *extensive teachings* based on illusory truth, and the *profound teachings* based on ultimate truth.

It is good to have an understanding of the unique structure of the entire path leading to enlightenment:

- The **basis** is the two truths,
- The **path** encompasses method and wisdom and
- The **result** is the two bodies of a buddha.

Through gaining an understanding of the two truths, and by cultivating method and wisdom, one obtains the two resultant bodies of a buddha. The entire structure can also be understood on the basis of the Four Noble Truths. I feel that studying these texts to gain this understanding is one of the best ways to accumulate extensive merit and purify negative karma. Indeed, what better way would there be for accumulating merit and purifying negative karma than contemplating the entire path to enlightenment? It will also leave an exceptionally profound imprint on one's mental continuum.

As mentioned earlier, the definitions and explanation of the two truths are presented in the *Madhyamaka* in detail. You already have the transcripts and it's good to revise them and familiarise yourself with the presentations there. Incorporating the explanation from the

¹ These teachings finished in June 1996

² In 2005

³ Presented from 2002 to 2004

⁴ Presented in 2006 and 2007

Madhyamaka into the explanation presented here is a good way to gain a deeper understanding of these two truths. It is incredibly meaningful to gain a good understanding of the two for use in one's own practice and meditation, and for explaining and presenting it to others.

2.1.1.2. DEFINITION OF THE TWO TRUTHS

The definition of the two truths in the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, is presented in the second two lines of verse 2.

2cd. The ultimate is not an object engaged by awareness, Awareness is stated to be illusory.

Before we go further, how would you interpret these lines? Is it sufficient to take the meaning literally as presented, *the ultimate is not an object engaged by awareness, awareness is stated to be illusory*, or is there another interpretation?

Student: It's saying that the ultimate is not an object of a mistaken awareness. This refers to the normal dualistic awareness which cannot engage in ultimate reality.

That was a good and accurate explanation. To make it clearer, you need to add that a mistaken dualistic awareness is not able to directly perceive the ultimate.

If we were to take these lines *the ultimate is not an object engaged by awareness, and awareness is stated to be illusory* literally, then it would sound as if the ultimate cannot be engaged by any awareness, because awareness itself is illusory. So interpreting the meaning literally is incorrect.

The explanation of the two truths is covered in two parts:

2.1.1.2.1. The refutation of the school of others

2.1.1.2.2 The presentation of our school

2.1.1.2.1 The refutation of the school of others

This refutation of the other schools is quite clear:

Opponents such as the Red Ones from Toelung, using the first line "the ultimate is not an object engaged by awareness" as a statement, and the later line as a reason, have asserted that ultimate truth is unsuitable to be the object of conceptual or non-conceptual consciousness, because if it is awareness of the object of awareness, then there is a pervasion that this object is illusory truth, as shown in the lower lines. This is completely unsuitable, because if one accepts the non-existence of awareness in the meditative equipoise of a superior, then one supports the texts of *Those Putting Themselves Afar*.⁵ They posit that while there is consciousness up to the point of death, the continuity is severed upon death, and you would accept likewise that while there is awareness up to and including the last moment of the path of preparation, that it does not exist while in meditative equipoise on the mode of abiding.

Further, if one does not accept a directly cognised meaning, an object of knowledge that can purify stains, then the elimination of stains becomes impossible, and one will become somebody that singularly or completely denies that a person can be posited as a buddha or bodhisattva.

If one accepts such a phenomenon, then to have ultimate truth as phenomenon but to not have an awareness that realises it, becomes a contradictory

illusory phenomenon. If one asserts that the ultimate is never comprehended, then, since the ultimate cannot comprehend itself, it has nothing that understands it, and thus becomes baseless. If it is like that, then what is the purpose of positing the division of the two truths?

Further, if the illusory is empty of being true, then there is nothing to harm the acceptance that the truth of emptiness is ultimate truth, but lacking that, illusory truth becomes truly existent.

From the *Refutation of Arguments*⁶:

If the mere lack of nature is reversed,
Then it is established as existing in this very nature.

What is being refuted here is the misinterpretation of the lines *the ultimate is not the object of awareness, and awareness is illusory*. If it is understood to mean that because awareness itself is illusory the ultimate cannot be perceived, then that is completely wrong. These are actually the words of Lama Tsong Khapa, from notes that Gyaltsab Je made when he received teachings from Lama Tsong Khapa. So they are very profound.

It is good to read the text by yourselves, trying to derive an understanding by going through it slowly, reading it and re-reading it to familiarise yourself with it. If you always have to rely on someone else to explain the text to you, then that would deprive you of the opportunity to gain an understanding for yourself. Try not to be discouraged and daunted if you don't understand the meaning the first time you read it, because every time you read it you will get a deeper and more profound understanding. It is quite normal not to gain a complete understanding the first time you read a text. But if you read it many more times, each time you will gain a deeper understanding. This is the proper approach for studying a Dharma text.

Now we come to the actual presentation of our own system or school.

2.1.1.2.2 The presentation of our school

The commentary reads:

The first line shows the definition of ultimate truth and the second line shows the definition of illusory truth.⁷

[Here the translator of the commentary has translated the Tibetan term *kun-dzob denpa* as illusory truth. The literal translation of the Tibetan words *kun-dzob* is all-obscuring or concealing and *denpa* is truth. I personally feel that the usual translation – conventional truth – does capture the intended meaning i.e. truth by mere convention but ultimately not true. However illusory or deceptive truth can also carry that meaning.]

The commentary continues:

Both the earlier and later awareness are dualistic awareness, and not mere awareness, which is from the point of view of the way of comprehension.

⁶ Nagarjuna

⁷ ed2: Here the translator of the commentary has translated the Tibetan term *kun-dzob denpa* as illusory truth. The literal translation of the Tibetan words *kun-dzob* is all-obscuring or concealing and *denpa* is truth. I personally feel that the usual translation – conventional truth – does capture the intended meaning i.e. truth by mere convention but ultimately not true. However illusory or deceptive truth can also carry that meaning.

Thus it has to be related like this: The examples, the lack of inherent existence of the person and the aggregates, exemplify ultimate truth, and the awareness that is a prime direct perception comprehending them does not engage in the object explicitly by way of them appearing in a dualistic manner but are known by the prime direct perception comprehending them.

This point, *both the earlier and later awareness are dualistic and not mere awareness, which is from the point of view of the way of comprehension*, is as explained previously.

Then the commentary gives the actual explanation of ultimate truth. Persons and the aggregates are illusory truths and *the lack of inherent existence of the person and the aggregates are examples that exemplify ultimate truth. As further presented here, the awareness that is a prime direct perception comprehending them does not engage in the object explicitly by way of them appearing in a dualistic manner but are known by the prime direct perception comprehending them.* Basically what is being explained here is that the lack of inherent existence of a person and the aggregates as perceived directly by an awareness without any dualistic appearance is ultimate truth.

So, the definition of **ultimate truth is: that which is realised in a non-dualistic manner by a direct valid cognisor that realises it directly.**

And the definition of **conventional truth is: that which is realised in a dualistic manner by a direct valid cognisor realising it directly.**

In the past I presented the differences between the definitions of conventional and ultimate truth as presented here in the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* and those that are presented in the *Madhyamaka*.⁸

According to the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, both ultimate truth and the conventional truth are presented as being directly perceived by an awareness, and the significant criterion for both conventional and ultimate truth is that they are cognised directly.

According to the *Madhyamakavatara* the definition of a conventional truth is: **the meaning found by valid cognisor engaged in a nominal analysis, as well as being a nominal cognisor with regard to the found meaning.**

The definition of ultimate truth is: **the meaning found by a valid cognisor engaged in ultimate analysis which becomes a valid cognisor engaged in ultimate analysis with regard to that object.**

So the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* is presenting a more general meaning of the two truths, but that explanation is not pervasive. Whereas the definition presented in the *Middle Way* text is more inclusive, as it includes all of the elements of the actual definition of conventional and ultimate truth.

As mentioned earlier, according to the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, the definition of conventional and ultimate truth is that they are both related to a direct perception, whereas the definition in the *Middle Way* text includes both conceptual and direct perceptions.

In order to understand the differences between the definitions and explanations it is good to refer to the teachings in the *Madhyamaka* text.⁹

Before I go onto the explanation of dualistic appearance perhaps Damien could explain what lack of dualistic appearance means.

Damien: Not having dualistic appearance means the object and the mind cognising the object are not one.

What about conventional appearance? Does that mind seeing the object and subject as being one have conventional appearance?

Damien: With all conventional appearances the object is seen as different to the mind.

The Tibetan term *nyi-nang-nup* basically means lacking dualistic appearance. There are three types of dualistic appearances:

1. The appearance of conventional or illusory truth
2. The appearance of true existence
3. The appearance of the subject and object as being distinct.

For an arya being in meditative equipoise it is said that all three types of dualistic appearances have completely ceased. In other words, the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness lacks all three types of dualistic appearances. Therefore, as I have explained many times, to the meditative equipoise directly realising emptiness the lack of a vase, for example, is the emptiness of the vase. The lack of a dualistic appearance of subject and object is actually the perception of ultimate truth or emptiness.

This reminds me of the time when Tara Institute was located in St Kilda and I was walking on the pier with Ven. Gyatso one day, someone came up to us and said that he was meditating on emptiness. He said, "Oh, I meditate on nothing. In my meditation I have nothing in mind". He also said, "That makes me feel very happy and very joyful". In fact, although nothingness is not actually emptiness, this would be similar to the state of where all dualistic appearance - i.e. conventional appearance, true appearance, and object and subject being distinct - has completely ceased, and only ultimate truth or emptiness is apparent to that awareness.

This is further explained in the commentary with a quote from the *Madhyamaka* text:

It is like stated in the *Introduction to the Middle Way*
Mistaken identities such as hairs, etc. [6.29]
Imagined due to defective faculties,

Due to the affliction of disease such as a high fever there is a *defective faculty* that perceives *hairs* falling out and so forth. These defective faculties are an example of something that is false and not actually existent. The *Madhyamaka* verse continues:

Similarly to pure eyes seeing their nature
One should know suchness here.

Just like the mistaken appearance of falling hairs and so forth do not occur to pure eyes that have not been affected by an illness, and which see the nature of the object unmistakably, similarly, the pure awareness (i.e.

⁸ See teaching of 15 February 2005.
Chapter 9

⁹ See teaching of 10 June 2003.

the wisdom directly realising emptiness) of an arya being who is in meditative equipoise, sees suchness or the true nature of phenomena just as it is. Then, as Gyaltsab Je's commentary further explains:

The examples of the person and the aggregates are called illusory truths because the awareness that is a prime direct perception realising it explicitly has to do so in a dualistic manner.

Here we see the meaning of the illusory truth actually being presented. This is exactly as explained earlier.

Thus the line *the ultimate is not an object engaged by awareness* presents the definition of ultimate truth, and the line *awareness is stated to be illusory* presents the definition of illusory truth.

The commentary explains that:

The examples of the person and the aggregates are called illusory truths because the awareness that is a prime direct perception realising it explicitly has to do so in a dualistic manner.

This is an explanation of illusory truth in accordance with the line *awareness is stated to be illusory*.

Then:

One should become acquainted with a more elaborate analysis of this from the commentary on the *Introduction to the Middle Way* composed by Je Rinpoche himself.

Therefore, the need to know thus in detail the detailed definitions of the two truths pervades also the two transcendental wisdoms of a buddha. This is so because although the transcendental wisdom of a buddha knowing suchness understands the world of multiplicity, and the transcendental understanding of the world of multiplicity understands suchness, the understanding of suchness is like water into water, and the understanding of the world of multiplicity is in a dualistic manner.

These explanations have been presented in the past.

What does *the wisdom of a buddha knowing suchness* and *that which understands the world of multiplicity* relate to?

Student: Is it the world of multiplicity conventional reality?

Geshe-la: And knowing suchness?

Student: Ultimate reality

That is indeed the case. *The wisdom of a buddha knowing suchness* relates to knowing ultimate truth, and *understanding the world of multiplicity* relates to conventional or illusory truth. So as explained here, a buddha's mind that knows suchness also understands the world of multiplicity, and the transcendental understanding of the world of multiplicity understands suchness. *The understanding of suchness is like water into water and the understanding of the world of multiplicity is in a dualistic manner.* Even though they understand that a buddha's awareness perceives the world of multiplicity and vice-versa, the way of understanding it is slightly different.

Next:

An argument by an opponent who does not understand the meaning of the commentary on the *Introduction to the Middle Way* at all: It is illogical to

assert that a buddha's transcendental wisdom appears to itself as there are only two ways for it to appear.

The argument here is that it is not possible for a buddha's awareness to appear to itself. If *a buddha's transcendental wisdom* were to *appear to itself* then *there are only two ways for it to appear* – either as being one with each other or separate. As explained here:

If it appears as different, then, since it is impossible for a buddha's transcendental wisdom to be mistaken with regards to the appearing object, one would need to accept that it is different from itself.

If the transcendental wisdom that appears to a buddha's mind were to be separate from the buddha's transcendental wisdom itself, then that would be absurd. That is because it implies that a buddha's transcendental wisdom is not a buddha's transcendental wisdom, because it is separate to itself.

Furthermore,

If it appears as water into water, then it would irrefutably be ultimate truth.

Gyaltsab Je's explanation, which serves as an answer, is:

A buddha's transcendental wisdom realises everything that is established as one entity with itself but is of different isolate on the basis of appearance, and regardless of whether it realises the name implicitly or not, it realises itself although not appearing to itself.

The explanation is that a buddha's *transcendental wisdom realises everything that is established as one entity with itself but is of different isolate* (similar to the aspects of being produced and impermanent) realised *on the basis of appearance. Regardless of whether it realises the name implicitly or not, it realises itself although not appearing to itself.*

What is being established is that a buddha's transcendental wisdom does appear to itself. But you cannot say that things appear implicitly to a buddha's mind, because whatever appears in the buddha's mind has to appear directly. There is no implicit appearance for a buddha's mind. Therefore it has to be established that all objects of knowledge, i.e. all existence, appears to a buddha's mind directly.

The way to establish this is that the transcendental wisdom i.e. a buddha's mind, appears directly to a buddha's transcendental wisdom or mind, however it appears as being separate. It appears directly but as being separate to the buddha's transcendental wisdom. But it's not actually separate because, as presented in the earlier argument, if it appears to be separate then it has to be separate. So, the conclusion is that while the Buddha's mind is not separate from itself, it does however appear as if it is separate. This is the point to be understood. For example, the characteristics of impermanence and production, although being of one nature, are different isolates and so they appear as being separate.

A further explanation to establish one's own system, is presented:

If it is the prime direct perception apprehending blue of an ordinary individual, then it does not appear to itself, as it is impossible for it to be a self-knowing direct perception.

In this system a *self-knowing direct perception* is not being accepted. It is established that when the colour blue appears, the impermanence and the characteristic of being produced and all of that also appear to that same perception.

As further explained:

It is also unsuitable to be posited as realising, on the basis of appearance, the other parts that are established as being of one entity with it. It is singularly an implicit realisation in dependence on the explicit realisation of blue, and one should know that such an implicit realisation is impossible for a buddha.

As mentioned previously, for a buddha there is no implicit realisation – everything is realised directly. In relation to the awareness perceiving blue: it is said that for an ordinary person the awareness perceiving blue perceives that blue directly, and the awareness itself indirectly. Of course you cannot say that a buddha perceives it indirectly, because there is no indirect or implicit realisation for a buddha.

These, of course, are points that I presented earlier in the *Madhyamaka* teachings, so it is good to refer to them.

2.1.1.3. IDENTIFYING A PERSON THAT HAS UNDERSTOOD BOTH

This is referring to both conventional or illusory truth and ultimate truth, and is sub-divided into two:

2.1.1.3.1. Divisions from the point of view of a person that wishes to understand the two truths

2.1.1.3.2. Explaining the difference of high and low awareness

2.1.1.3.1. Divisions from the point of view of a person that wishes to understand the two truths

The lines relating to this are:

*3ab. Regarding this, two aspects of transitory beings are seen,
Yogis and ordinary beings.*

Then the commentary reads:

A person who wishes to comprehend the two truths is a transitory being, i.e., a person labelled in dependence on the aggregates. This is again seen in two aspects: a yogi with the concentration of the union of calm abiding and special insight, who realises all phenomena as being empty of inherent existence, and ordinary beings asserting real existence. This is from the point of view of emphasis. Those that realise emptiness through listening and contemplating, and those whose minds have not been affected by a tenet are included in these classes.

As explained here *two aspects of transitory beings are seen. A person who wishes to comprehend the two truths is a transitory being.* In the Tibetan word *jig-ten*, *jig* is 'transitory'. While *ten* is translated here as 'being' the literal translation of '*ten*' is 'dependent'. Thus, a person is characterised as an entity who is *transitory* i.e. that changes from moment to moment, and is *dependent* upon the five aggregates.

Therefore the definition of a person is one who is labelled in dependence on the aggregates. And as further presented there are two different types of beings:

- *yogis, who, with the concentration of the union of calm abiding and special insight, realise all phenomena as being empty of inherent existence.*
- *ordinary beings* are beings who *assert real existence*, where *real* refers to functionalities, and *existence* refers to those functionalities and so forth as existing truly, or having true existence. This includes those asserting real appearance, i.e. actually establishing true existence, such the lower schools – the Vaibhashika and so forth.

As further explained in the commentary, *this is from the point of view of emphasis* on how it is defined or categorised: *those who realise emptiness through listening and contemplating, and those whose minds have not been affected by a tenet are included in these classes.*

2.1.1.3.2. Explaining the difference of high and low awareness.

We can leave this for our next session.

In preparation, it is good to familiarise yourselves with the explanations in the commentary and complement that with the explanations in the *Madhyamakavatara*. It is good to refer to the notes you have and the transcripts of the *Madhyamaka* teachings. When you refer to both texts the explanations will help to enhance your understanding of the main meaning.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

འགྲུབ་ལྷན་པའི་སྐྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

26 July 2016

Based on the motivation we generated during the refuge and bodhicitta prayers, we can engage in our regular meditation practice. [meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: "For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and for that purpose I will listen to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practice well." Generating such a motivation, even for a few moments, will definitely establish very strong positive imprints in our mind.

2.1. The presentation of the two truths

2.1.1. Actual

2.1.1.3. IDENTIFYING A PERSON THAT HAS UNDERSTOOD BOTH (CONT.)

2.1.1.3.2. Explaining the difference of high and low awareness

This is quite straightforward, and should be quite easy to understand. The verse under this heading is the second line from the earlier verse and the next two lines:

- 3cd. *The ordinary transitory being
Is outdone by the yogic transitory being,*
4ab. *And yogis are outdone as well through
distinctions
Of awareness by the one above.*

The commentary explains:

Ordinary transitory beings who assert partless particles, partless moments of consciousness and functionalities as existing truly are transitory beings, as well as yogis. The yogic person who realises the transient world as lacking inherent existence outshines the lower tenets that propound realism, and among the yogis who have attained a union of calm abiding and special insight, the higher ones outdo the lower ones. With reasoning the Madhyamikas refute the Cittamatras' assertion of truly existing mind, which is in turn refuted with reasoning the assertion of partless particles by the Sautrantikas.

Here, *ordinary transitory beings* refers to the Realists, such as the Sautrantika. They assert *partless particles* i.e. particles which cannot be divided, *partless moments of consciousness* (i.e. consciousness that cannot be divided into earlier and later moments), and *functionalities, as existing truly*.

The verse and commentary further state that the ordinary transitory being is outdone by the yogi or *yogic transitory being*. And *yogic transitory beings* such as the Madhyamikas, who realise the transient world lacking inherent existence, outshine the lower tenets that propound realism. This is quite straightforward.

Where the commentary next says that *among the yogis who have attained a union of calm abiding and special insight, the higher ones outdo the lower ones*, the literal translation of the

Tibetan word is to 'harm' the lower ones. The context of 'harm' here should not be misinterpreted: it does not refer to any malicious intent. Rather, the intended meaning here is that the assertions of the lower schools are harmed i.e. outshined by the higher schools through logic and reasoning.

The commentary thus explains that the higher ones harm, i.e. outdo, the lower ones through logic and reasoning: *with reasoning the Madhyamikas refute the Cittamatras' assertion of truly existing mind, which [referring to the Cittamatras] in turn refutes with reasoning the assertion of partless particles by the Sautrantikas*. Thus, through reasoning and logic, the assertions of proponents of the higher schools, that is the Madhyamikas, outshine those of the Cittamatras, and the Cittamatras' proponents, in turn, outshine those of the Sautrantika and Vaibhashika schools.

Next, a hypothetical doubt is raised and resolved:

If one wonders whether the yogis who realise emptiness outdo each other or not: Also among the yogis who have realised emptiness, those on the higher grounds such as on the second ground and so forth, harm, i.e., outshine, those on the lower grounds, such as on the first ground and so forth, due to a distinction of their awareness.

Thus, what is being explained is that because of their qualities, *those on the higher grounds naturally outshine those on the lower grounds*. For example, bodhisattvas on the first ground are said to have twelve hundred qualities, and bodhisattvas on the second ground have twelve thousand qualities. The qualities of each of the grounds above are multiplied by a thousand times. This was covered in detail when we were doing the Madhyamaka teachings. Thus, bodhisattvas on higher grounds, because of their significant extra qualities, naturally outshine the bodhisattvas on the lower grounds.

Those who recall the explanations in the Madhyamaka will be able to immediately understand the presentation here. With that earlier understanding what is presented will not be new and complicated, but for those who have not done that study it will be something completely new. So it is important to refresh what you had learned by reading your notes from the Madhyamaka teachings. For example, as I presented in detail during the Madhyamaka teachings, those on the first ground have hundred-fold qualities such as being able to see a hundred fields of the buddhas, being able to ripen the minds of one hundred disciples, taking a hundred births and so forth.

The second ground is multiplied by a thousand, so being able to see a thousand fields of the buddhas, being able to ripen the minds of one thousand disciples, and so forth. These qualities are progressively multiplied on each of the higher grounds. This is how, with the extra qualities obtained on the higher grounds, these bodhisattvas naturally outshine the beings on the lower grounds.

If we were to think about it in terms of the paths, then bodhisattvas on the **path of accumulation** are outshined by bodhisattvas who have reached the **path of preparation**. Then bodhisattvas on the path of preparation would be outshone by those who have obtained the **path of seeing**, and are outshined by the bodhisattvas on the **path of meditation**, and they in turn

are outshined by bodhisattvas on the **path of no-more-learning**. For each ground and path, the later bodhisattvas outshine the ones on the lower grounds and paths. This is how we need to understand how the higher ones outshine the lower ones.

What follows next in the commentary are the actual words of Lama Tsong Khapa, which would have been taken down as notes by Gyaltzab Rinpoche. So these are very profound points being presented here:

In addition, one should understand the implicit meaning, that also from the point of view of one continuum, an increased awareness through meditation of the higher grounds can harm the seeds that are to be abandoned, whereas the lower grounds cannot harm them.

So, while the earlier context of 'outshining' referred to beings of different continuums, or higher beings outshining lower beings, here the text clarifies that this principle applies even within the mental continuum of one individual being. We can understand that, as the qualities gained as one's realisations of *meditation* increase, and as one gains *higher grounds*, one is able to *harm the seeds that are to be abandoned* on that particular ground, which cannot be abandoned whilst on the *lower grounds*.

For example, the uninterrupted path of seeing can harm the seeds that are to be abandoned on the path of seeing, but cannot harm the seeds that are to be abandoned on the path of meditation, which has not been obtained yet. Thus, within the mental continuum of one individual being, the seeds that are to be abandoned on that particular path cannot be abandoned whilst abiding on a lower path.

The significant point of the statement, *whereas the lower grounds cannot harm them*, is that while the qualities obtained on the higher grounds would outshine the qualities obtained on the lower grounds, the qualities obtained on the lower grounds cannot possibly outshine those obtained on the higher grounds. In other words, by explicitly presenting here that the qualities of the higher ground outshine those of the lower, the implicit meaning is that the qualities of the beings on the lower ground cannot possibly outshine the qualities of the beings on higher grounds.

The commentary further explains:

The purpose of stating these scriptures is to gain the certainty that awareness is divided into awareness that realises the illusory and awareness that realises the ultimate. If an awareness realising the ultimate is not harmed by a prime cognition realising the illusory, then what need is there to mention it being harmed by the grasping at partless particles?

As explained clearly, what is to be realised by awareness falls into the category of either illusory truth or ultimate truth. So what is being explained here is that if it is an awareness that is a prime cognition realising a truth, then it has to be either an awareness realising illusory (or conventional) truth or an awareness realising ultimate truth. But of course awarenesses do not necessarily have to realise either of the two truths. For example the mind grasping at true existence is an awareness, but it doesn't realise either of the truths.

Then it further mentions *if an awareness realising the ultimate is not harmed by a prime cognition realising the illusory, then what need is there to mention it being harmed by the grasping at partless particles?*

A concluding statement is then presented:

The purpose [of presenting all this] is to understand that the awareness realising the ultimate harms all extreme views.

This is the main point: the awareness realising the ultimate completely extinguishes all extreme views.

The commentary then explains:

Further, it is to understand that a mistaken assertion by the lower is refuted with logic by the higher.

This has been presented previously.

Through the distinction of their awareness, yogis of the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika harm with logic the assertion of permanent functionalities accepted by the non-Buddhist schools, the acceptance of partless particles by the two Asserting Meaning¹ is harmed with logic by the Mind Only, and the acceptance of truly existent mind by the Mind Only is harmed with reasoning by the Madhyamaka.

Here, we are succinctly reminded of the incredibly skilful means by which the Buddha taught his disciples, leading them from views of the lower tenets up to the highest tenets. The main point here *is to understand that a mistaken assertion by the lower is refuted with logic by the higher*.

To give an example of overcoming wrong views and assertions with reasoning and logic, some proponents of non-Buddhist schools would accept sound as being permanent. Thus a logical syllogism to prove that this is incorrect would be: The subject 'sound' is impermanent – because it is produced". For someone who initially had the wrong view of sound being permanent, when the reasoning of that syllogism becomes apparent to their mind, they would be able to replace that mistaken view with the understanding that sound is impermanent, because of the reason that it is produced.

In this way, each misconception, such as grasping at permanence in general and grasping at true existence, can be overcome with correct reasoning to prove that it is a mistaken conception. When logical syllogisms are presented in the teachings, we need to study them and get an understanding of them. Then we must utilise this understanding to overcome the wrong conceptions that we personally hold, rather than just using them for theoretical debate. It is much more meaningful for one to apply this understanding to one's own misconceptions; we all grasp at permanence, holding things as being permanent, and likewise we all grasp at true existence.

When these reasons are applied to one's own mental continuum as a way to overcome misconceptions, they act as antidotes. For example, we can all relate to the shortcomings of anger. That which serves as an opponent or antidote to anger is patience. The more we practise patience, the weaker our anger becomes.

So if, when we engage in study, we relate it to our own mental continuum, we will really begin to taste the true

¹ Euphemism for the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika i.e. those who assert external meaning.

essence of the teachings. This will not be apparent to one right away; when we read the text, the understanding will not dawn upon us immediately. However gradually, time after time, if we are persistent, things will become clearer and clearer. Then we can apply our understanding to our practice. That would be the proper way.

The explanation ends here with:

The earlier explanation is the view of the *Great Commentary*.

2.1.2. Refuting objections of no-need and no ability regarding emptiness

That is subdivided into two:

2.1.2.1. Actual

2.1.2.2. Defending one's position

2.1.2.1. ACTUAL

The verse under this heading is preceded by the argument:

Argument: If you say, it is not valid that the yogi who realises that all phenomena lack inherent existence harms ordinary tenets, because there is no evidence for the lack of inherent existence. If there is no inherent existence, then there would be no point in training in generosity and so forth to attain the result of enlightenment.

Then the first two lines of the verse are presented as the answer:

*4cd. Through examples asserted by both,
There is no investigation towards a result.*

Answer: It follows that it is not the case that there is no evidence for the lack of inherent existence, because for both Madhyamaka and Realists, the lack of inherent existence is established in dependence on examples that were well known and accepted as being false, such as dreams and illusions.

Further:

If there is no inherent existence, it does not follow that training in generosity and the other perfections is pointless. Although generosity and so forth, which are practised in order to attain the result of enlightenment, are not truly established, one engages in them without investigation or analysis while holding them with the wisdom realising them to be false, like an illusion. If the remaining perfections are not held by the wisdom realising the lack or absence of inherent existence, then they do not gain the name 'having gone beyond' [which is another term for perfection] and they, as well as their objects, need to be guided up to the city of enlightenment.

What is being presented here in the commentary, which serves as the answer to the earlier argument, is that basically it is not true that there is no evidence for the lack of inherent existence. What the Madhyamikas are saying is that for both we the *Madhyamikas* and you the *Realists*, it follows that it is not the case that there is no evidence for the lack of inherent existence because for both *Madhyamika* and *Realists* the lack of inherent existence can be established in dependence on examples which we both accept as being false, such as dreams and illusions.

So the lack of inherent existence can be established by examples, such as dreams and illusions. Since we both [i.e. the Realists and Madhyamikas] agree that these are

examples of falsity, these examples can be used as reasons to prove the lack of inherent existence.

The second part of the earlier argument said: If there is no inherent existence, then there would be no point in training in generosity and so forth to attain the result of enlightenment.

However this is not the case. As explained here, *although generosity and so forth, which are practised in order to attain the results of enlightenment, are not truly established, one engages in them without investigation or analysis while holding them with the wisdom realising them to be false, like an illusion*. Using the example of an illusion, one can establish the lack of inherent existence of the training in generosity and so forth.

If, without going into specific investigation or analysis, *the remaining perfections are not held by the wisdom realising the lack or absence of inherent existence, then they do not gain the name 'having gone beyond' [or do not bear the name 'perfection'] and they, as well as their objects, need to be guided up to the city of enlightenment*.

The point here, as I've explained previously many times, is that not only the perfection of wisdom, but all the earlier perfections need to also be combined with wisdom – otherwise it would be as if they were blind. The earlier practices such as generosity, morality and so forth cannot, in themselves, become a means to achieve full enlightenment without the wisdom realising emptiness. Without the wisdom realising emptiness they are like a blind person who cannot go to a faraway destination by themselves. Thus, the earlier practices of generosity and so forth, need to be complemented with the wisdom realising emptiness, whereby they become the perfection of generosity and so forth.

For example, when generosity is complemented with the wisdom realising emptiness, it is practised with the understanding that all three – the individual who is being generous, the substance that is being given, and the recipient of the generosity – are empty of inherent existence. With that realisation, generosity becomes a perfection of generosity. These particular characteristics are similarly applied to the rest of the perfections. The reason the perfections practised in this way are referred to as practices that are 'gone beyond' is that they lead to the state of enlightenment which is to go beyond samsara. *They, as well as their objects, need to be guided up to the city of enlightenment*.

The point here is that when we really pay close attention to what is being explained and really contemplate it, the meaning will become clearer and clearer as we read through the text.

As part of an argument, the commentary further says:

Argument: If also you accept that fire, that which can perform the function of cooking and burning, and other functionalities and their functions, are established by direct perception, then our debate is pointless, because we both call that truly existent. If you do not accept this, then you receive the harms of being contradicted by direct perception and the like.

This argument is from a lower school, the Realists, who are proponents of true existence. They argue, *if you – meaning the Madhyamikas – accept that functionalities like*

fire, which can perform the function of cooking and burning, and other functionalities and their functions, are established by direct perception then our debate is pointless. Here, the Realists are saying that the true existence of a fire is demonstrated by the fact that it can cook, burn and so forth, which is established by direct perception. The Realists argue *we both call that truly existent. If you do not accept this, then you receive the harms of being contradicted by direct perception and the like.*

However, that which serves as part of the answer here is:

Answer: This argument is based on the view that the two truths contradict each other, i.e., if functionalities do not exist inherently, they become completely non-existent, and if they do exist, then they have to exist inherently.

In other words, it is because you fail to know this subtle distinction, that you raise your argument.

The next verse under the earlier heading is:

5. *Transitory beings see objects
And think they exist perfectly,
Not like an illusion; therefore here
The yogi and the transitory being disagree.*

The commentary explains the meaning:

Both Madhyamika and Realist worldly beings² see fire and the like with prime cognition and accept them, but the Realists think of and accept them as being wholly perfectly established objects, and do not comprehend them as being illusory-like and lacking true existence. The Madhyamikas do comprehend them as such, and therefore also in this regard do the Madhyamika yogis and the Realist worldly beings have a dispute.

While the commentary says that *both Madhyamika and Realist worldly beings see fire and the like with prime cognition* i.e. the eye consciousness *and accept them*, it points out that the difference is that the Realists don't comprehend them as being like an illusion and as lacking true existence. On the other hand, *the Madhyamikas do comprehend them as such*, meaning that the Madhyamikas comprehend fire and the functions of fire and so forth as being like an illusion, and lacking true existence.

And therefore also in this regard do the Madhyamika yogis and the Realist worldly beings have a dispute, meaning that this is where the actual debate or disagreement in perceiving the fire lies.

2.1.2.2. DEFENDING ONE'S POSITION

This is subdivided into three:

2.1.2.2.1. Refuting realists such as the Sautrantika in general

2.1.2.2.2. Refuting the Mind Only in particular

2.1.2.2.3. Refuting the argument that the path realising emptiness has no use or purpose for a Madhyamika

2.1.2.2.1. Refuting realists such as the Sautrantika in general

This is further subdivided into two:

2.1.2.2.1.1. Refuting harm through direct perception

2.1.2.2.1.2. Refuting harm through quotations

2.1.2.2.1.1. Refuting harm through direct perception

The argument presented here under the heading first is:

Argument: If you say, if the five sense objects are not established inherently, then it would contradict them being seen with direct perception.

The argument is that if the five sense objects are not established inherently, this would contradict them being seen with direct perception.

The first two lines of the next verse are:

*6ab. The mere direct perception of forms and so forth
Exists through renown and not by prime
cognition.*

The commentary then provides the answer to this argument:

Answer: This is not valid. The prime direct perception of form and the other objects is merely a prime cognition of the renowned illusory aspect. It does not establish their suchness, and does not become a prime cognition in relation to their suchness. In that case, as even ordinary individuals would see suchness, there would be no need to generate a superior path. Also, the quote from the *King of Concentration Sutra*, "the eye, ear and nose are also not prime cognition" is to be understood as refuting them being prime cognitions of suchness.

As clearly explained here, the earlier argument is *not valid* because *the prime perception of form and the other objects is merely a prime cognition of the renowned illusory aspect*, meaning that they're accepted as prime cognition of conventional appearance, but this *does not establish their suchness*.

Further, *and does not become a prime cognition in relation to their suchness* means that, if it were the case that prime cognition of form and other objects related to the object's suchness, then *as even ordinary individuals would see suchness*, or emptiness, *there would be no need to generate a superior path*. If, through their prime cognition, ordinary beings could realise the ultimate nature of things — suchness or emptiness — there would be no need for the superior path. That is what is being presented quite clearly.

The commentary then shows how one should understand the quote from the *King of Concentration Sutra* in its proper context. The quote itself reads: *the eye, ear and nose are also not a prime cognition*. If one were to take that literally, it would sound as if the sutra is saying that the eye, ear, nose and remaining five sense faculties are not prime cognitions. But, as the commentary explains, this *is to be understood as refuting them to being prime cognitions of suchness or emptiness*.

A further explanation of the next verse is presented again with the argument from the Realists:

Argument: If forms and the other objects do not exist inherently [as the Madhyamikas assert] then how can they be renowned, and although being renowned, how are they false?

This argument is presented to contradict the Madhyamikas. It posits that if objects *do not exist inherently* (as the Madhyamikas assert) but are renowned conventionally, then how can they be false? If they're

² Gyaltsab Je: Or one relates the earlier worldly beings only to the Realists.

renowned as conventionally existent, how can they be false at the same time? That's what the Madhyamikas assert: while objects are true conventionally, they're called illusory truths, because ultimately they do not exist in the manner in which they appear.

The next two lines are presented:

*6ab. They are false, just as impurity and so forth
Are renowned as purity and so forth.*

These two lines of verse serve as an answer to the argument that if an object is renowned, how can it be false?

The meaning of these two lines is presented in the commentary:

Answer: Functionalities are false in the same way as the impure body of a woman, among other things, is renowned to be pure and so forth.

What is renowned in the world, or known conventionally, is that the body is pure and thus desirable. But in reality the body is not pure; there are many impure substances within the body. So, although the body is perceived as pure by worldly people, this perception is false, because the body is not pure. Other functionalities are false in the same way. This is the point emphasised here.

2.1.2.2.1.2. Refuting harm through quotations

This is subdivided into three:

2.1.2.2.1.2.1. Showing the sutras which state that compounded phenomena are impermanent and so forth to be interpretative

2.1.2.2.1.2.2. Refuting them to be definitive

2.1.2.2.1.2.3. Refuting that one is in contradiction

2.1.2.2.1.2.1. Showing the sutras which state that compounded phenomena are impermanent and so forth to be interpretative

The argument presented here is:

Argument: If you say if forms and other objects are not established inherently, then it is contrary to the sutras stating that they are impermanent.

The next two lines that serve as an answer to this:

*7ab. For the purpose of introducing transitory beings
The protector showed functionalities.*

The commentary explains the meaning of these two lines that serve as an answer to the argument:

Answer: There is no contradiction as the Protector showed forms and the other functionalities to be impermanent in order to lead the transitory beings gradually to emptiness.

2.1.2.2.1.2.2. Refuting them to be definitive

The line from the verse:

7c. They are not momentary in suchness.

From the commentary:

These functionalities are not momentary in suchness because in suchness they are not established as one or many.

Here, the older students will recall the presentation in the *Madhyamakavatara*, which I've covered numerous times, of the reasons that prove the lack of inherent existence. It is said that inherent existence has to be either established as being inherently one or inherently separate. The

reasoning that I've presented previously is presented here.

This reasoning is presented in the *Madhyamaka* text, as well as in *The Four Hundred Verses*, and *Precious Garland*, which we have also studied. These texts have presented this reasoning, so you can refer to them.

2.1.2.2.1.2.3. Refuting that one is in contradiction

This has five divisions:

2.1.2.2.1.2.3.1. Refuting that they are not even established as illusory

2.1.2.2.1.2.3.2. Refuting that the build up of the accumulations would be invalid

2.1.2.2.1.2.3.3. Refuting that taking rebirth would be invalid

2.1.2.2.1.2.3.4. Refuting that the division into virtue and negativity would be invalid

2.1.2.2.1.2.3.5. Refuting that the distinctive individual realisation of samsara and nirvana would be invalid

We will conclude here. You'll be aware that the next session will be a discussion?

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་རྒྱུད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

16 August 2016

As usual let us spend some time in meditation.

(Pause for meditation)

Now, generate the bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teachings.

2.1.2. Refuting objections of no-need and no ability regarding emptiness

2.1.2.2. DEFENDING ONE'S POSITION

2.1.2.2.1. Refuting Realists such as the Sautrantika in general

2.1.2.2.1.2. Refuting harm through quotations

2.1.2.2.1.2.3. Refuting that one is in contradiction

2.1.2.2.1.2.3.1. Refuting that they are not even established as illusory

The last line of the earlier verse and the first line of the next verse is presented.

7d. If said to be contradictory even with the illusory;

8a. The yogis are not at fault in the illusory

The commentary first presents the argument of the opponent:

Argument: Even on the illusory level, it would be contradictory for compounded phenomena to be impermanent because in the world functionality in the morning is renowned to also exist permanently in the evening. There is no contradiction ...

The **Sautrantikas'** argument here is that, besides impermanence being doubtful in an ultimate sense, even at an illusory or conventional level, it would be contradictory for compounded phenomena to be impermanent. The reason presented here for that argument is *because in the world functionality in the morning is renowned to also exist permanently in the evening*. This is indeed how we normally think. For example, when we meet someone again we think, 'This is the same person I saw earlier'. And when we refer to things, we treat the thing that we perceive now as the same thing that we saw earlier.

Normally, if we meet someone later in the day after having seen them that morning, we would say, 'I saw you this morning'. This means that we perceive and believe that the person we see now has not changed in any way from the person we saw in the morning. We make these comments because our perception is that nothing has really changed. But on the subtler level of impermanence, things are changing moment by moment. From the point of view of subtle impermanence, we are seeing someone newly and fresh at every moment, thus you are not seeing the same person you saw in the morning. The person you saw in the morning has already ceased and what you are seeing now is a new continuum of the person.

This reminds me, on an occasion of a visit I made to Geshe Loden's centre, one official guest – who was not a Buddhist – came up to me and said, 'I saw you last year and you were very jovial and happy. And this year I see you again, and you haven't changed a bit. You are the same jovial, happy person'. And he thanked me, saying 'I really appreciate that you are here'. Others have even made comments to me such as, 'You look the same, even after twenty years!' [*laughter*] So that shows the normal perception of how things don't seem to change.

The commentary then presents what serves as the answer:

Answer: Although forms and the other sense objects are renowned in the world as permanent, the fault that their impermanence is not established by prime cognition does not exist, because they are established as impermanent and so forth, i.e. suffering, empty and selfless by the illusory nominal prime cognition of yogis.

The answer presented here is suggesting that what the opponent is saying is true on one level: from a worldly point of view, that is indeed how we normally perceive things. *Although forms and the other sense objects are renowned in the world as permanent* indicates the perception of an ordinary being – that the objects they perceive are permanent. However, the **Madhyamikas** respond that *the fault that their impermanence is not established by prime cognition does not exist*, or is not true. This means that the way ordinary beings perceive things as being permanent does not contradict or nullify the prime cognition that perceives impermanence. That is the point. This is because forms and so forth are established as *impermanent, suffering, empty and selfless by the illusory nominal prime cognition of yogis*. These yogis have the prime cognition that perceives them as being impermanent and so forth.

The next argument is then presented:

Argument: This is in contradiction to the statement that seeing impermanence and the other characteristics is to see it as such.

The remaining lines of verse 8 that serve as an answer show there is no contradiction.

8bcd. It is seen as such in comparison to the world.

Otherwise the thought of a woman's impurity

Would be harmed by the world.

Answer: It is the mere assertion that in comparison to the grasping by worldly beings at purity, happiness, permanence and a self, that this is seen as such.

Here *this is seen as such* refers to seeing the world as being pure, happy and permanent and with a self, when in reality it is not like that. The **Madhyamikas** assert that merely seeing impure things to be pure, suffering as happiness, and impermanent things as permanent, is just in accordance with how they are perceived by worldly beings.

The commentary continues:

Otherwise, if being renowned by the world would be the measure for prime cognition, then it would follow that the yogi meditating on impurity, who has gained conviction regarding the impurity of the woman's

body, would be harmed by the worldly grasping at the purity of the woman's body.

Thus, if the measure of prime cognition were to be how it is perceived by worldly beings, then it would follow that when the *yogi* who is *meditating on impurity* or the imperfections of the body to the point where they have *gained the conviction regarding the impurity of a woman's body* (for a female *yogi* it would be the other way round), that prime cognition would be harmed by *the worldly grasping at the purity of the woman's body* and so forth. But the *yogi's* perception is not nullified or contradicted by the worldly perception.

The main point is that, just because the worldly perception of things is renowned and accepted as normal, that doesn't harm yogic prime cognition. The example given here is that of a *yogi* meditating on the impurities of the body - such as a male or female body - indeed all contaminated bodies including the impurity of one's own body. An ordinary being perceives the body - males in regard to a woman's body, women in regard to a male's body - as being completely pure and clean, with no imperfections or faults. However, a *yogi* who has meditated and developed a conviction about the impurities of the body will perceive it otherwise: he or she will see the impure body in its natural state, with its natural faults and imperfections. Thus, just because something is renowned as being pure in the worldly view doesn't mean that it is actually pure, likewise just because in the worldly view things are seen as permanent, it doesn't mean that they are actually permanent and so forth.

2.1.2.2.1.2.3.2. Refuting that the build-up of the accumulations would be invalid

The argument presented here is an objection to the Madhyamika assertion that things lack inherent existence. According to the **Realists**, if things lack inherent existence then one cannot possibly establish the functionality of karmic cause and effect and establish anything within the existence of samsara and liberation.

Argument: If there is no inherent existence, it contradicts the explanation that one accumulates merit through making offerings and such to the conquerors.

This is an objection expressed by the Sautrantikas. We need to pay close attention to the following presentations - which are presented in the format of a debate - questions and answers between the Madhyamikas and the lower schools. The ninth chapter of this text by Shantideva is renowned as the chapter that presents emptiness. The correct view of emptiness is established by eliminating all the hypothetical objections and doubts of the lower schools. Thus one comes to gain the correct understanding of the view of emptiness. At the same time, on a practical level, Chapter 9 also presents many logical reasons to establish the validity of the cause and effect of karma.

We need to pay particular attention to the lower schools' point of view where they say that if things lack inherent existence one can't establish the cause and effect sequence of karma. If things do not exist inherently, they argue,

how can you posit the functionality of the cause and effect sequence of karma?

What is being established in this chapter - very meticulously, logically and profoundly - is the functionality of the cause and effect sequence of things and events, not in spite of, but precisely because of their lack of inherent existence. This is the unique position of the **Prasangika Madhyamaka school**: things perform their function, and the cause and effect of karma is established, because they lack true existence. So while both Sautrantika and Prasangika agree upon the functionality of things, the unique position of the Prasangika is that they lack inherent existence.

The lower schools' views are in accord with our normal worldly perception. The presentations here can gradually help us understand how things exist while lacking inherent existence. If we spend ample time thinking about these points carefully and get a sense of the uniqueness and validity of the Prasangika presentation, we will gain a much deeper and more profound understanding of emptiness.

In the following passages the opponents argue that, according to the Prasangika view, one cannot establish samsara or nirvana; this is subsequently refuted. The refutation establishes that samsara and nirvana exist while lacking inherent existence. The essence of this refutation is presented in the *Heart Sutra* with the passage 'form is empty, emptiness is form'. This is a profound point and I have presented the meaning over a hundred times. I have explained it many times because it is the essential point regarding the correct view. So we need to get a really good, sound understanding of this point.

In fact, these are the essential points to understand if we wish to meditate on emptiness. It is extremely important to gain the understanding of how the deed, action and performer all equally lack inherent existence; understanding this is essential.

When we engage in meditation practice with this understanding our practice will indeed become a means to enhance our wisdom. The mind will become sharper, and we will gain more - and more profound - insights. Whereas if we are not careful and just focus on an object and try to develop a single-pointed focus on it - in other words, if we don't have a clear basis for gaining a profound understanding of the object we are focusing on - it can actually become a cause for the mind to become duller, rather than becoming sharper. If that were to occur, it would be a real pity if one has spent so much time and energy in the meditation, but it has resulted in the mind becoming duller. We need to be really careful about these points.

In order to succeed in our practice and achieve our goals we must have the aid of both method and wisdom. The need for both method and wisdom is presented in the Middle Way text, the *Madhyamakāvataṛa*, in the verse that gives the analogy of a crane that can fly and migrate far beyond the ocean with the aid of both wings. If one of the wings is injured or maimed, it could not possibly make that long-distance journey. In this analogy, the ocean is the ocean of samsara. In order to cross over the ocean of samsara to reach the pristine state of enlightenment, we

need the two wings of method and wisdom. Both are needed. Neither method nor wisdom alone is sufficient.

After the argument is presented, then comes the first two lines from the verse:

*9ab. Merits from the illusory like conqueror
Equal the ones from a truly existent.*

Answer: There is no contradiction. That one accumulates merit through making offerings to the conquerors that are illusory-like and lack true existence is just like your assertion that one accumulates merit through making offerings to a truly existent conqueror. Regardless of whether they are suitable to exist truly or not, one accumulates merit in accordance with the object.

The commentary shows that the preceding argument doesn't hold ground. According to the **Madhyamika's** position, *one accumulates merit through making offerings to the conquerors that are illusory-like and lack true existence*; while they appear to be truly existent to ordinary perception, they in fact lack any true or inherent existence. Thus, if one makes offerings to the conquerors who are illusory-like, one will still receive merit. It is similar to the **Sautrantika's** assertion that one accumulates merit through making offerings to a truly existent conqueror.

The last line of the commentary presents a really succinct point, which is *regardless of whether they are suitable to exist truly or not...* In other words, you, the **Sautrantika**, say that they exist truly and we, the **Madhyamika**, say that they don't exist truly, but regardless of who is right or wrong here, the fact remains that *one accumulates merit in accordance with the object*, that is, a holy object. So by making offerings, one can definitely accumulate merit. This is an essential point to keep in mind for our own practice.

2.1.2.2.1.2.3.3. Refuting that taking rebirth would be invalid

This is again according to the lower schools' position. Their argument is that if, for example, sentient beings are illusory, how could they take rebirth? The next two lines under this heading are:

*9cd. If sentient beings are like an illusion,
Then how can they be reborn after death?*

The commentary first presents the Realists' position, which is:

Argument: If sentient beings are like an illusion and lack true existence then, just like the illusory sentient being does not regenerate after disintegration, how are they reborn upon death?

That commentary presents the answer in relation to the meaning of the next verse:

Answer: We do not accept that sentient beings and illusions are the same in each and every aspect, but we accept that they are the same in existing truly or not. If the fault only relates to that, since you also accept dreams and illusions to be false, then your question is like asking if the basis for deception appears as a horse, then why doesn't it appear as a donkey.

The Prasangika **Madhyamika** position is that things and events, particularly sentient beings, are illusory-like, in

that while they lack true existence, they appear as being truly existent or inherently existent. Insofar as they do not exist in the way they appear, they are like illusions of conjured horses and elephants. When an illusionist conjures horses and elephants, they appear yet they do not actually exist. This is the analogy used here.

The **Realist** opponent says, *If sentient beings are like illusions like you say and lack true existence, then just like an illusory sentient being does not regenerate after disintegration, how are sentient beings reborn upon death?* This argument is very clever and intelligent because it is effectively saying that, after the magician's spell wears off the conjured horses and elephants do not recur again. Once the illusion has disappeared, it won't recur. This is a fact. In using that reasoning, the Realists are saying: therefore, if sentient beings were like illusions, they couldn't be reborn again after death just like an illusory sentient being doesn't regenerate after the illusion ceases. The answer to this is that they are not exactly the same.

In essence what the **Sautrantikas** are saying is that just as an illusion would not reappear or re-establish again after it disappears, likewise sentient beings being would not be reborn again after death. Their argument is presented here as a rhetorical question: 'How could they be reborn after death if they were an illusion?'

The **Madhyamikas** respond: *we do not accept that sentient beings and illusions are the same in each and every aspect, but we accept that they are the same in existing truly or not.* Further, they say that 'If the fault only relates to that, since you also accept dreams and illusions to be false, then your question is like asking if the basis for deception appears as a horse, then why doesn't it appear as a donkey?' In this case the basis for deception is a horse, not a donkey. The magician has not cast a spell to see a donkey – the spell produces only the illusion of a horse.

So while the basis for the illusion (in this case a horse) is seen, because the spell to see a donkey has not been cast, the illusion of a donkey is not seen. So the Prasangika are saying, your question regarding how sentient beings can be reborn if they are like an illusion, is similar to asking, 'How come an illusory donkey is not seen when one sees an illusory horse, since they are both similar in being an illusion? According to your question, it would imply that when one sees the illusory horse one would have to also see an illusory donkey!'

This will become clearer as we go further into the text.

So the next verse, which relates to this is:

*10abc. For as long as the conditions come together.
For that long even the illusion exists
Just because of a long continuity?
Sentient beings are truly existent?*

The commentary further explains:

Thus, for falsities, as long as the conditions are present, for that period of time the illusion exists.

As presented here, all illusory truths are presented as falsities because the definition of a truth is that **if there is no discrepancy between what appears and what actually exists, then it is a truth. Whereas if there is discrepancy between what appears to you and its actual existence, it is false.** Therefore, all illusory phenomena

are said to be falsities because there is a discrepancy in how they appear and how they actually exist – or they appear as truly existent, but in fact lack true existence; or they appear as inherently existent but in fact lack inherent existence. Therefore, for all falsities such as illusions, for as long as the conditions are present, then for that period of time the illusion exists.

To conclude the earlier paragraph of the commentary:

Similarly, for as long as the conditions of ignorance and so forth are complete, sentient beings will take rebirth.

This is the answer being presented by the Madhyamika.

The next counter argument from the **Realists** is:

Argument: It is not the same, as sentient beings exist from beginningless time.

What is being presented here is that while an illusion doesn't last for long, sentient beings in fact have existed from beginningless time. So because of their duration, say the Realists, you cannot say that sentient beings are like illusions. In other words, the argument is that because sentient beings have existed from beginningless time and thus for a long duration, it cannot be established that they are unreal like an illusion. Illusions are not true, argue the Realists, because they are very short-lived. That is what is being presented here.

The **Madhyamika** answer to that is:

Answer: It follows it is invalid to assert the distinction that sentient beings exist truly merely because they exist for a long time, and that illusions are false because they exist for a short while; if that was the case, then one would need to also accept a difference in the true and untrue existence of dreams and illusions as they have a difference in length.

Thus, if the criteria for something to be true or false were dependent on duration, then even illusions and dreams have different durations. Some illusions may last for a short while, but some can last for much longer. So, according to your, i.e. the Realists', assertion, the delusions that last for longer would be true, and the ones that lasted for a short time would be false. As the commentary further explains:

For in dreams, there are remembrances of an eon or just one day and so forth.

In dreams you might have a remembrance of a whole eon or just one day. Thus you Realists would have to assert that the dream of a long period of time, say, over one eon, would be true, and the dream about just one day would be untrue. But that is absurd and could not be the case.

2.1.2.2.1.2.3.4. Refuting that the division into virtue and negativity would be invalid

Here the argument from the **Realists** against the Madhyamikas is:

Argument: If they are like an illusion in that they lack inherent existence, then that would contradict that the killing and the like of sentient beings are negativities.

What they are saying is that if sentient beings are like an illusion, then you would not create negative karma by engaging in the act of killing them.

The verse which relates to this reads:

*11. The killing and the like of an illusory being
Is not a negativity because there is no mind.
Relative to those endowed with an illusory
mind
Merits and negativities arise.*

Answer: Regarding the killing and the like of an illusory person, if one pierces them with a weapon with the intent to kill on the basis of perceiving it as a human and the like, then one creates the negativity of action, but there is no actual karma of killing as it does not possess mind.

An illusory person would not be an actual person, but a magical illusion that appears like a person. If one pierced this illusory person with a weapon with the intent to kill on the basis of perceiving it as human, then one creates the negativity of action. This is a good point to keep in mind; while there is negative karma created in relation to engaging in the action of piercing this illusory human with the intent to kill, there is no actual killing. So one does not incur the karma of killing, as that object does not possess a mind. Because it is not an actual person, there is no act of killing. This is because the negative karma of killing is only complete when that person's life force has been severed. But the life force cannot be severed from an illusory person because as there is no consciousness there is no life force present.

The concluding statement presents a significant point:

By benefiting sentient beings endowed with an illusory mind, such as humans and so forth, one creates merit, and by harming them, one creates negativity.

Then the next argument is presented:

Argument: For those being the same in lacking inherent existence, how can there be a difference in generating a mind or not?

So the **Realists** then argue that, if you Madhyamikas say an illusory person and an actual person are the same in lacking inherent existence, how come one has a mind and one doesn't have a mind? How does that difference come about?

The verse relating to that is:

*12. Since mantras and the like do not possess the
power
An illusory mind does not arise.
The illusion that arises from manifold
conditions
Is also manifold.*

*13ab. That one condition can do it all
Is totally non-existent anywhere.*

The commentary related to this reads:

Answer: Because the illusory substances and mantras cannot generate an illusion with mind, the illusory horse and elephant do not have mind. The illusion that arises from various conditions also appears in various ways. The 'also' does not eliminate sentient beings.

That one needs various conditions for various results is because it is impossible for one condition to generate all results. That one condition cannot generate all results is totally non-existent anywhere.

What is being presented here in the commentary is that illusory substances – here, the word ‘substance’ would include medicines and mantras – cannot generate an illusion with regard to the mind. So the illusory horse and elephant do not have mind. In order for the magician to conjure horses and elephants, certain conditions have to be intact. It is said that the magician uses certain substances which, if used upon objects, will cause illusions to appear. Or it could be mantras. It is said that some magicians use mantras, which in the West we would call spells. When a spell is put on the people watching the spectacle, their eyes will see illusions. So the illusion is due to these conditions, such as the substances of medicines and spells, which are used by the magician to conjure the horses and elephants. These substances, however, do not have the power to produce a mind in the conjured illusions.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© **Tara Institute**

Thus, while a magician has the power to perform a magical illusion, he or she does not have the power to make mind or consciousness. If, through substances, mind and consciousness were to be able to be made, then by now scientists would have made many new minds. If, through spells or the power of mantras, it were possible to make minds, then magicians and yogis would have produced many beings. But that is not possible. This is a very significant point.

So while illusory substances such as the medicines and the mantras are the conditions for generating an illusion, they are not the conditions to produce a mind. And the reason why a mind cannot be produced is that the specific cause for a mind or consciousness is lacking. When the specific cause is lacking, that particular result cannot be produced. Mind has its own substantial causes for it to exist, which is a previous moment of mind. When the substantial cause for a mind is lacking, a mind cannot be produced. Therefore, mind does not exist in an illusion.

Furthermore, the commentary says:

The illusion that arises from various conditions also appears in various ways.

So there are various types of illusions – such as horses and elephants – because of the various types of causes, such as the different substances of medicines and mantras. However, while the different types of illusions are produced by different causes, one cause cannot possibly produce many different results.

Then the commentary continues:

The ‘also’ does not eliminate sentient beings. That one needs various conditions for various results is because it is impossible for one result to generate all results. That one condition can generate all results is totally non-existent anywhere.

The significant point here is that just because there is a cause for an illusion to arise and various causes for various types of illusions to arise, the notion that one cause can produce many results – such as an illusion, as well as a mind – is completely absurd; it is not possible.

What we take as personal instruction here is that, if we wish to experience certain types of result, we have to create the corresponding causes. It is not possible to obtain various results from just one cause.

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

23 August 2016

As usual, let us engage in our regular meditation practice.

[meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: 'For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will engage in, and listen to the teachings and put them into practice well'. This is very meaningful.

I understand that the seminar on Sunday went very well, so I am very glad about that. It seems that there were quite a few participants, including some who might have been quite new to the topic. So it was good on two levels: for those who hear about it for the first time, and for others to refresh and deepen their understanding.

I consider that sharing our knowledge and benefitting others in this practical way is real Dharma. Indeed, the optimum purpose of our studies is to put them into practice to benefit others. It's not that we are lacking the ability to benefit others. We do have the ability, so to actually utilise that ability to benefit others would be very meaningful.

As Geshe Chengawa presented, the Dharma comes down to two main points: benefitting others and not harming others. Last year these points were presented as part of practising patience as a way to benefit others. We need to incorporate the practice of patience into our practice of not harming others, and particularly when benefitting others. There might be occasions where others may not appreciate our attempts to benefit them, or they might retaliate with some sort of harm. When this happens patience is indispensable so that we don't become daunted and give up the intention to benefit others. So we definitely need to practise patience. The entire teachings of the Buddha, either when combined into the Three Baskets - vinaya, sutra and abhidharma - or sutra and tantra, come down to these two essential points: benefitting others and not harming others.

It is essential that we make every effort, to the best of our ability, to benefit others and not harm others, and to incorporate this into our daily lives. Familiarising ourselves with these sentiments, and reminding ourselves of them again and again is essential. We become familiar with this practice by actually putting it into practice in whatever way we can. It is through the familiarity with benefitting others in accordance with our capacity and ability that we are actually able to put it into practice. Right now many of us have the ability and potential to benefit others, but our lack of familiarity with that attitude prevents us from actually benefitting others. Likewise, we have the ability to refrain from harming others, but because we are not familiar with that, we find ourselves engaging in harming others. We will be able to utilise our abilities to benefit others, to the best of our

capacity, and refrain from harming others when we familiarise ourselves again and again with this practice. We really need to pay attention to this point.

As I mentioned earlier, in essence benefitting others and not harming others is Dharma practice. I really feel that ultimately all Dharma can be combined into these two aspects, and thus we need to ensure that every practice we do is integrated with these two essential points. In the Vinaya sutra, the Buddha mentioned that the person who harms others is not a person who practises virtue. So we need to keep that in mind. If one considers oneself to be someone who practises virtue, then one needs to refrain from harming others at all costs. We need to remind ourselves of these passages from the sutras again and again.

In Shantideva's very meticulously presented text that we have been studying, you will recall that there are passages where Shantideva quotes the Buddha as saying: "Benefiting sentient beings is in turn benefitting me; harming sentient beings is in turn harming me". This is essential advice from the Buddha. If we respect the Buddha then the best way to honour him, as the Buddha himself mentioned, is to benefit other sentient beings. The best way to refrain from showing disrespect to the Buddha is by refraining from harming and not respecting other sentient beings. This is really profound and practical advice for us to put into practice, which is the best way to remember the kindness of the Buddha.

These sentiments, which were presented by the Buddha himself, illustrate the great compassion that the Buddha has for all beings. He does not discriminate between sentient beings - indeed his only intention is to benefit them all. The Buddha reached this state of infinite compassion for all beings as a result of having familiarised himself with these attitudes prior to actually reaching the state of buddhahood. These are the attitudes that he familiarised himself with as a trainee on the path, and achieving buddhahood is a result of having perfected these positive attitudes of wishing to benefit all beings and not harm any living being. Reaching the state of having infinite compassion for all beings is a result of the practices that the Buddha engaged in as a trainee on the path.

What we need to learn from this is that it is exactly the same for ourselves. If we now, to the best of our ability, really develop these attitudes (wishing to benefit other sentient beings and not harm any sentient being even in the slightest way) and put them into practice, then, as we perfect these attitudes, and as they become more and more a part of our way of thinking, it will be possible to reach the state where that is our sole intention. Then we will be able to confidently say: "if you harm others, then that is equivalent to harming me" and "if you benefit others, then that is equivalent to benefiting me". These are actual states of mind that can be developed.

As Lama Tsong Khapa mentions in all of his texts on the stages of the path - the great treatise, and the middling and small treatises on the stages of the path to enlightenment - the practice for a beginner is to avoid one negativity at a time and engage in one virtuous deed at a time. They will accumulate to the point of completely abandoning all negativities and achieving all supreme

qualities. This indicates that setting a very high goal of wishing to achieve the state of enlightenment and focusing only on the end result, while neglecting to actually engage in these small practices now, is completely missing the point. If we wish to achieve that state of enlightenment in the future, then the only way for a beginner trainee is to engage in this practice of accumulating virtues one at a time, and abandoning negativities one at a time.

2.1.2.2.1.2.3.5. Refuting that the distinctive individual understanding of samsara and nirvana would be invalid

Here the commentary reads:

The Madhyamika accept that there is no ultimate birth or death, that the lack of inherent existence is natural liberation, and that the birth, death and so forth established by karma and afflictions are cyclic existence.

This presents the **Madhyamika** view that the lack of inherent existence of all aspects of cyclic existence such as birth, sickness, aging and death is *natural liberation*. Thus, the term natural liberation refers to the *lack of inherent existence of birth, sickness, ageing and death*, and so forth. These conditions are *established by karma and afflictions* and this is what is referred to as *cyclic existence* or samsara.

In the text each of the other schools of Buddhist thought present their arguments to refute this assertion of the Madhyamika. Earlier the arguments of the Vaibhashika (Realists) were presented and refuted. Here, the objections of the Sautrantika (the followers of sutra) are being presented and refuted. Next the views of the Cittamatra (Mind Only) schools will be presented and refuted. As I have already covered the teachings on the tenets, it would be good for you to refer to those teachings as a way to understand the particular assertions of these proponents – the Realists, the followers of sutra, the Mind Only school and then the Madhyamika or Middle Way school, which has two sub-schools - the Autonomist or Svatantrika and the Consequentialist or Prasangika schools.

In relation to the Madhyamika assertion of natural nirvana and cyclic existence, the commentary then says: Regarding this a **Sautrantika** opponent argues ...

The argument is presented in the following lines of the root text:

13cd. *If nirvana is the ultimate,
And samsara the illusory,*

14. *Then also the Buddha would circle,
What would be the point of the bodhisattva's
practice?*

Then the commentary explains the meaning of this verse, which is the argument of the Sautrantikas:

If the ultimate or natural liberation is actually liberation, then although the emptiness of inherent existence of cyclic existence is ultimate liberation, the continuity of circling, that is in an illusory way, through birth and death, is cyclic existence. In that case, there would be a common basis for cyclic existence and liberation, which would mean that even buddhas circle in cyclic existence. If that were the case, then it would be pointless for bodhisattvas to practise

the bodhisattva trainings in order to attain enlightenment.

What the **Madhyamika** propose is that the lack of true existence of samsara - which includes birth, sickness, ageing and death - is the natural abiding nirvana, or liberation. This means that from time immemorial samsara has always existed in the nature of the naturally abiding liberation. That is because samsara has always lacked true and inherent existence.

The **Sautrantika** argument is: *if the ultimate or natural liberation is actually liberation* – this is in relation to the Madhyamika's assertion that the lack of true or inherent existence of samsara is the naturally abiding liberation – *then although the emptiness of inherent existence of cyclic existence is ultimate liberation, the continuity of circling (in an illusory way) through birth and death, is cyclic existence*. Thus, *there would be a common basis for cyclic existence and liberation, which would mean that even buddhas circle in cyclic existence*. If that were the case then it would be pointless for bodhisattvas to practise the bodhisattva trainings in order to attain enlightenment. This is the argument presented by the Sautrantika.

The **Madhyamikas** explain that there is a difference between naturally abiding nirvana and the nirvana that is obtained as a way of abandoning the adventitious defilements.

The key point to be understood here is whether or not natural liberation is actual liberation. And what is being explained is that naturally abiding nirvana or liberation is not the actual liberation that is obtained through having practised the path and abandoned the defilements. Thus, the argument presented by the Sautrantika is not feasible.

As an answer to the Sautrantika the text says:

Answer: There is no such fault because ...

These lines from the root text are presented:

14cd. *If the continuity of the condition is not cut off,
Then the illusion will also not be reversed.*

15ab. *If the continuity of the condition ceases
Then it will not arise even conventionally.*

The commentary then explains the meaning of these lines:

...there is a difference between natural liberation and the liberation purified of the adventitious. The natural liberation does not depend on meditating on the path because it is the suchness of all, irrespective of whether one meditates on the path or not.

The liberation free from the adventitious stains needs to be attained by ceasing to take rebirth in cyclic existence through the continuity of birth and death. Although it lacks inherent existence, if one does not cease the continuity of the conditions, one cannot even reverse an illusion, not to mention cyclic existence. If one does cut the continuity of the conditions of ignorance and so forth, then cyclic existence will not even arise in an illusory way.

The answer begins with *there is a difference between* what is referred to as *natural liberation and the liberation that is purified of the adventitious* defilements.

That is followed by the explanation that *natural liberation does not depend on meditating on the path because it is the suchness or nature of all, irrespective of whether one meditates*

on the path or not. This implies that the natural liberation is something that has always abided. If there was a beginning to cyclic existence, then from the very beginning naturally abiding nirvana would be present at all times, because that is its very nature.

Then the text explains further that *the liberation that is free from the adventitious stains needs to be attained by cutting off the taking of rebirth in cyclic existence through the continuity of birth, ageing, sickness and death.*

The commentary further explains that *although it, meaning the continuity of birth and death and so forth, lacks inherent existence, if one does not cut, or stop, the continuity of the conditions, one cannot reverse even an illusion.*

What is being meticulously presented here is that although cyclic existence lacks inherent existence that does not nullify the fact that one will experience the sufferings of birth, sickness, ageing and death. Unless and until the continuity of those conditions of birth, sickness, ageing and death are completely stopped, one will have to continuously experience these sufferings. When it says that *one cannot reverse an illusion, not to mention cyclic existence* this means that for as long as the conditions for an illusion are there, the illusion will appear. The only way for an illusion to disappear is when the conditions for the illusion cease to exist. Cyclic existence is exactly the same: birth, sickness, ageing and death will remain for as long as the conditions for them to be regenerated remain. Lacking inherent existence doesn't mean that one will not experience the consequences of the conditions that were created earlier.

Adventitious stains refers to all the delusions; delusions are referred to as being adventitious because they are not one entity with the mind itself. This means that when the proper conditions are in place, they will cease to exist. The analogy that is given to portray adventitious delusions is clouds in an otherwise clear sky. With the conditions of strong wind, even dark and heavy clouds will be blown away, and the natural clear sky will become apparent again. Likewise, when the conditions for the delusions are abandoned, then the pure nature of the mind will become apparent. This is to be understood.

Next the text says: *if one does cut the continuity of the conditions of ignorance and so forth, then cyclic existence will not even arise in an illusory way.* This implies that, leaving aside 'ultimately', samsara will not be present even 'as illusory' or 'conventionally' when the conditions for samsara are eliminated.

Then the concluding statement reconfirms the refutation of the Sautrantika objections.

The earlier objection needs to be answered by making a distinction between ultimate liberation and liberation ...

Here *liberation* is the state of being free from the delusions through engaging in the path. That is actual liberation.

... rather than answering it in any other way because the opponent accepts that the buddhas do not circle and that sentient beings do.

2.1.2.2.2. Refuting the Mind Only in particular¹

This is presented in two sections:

1. Expressing the view
2. Refuting it

1. EXPRESSING THE VIEW

This refers to the view of the **Mind Only**

*15cd. If even the mistaken is non-existent
What takes the illusion as its object?*

Thus they are objecting:

Mind Only: If all phenomena lack inherent existence and even the mistaken consciousness apprehending the illusion does not exist, then what is the mind of which the illusion becomes the object of? As it does not exist, even the illusion becomes non-existent.

The **Madhyamika** answer is:

Answer: This again is the debate that if it exists, it has to exist inherently.

The argument of the **Mind Only** school is that *if all phenomena lack inherent existence and even the mistaken consciousness apprehending the illusion does not exist, then what is the mind of which the illusion becomes the object?* Because the Madhyamika assert the lack of inherent existence and true existence, the Mind Only school says that *if all phenomena lack inherent existence* as you propose, *then even the mistaken consciousness apprehending the illusion does not exist.*

What one needs to understand from this objection is that the Mind Only school assert that the mind exists inherently and that there is no external existence. Because the Madhyamika assertion that all phenomena lack inherent existence harms the their own assertion that the mind exists inherently, the Mind Only argue that if all phenomena lack inherent existence, as the Madhyamika claim, *then the mistaken consciousness apprehending the illusion also does not exist.* If that is the case, they say *then what is the mind of which the illusion becomes the object of?*

For the Mind Only school, if the mind apprehending the illusion does not exist inherently, then that is the same as saying that it doesn't exist. Thus they say, according to the Madhyamika, if the apprehending mind *does not exist*, then *even the illusion* would have to be *non-existent*.

The commentary presents a brief answer from the Madhyamikas pointing out that the reason for the Mind Only School objection *again comes down to the argument that if it exists*, i.e. if things exist, *it has to exist inherently.* The Mind Only argue that if all phenomena doesn't exist inherently, then that would mean that the mind (which they in fact believe exists inherently) also doesn't exist. If the mind that apprehends the illusion does not exist inherently, then by default one would have to say that what has been apprehended (the illusion itself) also does not exist. That is the absurdity that the Mind Only school presents.

2. REFUTING IT

This refers to refuting the previous argument of the Mind Only school that if the mind apprehending the illusion

¹ This explanation contains many subdivisions so to simplify things the numbering restarts here. It will return to the overall numbering structure at verse 30, which is the beginning of the next major heading.

does not exist inherently, then that would imply that the illusion itself does not exist. The refutation is presented in these two subdivisions:

2.1. Similar counter argument

2.2. Refuting the answer

2.1. Similar argument

The counter argument by the **Madhyamikas** uses a similar argument to the one presented earlier by the Mind Only:

*16ab. When for you the illusion is non-existent,
At that time, what becomes the object?*

The commentary explains:

If the object held by you, the Mind Only, existed in the way it appears when it is held, i.e., as an outer object, then it would exist externally. In that case, that is similar to an illusion and the mind taking it as its object, become non-existent. If it does not exist in the way it appears, it does not exist inherently, and in that case, according to you, it would have to be non-existent. If there is no apprehended illusory object appearing as an external object, at that time what is taken as an object at that time? Even the apprehenders of the five objects of forms, sounds and so forth become non-existent.

The counter argument begins with the Mind Only assertion that there is no outer or external object: The Madhyamika argue - *If the object held by you, the Mind Only, existed in the way it appears when it is held as an outer object, then it would exist externally. In that case, it is similar to an illusion and a mind taking it as its object being non-existent.*

The **Mind Only** argument is that if the mind didn't exist inherently then the illusion itself would not exist.

So, the **Madhyamikas** present a similar counter argument: In saying that things do not exist externally, you would also be implying that they don't exist.

The commentary further explains: *If it does not exist in the way it appears, it does not exist inherently, and in that case, according to you, it would have to be non-existent.* This is the point. *If there is no apprehended illusory object appearing as an external object, at that time what is taken as an object at that time? Even the apprehenders of the five objects of forms, sounds and so forth become non-existent.*

So the counter argument turns on the **Mind Only** argument asserting that if things were to lack inherent existence, and if the mind apprehending an illusion lacks inherent existence, then the illusion itself would be non-existent.

Similarly, the **Madhyamika** say, if you say there's no external existence, then the mind apprehending these external objects such as sounds, forms and so forth, would also be non-existent; you say that they do not exist externally, yet they are perceived as being external objects.

2.2. Refuting the answer

This is subdivided into two:

2.2.1. Expressing the view

2.2.2. Refuting it

2.2.1. Expressing the view

16cd. In case: "It exists in another way.

The aspect is mind itself."

The **Mind Only** say:

Mind Only: Although it does not exist in the very way it appears, as an external object, it exists in a different way, because the aspects of form and the like are the substance of mind itself.

The Mind Only are saying that *it does not exist in the way that it appears*. Just as the Madhyamika would say that things appear as existing inherently but do not exist in that way, the Mind Only are saying that *it does not exist in the very way that it appears, as external objects*. While things like forms, sounds and so forth appear as being external objects, they do not exist in that way. They *exist in a different way, because the aspects of form and the like are the substance of the mind itself*. So the Mind Only assertion is that form does not exist externally, rather it is a partial substance of the mind itself. Thus the Mind Only School, unlike the Madhyamika, would not say that the consciousness apprehending form arises in relation to form, but rather the consciousness apprehending form arises from seeing another partial imprint of the mind itself appearing as form. Therefore what appears as being form or sounds and so forth (the external five sense objects) are actually a similar substance to the mind, arising from the same imprint, and one partial aspect of that substance appears as these five sense objects, so that is how it appears.

In essence the Mind Only school asserts that forms and so forth do not exist externally, but rather they are a substance of the mind itself.

2.2.2. Refuting it

The refutation of the Mind Only position is subdivided into two sections.

2.2.2.1. The non-dual mind is not seen by anything

2.2.2.2. Refuting a self-knower through the answer to the question

2.2.2.1. THE NON-DUAL MIND IS NOT SEEN BY ANYTHING

The non-dual mind refers to the **Mind Only** assertion that there's no duality in what is being apprehended and the apprehender, basically the subject and object. They say that there is a non-duality of subject and object because both are aspects of the mind itself.

The **Madhyamika** response is that if a non-dual mind were to exist it would have to be seen by a consciousness, but it is not seen by any consciousness.

*17ab. When the mere mind is an illusion,
At that time what is seen by what?*

The commentary reads:

If at a time when the mere mind appears like an illusion, and it does not exist as an external object, what prime cognition sees the mind that lacks external existence? There is nothing that sees it.

As clearly presented here, *if at a time when the mere mind appears like an illusion, and it does not exist as an external object then what prime cognition sees the mind that lacks external existence?* The answer to this rhetorical question, by default, also refutes the self-knower.

2.2.2.2. REFUTING THE SELF-KNOWER THROUGH THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION

The argument of the **Mind Only**:

The Mind Only argue: Consciousness can be of two types: In the aspect of being directed outwards and in the aspect of only being directed inwards. The latter is the self-knowing direct perception. All consciousnesses are the object of that self-knower.

Following on from the earlier question, *what prime cognition sees the mind that lacks external existence?*, the Mind Only School present their position that *consciousness can be of two types: a consciousness in the aspect of being directed outwards* and perceiving things that appear as external phenomena, and a consciousness in *the aspect of only being directed inwards*.

Of these two types of consciousnesses, *the latter is the self-knowing direct perception*. This assertion of a self-knowing consciousness – a consciousness that knows itself – is one of the unique presentations of the Mind Only school. For them, *all consciousnesses are the object of the self-knower*.

What has to be clarified is that it is not as if two separate consciousnesses are posited by the Mind Only. Rather it's the same consciousness that has two aspects: one aspect that focuses externally or outwardly, and one aspect that focuses inwardly. In other words, one aspect of the consciousness apprehends objects and the other aspect apprehends the subject, or the mind itself.

Saying that there are *two types* of consciousness may sound like there are two different consciousnesses, but in fact one consciousness is posited as functioning in two different ways. *The latter*, the consciousness in *the aspect of only being directed inwards is the self-knowing direct perception* and all consciousnesses appear to that.

This is refuted by the **Madhyamika** under the following four headings:

2.2.2.2.1. Refuting this with quotation

2.2.2.2.2. Refuting this with logic

2.2.2.2.3. Refuting the arguments for the existence of a self-knower

2.2.2.2.4. Refuting that imputed objects are based on truly existent functionalities

2.2.2.2.1. Refuting this with a quotation

This section starts with the statement by the **Madhyamika**:

It is not feasible for this very mind to experience and know itself in a non-dual manner.

Then these lines are presented:

*17cd. Even the protector of the worlds said
That mind does not see mind.*

*18ab. The edge of a knife does not cut itself
It is the same for mind.*

The commentary explains that:

Even the protector of the worlds stated this in the *Sutra of the Precious Crown Ornament*, with examples such as the edge of the knife cannot cut that very knife itself, and that mind does not see mind.

This relates to the **Mind Only** assertion of self-knowing mind. Their definition of the self-knowing mind is an initial, infallible cogniser that is free from conceptuality, bears the aspect of an apprehender and only looks

inward. So it is a cogniser that only looks inward which means it only apprehends the mind itself; free from conceptuality means it apprehends the mind in a non-dualistic manner. So, they posit the self-knower that is neither a primary consciousness nor a mental factor. It exists like a separate entity from the mind, whose only function is to be merely aware of the mind.

The Mind Only assert that the self-knower experiences the mind in a non-dual manner. We covered the Mind Only view when I taught the tenets, so you can refer to earlier notes and transcripts.

As I have explained previously, the self-knower is asserted as a cogniser that apprehends itself in a non-dual manner, however it is not a mind that perceives non-duality, for the only mind that can perceive non-duality is the wisdom realising emptiness. As the self-knower is not a mind realising emptiness or suchness, it therefore cannot actually perceive or realise non-duality.

As explained in the commentary, *even the protector of the worlds stated this in the Sutra of the Precious Crown Ornament with examples such as the edge of the knife cannot cut the very knife itself*, and similarly, *the mind does not see mind*.

The commentary then further explains the meaning of this analogy:

For example, just like the edge of the blade no matter how sharp, cannot cut itself in any way, and similarly the mind cannot see the mind.

Those who accept a self-knower accept that the very apprehending aspect knows itself. As there is not even one atom of difference in the arising aspect of the knower and that known, they need to accept them as one without any extra other part.

If that is the case, the **Madhyamika** say:

If one accepts such a self-knower, then one needs to accept examples such as that the blade of the knife cutting itself, or that prime cognition comprehends the object of comprehension independently of such an object.

This quotation from the *Sutra of the Precious Crown Ornament* refutes the Mind Only position.

2.2.2.2.2. Refuting this with logic

This is subdivided into two:

2.2.2.2.2.1. Refuting the example

2.2.2.2.2.2. Refuting the meaning

2.2.2.2.2.1. Refuting the example

Here there are two examples, the first of which is the example of candlelight.

The lines of verse relating to this are:

*18cd. If, 'It is like a candle
Perfectly illuminating itself.'*

*19. The candle light is nothing to be illuminated
Because darkness does not obscure.*

After these lines, the **Mind Only** argument is presented:

Argument: Just as the candlelight perfectly illuminates itself and other objects, in the same way does the consciousness know itself and others.

The **Madhyamika's** answer to that is:

Answer: The example is not established because the candlelight is not illuminated by itself. It does not

need to and cannot illuminate itself. Otherwise, darkness should also obscure itself and others, which is not valid. If darkness obscured darkness, then one could not see darkness, just as one cannot see the vase covered by a cloth. One should try to extensively understand these arguments, in the way they are outlined in the *Root Wisdom*.

Although it is not in fact the case, the **Mind Only** say that *just as the candlelight perfectly illuminates itself and other objects, in the same way consciousness knows itself as well as others*. They use the analogy of candlelight to assert that the consciousness knows itself as well as others.

Then the **Madhyamika** refute that, by saying: *The example is not established*. The example you use cannot be established, *because the candlelight is not illuminated by itself*. So the very example that you present is not valid or established, because candlelight does not illuminate itself. It does not need to and it cannot illuminate itself.

If a candle could illuminate itself, then by default you would have to say that *darkness should also obscure itself*, which is absurd. *If darkness obscured darkness, then one could not see darkness, just as one cannot see the vase covered by a cloth*. Indeed, if a vase is covered by a cloth, then you cannot see it because it is obscured by the cloth. So if darkness obscured itself that would imply one could not see darkness because it is obscured. That is absurd.

The commentary concludes with: *one should try to extensively understand these arguments in the way they are outlined in the Root Wisdom*. The seventh chapter of this text contains a few verses that explain these analogies.

The second example is the example of the crystal, which we can cover in our next session.

If you pay attention, and read up on this topic and try to understand the views of the proponents, then it becomes a bit clearer. Otherwise at first glance it might seem hard to understand.

This will become clearer as we go further into the text.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© *Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

30 August 2016

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: 'For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teachings and put them into practice well'. When we develop this strong motivation from the depths of our heart then our actions become most purposeful.

As well as generating a positive motivation, it is also good to engage in regular meditation practice to help settle the mind. A settled, more focused mind is an essential tool for whatever other practice or virtuous activity we wish to engage in, because that activity becomes more meaningful when the mind is focused.

Refuting the Mind Only in particular

2.2.2.2 REFUTING THE SELF-KNOWER THROUGH THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION

2.2.2.2.1 Refuting the example (cont.)

Refuting the example of the crystal

- 19cd. *Unlike a crystal, blue does not depend
On something else to be blue;*
20. *Likewise, some are seen to depend on others,
And yet some are also not.
That which is not blue cannot produce itself
As blue out of its own nature.*

One needs to understand that the debates presented here are specifically between the proponents of the Mind Only school and those of the Madhyamika school who are refuting each other's positions.

The example being particularly refuted here is one used by the **Mind Only** school to assert a self-knower. The Mind Only school is asserting that there is a self-knower because, when the mind apprehends blue – when we recall having seen blue in the past – that recollection that one has seen blue is proof that there is a self-knower. This is because, at the time of seeing blue, it is the self-knowing mind that apprehends the mind perceiving the colour blue, and this allows you to remember that you have seen the object blue at the same time as the object possessor, which is the mind that perceives blue.

The **Madhyamika** school refute that by saying that one doesn't need to have a self-knower to remember the mind apprehending blue, as well as the object blue itself. Rather, this is remembered through the connection formed at the time of perceiving blue. Because of the connection that was made earlier between the object possessor, or the mind that perceives blue, and the object blue, one can now recall having seen blue.

These assertions and debates are very meticulous ways of explaining how the mind works. For example, when we perceive something, how is it perceived? How does memory work? How do we recall or recollect things? Each of the schools has its own presentation, and it is by analysing and looking into these different presentations that one gets a

clear understanding of how the mind works. This is a really significant point, and it is debated meticulously here.

So the Mind Only school uses the example of a crystal to present a self-knower. The Madhyamikas refute that, as presented, with the above verses. The subsequent argument initially presented by the **Mind Only** school is:

Argument: That the white crystal is generated as blue through the force of the basis is in dependence on other, rather than through its own nature.

The example presented in this argument by the Mind Only school is that of a clear crystal. When a clear crystal is placed on a blue base, that crystal will appear blue when one looks at it. If it is placed on a yellow base, the crystal will appear to the eye consciousness as yellow. Likewise, if it is placed on a red base, it will appear red, and so forth. The analogy rightly shows that the colour of the clear crystal – that which is reflected – is dependent on the colour of its base. That is quite clear.

The Mind Only argument further says:

The blue of the lapis lazuli is blue out of its own nature, and not in dependence on others. Likewise, the knowing of forms and so forth exists in dependence on the other mind, but the knowing of mind by mind itself exists independently from some separate knower.

The **Madhyamika's** refutation of this assertion of the Mind Only school is presented:

Answer: It follows that the example of the blue of the lapis lazuli being generated as blue independently from something else is not valid because blue does not by its own self generate itself in the nature of blue, which it would need to in order not to be generated from a cause as blue.

So the Madhyamika refute this assertion by saying that the blue in the lapis lazuli is not produced by itself and it doesn't exist by its own nature, because if that were the case, it would need not need to depend on, or be generated by a cause. So what is being presented in the answer is that because the colour blue in the lapis lazuli is dependent on causes, it cannot be generated by itself, by its own nature.

The Mind Only school uses the assertion that 'the blue of the lapis lazuli arises from its own nature' as an example of the mind knowing itself. But the Madhyamikas refute that by showing the absurdity of blue arising by itself, without having to depend on causes.

Although the Cittamatrins (Mind Only) are not claiming that the blue of the lapis lazuli does not depend on causes – they wouldn't assert that – the Madhyamikas are saying that if blue *were* to exist by its own nature, from its own side, then logically it would have to be the case that it could not depend on causes. So the Madhyamikas are refuting the Mind Only by default, saying that if you accept that something exists from its own side or by its own nature, then that would imply that it does not depend on causes.

The Mind Only school, of course, with its own system of logic, is presenting quite a meticulous argument by saying that, just as the blue colour of lapis lazuli exists by its own nature and doesn't depend on something else, similarly, the mind knows itself and doesn't have to depend on something else. This is on the basis of the Mind Only school asserting that there is true existence or existence by its own nature.

As I have presented previously many times, the Mind Only assert that dependent phenomena and thoroughly established phenomena exist truly, while imputed

phenomena do not exist truly. This is presented in the teachings of the tenets, so you should apply that understanding here.

2.2.2.2.2 Refuting the meaning

21. *If the statement, 'the candle flame illuminates'
Is made upon knowledge by consciousness,
Then the statement 'awareness is luminous'
Is made upon knowledge by what?*

If one says, 'Although the candle does not illuminate itself, but rather it merely illuminates', and says likewise 'it is known by consciousness' then, in that case, consciousness does not illuminate itself. Instead one has to say 'consciousness merely illuminates'. By which different substance is consciousness known that you make this statement? This is invalid.

When the **Mind Only** school asserts *although the candle does not illuminate itself*, this is in relation to the earlier **Madhyamika** refutation that, if light illuminates itself, this would imply that dark obscures itself, and that would be absurd. Now the Mind Only proponents are saying, 'OK. We accept that the candle does not illuminate itself – it merely illuminates. So that is the nature of the candle light, it merely illuminates.' Then they ask the Madhyamikas: *By which different substance is consciousness known that you make this statement? This is invalid.*

They further state:

If it would be known by a consciousness of different substance, it would become infinite. Hence, it is not known by self or by another.

Here, the **Mind Only** school is asserting a counter argument to the Madhyamika position by saying that, if you assert a different substance, or a different mind that knows the mind, and you say that the mind doesn't know itself, then that different substance that knows the mind would need a different substance to know that, and a further substance to know that, and so on. So there would be the fault of infinite regression and the absurdity would be that the mind is not known by itself nor by another.

In other words, the Mind Only school is saying that there would be nothing to know the mind; the mind would not be known if it is not known by itself and not known by another. This is what is presented next, and subsequently refuted by the Madhyamika.

22. *To remark about it being illuminated or not illuminated,
When it is not seen by anything,
Is pointless even though expressed,
Like the poise of a barren woman's daughter.*

The argument is saying:

As there is no knower seen by any consciousness, then although one may make statements regarding whether consciousness is illuminated or not, they are meaningless as the basis for the distinction is not established by prime cognition. If it is impossible for the daughter of a barren woman to exist, then it is meaningless to talk about her poise.

Here, the Mind Only school is saying, 'You Madhyamikas may refute us by saying that consciousness does not illuminate itself and so forth, but according to you, making statements about whether consciousness is illuminated or not is meaningless, as the basis for the distinction is not established by prime cognition'. The analogy presented here is like making comments about a daughter of a barren woman.

The literal analogy given is that of a mule. Apparently mules cannot have offspring. Thus, the absurdity being presented here is that, if the daughter of a barren woman doesn't even exist, then to talk about her poise, such as her looks, shape and elegance is meaningless.

2.2.2.3 REFUTING THE ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF A SELF-KNOWER

Here there are three sub-headings:

2.2.2.3.1 Example of how memory is generated even though there is no self-knower

2.2.2.3.2 Refuting other reasons used to establish a self-knower

2.2.2.3.3 Refuting that other-knowers would be impossible if there were no self-knower

As a response to the Mind Only school's reasoning for the existence of a self-knower through examples, the **Madhyamika** presents another example to refute that there is a self-knower. As mentioned earlier, if there is no self-knower, there wouldn't be other knowers as well, so the Madhyamika refute this by showing the impossibility of a self-knower.

2.2.2.3.1 Example of how memory is generated even though there is no self-knower

The **Mind Only** school presents this verse:

- 23ab. *If there is no self-knower,
How can one remember consciousness?*

Mind-Only: If there is no self-knower, then how could there be recollection of the object possessor consciousness? There cannot be.

If one can infer the experience through the reason of recollection, and the recollection when one thinks, 'I previously saw blue' comes subsequent to the experience, then, when one says, 'I saw blue', one establishes the experience of the object through the recollection of the object, and that very experience of the object is the apprehension of blue.

The reasoning that refutes other possibilities as to what is it that experiences the apprehension of blue also establishes the self-knower.

The Mind Only proponents assert: *If there is no self-knower, then how could there be recollection of the object possessor consciousness? There cannot be.* They are arguing that without a self-knower, how could one remember that one has seen something? An object possessor is the consciousness that apprehends the object. What I explained earlier is now being presented here.

The Mind Only school argue: *If one can infer the experience through the reason of recollection and the recollection when one thinks, 'I previously saw blue' comes subsequent to the experience, then, when one says, 'I saw blue', one establishes the experience of the object through the recollection of the object, and that very experience of the object is the apprehension of blue.*

They further state:

When one says, 'I saw' one establishes the experience of the object possessor through the sign of the recollection of the object possessor, and that experience of the object possessor is the self-knower.

This is how the Mind Only proponents assert a self-knower.

That which serves as an answer by the **Madhyamikas** is in the last two lines of the verse:

- 23cd. *One remembers in relation to the experience of something else,
Like the poison of a rat.*

Madhyamika: The memory of the object possessor does not establish the self-knower. If the apprehension of blue experiences the other object of blue then, when one says, 'I previously saw this blue', the memory of the object possessor is generated from the memory of the relation between the object and the object possessor. It is not generated from the experience of the object possessor, just like the marmot does not experience the poisoned bite at the time but does remember it later.

For example: When the marmot in winter is bitten by a rat, although the poison of the rat enters its body, it only experiences the bite and not the poison. Later, when it wakes up due to hearing thunder, it remembers that at the time of the bite it had been poisoned, but without having earlier experienced the poison at the time.

Then the analogy is further explained:

The marmot being bitten is similar to the experience of the object by the apprehension of blue. Being poisoned at the same time as the bite is like the experience of the object possessor at the time of holding the object. That the object possessor does not experience itself at this time is like the non-experience of poison at the time of being bitten. Subsequently remembering the bite is like remembering the object. The memory of the object possessor through the memory of the object, along with the object possessor not having experienced itself earlier, is like the memory of the poison through the power of merely remembering being bitten, and without having experienced being poisoned at the time.

First of all, the Madhyamika asserts that the memory of the object possessor does not establish the self-knower. *If the apprehension of blue experiences the other object of blue then, when one says, 'I previously saw this blue', the memory of the object possessor is generated from the memory of the relation between the object and the object possessor. It is not generated from the experience of the object possessor ...*

This is in relation to the **Mind Only** assertion that one recollects by experiencing the object possessor the mind knowing itself. The **Madhyamika** says this is not the case. The analogy presented here is *just like the marmot does not experience the poisoned bite at the time, but does remember it later*. The marmot is an animal that hibernates in the winter. I think what is translated here as a rat may be more like a small mouse that has a poisonous bite.

When the marmot in winter is bitten by a rat [or a small poisonous mouse], although the poison of the mouse enters its body it only experiences the bite and not the poison. This refers to the fact that, when it is hibernating, the marmot would experience the pain of the bite, but would not yet experience the actual poison transmitted with that bite. That hasn't taken effect on the marmot's body, so it doesn't actually know that yet. It only experiences the bite and not the poison. Later, when it wakes up due to hearing thunder, it remembers that it had been poisoned at the time of the bite, although it had not experienced the poison at that time.

A marmot is an animal that hibernates underground for about six months a year in the winter months, so when another small animal like a poisonous rat or mouse bites it, apparently it has an awareness of the bite because of the pain of the bite. It experiences the pain of the bite, but because the poison has entered its body but has yet to be activated, the poison remains dormant. Later, when Spring comes along and the thunderstorms wake up the hibernating

animal, at the time the marmot wakes up the poison apparently gets activated, and that is when it feels the actual pain and suffering of the poison.

So although the poison entered the marmot's body at an earlier time, it was not experienced at that time because the poison had not yet been activated. Later, however, when it wakes up and experiences the pain of the poison being activated and spreading throughout its body, it feels the pain and then has the recollection, 'I was poisoned when I was bitten earlier'. Even though it doesn't recollect having been poisoned earlier, due to the delayed effect it now has a recollection that it must have been poisoned earlier. This is an analogy to show how recollection or remembrance comes about.

We can all relate to this example. We might have been out in some wilderness area and something might have stung us and we thought, 'Something has bitten me'. It could be a poisonous animal, like a rat or a mouse, but initially we would only experience the pain of the sting or the bite, and not pay much attention to it and move on. But then, later, after the poison starts to spread, the actual pain of the poison is felt. Even though one may have forgotten about the bite, later one will think that the poison is very painful and one can feel it spreading over a greater area, such as up one's leg.

So even though one would not have known at the time of the bite that one had been poisoned, later on, because of the pain spreading and knowing that it is the effect of the poison, one would reflect, 'I must have been poisoned earlier'.

The text refers to the marmot waking up due to hearing thunder and remembering that at the time of the bite it had been poisoned, but without having experienced the poison at that time. This analogy is basically refuting that there has to be a self-knower: that even though at the time one didn't know one had been poisoned, later one has the recollection of this.

The analogy is explained as follows: The marmot being bitten is similar to the experience of the object by the apprehension of blue; the experience of the bite itself is analogous to the experience of the object by the consciousness perceiving blue at that time.

Being poisoned at the time of the bite and not knowing one has been poisoned is like the experience of the object possessor – that which perceives the blue – at the time of holding the object, which in this case is the colour blue. The object possessor does not experience itself at this time, just like the poison is not experienced at the time of being bitten. So in this analogy, the object possessor not experiencing the poison at the time of being bitten shows how one does not need a self-knower to remember the object possessor. Subsequently remembering the bite is like remembering the object, the memory of the object possessor through the memory of the object – *the memory of the object possessor through the memory of the object, along with the object possessor having earlier experienced itself, is like the memory of the poison through the power of merely remembering being bitten, and without at the time having experienced being poisoned.*

The analogy is elaborately explained to show how there is no need to have a self-knower in order to remember the object possessor at a later time. Gyaltsab Je gives the following statements:

This reasoning to establish memory without a self-knower appears to me as having been composed by a fully qualified scholar, and as excellent. It seems it has

not been adopted correctly by those practising the words of the *Introduction to the Trainings*.

Actually these would be the words of Lama Tsong Khapa himself, recorded in notes taken by Gyaltsab Je Rinpoche. So it is actually Lama Tsong Khapa who is saying this. The final statement here is:

Because in general the answer given to, 'it is incorrect that the later consciousness remembers because the earlier consciousness did not experience itself', is 'the pervasion is not established', it says that the assertion, 'the *Introduction to the Trainings* does not refute a nominal self-knower' is not the position of the great bodhisattva.

2.2.2.3.2 Refuting other reasons used to establish a self-knower

24. *If, 'It can illuminate itself because that endowed with other conditions can see.' By applying the formulated eye balm, The vase is seen, but not the eye balm.*

Mind-Only: Having accomplished the mind of calm abiding, one can see the mind of others, then one can illuminate one's mind as one's object. For example, like being able to see the close mountain if one can see the far away needle.

Answer: Although one can see underground treasures such as vases by applying the substance made out of a medicinal eye balm, one does not see the eye balm itself. This reason harms the position of the self-knower, and does not support it.

Further: It is explained like this because, as they are the same in arising from the same illuminating cause, it follows that not only are that illuminating and that illuminated not established as one, they are certainly also not established as of one entity. This is so because at the time when the underground vase is seen due to applying the medicinal eye balm created through a secret mantra for seeing underground treasures, not only is the illuminated vase not one with the illuminating eye balm, they also do not become one entity.

Hence, not only is it unsuitable as a reason establishing a self-knower, it harms the existence of a self-knower.

The **Mind Only** are saying that, having established calm abiding and with other conditions such as achieving the higher mental concentrations, then due to acquiring clairvoyance, one is able to know others' minds. If one can know others' minds, which in comparison to one's own mind are external and far away, then one can definitely assert that one knows one's own mind which is close. The example given here is like being able to see a nearby mountain if one can see a needle far away in the distance.

So the **Madhyamika** then refute this example that the Mind Only use, which is that if you can see something far away, then by default that would imply one could definitely see what is near. The Mind Only use that example to assert, therefore, that there is a self-knower. The Madhyamika's counter-argument to establish that the Mind Only school assertion is not valid is:

Answer: Although one can see underground treasures such as vases by applying the substance made out of a medicinal eye balm ...

This eye balm is a substance that is a combination of medicinal plants and the mantras recited over it. It is said that when one applies the eye balm to one's eyes, it enables

one to see treasures underground. Although the treasures underground are seen, one does not see the eye balm itself.

So the Madhyamika present a meticulous example here. If the Mind Only say that if something far away is seen, then by all means one has to see something near, then how about a situation where one applies this eye balm to the eyes to see treasures underground? One would be able to see the underground treasures, but not the eye balm itself. This is a very good example.

This reason harms the position of the self-knower, and does not support it.

Further: It is explained like this because, as they are the same in arising from the same illuminating cause, it follows that not only are that illuminating and that illuminated not established as one, they are certainly also not established as of one entity.

The analogy is further explained:

This is so because at the time when the underground vase is seen due to applying the medicinal eye balm created through a secret mantra for seeing underground treasures, not only is the illuminated vase, ...

... illuminated vase meaning here a vase that is clearly seen

...

... not one with the illuminating eye balm, they also do not become one entity.

Hence, not only is it unsuitable as a reason establishing a self-knower, it harms the existence of a self-knower.

In relation to the analogy presented earlier, the Madhyamika says to the Mind Only that not only is it unsuitable as a reason to establish a self-knower, it actually harms the existence of a self-knower. So what the Mind Only asserts as being an example harms the very assertion of a self-knower.

2.2.2.3.3 Refuting that other-knowers would be impossible if there would be no self-knower

The Mind Only school then says that if there was no self-knower, it would be absurd to know other external phenomena. This is what the Mind Only school uses as a counter-argument and will be refuted next.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱུང་རྒྱུ་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྒྱལ་མོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

6 September 2016

Based on the motivation we generated during the refuge and bodhicitta prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [*meditation*]

Let us generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will engage in the practice of listening to the Mahayana teachings, and then put them into practice well.

Generating such a motivation, even for a few moments, will definitely establish very strong positive imprints in our mind.

Just as we have attempted in our short meditation session it is essential to incorporate meditation into our daily life.

Accumulating virtue and reducing familiarity with non-virtue through meditation¹

The literal meaning of meditation is to familiarise the mind with a virtuous object. So focusing on a virtuous object is the actual meditation practice. The reason why we find it so hard to actually engage in a proper meditation practice is because we are controlled by our thoughts, and these thoughts are in turn controlled by the delusions. That is why we find it very hard to maintain a focus on virtuous objects.

When we understand meditation practice in this way then we are able to incorporate the essential aspects of the path such as the four noble truths, the two truths and so forth into that practice. Indeed, when we realise how distracted our mind is, we can see how meditation practice reminds us of the first two noble truths – the truth of suffering and the truth of origination.

When we are able to maintain our focus on a virtuous object, then due to that familiarity we will be inclined to focus more and more on virtuous objects, even in our daily life. At a beginner's level however, we find that our minds are very easily influenced by non-virtuous objects, and that it is extremely difficult to maintain a focus on a virtuous object. Focussing on non-virtuous objects seems spontaneous and natural as it doesn't require any effort, and maintaining a focus on a virtuous object is very hard, like leading an old horse. This is because one's mind has become habituated to focussing on non-virtuous objects and distractions. That pattern has to be reversed, and the only way to do that is by putting an effort into really maintaining our focus on a virtuous object.

Then we will gradually find that our mind is more and more inclined to focus on virtuous objects as opposed to focusing on non-virtuous objects, and this indicates that the meditation practice has begun to take root within us. To reach our goal, we need to develop more and more familiarity with focussing on the virtuous objects at our everyday level. If someone has meditated for a long time and still finds it very hard to focus on virtuous objects, then

that goes to show that they have actually been missing the point, and there have not yet been any positive results from their meditation.

When we apply a correct understanding within the meditation practice itself, then it can serve as an optimum means to be able to accumulate more virtue and positive karma. That is what we really need to aim for. If we don't understand how meditation helps us to engage in virtue consistently, then even if we focus on an object for a certain period of time in meditation, we will find that when we come out of meditation we will go back to a completely distracted mind that is focussed on non-virtuous objects. Then the meditation practice really hasn't served much of a purpose.

Being able to maintain a focus on a virtuous object for even half an hour is very difficult now, because of our lack of true familiarity with the practice. And even if we are able to remain focused on an object without distraction for a while, we find ourselves still following distractions when we come out of our meditation. So our meditation practice hasn't served its ultimate purpose.

In simple terms, what we are intending to acquire for our wellbeing is the accumulation of virtue, and to reduce our familiarity with non-virtue and with creating non-virtuous karma. The way to achieve that is by becoming more and more familiar with focussing on virtue. When we are able to maintain a focus on virtue, then the conducive conditions for personal wellbeing will naturally be acquired. Of course we will see the benefit of this in this life, but we are also preparing for our future lives.

If we find ourselves engaging more and more in virtue, then we are naturally creating the causes to acquire favourable conditions in our future lives. Whereas if we find ourselves accumulating more non-virtue, then we are distancing ourselves from good conditions, not only in this life, but in our future lives as well. This, in simple terms, is what the outcome will be. Since we want good conditions, not only in this life but also in our future lives, we need to ensure that we actually engage in the ways and means to achieve that. This is how we need to understand meditation practice.

Incorporating understandings gained from the teachings into meditation practice

Understanding meditation in its entirety ensures that, from the very beginning, our meditation practice hits the mark of being an aid to accumulating virtue. On that basis we can then incorporate our meditation practice into all other aspects of our understanding of the teachings. When we understand that meditation practice encompasses the entire Dharma, then we will be able to relate to many other aspects of the teachings that we have studied to that practice. For those who have not done much study, meditation will be limited to focussing the mind on one object. Of course that in itself brings some solace to their mind as they get some peace and benefit from their meditation. But they will not be able to expand that understanding to the entire range of the teachings.

Whereas we here have all received many teachings, which encompass the entire range of the teachings on the extensive path, as well as the profound path. The extensive path of the teachings such as karma, the four noble truths, as well as the entire stages of the path can all be incorporated into our meditation practice. Likewise, when we incorporate into our meditation practice our understanding that, while practices such as the six perfections and so forth exist conventionally,

¹ These headings are not part of the structure of the headings in the commentary.

they lack inherent existence and are thus empty of true existence, then that includes the profound teachings of the Buddha.

When we keep in mind this really expansive view of how meditation practice ultimately encompasses the full range of the teachings, then we will see much more value in the meditation practice that we do. Also, when we familiarise ourselves with this practice and develop a more focussed mind, then that serves as the basis for achieving the highest level of concentration, which is calm abiding. As explained in the teachings, when calm abiding is achieved, then one is able to focus single-pointedly on any virtuous object for as long as one wishes. When the focus is placed on one virtuous object it will be as firm as a mountain, and when expanded one will be able to apply it to all virtuous objects.

This is how we need to understand the value of meditation practice.

Overcoming attachment and anger through meditation

Furthermore, if our meditation practice doesn't incorporate an understanding of karma, then we've completely missed the point of the teachings. Our practice is based on incorporating an understanding of how our karma works. If our meditation practice serves as a means to prevent one from acting upon non-virtuous negative states of mind such as anger, then it has taken root. But if one claims to be a meditator, and succumbs to anger as soon as the conditions for anger arise, then one has completely missed the point again. The teachings also explain that all the teachings of the Buddha can be incorporated into a means for overcoming negative states of mind such as anger, and attachment.

Likewise it is really essential that our meditation practice hits the mark of overcoming attachment. As the great masters have explained in very succinct and concise teachings, if one finds the meditation on seeing the imperfections of an object doesn't work to overcome attachment, then that is a sign that one is still holding onto the object of attachment from the depths of one's heart. If within the depths of one's heart one still grasps at the object as being appealing, then no matter how much one tries to focus on the imperfections of the object, one will find it doesn't work to overcome the attachment. If it doesn't take much at all to remember the object of attachment as being appealing, then that is a clear sign that one has been grasping at it for a very long time. That is why it doesn't take much effort for the attachment to surface. According to the advice of these great masters, when we meditate on the imperfections of an object, we need to attempt to really generate a true sense of understanding of the natural imperfections of the object, from the depths of our hearts. Only then does it become an antidote.

As I've mentioned previously, the very succinct advice that the Sakya Pandita offers is that attempting to meditate without hearing the teachings first is like trying to climb a rocky cliff without any fingers.

Both method and wisdom are necessary

Each of the five paths has two different stages; meditative equipoise and post-meditative equipoise. Why are both meditative equipoise and post-meditative equipoise stages needed?

As explained earlier, meditative equipoise is where one applies a particular antidote to overcome the delusions; whilst the post-meditative equipoise state is where one

applies the technique to other practices such as listening, and engaging in the practice of the remaining perfections as a way to purify negativities and accumulate merit. If only meditation were a sufficient cause for enlightenment, then there would be no need for a post-meditative state. Even on the tenth *bhumi* or ground, there is still the distinction between the state of meditative equipoise and post-meditative equipoise. That is because, even on the final ground, merit still has to be accumulated as a means to overcome the subtlest imprints of the delusions. Just as on the previous grounds, the bodhisattva on the tenth ground needs to come out of their meditative equipoise in order to accumulate further merit, and then finally goes back into meditative equipoise focussing on emptiness, and thus obtains enlightenment within that final state of meditative equipoise.

This clearly shows that both merit and wisdom are required in order to achieve the state of enlightenment. As Lama Tsong Khapa mentions in a text he composed, 'In the beginning I engaged in extensive listening, in the middle all the teachings appeared as instructions, and in the end I put them into practice day and night. I dedicate this to the flourishing of the Buddha's teachings'.

The great Kadampa masters have explained that the way to engage in practice is through extensive listening to the teachings, contemplating the meaning and then finally this is incorporated into the practice of meditation as a way to acquire wisdom. As mentioned earlier, without having received instructions through hearing it is futile to try to engage in a practice, as one will not be able to achieve much in the way of results. So we need to understand the importance of the combination of all of these aspects.

I've mentioned a few points that we need to really keep in mind. Essentially the practice one engages in should ultimately subdue one's mind and make it kinder and more gentle. That is why we engage in our studies and in personal practice. It is what I attempt to do regularly, and the message I'm giving to you is that I see it as being essential. The study that we are engaged in is really profound. As a technique to help subdue the mind, one could say that there's no greater text than the one we're studying. If it doesn't work to subdue your mind then I can safely say nothing else could.

I'm not implying that you are not already making attempts to put it into practice. All I'm doing is encouraging you to further enhance your intentions and practice to ensure that your study and practice is fruitful. That is all I am concerned about. So you should not think that I'm reprimanding you, or saying that you're not doing well. I'm just encouraging you. In presenting the teachings over all these years I feel that I have given you the material to work on. Now I'm encouraging you to actually use it as a way to gain some benefit from that.

As a way of complimenting you on your positive efforts I can tell you of the person who attended a seminar one or two years ago. He went to the morning session where he found that people were presenting in a very nice and gentle manner. People showed great understanding and knowledge, which they presented very clearly in a very kind manner. He was very impressed and very pleased with that, and when he shared that with me, that in turn made me feel very happy. The seminars have improved a lot in the way they've been conducted and how information is shared and so forth. That, in itself, shows that there have been positive improvements.

2.2.2.2.3.3. Refuting that other-knowers would be impossible if there were no self-knowers

This is subdivided into two:

2.2.2.2.3.3.1. Actual

2.2.2.2.3.3.2. Refuting that the illusory workings of the mind are inexpressible as being the very mind or other from it

2.2.2.2.3.3.1. Actual

This section begins with the argument:

Argument: If there is no self-knower, then there is no memory, and therefore the experience of objects and the consciousnesses of seeing, listening and the like become non-existent.

The argument that is presented here by the **Mind Only** school is an argument against the Madhyamika who do not assert a self-knower. The Mind Only argue that *if there is no self-knower, then there is no memory, and therefore the experience of objects and the consciousnesses of seeing, listening and the like, the five sense consciousnesses, would all be non-existent.* This is their argument.

25. *Just as the consciousnesses of seeing and listening,
Are not to be refuted here,
That which becomes the cause of suffering,
The formulation of true existence, is to be refuted.*

Then the commentary explains the verse, which serves as an answer by the **Madhyamikas**.

Answer: The reason conventionalities of sight by eye consciousness, hearing by ear consciousness and knowing by mental consciousness are not something to be abandoned is because they do not need to be abandoned as suffering is not generated merely through them, and also arhats possess these nominalities. They cannot be abandoned, because this would have to happen either through logic or through quotation, which would in turn also have to be refuted. If these are refuted, it is a mistake because one would adopt a nihilistic view.

Thus, because the formulation of these phenomena as truly existent is the cause of suffering, that becoming the cause of suffering is that which is to be abandoned, as it is the root of cyclic existence. If one does not reverse the root of cyclic existence, one does not stop cyclic existence, and because the true-grasping at forms, sounds and the like is shown to be the root of cyclic existence, it clearly shows that hearers and self-liberators realise the selflessness of phenomena.

The assertions made by the Karakpas and the like, that while the mere appearance to the sense consciousnesses are not objects of negation, but that if they are held as permanent or impermanent, existent or non-existent and so forth, then they are objects of negation, is a comeback response of the Chinese Abbot.

It first explains that *conventionalities of sight by eye consciousness, visual objects that are seen by the sight consciousness, hearing by ear consciousness and knowing by mental consciousness are not to be abandoned conventionally.* In other words, on a conventional level these consciousnesses are not to be abandoned. The reason, as Gyaltsab Je explains, is that *suffering is not generated merely through them, and also arhats possess these nominalities.* Saying that conventionalities of sight by eye consciousness, hearing and so forth are not to be abandoned carries the implication that they do need to be abandoned as truly existent. That is the point.

In saying that the *arhats possess these nominalities*, the commentary is explaining again that, on a conventional level, arhats have not abandoned a nominal eye consciousness, ear consciousness, and so forth, but that they have abandoned them as truly existent.

Then the commentary further says, *they cannot be abandoned, because this would have to happen either through logic or through quotation, which would in turn also have to be refuted.* What is being explained here is that if they are to be abandoned nominally, then it would have to be either through logic or through quotation. If they were abandoned *through either logic or quotation*, then the logic and the quotation themselves would also have to be abandoned because they are nominally existent. So this absurdity is being presented.

As explained further, *if these are refuted*, either conventionally or nominally, *it is a mistake because one would have to adopt a nihilistic view.* In other words, refuting the conventionalities of the sense consciousnesses would be adopting a nihilistic view.

If you relate this explanation to its context in the text, then you will derive an understanding of the logic being presented here.

The commentary further explains that *because the formulation of these phenomena as truly existent is the cause of suffering, that becoming the cause of suffering is that which is to be abandoned, as it is the root of cyclic existence.* This is the main point: it is the causes of cyclic existence that have to be abandoned.

The succinct point being presented here is that *if one does not reverse the root of cyclic existence, one does not stop cyclic existence.* Furthermore, *because true-grasping at forms, sounds and the like is shown to be the root of cyclic existence, it clearly shows that hearers and self-liberators realise the selflessness of phenomena.* These points were presented previously. The reason why hearers and self-liberators have to realise the selflessness of phenomena, is because without gaining that realisation they cannot overcome the very root of cyclic existence.

The reasons presented here are points to really think about, and apply on a personal level. That is *because the formulation of these phenomena as truly existent is the cause of suffering, and that becoming the cause of suffering is that which is to be abandoned.* If one wishes to overcome suffering, then the cause of suffering, which is grasping at true existence, has to be overcome. Cyclic existence is within the mental continuum of all living beings. So it is the grasping at true existence within one's own mental continuum that is the root cause of cyclic existence.

The way to overcome the root of cyclic existence within one's own mental continuum is by gaining the realisation of the lack of inherent existence, i.e. selflessness. As grasping at a true self is the root of cyclic existence, the realisation of selflessness within one's own mental continuum is the means to overcome the very root cause of cyclic existence.

This is really the essential point. As we gain a clearer understanding of what selflessness is, and as our correct understanding increases, then we move closer to achieving the goal of overcoming the root of cyclic existence. Conversely, if we befriend grasping at true existence within our own mental continuum, by making it feel welcome and comfortable, then we are never going to be able to overcome grasping at true existence. If we don't ensure that our practices become the means to overcome grasping at true existence, then they could actually strengthen that grasping. For some this actually happens – rather than reducing

grasping at a truly existent self, the grasping increases. So we need to be careful and protect ourselves from that.

I think the rest of the commentary can be understood without further explanation.

2.2.2.2.3.3.2. Refuting that the illusory workings of the mind are inexpressible as mind itself or other from it

The first two lines of verse relating to this read:

*26ab. If, 'There is no illusion apart from mind
And I do not hold them as not being separate'.*

Then the commentary presents the **Mind Only** assertion:

Mind Only: Because there is no outer existence there is no illusion, i.e., forms and the like, of different substance from the mind. And because of the earlier fault of 'at that time what is seen by what?', I do not hold them as not being separate.

The Mind Only say, *because there is no outer existence there is no illusion, i.e., forms and the like, of different substance from the mind.* So therefore they are not different substance from the mind, and *because of the earlier fault* which was raised as 'at that time what is seen by what?', I do not hold or assert them as not being separate as well.

Then the next four lines of verse present the **Madhyamika's** answer:

*26cd If it is a functionality, then how is it non-other?
If asserted to be non-other, then there is no functionality.*

*27ab. Just as illusions, though untrue, are
The perceived object, perceivers are too.*

The commentary says:

Madhyamaka: If forms and the like exist truly, they need to be true in the way they appear. In that case, as they appear as outer objects, they need to exist as outer objects. If they are outer functionalities, then how are they not of different substance from mind itself? It follows they are.

The **Mind Only** respond to that saying:

Mind Only: They are not of different substance.

Then the **Madhyamika** further reason:

Madhyamaka: It follows there is no true phenomenon because appearances are accepted to be false, and they do not exist in a different way. Although the illusions of forms and the like, which appear as outer objects but do not exist truly, are that perceived by the mind, and likewise, although the six consciousnesses are that which perceives, they are the same in not existing truly.

Therefore, the earlier fault of, 'If even the mistaken is non-existent' does not apply to the Madhyamaka, and this method would suit you, the Mind Only, well too.

The way of refuting the Mind Only assertions is by turning their own assertions back on them. The Mind Only school asserts that *forms and the like exist truly*, while the Madhyamika say that things lack true existence.

The Madhyamika counter the Mind Only argument by saying that if they do *exist truly*, they need to be true in the way that they appear. According to the Madhyamika, the criteria for something to be true is that it exists as it appears. If it does not exist in the way that it appears then it is false. So the Madhyamikas are reasoning with the Mind Only system, saying that *if form and the like exist truly*, they need to be true in the way they appear. In that case, because they appear as outer objects, they need to exist as outer objects. So the Madhyamikas

are saying: 'If you say that they are true, then it would have to exist in the way that they appear, and since they appear as outer objects, then they would have to be outer objects. And according to you, Mind Only, that would be an absurdity, because you assert them as being one with the mind.

Furthermore, *if they are outer functionalities, then how are they not of a different substance from the mind itself?* So the Madhyamikas are arguing that there is a contradiction in that if they are outer functionalities or outer phenomena, then how could they be one with the mind itself as you Mind Only assert. Because using your own logic it follows that they have to be separate.

Then the **Mind Only** respond saying, *they are not of different substance.*

The **Madhyamikas** say that *it follows there is no true phenomenon because appearances are accepted to be false, and they do not exist in a different way.*

Furthermore, *although the illusions of forms and the like, which appear as outer objects but do not exist truly, are that perceived by the mind, and likewise, although the six consciousnesses are that which perceives, they are the same in not existing truly.* The main point is that according to the Madhyamika both the perceiver and that which is perceived are the same in existing conventionally, and the same in not existing truly.

The concluding statement is that, *therefore, the earlier fault of, 'If even the mistaken is non-existent' does not apply to the Madhyamika, and this method would suit you, the Mind Only, well too.* So, the Madhyamika say, the fault, *if even the mistaken is non-existent*, does not apply to us in accordance with what we assert. Then the Madhyamikas conclude by saying to the Mind Only, 'It would actually suit you well if you were to adopt this understanding'.

2.2.2.2.4. Refuting that imputed objects are based on truly existent functionalities.

What is being refuted here is one of the fundamental assertions of the **Mind Only** school, which is that all imputed phenomena have to have a truly existent base. They say that without a truly existent base, other imputed objects such as space and so forth cannot exist. That is the assertion that is being refuted here.

What the Mind Only school assert is that dependent phenomena, also translated as other-powered phenomena, have to rely on a truly existent base for their existence.

The **Madhyamika** say that the very term *other-powered* or *dependent phenomena* itself indicates that they have to depend on others for their functionality. Therefore they cannot be truly existent.

Both schools are referring to the same basis, that of other-powered or dependent phenomena, which are all things within samsara and nirvana. The Mind Only school say that all things within samsara and nirvana are dependent on a basis which is truly existent, and that is what is being refuted or negated by the Madhyamika school in this part of the text.

The first lines of verse under this heading read:

*27cd. If, 'Cyclic existence is based on functionalities,
Otherwise it would become like space',*

28ab. If non-functionalities are based on functionalities

How can they perform an action? Then under this verse the Mind Only assertion is presented:

Mind Only. The false and imputed phenomena of cyclic existence and beyond are each based on a truly existent functionality, because everything deceptive is based on a truly existent basis. For example, even when a tree stump is mistaken for a human the tree stump itself exists truly. Likewise, cyclic existence is based on a truly existent basis. If it were not, then it would become a non-functionality, like space.

The meaning of this debate is put forth in the *Compendium of Trainings* like this, and to explain it in any other way is not the meaning.

Then the **Madhyamikas** respond to that:

Madhyamaka: If the false non-functionalities of samsara and nirvana depend on a truly existent basis of deception, then how could they produce the results of bondage and liberation? It follows they could not - because the truly existent basis does not exist. This reason is put forth in the *Compendium of Deeds*.

As quite clearly presented here, the **Mind Only** say that *the false and imputed phenomena of cyclic existence and beyond are each based on a truly existent functionality, because everything deceptive is based on a truly existent basis*. Even what is deceptive has to have a truly existent basis.

The example that they use to illustrate the point is: *even when a tree stump is mistaken for a human, the tree stump itself exists truly*. When you see a tree stump in the distance it may appear as if there is a human there, which is a deceptive appearance. However the basis of that deceptive appearance, which is a tree stump, actually does exist. They say that this is a sign that it exists truly. Another example that is also used in the teachings is a striped rope that appears to be a snake. Again, they say that while the appearance of a snake is deceptive the striped rope does actually exist. Therefore, they say, that is a reason why things exist truly.

With that illustration they then say, *likewise, cyclic existence is based on a truly existent basis. If it were not, then it would become a non-functionality, like space*. So they consider space as a non-functional phenomenon.

The **Madhyamikas** reply that *if the false non-functionalities of samsara and nirvana depend on a truly existent basis of deception, then how could they produce the results of bondage and liberation? It follows they could not - because the truly existent basis does not exist. This reason is put forth in the Compendium of Deeds*. So this meticulous reasoning is presented in the *Compendium of Deeds*.

Then come these two lines of verse:

*28cd. Your mind becomes completely isolated,
Without any support.*

This is the actual reasoning that is presented.

The commentary explains:

According to your Mind Only system the mind becomes an isolated self illuminating self-knower, without the supportive distortion into apprehender and apprehended and the like. This follows because, since you accept the appearance of object and object-possessor as being distant as not existing the way it appears, there is no outer existence, and because the appearances of forms and so forth as consciousness were refuted earlier. In this case the appearances of forms and such become objects distinct and unrelated to consciousness, and although the appearances of forms are tainted, they cannot taint the substance of consciousness.

This is actually quite a clear explanation if you go through it slowly. Basically, the **Mind Only** are saying that apprehender and apprehended are one and there is no distinction between them. However, according to the **Madhyamika** system of course there is a distinction. So that is what is being presented in this explanation.

So the next verse under the same heading is:

*29. When the mind is devoid of that perceived
Everyone will have gone thus.
In that case, what is the benefit
Of that imputed as mere mind?*

The commentary explains:

If this is accepted: It follows that when the mind is free from the dualistic appearance of apprehender and apprehended, then all sentient beings become thus gone ones and effortlessly attain liberation - because all minds are free from the appearances of apprehender and apprehended.

If however one accepts this position, then it follows that there is not the slightest need to comprehend the lack of apprehender and apprehended as being of different substance, which is labelled mere mind, in order to achieve the omniscient transcendental wisdom.

The explanation is that *it follows that when the mind is free from the dualistic appearance of apprehender and apprehended, then all sentient beings become thus gone ones and effortlessly attain liberation*. According to the **Mind Only** system the apprehension of form and the mind apprehending form being of different substance is the grasping to self of phenomena. So according to them, if things did exist externally then this is how it would have to exist, i.e. apprehender and apprehended being distinct and of different substance. Thus, they assert that the apprehender and apprehend are devoid of being distinct.

So the **Madhyamikas** are saying: at the time *when the mind is free from the dualistic appearance of apprehender and apprehended*, then all sentient beings by default would already be *thus gone ones* or enlightened buddhas *effortlessly*, and *attain liberation - because, according to you, Mind Only, all minds would have be free from the appearances of apprehender and apprehended*. Since, according to you *all minds are free from the appearances of apprehender and apprehended*, then this would mean that sentient beings are effortlessly and spontaneously liberated. Again according to the Mind Only, form and the apprehension of form being devoid of being different substance, is the selflessness of phenomena. Thus the **Madhyamikas** conclude: *then it follows that there is not the slightest need to comprehend the lack of apprehender and apprehended as being of different substance, which is labelled mere mind, in order to achieve the omniscient transcendental wisdom*.

We can conclude here for the evening. Once you are able to apply the logical reasoning in its proper place then it will be easy to understand and read the text. It just requires the application of logic.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

13 September 2016

As usual let us spend some time for our meditation practice. (*meditation*)

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: for the sake of all mother sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose, I will engage in listening to the teachings and put them into practice well.

2.1.2. Refuting objections of no need and no ability regarding emptiness

2.1.2.2. DEFENDING ONE'S POSITION (CONT.)

2.1.2.2.3. Refuting the argument that the path realising emptiness has no use or purpose for a Madhyamaka¹

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.2.2.3.1. Argument

2.1.2.2.3.2. Answer

This is the continuation of the debate between the Mind Only and Madhyamika schools. The main point of disagreement is that the **Mind Only** proponents assert that there is no external existence, while the **Madhyamika** proponents assert that there is external existence. That is the basis of the argument between the two.

Specifically, Mind Only proponents assert that the subject and object – for example, form and the consciousness apprehending that form – are one in nature, not separate or distinct. Madhyamikas, on the other hand, would say that there *are* external forms and so forth that are perceived as existing and functioning externally.

When we mention Madhyamika here, we are specifically relating to the **Prasangika-Madhyamika**, i.e. Consequentialist Middle Way School. We make a distinction here because the Madhyamika School also includes the Svatantrika-Madhyamika school, amongst whom there are those who assert external existence.

This presentation in debate form is a useful way of understanding the subject we are studying. At a personal level, it enhances our intelligence or wisdom by increasing our ability to reason and analyse things.

Within the four different schools of Buddhist tenets in general, and within the Middle Way School in particular, we consider ourselves to be followers of the **Prasangika-Madhyamika** or **Consequentialist** system. If we do indeed hold that we are followers of the Prasangika-Madhyamika, then we need to understand the logical reasoning that characterises this system. We must really understand what it means, what its assertions are, and how its proponents use logic to assert their views.

Within the four Buddhist schools of tenets, proponents of the Mind Only School and the Madhyamika or Middle

Way School are followers of the Mahayana tradition, i.e. the Great Vehicle. We need to understand that the proponents of the four schools of tenets are differentiated by the different views they hold, whereas the distinction between the Theravada or Lower Vehicle, and the Mahayana or Greater Vehicle is based on the respective followers' conduct and practices.

Within the Mahayana, there is also the Perfection of Wisdom Vehicle and the Tantra Vehicle and the distinction here is again not based on views, but rather on the practices of each vehicle.

2.1.2.2.3.2.1. Argument

30. *Although knowing it to be like an illusion*

How can the afflictions be opposed?

Even the creator himself

Generates attachment for the illusory woman.

This verse is the argument presented by the **Mind Only**. The commentary then explains this verse:

Mind-Only: Although you may comprehend that all phenomena lack inherent existence, like an illusion, it will only cause exhaustion if it serves no purpose with regard to abandoning the afflictive and other obscurations. Even if it is asserted to serve a purpose, how can it reverse the afflictions? It follows it cannot – because one who can see that even the creator of the illusory woman, who realises it to be empty of an external woman, generates attachment by thinking of the illusory woman as something suitable to be enjoyed, and one has nothing beyond the initial realisations of emptiness through listening and contemplation.

When the **Mind Only** say, *Although you may comprehend that all phenomena lack inherent existence, like an illusion*, this is referring to the **Prasangika-Madhyamika's** unique assertion that all phenomena lack inherent existence. Both the **Svatantrika-Madhyamika** and **Mind Only** schools, on the other hand, assert that there is inherent existence.

Here, the Mind Only proponents are debating the Prasangika-Madhyamika assertion that things lack inherent existence, saying *it serves no purpose with regard to abandoning the afflictive and other obscurations*. In other words, the Mind Only are saying to the Madhyamika, "Your assertion that things lack inherent existence and are like an illusion cannot help abandon the afflictive and other obscurations, so what purpose does it serve? Since it doesn't serve any purpose, then making such an assertion and gaining that understanding merely causes exhaustion. There is no point."

What follows next is a meticulous argument presented by the **Mind Only** School. It is good to get a sense of how they prosecute their argument after having said that, if the Madhyamika view that things lack inherent existence doesn't serve any purpose, then it is merely a cause of exhaustion. The Mind Only continue to argue that: "If it is asserted that the Prasangika-Madhyamika view serves a purpose *then how can it reverse the afflictions?* How can this assertion that things lack inherent existence and are like an illusion reverse the afflictions?"

Then the Mind Only School presents an example to illustrate that this view could not bring about the result of abandoning the afflictions: *It follows it cannot – because one who can see that even the creator of the illusory woman, who*

¹ This heading was introduced on 26 July 2016. The heading numbering returns to the sequence used in the chapter as a whole.

realises it to be empty of an external woman, generates attachment by thinking of the illusory woman as something suitable to be enjoyed ... In simple terms, the Mind Only School is arguing that, when a male magician or illusionist conjures, for example, a beautiful woman, while the magician or illusionist may know it is an illusion, that doesn't prevent him from developing attachment to the illusion when he sees it as a very attractive and beautiful woman. Attachment and the desire to enjoy that illusion as if it were a real woman would still arise. Thus the **Mind Only** School is presenting a meticulous argument, saying that whilst the magician knows he is seeing an illusion, that doesn't prevent the afflictions, such as attachment, from arising, so the **Prasangika-Madhyamika** view that things are like an illusion does not serve a purpose, in terms of overcoming the afflictions.

The Mind Only proponents further argue that Prasangika-Madhyamika proponents have *nothing beyond the initial realisations of emptiness through listening and contemplation*.

In other words, the Mind Only is saying: "Your [Prasangika-Madhyamikas'] realisation of emptiness is nothing more than what you have gained from just hearing and contemplating, but lacks the realization gained from meditating. Your presentation of emptiness is merely based on listening and contemplating. Thus your presentation of emptiness cannot overcome the afflictions."

The **Prasangika-Madhyamika** School's answer is presented in the following three subdivisions.

2.1.2.2.3.2. Answer

This has three sub-divisions:

2.1.2.2.3.2.1. The reason why the illusionist generates attachment

2.1.2.2.3.2.2. Showing that meditating on the wisdom realising emptiness can overcome the afflictions and their imprints

2.1.2.2.3.2.3. Showing that one will receive the perfect complete result of abandonment.

The first part of the Prasangika-Madhyamika's answer responds to the Mind Only School's argument that the illusionist would still develop attachment to the illusory woman.

This answer can also help us understand how we develop attachment towards other objects. If one goes through the explanation slowly and tries to understand the point, the explanations given here are actually not too difficult to comprehend. For many of you to whom I have previously presented these teachings, this is basically a way to refresh these points.

2.1.2.2.2.1. *The reason why the illusionist generates attachment.*

The verse relating to the first part of the answer is:

31. *The creator has not abandoned the afflictive imprints
Regarding objects of knowledge.
Hence, when seeing them
The imprints of emptiness are weak.*

And the commentary explains: The illusionist that is the creator of the illusion has not abandoned in the slightest the afflictive imprints, i.e. true-grasping, with regards to the object of knowledge which is the illusory woman. Because they grasp at true existence, when they see the object, the imprints of realising emptiness are weak, and as a result they generate attachment.

If someone were to answer, 'The earlier has not abandoned the afflictions because his realisation of the illusory woman being empty of being a woman is only a partial emptiness, but in my system they are abandoned because the pervasive emptiness is realised', then this answer would be invalid.

Realising that the illusory woman is empty of being a woman is not a partial realisation of emptiness in relation to the subtle object of negation. If one has identified the object of negation, and then realised its non-existence on one phenomenon, then one can also understand it on other phenomena. This can be understood as explained in other places.

Thus in general, with regards to mistaken perceptions, to stop the non-conceptual mistaken perception of falling hairs due to the vitreous humour, it is not enough for the mental consciousness to understand the absence of falling hairs, which by itself does not stop the appearance of falling hairs. Rather one needs to clear the disease from the eye.

With regards to conceptual mistaken perceptions such as the grasping at the mottled rope as a snake due to adventitious conditions, the mere realisation of the rope will stop the mistaken perception. One does not need to meditate longer on this understanding.

Even the buddhas do not see a beginning of true grasping in the continuum of all migrators. The mental continuum has been intimately acquainted with true grasping since beginningless time; it is as if it has been 'baked in' to the continuum. Without even mentioning the seeds, just to stop coarse manifest self-grasping, it is not enough to merely realise the lack of true existence. Even if one realises the lack of true existence directly, it only abandons the intellectually acquired afflictions and their seeds, but not the innate ones. For that reason, the manifold presentation of the path of having to meditate for a long time on the path of meditation and the like was taught.

It is accepted that the conclusion of the realisation of emptiness is the elimination of the afflictions, and the realisation of emptiness can bring this about, but not immediately. It is not accepted that the afflictions need to be eliminated immediately upon the realisation of emptiness. The statement, 'How is that needed?' contains the answer.

The illusionist who creates the illusion of a woman has not abandoned the afflictive tendencies of true-grasping with regards to the object of knowledge of the illusory woman, and grasps at that object as truly existent. Hence, when he sees the illusory woman as empty of being a woman his imprints of realising emptiness are weak, and he does not have the ability to harm true-grasping as he does not possess anything that contradicts true-grasping.

The afflictive tendencies can refer to true-grasping, its seeds or the obscurations to knowledge, but here it is the earlier.

In showing the earlier Mind Only hypothetical statement as invalid, the **Prasangika-Madhyamika** proponents explain that realising the illusory woman as empty of being a woman is not a partial realisation of emptiness, in relation to the subtle object of negation. The point here is that earlier, when the Mind Only School presented the argument against the Prasangikas, they assumed the Prasangikas were asserting that the illusory woman was empty of the external woman, meaning that emptiness is the object not being an external woman.

The Prasangika School is now refuting this, saying that realising the illusory woman as being empty of an external woman is not, according to their view, even a partial emptiness. Earlier, the **Mind Only** School had argued that seeing the illusory woman as being empty of an actual external woman in itself would not overcome attachment and the other afflictions. Now the **Prasangikas** are saying that *the illusory woman being empty of an external woman is not even a partial emptiness* in relation to the object of negation.

The Prasangikas further explain that when the actual *object of negation is realised* in relation to one phenomenon, *one can also realise it* in relation to other phenomena, as explained in other places. Here, 'other places' refers to other texts. As you will recall, Aryadeva's *Four Hundred Verses* clearly explains that when the emptiness of one object or phenomenon is realised then, without needing much further investigation and reasoning, when that realisation is applied to all other objects, the emptiness of all other objects can be realised.

The commentary continues: *Then, in general with regard to mistake perceptions, to stop the non-conceptual mistaken perception of falling hairs due to the vitreous humour ...* The latter refers to an eye condition involving the vitreous humour in the eyeball. When someone sees falling hairs when in fact there is no falling hair, then that is an example of a non-conceptual mistaken perception.

The commentary says that, in order to overcome that *non-conceptual mistaken perception, it is not enough for the mental consciousness to understand the absence of falling hairs*. In other words it is not enough to think, "Although I see falling hairs, there are no actual falling hairs". Just that thought alone will not prevent the mistaken perception of falling hair. To overcome that non-conceptual mistaken perception, one has to actually cure the disease, for example, by taking some medicine or applying ointment that can stop the mistaken perception of seeing falling hairs. So it is not only a matter of the mind knowing that the perception is mistaken.

Having presented mistaken perception in relation to non-conceptual perception, the **Prasangika** then present *conceptual mistaken perception*, using the example of *grasping at the mottled rope as a snake due to adventitious conditions*. *Due to adventitious conditions* here means immediate conditions. As explained in the teachings, there are three immediate conditions required for a rope to be seen as a snake: the rope itself must be mottled, which means it has a pattern that makes it look like a snake; it is coiled like a snake; and the time of the day is such that it prevents you from seeing it clearly from a distance, for example, at dusk. So, under those conditions, a mottled rope could appear as a snake.

So, although initially one might feel fear as a result of seeing the object as a snake, all that is needed to overcome that mistaken perception is the mere realisation that it is a rope. One does not need to meditate longer on this understanding.

These examples show that both non-conceptual and conceptual mistaken perceptions can be overcome. If the non-conceptual mistaken perception is due to a condition like an eye disease, then all that is required to prevent the non-conceptual mistaken perception is to cure that eye disease. With a conceptual mistaken perception, all that is required to remove that mistaken conception is to understand, for example, that the object is actually a rope and not a snake.

As the **Prasangikas** explain further: *Even the buddhas do not see a beginning of true grasping in the continuum of all my migrators*. So while the Mind Only School asserts that there is true existence, according to the Prasangika, the grasping at true existence is what is to be overcome or abandoned. This abandonment, grasping at true existence, has existed within the mental continuum since beginningless time. Even the buddhas cannot see the beginning of this grasping at true existence within the mental continuum of sentient beings.

As the commentary further explains, the mental continuum has been intimately acquainted with grasping at true existence since beginningless time. *It is as if it is 'baked in' to the continuum*. The original Tibetan word translated as 'baked' can also mean well-ripened – in other words, it is as if self-grasping has become inseparable from the mind itself. So, leaving aside the prospect of overcoming the seed of self-grasping, even to just stop the coarse manifestation of self-grasping, it is not enough to merely realise the lack of true existence. This is the point being made here. Even overcoming the grosser or coarser manifest levels of self-grasping cannot be done just by the mere realisation of the lack of true existence.

Further, while it is not enough to merely realise the lack of true existence, to even stop the coarser manifestations of self-grasping, the commentary says: *Even if one realises the lack of true existence directly, it only abandons the intellectually acquired afflictions and their seeds, but not the innate ones*.

The conclusion here is that, *for this reason, the manifold presentation of the path of having to meditate for a long time on the path of meditation and so forth was taught*. When one attains the path of seeing on the five paths, that is when one gets the direct realisation of emptiness; the lack of inherent existence is realised at that point. However, as mentioned here, the initial direct realisation of emptiness can only overcome the intellectually acquired afflictions, but it doesn't overcome the innate ones.

Therefore, even after realising emptiness directly on the path of seeing, one has to go further. When reaching the path of meditation, even meditation itself is divided into nine different stages. All of these stages on the path of meditation relate to different levels of overcoming the subtle afflictions.

We can accept that *the conclusion of the realisation of emptiness is the elimination of the afflictions completely*. The **Prasangika-Madhyamika** proponent is saying here: "I

accept the conclusion that, having meditated on the realisation of emptiness — after having initially realised it directly, then further meditating on it again and again, perfecting that understanding of directly realising emptiness, and removing subtler levels of the afflictions gradually — at the end of this, there is a total elimination of the afflictions. That is what I accept.”

Thus the Prasangikas are asserting that the realisation of emptiness brings about the elimination of the afflictions, *but not immediately*. *It is not accepted that the afflictions need to be eliminated immediately upon the realisation of emptiness*. This a counter-argument to the Mind Only School's earlier assertion that when the illusionist merely sees the illusory woman as empty of actually being an external woman, that doesn't help to overcome the afflictions, specifically attachment to the illusory woman. So the Prasangika proponent is saying here: “I never stated that realising emptiness initially will immediately overcome all afflictions. It has to be further developed.”

This is a very important point. We can take it as a personal instruction because, leaving aside the debate with the Mind Only School, we definitely have this thought: “If I gain some understanding of emptiness, I might be able to really overcome all my afflictions and all my problems”.

In relation to the meaning of these lines: *The creator has not abandoned the afflictive imprints. Regarding objects of knowledge, the object of knowledge is the illusory woman. The commentary explains the Prasangika view that: The illusionist that creates the illusion of a woman has not abandoned the afflictive tendencies of true-grasping with regards to the object of knowledge of the illusory woman, and grasps at that object as truly existent. Hence, when he sees the illusory woman as empty of being a woman his imprints of realising emptiness are weak, and he does not have the ability to harm true-grasping as he does not possess anything that contradicts true-grasping. The afflictive tendencies can refer to true-grasping, its seeds or the obscurations to knowledge, but here it is the earlier*. This means that when we talk about the imprints of grasping at true existence, it can refer to the obscurations to knowledge, but here it is referring to the actual tendency to grasp at things as truly existent.

So the part of the Prasangika's response is:

2.1.2.2.3.2.2. Showing that meditating on the wisdom realising emptiness can overcome the afflictions and their imprints.

When one gains an understanding of the topic from the outline itself, one can comprehensively understand the presentation. Here, the sub-heading ‘Showing that meditating on the wisdom realising emptiness can overcome the afflictions and their imprints’ is the next part of the Prasangika response to the Mind Only School's earlier assertion that the illusionist still has attachment to the illusory woman while realising it to be empty. Here, the Prasangika School argues that meditation on the wisdom realising emptiness can gradually overcome the afflictions.

This section is further sub-divided into two:

2.1.2.2.3.2.2.1. General presentation

2.1.2.2.3.2.2.2. Specific presentation

2.1.2.2.3.2.2.1. General presentation

32. *Meditating on the imprints of emptiness
Abandons the imprints of phenomena;
Meditating on that called ‘completely non-existent’
Subsequently abandons even that.*

The commentary explains the meaning of this verse as follows:

By meditating on the imprints of emptiness, i.e. realising the lack of inherent existence of functionalities, the imprints of grasping at functionalities as truly existent are abandoned. By meditating on that called ‘completely non-existent’, i.e. by meditating on the lack of true existence as lacking true existence, subsequently even the true-grasping at the lack of true existence is abandoned.

If one only abandons the coarse object of negation, then one needs to subsequently abandon true existence, because true-grasping will only be abandoned from the time one has attained the cessation of the subtle object of negation from the point of view that true existence means an existent that does not exist as merely being posited by name. This will be explained later.

By meditating on the imprints of emptiness, i.e. realising the lack of inherent existence of functionalities, the imprints of grasping at functionalities as truly existent are abandoned. The mistaken conception to be abandoned is holding on to true existence. Thus, one meditates on the opposite, which is the lack of true existence, or lack of inherent existence. Meditating on the lack of inherent existence, and familiarising the mind with the lack of inherent existence through further meditation, will overcome the imprint of grasping at functionalities, of thinking that they are truly existent.

The next part is: *By meditating on that called ‘completely non-existent’, i.e. by meditating on the lack of true existence as lacking true existence, subsequently even the true-grasping at the lack of true existence is abandoned.* So even grasping at the lack of true existence can be abandoned through the meditation as well.

2.1.2.2.3.2.2.2. Specific presentation

33. *When it is said that nothing exists
The investigated functionality is not observed.
At that time the non-functionality lacks a basis,
How can it linger before one's awareness?*

The commentary explains this:

When it is said that any functionality lacks true existence, if the investigated functionality existed truly, it should be observable, but it is not. Therefore, when it is realised as lacking true existence, then the truly existent non-functionality lacks a truly existent basis. As a result, how could the refuted true existence then linger before one's awareness? As there is no suchness without subject, if the lack of true existence existed truly, it would have to be established as the nature of the subject, but that has already been refuted as being in the nature of true existence.

The first sentence of the commentary is quite clear. If a functionality – a thing or event – existed truly, then when it is investigated, it should be observable, i.e. one should be able to observe its true existence. But this is not the case. That, in itself, proves that things lack true existence.

*Therefore, when it is realised as lacking true existence, then the truly existent non-functionality lacks a truly existent basis. This is contradicting the earlier point where the **Mind Only** School asserts that even something that is false has to have a true basis. However, according to the **Prasangika** School, even the basis lacks true existence – the very basis of the lack of true existence itself lacks true existence. As a result, how could the refuted true existence then linger before one's awareness? Being a rhetorical question, this is saying it cannot, there is nothing left that is truly existent when the very basis also lacks true existence.*

If you pay attention and read these sections carefully, it should become clearer.

For the older students, the explanations presented here would be quite apparent and clear, because they have studied them previously so many times, and I have explained them many times before. So if you still don't get much of an understanding by reading it now, then the earlier explanation has not served much purpose.

However, for the newer students, of course, this topic initially appears to be quite complicated and perhaps difficult to comprehend right away. But you can refer to other teachings that present explanations such as, if something exists truly, how does it exist and why does it lack true existence? This is explained in *The Heart Sutra* and you can read commentaries on *The Heart Sutra* that explain this topic, as well as other commentaries and texts, including other commentaries on this text itself. By reading different explanations, one can get a more comprehensive understanding.

Also, the earlier teachings I gave on the tenets present the different assertions of the different schools, and thus they can become clear in one's mind.

This is where the older students can help out the newer students. If newer students have any questions or doubts, you need to approach older students so that they can share their knowledge and understanding. That is assuming that the older students are not still fumbling with their misunderstanding! *[laughter]*

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྟུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

20 September 2016

Based on the motivation we generated during the refuge and bodhicitta prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. *[meditation]*

Generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: For the sake of all other mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will engage in the practice of listening to the Mahayana teachings and then put them into practice well.

Generating such a motivation, even for a few moments, will definitely establish very strong positive imprints in our mind.

2.1.2.2.3.2.2. *Showing that meditating on the wisdom realising emptiness can overcome the afflictions and their imprints*

2.1.2.2.3.2.2.2. **Specific presentation (cont.)**

There are two verses under this heading, the first of which was covered last time. The second reads:

34. *When objects and non-objects
Do not linger before one's awareness,
And since there is no other possibility,
They are totally pacified in non-existence.*

The commentary explains:

Thus, when no truly existent functionality or non-functionality lingers before one's awareness, and as there is no other aspect of true existence at this time, one realises that all objects of true-grasping are non-existent and then all elaborations become pacified. In the perception of a person who realises emptiness directly, all dualistic elaborations with regards to emptiness are pacified and although the realisation of emptiness, conceptually or with a meaning generality has not stopped dualistic appearance, it has stopped the elaborations of true existence with regards to the meaning it ascertains. This verse and the lower five verses elaborately show the reality of the result.

The explanation starts with *when no truly existent functionality or non-functionality lingers before one's awareness*. Here functionality refers to the category of compounded phenomena, impermanence and so forth, while non-functionality refers to permanent phenomena such as non-obstructing space.

This section of the text shows the absurdity of the **Mind Only** presentation in that if things were to exist truly, as the Mind Only say they do, then they would have to exist either as functional phenomena or non-functional phenomena. These are the only two possibilities - functional or non-functional. Here functional and non-functional can also be related to the basis of imputation and the emptiness of that base, or in other words, conventional illusory phenomena or ultimate

phenomena. If something exists it has to exist in one of these two categories.

When the commentary refers to *no truly existent functionality or non-functionality* lingering before one's awareness, it is saying that if true existence were established it would have to be established either as a functionality or a non-functionality. And since true existence doesn't appear before the awareness in either in these two ways, there is no other aspect of true existence that it could be. This leaves no other possibility for it to exist, as it does not appear to the valid awareness in any other way.

One realises that all objects of true-grasping are non-existent and then all elaborations are pacified in the perception of a person who realises emptiness directly. If truly existent phenomena were to exist then they would have to appear either as functional phenomena or non-functional phenomena; or as the basis of imputation, or the emptiness of that base. When one realises that it does not appear in any of these ways, then one sees that the object of true grasping is non-existent. What is being explained here is that grasping at true existence is a mistaken conception. Whatever appears to the mind that grasps at true existence does not actually exist in the way that it appears, because it is a mistaken conception.

When one realises that, then that is the dawning of the realisation of emptiness. As the commentary mentions, *all elaborations are then pacified in the perception of a person who realises emptiness directly.* When one realises that all objects of true-grasping are non-existent, then all elaborations are pacified.

This is a very significant point. When the objects of true grasping are seen as non-existent, then, as mentioned earlier, all the elaborations are pacified. There's this statement in the teachings which says 'the non-seeing is the ultimate seeing'. This is the same point being made here. When one realises that the apprehended object of true grasping doesn't exist, then one sees emptiness.

Further on the commentary states, *in the perception of a person who realises emptiness directly, all dualistic elaborations with regard to emptiness are pacified.* We had a lot of discussion earlier about how all dualistic appearances are pacified for a being who is in meditative equipoise realising emptiness directly. For such a being there's no dualistic appearance whatsoever – such as conventional appearance, or the appearance of the subject and object as being distinct, or true existence. So the three types of dualistic appearances have completely subsided.

Furthermore, *although the realisation of emptiness, conceptually or with a meaning generality, has not stopped dualistic appearance, it has stopped the elaborations of true existence with regard to the meaning it ascertains.* As opposed to the direct perception of emptiness, when one gains a conceptual understanding of emptiness, or the realization of emptiness with a meaning generality, although the true existence of objects is not perceived it has stopped the elaborations of true existence with regard to the meaning it ascertains, there's still the perception of the object and subject as being distinct. That is because emptiness is not yet perceived directly but rather through

a generic image. Thus, the dualistic appearance of subject and object being distinct is still present.

When the commentary mentions the *elaborations of true existence with regard to the meaning it ascertains*, it means that although all dualistic appearances have not subsided, the appearance of true existence in relation to the particular object that it is seeing subsides.

To explain how a conceptual mind perceives objects, think of how, when we see the colour blue with our eye consciousness, there's nothing that obstructs us from seeing the colour blue. We see it nakedly – blue - as it is, without any obstruction. When we close our eyes however and bring up the image of blue in our mind, we see the colour blue but not directly, we are rather see or perceive it through a generic image – or meaning generality. So we're not seeing blue directly. This is the difference between direct perception and perceiving an object conceptually.

What is being presented here in summary is the stages of ascertaining the ultimate reality of phenomena up to the point of directly realising emptiness. That process of gaining the realisation of emptiness directly is a gradual one where one first obtains the conceptual understanding of emptiness. With a conceptual understanding of emptiness, one ascertains a vivid and clear understanding of what emptiness is, but there is still something that obstructs one from seeing it directly. One is able to see emptiness only through the generic image and not directly. Therefore one has to meditate further to familiarise oneself with the meditation of realising emptiness. When one further develops that then eventually one obtains the actual direct perception of emptiness.

If we take someone who enters the Mahayana path from the very beginning, (i.e. not having entered either of the two lower vehicles' paths), then on the first two paths, the **path of accumulation** and the **path of preparation** the bodhisattva has only a conceptual understanding of emptiness, and has not yet developed the direct realisation of emptiness.

Whenever a bodhisattva obtains **calm abiding focussing on emptiness**, then they have reached the **path of accumulation**.

When that bodhisattva, on further meditating on emptiness, develops the **special insight on emptiness**, then they reach the **path of preparation**.

The bodhisattvas on these paths still only have a conceptual understanding of emptiness. When that conceptual understanding which perceives emptiness through a generic image or meaning generality is further developed, and becomes a **union of calm abiding and special insight directly perceiving emptiness**, the bodhisattva then has obtained the **path of seeing**.

It is said that one with a definite lineage and sharp faculty who has not entered the Mahayana path yet, and who is inclined to become a bodhisattva, first obtains the realisation of emptiness and then develops bodhicitta. But one of duller faculty will generate bodhicitta first and then gain the realisation of emptiness. Those with sharp faculty who have not entered the path first ascertain as to whether enlightenment is possible or not, whether

liberation is possible or not, and whether it is possible to overcome the delusions or not. And then only by seeing and ascertaining that it is possible, and working towards achieving that, they develop bodhicitta because they realise that it is possible to overcome all delusions and thus see the possibilities of attaining enlightenment.

The older students will recall that this was explained in detail when we covered the Madhyamaka teachings.¹ Whenever this topic comes up in any teaching then one has to be able to relate it to this understanding. If we start to think that there's possibly a different explanation, then one has missed the point.

Gyaltsab Je then mentions:

A Red One from Toelung argues: On the basis of thinking that the meaning of this commentary, and of the abbot of the two truths, is that at the time of the manifesting of the mode of abiding, no object of knowledge or consciousness exists: 'I do not know consciousness without an object of knowledge and prime cognition without an object of comprehension. I accept the lack of true existence to exist truly.'

Gyaltsab Je further mentions:

Gyaltsab Je: It is very clear that they do not understand the position of the great pioneer², while oneself is under the influence of a mere personal investigation, to be conceited with the presumption that one has realised the meaning of the middle way is a great mistake.

2.1.2.2.3.2.2.3. Showing that one will receive the perfect complete result of abandonment

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.2.2.3.2.2.3.1. Showing with example that although there are no conceptual thoughts the hopes of the disciples will be fulfilled

2.1.2.2.3.2.2.3.2. Refuting arguments with regard to this

This is a very meticulous presentation of an argument questioning how the Buddha could benefit sentient beings if there are no conceptual thoughts.

2.1.2.2.3.2.2.3.1. Showing with example that although there are no conceptual thoughts the hopes of the disciples will be fulfilled

What is presented first here is this carefully constructed argument:

Argument: If buddhas have pacified all conceptual consciousnesses, then they also do not think, 'I shall show the Dharma to those to be subdued' and therefore it is invalid to say they fulfil the purpose of sentient beings by showing the Dharma and through other actions or enlightened activities.

The first verse under this heading serves as an answer:

*35. Like the wish-fulfilling jewel and wish-granting tree
Fulfil hopes
Similarly, through the power of prayer
The body of the conqueror appears to disciples.*

The answer in the commentary reads:

Answer: There is no fault. Although they have no conceptual thoughts, the wish-fulfilling jewel grants

¹ See the teaching of 15 October 2002 for example.

² Nagarjuna.

humans their wishes and wish-granting trees fulfil the hopes of gods when supplicated.

Similarly, the conquerors appear to those to be subdued through the power of their accumulated merit to meet them. Although the buddhas do not have conceptual thoughts, their form bodies appear and teach the Dharma through the power of previous prayers such as, 'May I be able to fulfil the purpose of sentient beings effortlessly and simultaneously.'

To establish the example, the commentary responds to the opening argument saying *there is no fault*. The example is *the wish-fulfilling jewel*, which has *no conceptual thoughts*. A wish-fulfilling jewel is a mythological jewel, representing the most precious and supreme object that humans could possess. When humans supplicate this wish-fulfilling jewel, all their wishes will be fulfilled. Likewise, for the gods a wish-fulfilling tree is the most precious object they can possess because when the gods make supplications to the wish-fulfilling tree, all of their wishes are fulfilled. Both the wish-fulfilling jewel and the wish-fulfilling tree are devoid of a consciousness, so of course they don't have any conceptual thoughts. The specific meaning of this is that it is not as if they have an intentional thought of wishing to benefit humans or gods, but nevertheless they do fulfil the wishes of the humans and gods.

To explain the meaning of the analogy the commentary states, *similarly, the conquerors appear to those to be subdued through the power of their accumulated merit to meet the conquerors*. This is a very, very significant point in relation to our personal conditions right now. What is being illustrated here is that due to the aspirational prayers of the buddhas and the merit of the sentient beings, sentient beings are benefitted by the conquerors. When we relate that to our own situation and our own conditions, we can see that meeting with perfect Mahayana teachers is due to the teachers' aspirational prayers, as well as our own merit. So we need to consider ourselves as extremely fortunate to have met these good conditions right now.

Although buddhas do not have conceptual thoughts, their form bodies appear and teach the Dharma through the power of previous prayers such as, 'May I be able to fulfil the purpose of sentient beings effortlessly and simultaneously.' The resultant state of buddhahood is a result of the practices and unimaginably extensive aspirational prayers that have been made by bodhisattvas while engaging on the path. This also shows us the importance of the power of the aspirational prayers, which we really need to acknowledge.

At this point the Tibetan version of the commentary then states, *the conquerors appear to those to be subdued through the power of their accumulated merit to meet them*. It is not really clear in the translation, but through the combination of the previous aspirational prayers of the bodhisattvas, the buddhas enacting those aspirational prayers, and due to the merit accumulated by the disciples, they are benefitted through the actions of teaching and so forth.

Having presented this explanation a counter argument is then presented:

Argument: Because a long time has passed since these prayers were made they cannot generate a result in

the present, and as the ones praying were bodhisattvas, it is invalid to posit the enlightened activities of the conquerors as their result.

This is again a very clever argument. Since the aspirational prayers were made by bodhisattvas on the path, they must have been made a long, long time ago. So how could those aspirational prayers made such a long time ago have taken effect now in the aspect of the buddhas' deeds?

We can see that the arguments being presented here are not really all that different to the questions and doubts that we normally have.

The next two verses serve as an answer:

36. *For example, although having passed
After having established an offering tree to the
garuda,
And though a long time has passed since then,
Poisons and so forth will be pacified.*
37. *Having established an offering tree to the
conquerors
In accordance with the bodhisattva practices,
Although the bodhisattva has gone beyond
misery,
They fulfil all purposes.*

The commentary explains:

Answer: There is no fault. For example, the Brahmin may have passed upon having established an offering tree to the poison pacifying garuda, and although a long time has since passed, the offering tree can even now still pacify poisons. Similarly, the bodhisattvas have established an offering tree to the conquerors by way of building up the two accumulations in accordance with the bodhisattva practices, and although the bodhisattvas have manifested the non-abiding nirvana, this does not contradict them fulfilling all the temporary and ultimate purposes of sentient beings. This debate arises from not knowing placement through continuity.

The commentary begins the explanation with the statement: *there is no fault*. The example to illustrate the point is a mythological story of a Brahmin who, in order to protect villages from harmful snakes and so forth, took it upon himself to make great offerings to a garuda, which is a mythological bird that devours snakes. From the mass of offerings that he established through his prayers and practices, he made the offering tree i.e. great mass of offerings, to the garuda. And even though *a long time has passed* since then, that mass of offerings still has that ability to continuously pacify poisons. This analogy is used to counter the earlier argument that there can be no effects if a long time passes.

Then, as further explained, *similarly, the bodhisattvas have established an offering tree, a great mass of offerings, to the conquerors by way of building up the two accumulations in accordance with the bodhisattva practices. Although the bodhisattvas have manifested non-abiding nirvana*, meaning that when bodhisattvas reach the ultimate state of enlightenment, *this does not contradict them fulfilling all the temporary and ultimate purposes of sentient beings*.

As the commentary further mentions, *this debate arises from not knowing placement through continuity*. Basically, this argument arises from failing to understand that a

benefit that occurs on a continuous basis has a continuous effect.

2.1.2.2.3.2.2.3.2. Refuting arguments with regard to this

The first two lines of the verse are presented:

*38ab. How can one become endowed with a result
From having presented offerings to one lacking
mind?*

This is then followed by the argument from the commentary:

Argument by a hearer: How can one achieve the result of merit by making offerings to a buddha, who lacks conceptual mind? They also do not possess the thought of having received the offering.

This is an argument by a follower of the hearer vehicle who says, *how can one achieve the result of merit by making offerings to a buddha, who lacks conceptual mind?* This is implying that since a buddha does not have a conceptual mind that can know that they have received an offering and so forth, then how can one be sure that one actually receives the benefit of that offering?

Then the next two lines of the verse serve as the answer:

*38cd. Because it is taught that it is the same,
Whether they remain or have gone beyond
sorrow.*

The answer from the commentary:

Answer: It follows it is valid that merits are received by making offerings to the buddhas although they lack conceptual consciousness. Why? Because it teaches in the *Maitri Lion's Roar Sutra* that it is equally meritorious to make offerings to the body of a buddha that is actually present, as it is to the relics of a buddha who has passed beyond sorrow.

As presented in the commentary, when hearers say that it is not valid to make *offerings to a buddha, who lacks conceptual mind*, so it follows *it is valid that merits are received by making offerings to the buddhas although they lack conceptual consciousness*. And the reason is *because it is taught in the Maitri Lion's Roar Sutra*. Since we both agree that the Buddha's words in the sutras are a valid source that we can rely upon, there is a quotation from a sutra that explains our argument.

The quotation from the sutra reads,

Aside from the benefits of circumambulating,
Making offerings to those present and
To the relics of those gone beyond sorrow,
There is no difference in the merits
To a mind of equal faith.

As clearly mentioned in the quotation, when those who generate faith equal to the faith of the buddhas make offerings to images of the Buddha, they receive the merit equal to making the actual offering to the Buddha, because of that faith.

These are very, very significant and important points for our personal practice. Rather than doing some regular practice and making offerings mindlessly, we need to remember that we are making an offering to the actual Buddha. When we remember that, then it makes our practice much more powerful, and much more worthwhile because, as mentioned here, one receives the same benefit as if one had made the offering directly.

The main point is that when one makes an offering to a reliquary, or an image or representation of the Buddha as if it were the actual Buddha, then the benefit one gains from that is equal; meaning that the blessings one receives from the representation of the Buddha will be the same as receiving an actual blessing from the Buddha.

As you would recall, one of the refuge commitments is to regard all representations of the buddhas as being an actual buddha, and to have respect for any representation of the Buddha as being the actual Buddha. That is part of our refuge practice. Therefore these are significant points showing us the way to accumulate extensive merit when we engage in practices of making offerings and so forth. That is a significant point for us to recall.

Under the same heading the next four lines of verse are:

*39. Whether illusory or ultimate,
The result is taught in the scriptures.
For example, like having a result
Relative to a true buddha.*

The commentary explains their meaning:

The Buddha taught in the scriptures that one will receive a result by making offerings to the buddhas and so forth regardless of whether they exist conventionally or ultimately. For example, it is just as you assert. This can be seen in your assertion of the results with regard to a true buddha. The important meaning or point is that, while treating the analysis into the meaning of suchness with equanimity for the moment, regardless of whether they are true or false, one will receive the result in accordance with the functionality. This is the important meaning.

Again these are very pertinent points. Earlier we saw that the Realists – the Vaibhashikas and Sautrantikas – accept true existence. Regardless of whether one accepts the buddhas as being truly established or truly existent, or whether they lack true existence, the point is that by relying on the buddhas, making offerings and so forth, the resultant benefit is the same. The commentary goes on to say *it is just as you assert. This can be seen in your assertion of the results with regard to a true buddha*. Basically this is saying that gaining extensive results by making offerings to a true or truly existent buddha is similar to our earlier presentation.

The commentary further mentions that *the important meaning or point is that, while treating the analysis into the meaning of suchness with equanimity for the moment*. What it is saying here is: let's just put aside for the time being whether something exists truly or not, the main thing is that *one will receive the result in accordance with the functionality*. One will actually definitely receive the result of making offerings to the buddhas and so forth.

2.2 Establishing that even just to attain liberation one needs to realise emptiness

There are two subdivisions.

2.2.1. Argument

2.2.2. Answer

These are points that were raised earlier. As I've also emphasised, the unique presentation of the Prasangika is that one definitely needs to realise emptiness to obtain even liberation. Before we actually go into the explanation here, I'd like to check with you, why is it necessary to realise emptiness?

Student: It is my understanding that if any realisations of compassion or other such realisations weren't on the basis of emptiness they would not be accurate realisations. So we would always have new problems coming up, because those other realisations wouldn't have [inaudible].

Basically what you are saying in a roundabout way is another point that is also mentioned in the teachings, which is that compassion and so forth is not a direct opponent to the delusions, and therefore cannot overcome the delusions. That is the point here – in order to achieve liberation one has to overcome the opponent to obtaining liberation, which is this grasping at a self. It is only that which directly opposes grasping to a self - which is selflessness - that can become a cause to obtain liberation.

Can someone else give an explanation of what liberation means?

Student: Being free from afflictive obscurations.

I want the specific meaning of that word 'liberation'. What is one being liberated from?

Many students answer together.

The word liberation has a connotation that one is bound by something. To be liberated would have a connotation of being liberated from something to which one has been bound, right? Here that specific binding factor is karma and delusions. It's the karma and delusions that bind us to our contaminated aggregates. Our contaminated aggregates are cyclic existence and what binds us to our own cyclic existence of the contaminated aggregates is delusions and karma.

To give a specific illustration to clarify the point: If someone is bound to a tree with strong rope or chains then the tree is analogous to our samsaric aggregates. Basically, when we talk about samsara in relation to ourselves, our aggregates are our samsara; the person tied to the tree is analogous to our consciousness, and the strong rope or chains that bind that person to the tree are delusions and karma. When the chains are unshackled, then the person is free. Likewise, when karma and delusions are overcome, then we are freed from that which binds us to contaminated aggregates.

On a personal level we need to understand that samsara refers to our contaminated aggregates. Even in Tibetan, the term samsara can be misunderstood as being a place, and this has carried over into English. When samsara is referred to as a place then it is specifically referring to the abode of samsara.

The actual samsara is one's own aggregates. When the teachings refer to circling in samsara, they are referring to circling from the most unfortunate realm of the hells without respite, up to the highest form of the cyclic existence, which is called the peak of existence. Beings move through many different realms uncontrollably, i.e. bound by delusions and karma to these existences, from the lowest of the cyclic existence to the hell without respite, up to the peak of existence, and every other existence in between. We have no control because we are bound by delusions and karma. So when we talk about samsara, it is good to have a clear understanding that it is

our personal samsara, to which we are bound by our own delusions and karma.

When one is not bound by delusions and karma, yet is reborn in the abode of samsara, it has come about through aspirational prayers to benefit sentient beings. Bodhisattvas are still in the abode of samsara but they are not there involuntarily due to karma and delusions. Rather, due to their aspirational prayers, they are there as a way to benefit sentient beings in samsara.

2.2.1. Argument

The *argument* is presented in these two lines:

*40ab. One becomes liberated by seeing truth,
Why should one see emptiness?*

Other translations of the last line say, *What does emptiness do?* That is the argument.

This is a presentation from a hearer opponent:

Hearer opponent: By meditating on the direct perception of the four noble truths' 16 aspects of impermanence and so forth, one will attain the result of a liberated arhat. Why should one realise the emptiness of true existence of all phenomena for this? It is without purpose and even unsuitable.

Then Gyaltsab Je explains:

Gyaltsab Je: For this hearer opponent not only does one not need to realise emptiness to attain enlightenment, they do not even accept the concept of selflessness of phenomena. These, who do not accept the Mahayana sutras to be the words of the Buddha, are the main opponent. To refute them, and to refute on the side also those that, while positing the Mahayana sutras as valid, assert that one does not need to realise the selflessness of phenomena to attain the result of an arhat, I state these sources which, refuting these opponents, establish that only the wisdom realising emptiness is the path to be liberated from existence.

2.2.2. Answer

The *answer* is presented in these three subdivisions:

2.2.2.1. Establishing that only the wisdom realising emptiness is the path to liberation from existence

2.2.2.2. Establishing it as the path to the non-abiding nirvana

2.2.2.3. Advising that it is suitable for those wishing for liberation to meditate on emptiness

2.2.2.1. ESTABLISHING THAT ONLY THE WISDOM REALISING EMPTINESS IS THE PATH TO LIBERATION FROM EXISTENCE

This is again subdivided into two:

2.2.2.1.1. Establishing this with the Mahayana sutras

2.2.2.1.2. Establishing this with logic

2.2.2.1.1. Establishing this with the Mahayana sutras

The lines from the verse under this heading are:

*40cd. Because it is taught in scripture that
Without this path there is no enlightenment.*

This is the point where the actual answer is presented, and there's quite a bit of it. So it will be good for you read it as preparation for next time.

In other parts of the text Gyaltsab Je attempts to just give a literal explanation of the verse by inserting all of the words of the verse into the explanation. Here we can see that much more explanation is presented, and this is

actually Lama Tsong Khapa's own words, as they are from notes taken when Lama Tsong Khapa himself was teaching. So these are actually very significant points.

In the following verses Shantideva will be establishing the Mahayana sutras as valid teachings of the Buddha. These are very significant points that will be presented, and so it is good to be familiar with them.

In the Middle Way teachings establishing that the Mahayana teachings are valid words of the Buddha is explained in the part on identifying the lineage of bodhisattvas. I'll not go through the explanation now but if you can prepare by reading the text, then it will become clearer when I go through the text in our next session.

We can conclude here for the evening. Once you are able to apply the logical reasoning in its proper place then it will be easy to understand and read the text. It just requires the application of logic.

Addendum

Final revision of the commentary on verse 29 from the teaching of 6 September 2016

29. *When the mind is devoid of that perceived
Everyone will have gone thus.
In that case, what is the benefit
Of that imputed as mere mind?*

The commentary explains:

If this is accepted: It follows that when the mind is free from the dualistic appearance of apprehender and apprehended, then all sentient beings become thus gone ones and effortlessly attain liberation - because all minds are free from the appearances of apprehender and apprehended.

If however one accepts this position, then it follows that there is not the slightest need to comprehend the lack of apprehender and apprehended as being of different substance, which is labelled mere mind, in order to achieve the omniscient transcendental wisdom.

The explanation is that *it follows that when the mind is free from the dualistic appearance of apprehender and apprehended, then all sentient beings become thus gone ones and effortlessly attain liberation.* According to the **Mind Only** system the apprehension of form and the mind apprehending form being of different substance is the grasping to self of phenomena. So according to them, if things did exist externally then this is how it would have to exist, i.e. apprehender and apprehended being distinct and of different substance. Thus, they assert that the apprehender and apprehend are devoid of being distinct.

So the **Madhyamikas** are saying: at the time *when the mind is free from the dualistic appearance of apprehender and apprehended*, then all sentient beings by default would already be *thus gone ones* or enlightened buddhas *effortlessly, and attain liberation - because, according to you, Mind Only, all minds would have be free from the appearances of apprehender and apprehended.* Since, according to you *all minds are free from the appearances of apprehender and apprehended*, then this would mean that sentient beings are effortlessly and spontaneously liberated. Again according to the Mind Only, form and

the apprehension of form being devoid of being different substance, is the selflessness of phenomena. Thus the **Madhyamikas** conclude: *then it follows that there is not the slightest need to comprehend the lack of apprehender and apprehended as being of different substance, which is labelled mere mind, in order to achieve the omniscient transcendental wisdom.*

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །སྤྱང་རྒྱལ་མེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འདུག་པ་བརྟུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

27 September 2016

As usual let us begin with our practice of meditation, based on the motivation that we had generated during the recitation of the refuge and bodhicitta prayer. Indeed, whenever one engages in meditation practice it would be good to first begin by generating refuge and bodhicitta.

That requires not just reciting the words but actually spending some time generating a strong mind of going for refuge and trying one's best to generate a bodhicitta motivation. If one regularly spends some time doing this, then with familiarity one's practice will surely improve.

If one goes straight into meditation without first generating a proper motivation, such as taking refuge and generating bodhicitta, then the practice will not have much effect. We have recited these prayers thousands of times, but if we have not taken much initiative to really understand the implication of taking refuge and what it really means to generate the bodhicitta motivation, thus gaining some affinity with this, then all the recitations we've done so far would not amount to much benefit. I have mentioned many times before that generating a proper mind of refuge should not be underestimated; it is a really essential practice that subsumes the essential points of the entire path.

To incorporate a real understanding of refuge, one needs to spend significant time thinking about the two causes of going for refuge. The first is generating a fear of the sufferings of cyclic existence in general, and the sufferings of the lower realms in particular. The second cause is to generate the mind of complete trust and reliance on the objects of refuge, the Three Jewels. If one takes the time to generate the first cause in one's mind, it will familiarise our mind with genuine renunciation. Then, when one contemplates the second cause, one sees that the object of refuge has the full potential to protect one from having to experience the sufferings of the lower realms and cyclic existence. When one places one's full confidence and reliance in the objects of refuge e.g. in the Buddha, by saying 'You have the full ability to protect me. I definitely don't want to experience unimaginable great sufferings, so please bless my mind to be able to engage in the practices of developing renunciation as a way to be free from all sufferings'. Contemplating how all beings are also suffering and have the equal right to be free from suffering, and generating bodhicitta right after this, is the means to ensure our refuge becomes the Mahayana refuge.

Therefore, we do not just wish for ourselves to be free from suffering but for all living beings to be free from all sufferings of the lower realms and cyclic existence. For that purpose, with the understanding that the objects of refuge have the full ability to free oneself and all beings from all suffering, one makes supplications to request

blessings for oneself and all beings to be free from all suffering.

To make this more meaningful it would be more effective at times adopt ordinary language, as if we were speaking to a close friend, saying for example, 'I know that you, the Buddhas, Dharma and Sangha, have the full ability to help me and all sentient beings, so please grant me your blessings to subdue my mind.' When one thinks like this in ordinary terms, it can inspire us and have a stronger effect on our mind. At our ordinary level it's good to apply whatever means that work for our mind.

Another significant point about taking wholehearted refuge is that it is the foundation for receiving all other vows, e.g. pratimoksha or self-liberation vows. The teachings explain that the real foundation for receiving the vows is generating a mind of renunciation, and this in turn is based on refuge.

Going back to the two causes of generating refuge, when one wholeheartedly thinks about the suffering of cyclic existence, and particularly the suffering of the lower realms, one develops a strong sense of fear about having to experience that suffering; the greater the fear the stronger the determination to be free from the sufferings will naturally be. So when one develops that strong aspiration to be free from these sufferings, one naturally develops the second cause, one naturally develops the second cause, which is the mind that confidently understands that the objects of refuge have the ability to help one to be free. This in turn helps one to develop strong renunciation in one's mind.

More significantly, the causes for obtaining higher status in our next life involve the practice of ethics, which is to observe the vows that we have taken. This then protects one from being born in the lower realms. When one practises moral discipline and keeps the vows with the strong intention to be free from the lower realms, this becomes the cause for one to obtain a higher rebirth in the human or god realms in the next life. When one practices moral discipline with the intention that it be the cause to be free from cyclic existence in all the six realms, that then becomes the cause for one to attain liberation.

The teachings explain that when one incorporates these sentiments while taking refuge, it will ensure that the effects become really sound. Further, when taking refuge is preceded with the intention that it will be the cause for all living beings to be free from all suffering, then it becomes the specific Mahayana refuge, and a cause for enlightenment. In this way we can understand how the refuge practice incorporates the entire path. It is because refuge combines so many essential points of the path that His Holiness the Dalai Lama often emphasises that the act of going for refuge is an essential practice.

Actually, taking refuge is not unique to Buddhism. All religions have the practice of taking refuge that precedes whatever other practices or rituals they engage in. For example, before starting a ceremony Christians make the sign of the cross, representing the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Every tradition has an act of refuge essential to their faith. If we consider ourselves Buddhists then it is important to understand what our objects of refuge are, what they entail, what it actually means to take refuge

and so forth. As mentioned earlier, when we expand our understanding of going for refuge, it actually combines all the essential points of the path.

If our understanding of refuge is limited to just the recitation of the refuge prayer, then it would be not much more than that, just a recitation. If we fail to incorporate the actual understanding, then when we recite the prayer, it will be like 'Oh yes, I'll just recite this refuge prayer that I know from memory'. But then we will find that this doesn't really move our mind. If this happens, it's a sign we have not paid much attention to the actual meaning of refuge.

As mentioned earlier, the essential part of refuge is thinking about the two causes. If one takes time to contemplate the two causes of going for refuge in depth, it will move one's mind to the point where one really feels compelled to go for refuge wholeheartedly. This means one has contemplated the actual reality, not just imagined the sufferings of the lower realms and the suffering of cyclic existence in general, but contemplates the prospect of having to actually experience them personally.

Reflecting on this will move one's mind to the point where one feels the desperate urgency to be free from having to experience all those unimaginable sufferings, with the understanding that the objects of refuge have the full ability to help free oneself. Then the practice of going for refuge won't just be words, but a real act of going for refuge from the depths of one's heart.

I have noticed that Christian priests are also referred to as 'Father'. There might be different subtleties; grosser level and subtler level connotations of what 'Father' means. The priest himself can't be referred to as God so maybe it is more suitable for him if he refers to himself as 'Father'.

A student says that Christianity is patriarchal and all the higher positions go to men.

That seems to have changed in recent years. Now apparently women can also become priests. I noticed soon after I came to Australia that the gender discrimination was very prominent. Even in the same jobs men were paid much more and women were paid less. This must be true in other countries too, however I did notice that this was prevalent here. Equality and women's rights are significant issues to consider and will be beneficial for future generations.

(Meditation)

Now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I definitely need to achieve enlightenment, so for this purpose I will engage in listening to the teachings and put them into practice well.

The extent to which one makes this a commitment, prior to engaging in the teachings, will ensure the practice becomes more meaningful and purposeful.

2.2. Establishing that even just to attain liberation one needs to realise emptiness

There are two subdivisions:

2.2.1. Argument

2.2.2. Answer

2.2.1. Argument

The commentary begins by presenting the argument of a hearer opponent, who is a proponent of the Hinayana or Lower Vehicle tenets.

Firstly, it is good to understand the difference between a hearer who is a proponent of the Hinayana tenets and a hearer who has entered the path. A hearer who has entered the path doesn't necessarily have to be a proponent of the tenets of the Lower Vehicle, as there are also hearers who are proponents of the Mind Only School's tenets as well as the Middle Way School's tenets, i.e. the Svatantrika and Prasangika views. Hearers who are proponents of the Lower Vehicle tenets can, of course, definitely enter the path because they are able to develop renunciation. However, as they hold the views of Lower Vehicle tenets, they will not be able to advance further than the path of accumulation, because to attain the path of preparation and onwards one has to have the correct understanding of emptiness.

According to the Prasangika, all hearers and solitary realisers who are on the path of preparation, all the way up to becoming an arhat, have to necessarily be proponents of the Prasangika view because they would have gained the realisation of emptiness. That is because without the correct understanding of emptiness, followed by the actual realisation of emptiness, one could not possibly obtain the path of seeing and onwards. According to the Prasangika, anyone who realises emptiness would necessarily have to be a proponent of the Madhyamika Prasangika view.

So, a hearer who has realised emptiness would be a hearer who is on the Hinayana path and a proponent of the Mahayana tenet. This means that a proponent of the Mahayana tenets doesn't necessarily have to be a Mahayanist. Further, this means that someone who is a proponent of the Mahayana vehicle hasn't necessarily entered the Mahayana path.

We claim to hold the views of the Mahayana tenets, but we may not have entered the path of the Mahayana vehicle yet. The criterion for entering the Mahayana path is generating actual bodhicitta. Unless one has developed bodhicitta, which is the hallmark or doorway to the Mahayana path, there is no way one can enter the Mahayana path. Therefore one needs to know the distinction between a proponent of the Mahayana, and an actual Mahayanist who has entered the Mahayana path. This clarifies the distinction between hearers who are Hinayana proponents, and hearers who are proponents of Mahayana tenets.

One also needs to understand that there is a distinction between the uncommon Hinayana sutras and the common teachings shared by the Hinayana and the Mahayana. There are hearers who adhere only to the uncommon Hinayana teachings, and hearers who adhere to the shared teachings, which are common to both the Hinayana and the Mahayana. So, the hearer opponent

referred to in the commentary refers specifically to one who adheres to the Hinayana tenets.

Their argument is:

*40ab. One becomes liberated by seeing truth.
Why should one see emptiness?*

Hearer opponent: One will attain the result of a liberated arhat by meditating on the direct perception of the four noble truths' sixteen aspects of impermanence and so forth.

This opponent posits that by meditating on the direct perception of the four noble truths and the sixteen aspects, one becomes liberated. One needs to understand here that they are referring to the coarse understandings of the four noble truths.

For example, in relation to the four aspects of the truth of suffering i.e. impermanence, suffering, empty and selfless there is no specific difference in grossness and subtlety of impermanence between the Hinayana proponent's view and the Prasangika view. Impermanence is basically the same insofar that functional things are momentary – i.e. changing from moment to moment. So, there is no further subtlety than that.

With suffering, however, there some differences, but particularly in relation to emptiness and selflessness there is a huge difference of grossness and subtlety between the lower schools and the Prasangika. So this hearer proponent is essentially saying that by meditating on the direct perceptions of the four noble truths and the sixteen aspects, (which are only on the coarse level) one can become liberated. I have explained the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths in detail when we did the teachings on the Middle Way.¹

As further stated in the commentary:

Why should one realise the emptiness of true existence of all phenomena for that? It is without purpose and even unsuitable.

Here again we need to understand that the proponents of the Hinayana tenets, i.e. the Sautrantika and Vaibhashika, do not accept the selflessness of phenomena. Gyalsab Je further clarifies this in the comment relating to the opponents' views using the words of Lama Tsong Khapa.

2.2.2. Answer

The commentary beings by stating:

Answer: For this hearer opponent not only does one not need to realise emptiness to attain enlightenment, they do not even accept the concept of selflessness of phenomena. These, who do not accept the Mahayana sutras to be the words of the Buddha, are the main opponent.

As explained here, the main opponents are those who do not accept the Mahayana sutras. This implies that some proponents of the Lower Vehicle do not accept the Mahayana as the true words of the Buddha. The commentary further explains:

To refute them and to refute on the side also those who, while positing the Mahayana sutras as valid, assert that one does not need to realise the selflessness of phenomena to attain the result of an arhat.

Again, while some may assert the Mahayana sutras as the words of the Buddha, they do not, however, assert that one has to realise the selflessness of phenomena or emptiness to attain the result of becoming an arhat.

I state these sources which, refuting these opponents, establish that only the wisdom realising emptiness is the path to be liberated from existence.

The point here is that positing any sutra as valid (in this case a Mahayana sutra) means it has to be infallible in relation to the meaning that is presented. Hence, to present the Mahayana vehicle as valid requires accepting whatever is presented in the Mahayana vehicle to be infallible. Some may accept the Mahayana vehicle as valid on one hand, but then say that one doesn't need to realise the selflessness of phenomena to attain the result of an arhat to be liberated, which is a contradiction. These include not only the lower schools of the Sautrantika and Vaibhashika but also the Mind Only schools, and within the Middle Way school the Svatantrika as well, for they do not adhere to the correct understanding of the view of selflessness of phenomena.

The answer to the opponents' arguments is subdivided into three headings, which are meticulously presented.

2.2.2.1. Establishing that only the wisdom realising emptiness is the path to liberation from existence

That is, in order to be free from cyclic existence one cannot do without the wisdom realising emptiness.

2.2.2.2. Establishing it as the path to the non-abiding nirvana

Further, even to attain non-abiding nirvana i.e. full enlightenment, the realisation of emptiness is essential.

2.2.2.3. Advising that it is suitable for those wishing for liberation to meditate on emptiness

2.2.2.1. ESTABLISHING THAT ONLY THE WISDOM REALISING EMPTINESS IS THE PATH TO LIBERATION FROM EXISTENCE

This is divided into two:

2.2.2.1.1. Establishing it with Mahayana sutras

2.2.2.1.2. Establishing it with logic

The detailed explanation of this is presented in the Middle Way teachings that I have explained in the past.²

2.2.2.1.1. Establishing it with Mahayana sutras

*40cd. Because it is taught in scripture that
Without this path there is no enlightenment.*

It follows one definitely needs to realise emptiness to attain the result of a hearer or self-liberator arhat. For what reason? Because in the *Sutras of the Wisdom Gone Beyond* it teaches that without meditating on this chapter realising emptiness one cannot attain any of the three types of enlightenment.

In the *Great Commentary on the Introduction to the Bodhisattva Practices* it quotes the *Perfection of Wisdom* sutras as saying that those with a recognition of functionalities cannot attain liberation, and that all those perfectly enlightened in the three times, as well as the results from a stream enterer up to a self-liberator are attained only in dependence on this perfection of wisdom. The scriptures refer not only to the highest enlightenment.

¹ See the teachings of June 2002.
Chapter 9

² See 2005 teachings.

Further: I am not going to cite the innumerable quotes from the sutras showing that hearers and self-liberators realise the selflessness of phenomena. In these two lines Mahayana sutras were stated as an argument out of an understanding that some of those following the hearer's path accept the reasons of Mahayana sutras.

If one thinks, 'Is it not devoid of reason to state arguments to those that do not accept Mahayana quotes as valid' then there is no fault. The opponent does not need to immediately establish the three modes of all arguments. The pervasion of the argument is also established here, just as it is below through the reason of similarity and normality.

It establishes the point of this reason that the wisdom realising emptiness is the path to attain the three types of enlightenment. Although it is not established as the word of the Buddha by establishing the pervasion, there is no fault in relating the proof to quotation. Master Shantideva cited these texts also because he knew it would refute the wrong conception of thinking of isolated Mahayana sutra as not the words of the Buddha.

The commentary opens with a response to the Lower Vehicle hearer opponent who states that one does not have to realise emptiness in order to attain liberation. It confirms that one definitely does need to realise emptiness to attain the result of hearer or self-liberator arhat.

It notes that if one were to ask the reason, it is explained in the *Sutras of the Wisdom Gone Beyond* which teach that without meditating on the path realising emptiness one cannot attain any of the three types of enlightenment i.e. the hearer's enlightenment, the self-liberator's enlightenment or the bodhisattva's enlightenment.

It further explains:

In the *Great Commentary on the Introduction to the Bodhisattva Practices* it quotes the *Perfection of Wisdom* sutras as saying that those with a recognition of functionalities cannot attain liberation ...

What is referred to here as the 'recognition of functionalities' is the recognition of true existence or grasping at a self. Then the commentary further explains

... and that all those perfectly enlightened in the three times, as well as the results from a stream enterer up to a self-liberator are attained only in dependence on this perfection of wisdom.

This means that enlightened beings such as the buddhas and all those perfectly enlightened in the three times, as well as the results from a stream enterer up to a self-liberator, are attained only in dependence on this perfection of wisdom.

These include once returner, never returner and all the stages of the hearer's path, as well as the self-liberator's path all the way to the self-liberator arhat. All these are only attained in dependence on the perfection of wisdom, i.e. the realisation of emptiness.

The emphasis here is that the scriptures refer not only to the highest enlightenment. As quoted earlier, this refers to the Buddha of the three times, as well as the result of the stream enterer up to the self-liberator arhat. These are all mentioned in the teachings as those who depend on the perfection of wisdom, or the realisation of emptiness.

It does not just refer to the highest enlightenment as needing to understand the realisation of emptiness, but all of these earlier mentioned stages.

Then Gyaltsab Je mentions:

I am not going to cite the innumerable quotes from the sutras showing that hearers and self-liberators realise the selflessness of phenomena.

Here he is indicating that there are many citations from other texts as well.

In these two lines Mahayana sutras were stated as an argument out of an understanding that some of those following the hearer's path accept the reasons of Mahayana sutras.

In referring to the two lines from the root text, the commentary further mentions:

In these two lines Mahayana sutras were stated as an argument out of an understanding that some of those following the hearer's path accept the reasons of Mahayana sutras.

This indicates that some followers of the hearer's path do accept the reasons of the Mahayana sutras. As such it implies this argument is for those who do not accept the Mahayana as the Buddha's words. Of course those who accept that the Mahayana teachings are the Buddha's words do not need to use any of the arguments presented here.

The next is:

Is it not devoid of reason to state arguments to those that do not accept Mahayana quotes as valid, then there is no fault. The opponent does not need to immediately establish the three modes of all arguments. The pervasion of the argument is also established here, just as it is below through the reason of similarity and normality.

As an answer to that argument the commentary says:

The opponent does not need to immediately establish the three modes of all arguments.

In other words, the opponent does not need to have to completely accept all the valid reasons of that argument right away.

The pervasion of the argument is also established here, just as it is below through the reason of similarity and normality.

The reasons of similarity and normality are presented next, along with the pervasiveness of these reasons.

The commentary further explains:

It establishes the point of this reason that the wisdom realising emptiness is the path to attain the three types of enlightenment. Although it is not established as the word of the Buddha by establishing the pervasion, there is no fault in relating the proof to quotation.

The master [Shantideva] also cited these texts because he knew it would refute the wrong conception of thinking the Mahayana sutras are not the words of the Buddha. It establishes the point of this reason that the wisdom realising emptiness is the path to attain the three types of enlightenment. Although it is not established as the word of the Buddha by establishing the pervasion, there is no fault in relating the proof to quotation.

2.2.2.1.2. Establishing it with logic

This is subdivided into two:

2.2.2.1.2.1. Establishing it by way of similarity

2.2.2.1.2.2. Establishing it with common reason, which earlier mentioned normality.

2.2.2.1.2.1. Establishing it by way of similarity

*41ab. If the Mahayana is not established
Then how are your texts established?*

Argument: The Mahayana Sutras are not established for me because I do not regard them as the words of the Buddha, and I do not accept them to be valid. Stating them as an argument to establish that the realisation of emptiness is also the path for the hearers and self-liberators makes the argument equal to the proposition.

Answer: How do you establish the quotes belonging to the Hinayana basket, which you accept to be valid, as the words of the Buddha?

The reply to this by the opponent is as follows:

Reply: The Hinayana sutras are the words of the Buddha because we both accept them to be the words of the Buddha.

The opponent says here that presenting to me that the Mahayana sutras are valid, and quoting citations to prove it, doesn't work for me, because I don't even accept the Mahayana sutras as valid from the beginning.

The next lines of verse read:

*41cd. Since they are established for both of us.
Initially they are not established for you.*

This is the reasoning of similarity.

*42ab. The conditions through which you generate
faith
Are the same for the Mahayana.*

The commentary explains the meaning of these lines.

The reasons are exactly the same here because immediately upon birth, and before you established the meaning of the scriptures with logic, also the Hinayana basket was not established as valid for you. But later, through the condition of accepting them to be valid scriptures the *Great Treatise* and so forth, which shows the pure method within in the Vinaya and the Sutra, as well as not contradicting the Abhidharma, the method for comprehending the words and meanings, you generated faith in the sutras. The arguments with which you established that valid scripture as believable apply equally to the Mahayana Sutras.

The commentary states that the reasons presented are exactly the same as a Mahayana proponent refuting the Hinayana proponent who does not accept the Mahayana as the words of the Buddha, particularly *The Perfection of Wisdom*. Having asked 'How do you accept the baskets of the Hinayana as being the valid words of the Buddha?' they respond by saying 'because we both accept them'. Then the commentary mentions here:

Immediately upon birth, and before you established the meaning of the scriptures with logic, also the Hinayana basket was not established as valid for you.

What you state now as the Hinayana basket being valid words of the Buddha was not something you could establish right from the beginning. To see them as valid you had to go through a process of learning about them,

studying them, and then it dawned on you that they were actually valid. However, before engaging in studies to gain understanding, they would not have appeared to you as being valid.

How they accept them to be valid scriptures is done by:

Accepting them to be valid scriptures of the *Great Treatise* and so forth, which shows the pure method within in the Vinaya and the Sutra, as well as not contradicting the Abhidharma.

So in relation to the three baskets of the Hinayana sutra, it is related that the earliest disciples of the Buddha gathered as a council to establish that they had heard it from the Buddha themselves. Then due to that and further engaging in training, such as applying the training of the three higher trainings of morality, contemplation and meditation and wisdom in this way, they tested out the teachings, as mentioned here:

The method for comprehending the words and meanings through reason, you generated faith in the sutras.

They established the reasons for validity through earlier accounts of how the sutras came into being, as well as having tested out the treatises through reason and logic. Then they are accepted as valid.

'Just as that is the case for you', the Prasangika school says:

The arguments with which you established that valid scripture as believable apply equally to the Mahayana sutras.

This is equally true for the Mahayana sutras. When you engage in understanding and practice, test them out with reason and logic, then you'll establish the teachings of the Hinayana basket as valid words of the Buddha. It is exactly the same for the Mahayana sutras.

The next lines of verse read:

*42cd. If true because two others assert it, then
The Vedas and so forth also become true.*

43a. If you say, 'The Mahayana is in question',

The commentary explains here:

If this is not the case, and something becomes valid because two random people accept it, then it follows that also the Vedas and so forth are true, because there are two parties that accept them to be true.

Argument: Because you also accept the Hinayana sutras that I accept as the words of the Buddha, we do not have any dispute there. But because I do not accept the Mahayana sutras to be the words of the Buddha, we have a dispute in that regard.

The explanation here is quite clear. If it is not the case that something becomes valid because two random parties accept it, then it follows that the Vedas, which are non-Buddhist tenets, are also true because two parties accept them to be true.

The opponent presents the argument:

Argument: Because you also accept the Hinayana sutras that I accept as the words of the Buddha, we do not have any dispute there.

The opponent says that 'there is no dispute with the baskets of the Hinayana teachings because you accept it and I accept it. But because I do not accept the Mahayana

sutras as the words of the Buddha we have a dispute'. So what the opponent is presenting here is that the very fact that there is a dispute over the Mahayana teachings indicates that it is questionable whether they are the words of the Buddha.

What is being presented as an argument is that because there is a dispute that is a reason to say that they are not valid. The remaining part of the verse that reflects on this meaning is:

*43bcd. Non-Buddhists also question the texts,
And other texts are also questioned by
Self and other. Therefore they should be
abandoned.*

Answer: The Hinayana scriptures are questioned by non-Buddhists and Hinayanists alike. Also, while the Hinayana scriptures are accepted by all eighteen Hinayana schools as valid, there are individual quotes, such as the quotes that show the existence of an intermediate state, which are accepted by some Hinayana schools as the words of the Buddha, but are also not accepted by some Hinayana schools. It follows that the Hinayana baskets being valid is also something to give up, as they contain parts that are disputed by Buddhist and non-Buddhist schools.

The commentary explains the Hinayana response that if you cannot accept the Mahayana sutras as being valid words of the Buddha because there is a dispute, then it follows that the Hinayana scriptures are also questioned by both non-Buddhists and Hinayanists, on the same basis. Within the Hinayana scriptures some texts assert that there is a self, and others refute that saying that there is no self. Also in terms of permanence, there are texts that say some functional things are permanent, and other texts say they are not permanent and so forth. There are many points of disagreement and thus dispute.

The commentary further mentions here that while:

Hinayana scriptures are accepted by all eighteen Hinayana schools as valid, however there are individual quotes, such as the quotes that show the existence of an intermediate state, which are accepted by some Hinayana schools as the words of the Buddha, but are also not accepted by some Hinayana schools.

As such it further reasons that:

It follows that the Hinayana baskets being valid is also something to give up,

The earlier Hinayanist argument was that because there is a dispute it would not be valid. Leaving aside non-Buddhist schools even within the Hinayana subdivisions, where there are disputes and arguments about different points, this passage implies that since there is a dispute, then it would have to be considered as not valid and be given up:

As they contain parts that are disputed by Buddhist and non-Buddhist schools.

The commentary mentions an example of a Hinayana sutra about the existence of an intermediate state, which some Hinayana schools would accept as valid, while others do not. Another example is the *Vinaya Sutra*; the Tibetan system follows a particular system of the Vinaya from *mulasavastivda* tradition, whereas the Theravadin follow the school of the elders, which is a slightly different system that presents the Vinaya vows. There are

slight differences in terms of the numbers of the full ordination vows, with the system followed by the Tibetan tradition having slightly more in number, albeit subsumed into the main ones. So in fact, there is not much difference in that regard as well.

This reminds me of the time His Holiness the Dalai Lama spoke of meeting two Theravadin monks in a gathering somewhere; elder monks who His Holiness showed respect to and who in turn showed respect to him. When they sat down to have a little discussion he noted that one of the elder Theravadin monks said that 'we are the same in being followers of the Buddha, but there is a big difference between us'.

His Holiness was taken a little bit by surprise, then he actually started going through the vows in the *Vinaya Sutra* until it came to their notice that in terms of the Vinaya there was not much difference at all. His Holiness said that in terms of quoting and numbering the vows etc. he happened to have a better memory that day to quote even more recitations from the sutras. His Holiness commented that it made him feel good on that occasion to be able to quote the sutras well. That was in Tasmania.

Later, as a result of this encounter with the Theravadin elders, His Holiness the Dalai Lama made a particular proposal to have meetings with the monks from the Theravadin tradition to discuss these vows and the Vinaya sutras and other differences and the similarities between the different schools. Some meetings have taken place since.

In a recent teaching in Dharamsala, His Holiness the Dalai Lama mentioned that as a result of these meetings many Theravadin monks from the Thai tradition attended these teachings, as did the most senior abbot from that tradition. Apparently the abbot of the Theravadin monks was astonished at the Dalai Lama's depth of understanding and knowledge of the sutras.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་རྒྱུད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྟུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

4 October 2016

As usual let us engage in our meditation practice.

[Meditation]

We can now generate a good bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teachings. Indeed, the mind of wishing to benefit others is a very important and precious mind.

If we don't have the right mindset, then even though what is to be practised may be quite clear, we might engage in practices that are contrary to the teachings. However, this will not occur if we generate the mind of wishing to benefit others.

An example of practising contrary to the teachings would be to immediately revert back to our old habits of becoming upset or angry in difficult situations, rather than generating love and compassion. That is the complete opposite to the mindset one should have. Although one wishes for happiness, one voluntarily engages in creating the causes for one's own misery or suffering. We know the teachings and if we fail to put them into practice, then that will be the inevitable result. While regularly familiarising ourselves with positive states of mind such as love and compassion may not completely prevent anger from arising, when situations that cause us to become angry occur, that love and compassion will help us immediately notice the anger and not allow it to take root. That comes from familiarity with practising love and compassion regularly.

Throughout the day, in our spare time, it is really important to intentionally put some effort in to generate and familiarise ourselves with a virtuous state mind; this is really important. We might claim to be Dharma practitioners and set aside a minimum time for practice, but most of our time we are completely immersed in the afflicted distractions. In contrast to that, if we actually take the initiative to periodically bring a virtuous object to mind, then that definitely contributes to having a genuinely relaxed body and mind and to experience a happy state of mind. This will also ensure that one will have a genuinely happy life.

I mention this as a reminder for you to put into practice whatever Dharma you already know. For those who don't know anything about Dharma practice, then there is not much that can be done, as they are only familiar with following the afflicted distractions. As they don't know how to practise the Dharma, we cannot blame them for not practising.

But in our case it is different, as we know the value of the Dharma and have the means to practise it; we know the disadvantages and faults of following the afflicted distractions. Furthermore we know the great benefits of generating a virtuous mind, and know how to generate it. If, while knowing this and having the means to do so, we

fail to put it into practice, then the fault lies with ourselves. As the previous masters warned, 'disregarding karma and its effects while understanding karma, is like knowingly taking poison'. So, we need to be really mindful. Taking these points into consideration is the best method for having a meaningful, happy life.

Often it seems I go off on a tangent, however the point that I always try to emphasise is to actually put the teachings into practice. That is something I've taken interest in since I was very young. I've always been concerned with putting into practice what I have learnt; that has always been my intention. Through that familiarity from a young age it has become part of my character. Thus, whenever I share the teachings it is to emphasise putting into practice whatever one has understood. I believe that this is essential. Therefore I feel compelled to relate the ways and means of how to practice.

As those of you who come on Wednesday nights know, I always emphasise the importance of putting the Dharma into practice in everyday life. This must be why Fedor took the initiative to make a booklet out of the Wednesday night teachings. It must be useful for some, because quite a few have come up and thanked me for the book.

Whenever we engage in the teachings, our intention and priority should always be on putting it into practice. Now, while the subject we are dealing with is quite complex and hard to fully understand at times, we must consider ourselves extremely fortunate to have this opportunity to engage in listening to these teachings. Even though it's difficult, try not to resort to despair, thinking, 'Oh, it's too difficult'. Rather, just continue listening with the intention, 'May I be able to understand this profound teaching and put it into practice someday'.

2.2.2.1. ESTABLISHING THAT ONLY THE WISDOM REALISING EMPTINESS IS THE PATH TO LIBERATION FROM EXISTENCE

2.2.2.1.2. *Establishing this with logic (cont.)*

2.2.2.1.2.2. Establishing it with shared reason

The four sub-divisions under this heading are:

2.2.2.1.2.2.1. Showing that it is impossible to become an arhat and go beyond sorrow if one is devoid of the wisdom realising emptiness.

From the heading alone, one should be able to derive an understanding of what is being presented, i.e. the reasons why it is impossible to become an arhat and go beyond sorrow if one doesn't realise emptiness. The Tibetan term for arhat is *dra-chompa* which literally means foe destroyer. So, we need to understand what that means. What is the 'foe' that they have destroyed? What is the state of 'going beyond sorrow'? More specifically, the heading explains that it is impossible to achieve the state of liberation if one lacks the wisdom realising emptiness. So this heading presents the point that without the wisdom realising emptiness, there is no possible way of becoming an arhat or foe destroyer.

2.2.2.1.2.2.2. If one can become an arhat simply through the path of the sixteen aspects, then one can also become an arhat by merely abandoning the manifest afflictions.

As explained earlier, in relation to the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths, there are the coarser levels of understanding of the sixteen aspects and more subtle levels of understanding of the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths.¹ This presentation relates to the coarser levels. It explains that there is no way that one can become an arhat through relying on the coarser levels of the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths alone. One can only abandon the manifest levels of delusions with that coarse level of understanding, but not completely abandon all forms of delusion and their imprints.

2.2.2.1.2.2.3. Refuting the answer to that

This refers to refuting an argument on the previous presentation.

2.2.2.1.2.2.4. Showing that even those merely wishing to attain liberation need to meditate on emptiness.

What is being confirmed under this heading is that one definitely needs to have the realisation of emptiness in order to achieve liberation.

2.2.2.1.2.2.1. *Showing that it is impossible to become an arhat and go beyond sorrow if one is devoid of the wisdom realising emptiness.*

The first two lines of the root text are:

*44ab. If the root of the teachings is the essential
bhikhu,
Even the essential is difficult to abide.*

Under these two lines the commentary explains that:

The arhats had received direct teachings from the Buddha, and assembled them later into the collected works of the Buddha. Therefore, in a discussion amongst bhikhus, it would be difficult for even an ordained arhat to be the root of the Tathagata's teachings because of the following reason:

Take the subject 'superior hearer': it follows they have not attained the state of an arhat – because they did not take the wisdom realising emptiness as the path. This shows also the consequence that those who do not accept the emptiness that is the lack of inherent existence of phenomena cannot destroy the foes. The word 'even' indicates that 'not only can those devoid of a realisation of emptiness not become enlightened'.

As the commentary explains, *the arhats received direct teachings from the Buddha, and assembled them later into the collected works of the Buddha.* After the Buddha had passed away, those arhats who had received the teachings directly from the Buddha convened a gathering where they assembled a collection of all of the teachings of the Buddha. They had heard the teachings directly, and in that first council they recorded what they had heard. As mentioned earlier, the eighteen different Hinayana schools formed at that time, arising from some of the disputes in interpreting the words of the Buddha. So, that's one way of stating how arhats are the essence of the Buddha's teachings.

Another way of understanding the essence of the Buddha's teaching is the Vinaya sutra itself. As hearer arhats, they had heard the Vinaya teachings from the Buddha. In particular, the self-liberation vows are said to be the essence of the Buddha's teachings.

As Lama Tsong Khapa mentions in *The Foundation of All Good Qualities*:

The root of the teachings is keeping the pratimoksha (self-liberation) vows. Thus, please bless me to accomplish this essential practice.

While it is commonly accepted that the sangha in general, and the arhats in particular, are the essence of the Buddha's teachings, it would be difficult to state that they are actually the essence of the Buddha's teachings, because they are devoid of the wisdom realising emptiness and thus are not actually arhats. The reasoning is presented in the following syllogism. Take the subject 'superior hearer': it follows they have not attained the state of an arhat – because they did not take the wisdom realising emptiness as the path.

If one does not need to have the wisdom realising emptiness in order to become an arhat then, by default, it would be contradictory for the arhats to be accepted as the essential holders of the Buddha's teachings. They would in fact not be real arhats, because they are devoid of the wisdom realising emptiness, i.e. they have not taken the wisdom realising emptiness as a path.

As the commentary further explains, the syllogism shows that *those who do not accept the emptiness that is the lack of inherent existence of phenomena cannot destroy the foes.* Thus, it is difficult to establish the arhats as being the essence of the Buddha's teachings.

Then the next two lines of the verse are presented:

*44cd. The mind endowed with an object,
Has difficulty even to abide beyond sorrow.*

The commentary explains as follows:

Take the subject 'hearer arhat': it follows they have difficulties to go beyond sorrow as it is invalid for them to have liberation in their continuum – due to their mind possessing the object of true-grasping, as they have not repudiated with reasoning the grasped object of true-grasping, and so grasp at functionalities as truly existent.

Or: It is saying that for as long as one has true-grasping one will not go beyond sorrow. The first two lines state the proposition and the second two lines state the reason.

In brief, the *mind endowed with an object* means the mind that is endowed with the perception of a truly existent or an inherently existent object. Such a mind will have difficulty in even abiding beyond sorrow.

The syllogism, *take the subject 'hearer arhat': it follows they have difficulties in going beyond sorrow,* indicates that hearer arhats could not possibly *go beyond sorrow, as it is invalid for them to have liberation in their continuum.* The reasoning is that this is *due to their mind possessing the object of true-grasping, as they have not repudiated with reasoning the grasped object of true-grasping, and so grasp at functionalities as truly existent.*

The **Madhyamikas** are saying, since you accept that the hearer arhats have not actually overcome true-grasping with reasoning, and therefore *grasp at functionalities as truly existent,* they could not possibly *go beyond sorrow.* In other words, they could not possibly obtain the state of liberation.

¹ See teaching of 23 July 2002.

Then the commentary indicates that *the first two lines state the proposition and the second two lines state the reason.*

In verse 44, the first set of two lines serves as the proposition: *If the root of the teachings is the essential bhikhu, and the mind endowed with an object.*

The second set of two lines *Even the essential bhikhu is difficult to abide and has difficulty even to abide beyond sorrow*, show the reasoning, which is that *for as long as one has true-grasping one will not go beyond sorrow.*

2.2.2.1.2.2.2. *If one can become an arhat simply through the path of the sixteen aspects, then one can also become an arhat by merely abandoning the manifest afflictions.*

This heading posits a similar argument to the previous heading. If you accept the first case, then it has to follow that by merely abandoning the manifest afflictions one can become an arhat.

The first two lines under this heading are:

45ab. *If liberated through abandonment of the afflictions,
One transforms immediately afterwards.*

Then the commentary states the argument:

Argument: One does not need to realise emptiness to become an arhat. By meditating on the path that realises the sixteen aspects of impermanence and so forth, one exhaustively abandons the afflictions and attains the liberated result of an arhat.

Then the commentary gives the answer:

Answer: It follows that the person who has merely abandoned the manifest afflictions temporarily transforms into an arhat immediately afterwards because by merely meditating on the path of the sixteen aspects of impermanence and so forth one eliminates the afflictions and becomes an arhat. These two are similar in all aspects.

The opponent's argument is that *one does not need to realise emptiness to become an arhat* because *by meditating on the path that realises the sixteen aspects of impermanence and so forth, one exhaustively abandons the afflictions and attains the liberated result of an arhat.* This is their reason for saying that it is not necessary to realise emptiness.

The **Madhyamika** contradict this by saying that if you assert this, then *it follows that the person who has merely abandoned the manifest afflictions temporarily transforms into an arhat immediately* after they have abandoned those manifest afflictions. This is achieved *by merely meditating on the path of the sixteen aspects of impermanence and so forth.*

The proponents of the **Hinayana** tenets for example, do not accept the subtle selflessness of person. Rather, they assert a person who is empty or devoid of having a self-sufficient substantial existence. When they gain that realisation, the manifest levels of delusions such as anger and attachment can be overcome. However they have not been completely uprooted, because the means used is not an ultimate antidote for overcoming the afflictions.

The counter argument being proposed here by the **Madhyamika** is that you holders of the Hinayana tenets would have to also accept that by temporarily overcoming these manifest afflictions, one would then become an arhat, *merely by meditating on the path of the sixteen aspects of impermanence and so forth, and eliminating*

the [coarse] afflictions. As mentioned here, *these two are similar in all aspects*, which means that the reasons you gave earlier, and the reasons presented here on overcoming the manifest levels of the afflictions are exactly the same. Since they don't accept the latter, the Madhyamika are saying 'according to you, you would have to accept both because *these two reasons are similar in all aspects*'.

The reasons are similar in all aspects in that the opponent asserts that *by meditating on the path that realises the sixteen aspects of impermanence and so forth*, that one will *exhaustively abandon the afflictions and attain liberation*, becoming an arhat. That is what they accept.

The counter argument is, 'in that case, you would have to also accept that by abandoning the manifest afflictions temporarily, one is immediately transformed into an arhat'. As the realisation of the sixteen aspects is only on the coarser level, and since they accept that as the criteria for abandoning the afflictions and obtaining arhatship, then by default they would also have to accept the second proposition.

The next two lines of the verse are:

45cd. *Although not having afflictions,
One can see that their karma is still potent.*

The commentary that explains this reads as follows:

This is unacceptable however. Although the manifest afflictions are temporarily non-existent, it is observed that the person who has abandoned the manifest afflictions temporarily has the karmic potential to connect with a future existence.

The school of the opponent is expressed by: 'If liberated through abandonment of the afflictions', and the meaning of this is as stated in: 'One becomes liberated by seeing truth.'² What it is saying is that if one can abandon the afflictions and attain the state of an arhat through meditating on the path of the sixteen aspects of impermanence etc.

This is actually quite clear. It is unacceptable to posit that by abandoning the manifest levels of afflictions one becomes an arhat. That is because *although the manifest afflictions are temporarily non-existent*, it remains a fact *that the person who has abandoned the manifest afflictions temporarily still has the karmic potential to connect with a future existence*, i.e. cyclic existence. So those who have overcome the manifest levels of afflictions still carry the karma to be reborn into cyclic existence.

As the verse states: *Although not having afflictions, one can see that their karma is still potent.* The point is that they still have the karmic seeds to be propelled into cyclic existence.

The commentary continues:

The school of the opponent is expressed by: 'If liberated through abandonment of the afflictions', and the meaning of this is as stated in: 'One becomes liberated by seeing truth.' What it is saying is that if one can abandon the afflictions and attain the state of an arhat through meditating on the path of the sixteen aspects of impermanence and so forth.

This is the meaning of what it is saying, because at this point it is debating whether or not one attains

² This is the first line of verse 40.

liberation from the afflictions merely through the path of impermanence and so forth. This also is very clear from the arguments of, 'One becomes liberated by seeing the truth.'

The meaning is certainly not that, while accepting that one can eliminate the afflictions by meditating on the path of the sixteen aspects, that one will not be liberated from suffering through that.

The meaning is that when that posited specifically by the two Hinayana schools as afflictions³ is temporarily absent in its mere manifest form by having generated the earlier explained path in the continuum, they posit that one has attained liberation from the afflictions. As a result, by merely abandoning the manifest afflictions temporarily, one will then immediately attain liberation from all contamination.

This is the assertion of both of the **Hinayana** lower schools, which posit a self-sufficient and substantially existent person that has to be abandoned. The lower schools accept that as the selflessness of the person, while for the **Prasangika** this is only the coarser level of the selflessness of a person. For the Prasangika the selflessness of a person is a person who is empty of being a truly and inherently existent person. It is only by abandoning the view of grasping at an inherently and truly existent person that one can actually abandon the afflictions from their very root. What is being established here is that while we both accept that abandonment of the coarse afflictions, for the Prasangika, the subtlest level of the afflictions is only abandoned when you abandon that grasping at an inherently existing self.

Thus the argument that overcoming the manifest afflictions temporarily is the *cause to immediately attaining liberation from all contamination* cannot be accepted.

This is shown in the lines:

That one cannot accept this is shown in the lines, 'Although not having afflictions one can see that their karma is still potent'. This is saying that although the manifest afflictions are temporarily absent one can observe the potential to be thrown into a future existence through the power of karma.

The conclusion in the commentary is quite clear:

These lines need to be explained in this way, and not as some commentaries and past Tibetans have done, who say that because it is observed that Maugalyana and Phagpa Sodreng experienced the suffering result of karma created earlier while an ordinary individual, they are not liberated in the moments afterwards. Here it does not refer to the potential to create suffering in this life, but it is saying that one is not liberated because one has not stopped the karmic potential that throws one into a future existence.

2.2.2.1.2.2.3. Refuting the answer to this

The first two lines of the next verse read:

*46ab. 'You say the craving that takes forcefully,
Is temporarily non-existent and say it is certain.'*

The argument is:

Argument. The attainment of the state of arhat by meditating on the path of impermanence and so forth is not merely temporary. Craving is the simultaneously acting condition for the forceful taking of another existence, and as it is exhaustively abandoned through this path, there is no seed and one does not take another rebirth. It is like this with certainty.

In stating, *The attainment of the state of arhat by meditating on the path of impermanence and so forth is not merely temporary*, the **Hearer** opponent is saying, 'I'm not claiming that by overcoming the manifest afflictions, one can become an arhat. I'm not saying that that is temporary'.

Craving is the simultaneously acting condition for the forceful taking of another existence, and as it is exhaustively abandoned through this path, there is no seed and one does not take another rebirth. It is like this with certainty. So here the Hearer is positing a counter argument to them saying, 'we don't accept that it's a temporary abandonment. Rather it is a complete abandonment, and one does not have to take rebirth in samsara.

The next two lines of the verse, which serve as an answer, read:

*46cd. Although this craving is not afflicted,
Why should it not be like ignorance?*

Then the commentary reads:

Answer. Although the craving in the continuum of the person that you assert to be an arhat is not afflicted as explained in the *Knowledges* similar to there being posited a total incomprehension⁴ that is afflicted according to the *Knowledges* and one being not, why should there not be a craving that is afflicted according to the *Knowledges* and one that is not? Both need to be posited.

These texts show the existence of a craving that is commonly renowned as non-afflicted in the two Hinayana schools and the Mahayana, but for the craving that is asserted by our own system certainly no afflicted and non-afflicted are asserted.

The **Prasangika** are saying that *although the craving in the continuum of the person that you assert to be an arhat is not afflicted as explained in the Knowledges, similar to there being posited as total incomprehension that is afflicted according to the Knowledges and one being not, why should there not be a craving that is afflicted according to the Knowledges.*

What the Prasangika are saying is that there is the common ignorance as explained in the two *Knowledges*, and uncommon ignorance according to our system. The **common ignorance** that is taught in the two *Knowledges* is the ignorance grasping at the person as a self-sufficient substantial existent. The **uncommon ignorance** as taught in the Prasangika system is the ignorance grasping at an inherently existent self.

To explain the meaning of the line although this craving is not afflicted: first we need to understand that just like with ignorance there are two types of craving, one that is induced by grasping at a person as self-sufficient and substantial existent, and the other is craving which is

³ The coarse afflictions correspond to the explanations of the two *Knowledges* i.e. *The Treasury of Knowledge* by Vasubandhu and the *Compendium of Knowledge* by Asanga. These are the explanations of the afflictions having as their root the grasping at a self-sufficient substantial self. This text however follows the uncommon Prasangika presentation of the afflictions.

⁴ Ignorance.

induced by grasping at an inherently existent person. The **Vaibhashika** and **Sautrantikas** (the two Hinayana schools) accept that craving induced by grasping at a person as self-sufficient substantial existent is an affliction, but do not accept that there is craving induced by grasping at a person as inherently existent; that is because they do not assert that the grasping at an inherently and truly existent person is a wrong view of the transitory collection. So, the **Prasangika** are saying that while we both commonly accept that the craving induced by grasping at a person as self-sufficient and substantially existent is an affliction in accordance with the presentation in the two Knowledges, this craving however is not an affliction that is induced by the grasping at an inherently existent person, which is a wrong view of the transitory collections. Thus, in saying *although this craving is not afflicted* the Prasangika are saying that according to our system this craving that is induced by the grasping at a person as self-sufficient substantially existent is not afflicted, (i.e. not an affliction induced by the view of transitory collections), but they are not saying that it is not an affliction at all. The Prasangika do of course accept that craving is an affliction.

The line *why should it not be like ignorance?* means that since there are two levels of ignorance, why should it not also be the same for craving? There is the coarse craving that is induced by the transitory view grasping at the person as self-sufficient substantially existent, and the more subtle craving that is induced by the transitory view grasping at an inherently existent self.

Basically the **Hinayana** hearers assert that arhatship is obtained when grasping at a self-sufficient and substantially existent person is abandoned.

If you read through this carefully, it will become clear. I have explained this previously and this material is also explained in the *Madhyamaka* teachings.

As explained earlier, the view of a self-sufficient substantial existent person as being ignorance, is accepted by both schools. However, the **Hinayana** schools do not accept the grasping at an inherently existent person as being an affliction. They don't assert that one has to overcome the grasping at a truly existent or an inherently existent person to become an arhat, because they don't accept that as being ignorance of the transitory collection. That is the main point being presented here. The lower schools assert that abandoning the ignorance of grasping at a self-sufficient and substantially existent person is the cause to become an arhat. But the **Prasangika** do not accept that.

The commentary continues:

Thus, it is saying that although one temporarily abandons the manifest craving induced by the grasping at a person that is a self-sufficient substantial-existent self, how can one say that the craving induced by the transitory view that is grasping at the person as existing out of its own nature, is non-existent? The elimination of the earlier mentioned in manifest form does not stop even the manifest form of the just mentioned transitory view and craving.

If it is the same for both schools that when their manifest afflictions are abandoned, then this does not mean that the seeds are abandoned, then it is meaningless to set that craving apart.

What is being explained is that through meditating only on the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths as taught in the two *Knowledges*, a person may have abandoned the manifest craving that is induced by the grasping at the person as self-sufficient substantially existent. But that will not harm the manifest craving that arises from grasping at the self as inherently existent. The craving that arises from the grasping at the self as inherently existent will not be harmed in the slightest by the meditation on the sixteen aspects alone. Although it can abandon the manifest coarse afflictions to a degree, it will not abandon the seed of the afflictions at all.

We will now recite the *Eight Verses of Mind Training*, dedicating it to Susanna's mother, who is in Germany and is experiencing complications with her health. Susanna comes here regularly, and is a regular donor, and this is when the Centre needs to take the initiative to help out. We need to be mindful of those who are experiencing difficulty. After all, even dogs and cats recognise someone who has been nice and kind to them, and return their affection.

We will pray that Susanna's mother be freed from her illness and that she be quickly restored to health, and so that she has some more years. If however it is an illness that she cannot overcome and passes away, then we pray for her to have a good rebirth in the next life in Amitabha's pure land, coming into contact with Amitabha directly, receiving teachings from Amitabha and then gaining all the realisations of the path in her mind.

In general this is a good way to proceed whenever there is an occasion that we need to pray for others who pass away.

I, for my part, have definitely done prayers and as a study group if we can do these prayers, and then when she hears about that, that will also help Susanna.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke.

Transcript prepared by or Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© *Tara Institute*

The Sixteen Aspects of the Four Noble Truths

Truth of Suffering

One is mistaken with regard to the truth of suffering by grasping at purity, happiness, permanence and self. Understanding the four aspects of the truth of suffering, which are impermanence, suffering, empty and selfless, counteracts this.

Take the subject suffering of suffering - it is **impermanent** - because it is generated adventitiously; it is **suffering** - because it is powered by karma and afflictions; it is **empty** - because there is no separate controlling self; it is empty - because it **isn't** established in the nature of an **independent self**.

Truth of Origin

One is mistaken with regard to the truth of origin by grasping at sufferings to be without cause or to have a discordant cause. Regarding the latter there is the grasping at suffering being produced by only one cause, being produced by a creator the intention of whom preceded the result, and grasping at suffering to be changeable adventitiously but being essentially permanent. Understanding the four aspects of the truth of origin, which are cause, origin, intense generation and condition, counteracts this.

Take the subject contaminated karma and craving - it follows it is the aspect of **cause** - because it is the root of its resultant suffering; it is **origin** - because it generates its resultant suffering entirely again and again; it is **intense generation** - because it generates it strongly; it is the aspect of **condition** - because it is the concurrently acting condition of it's resultant suffering.

Truth of Cessation

One is mistaken with regard to the truth of cessation by grasping at liberation to be non-existent, by grasping at certain contaminated dharmas to be liberation, by grasping at certain sufferings to be supreme liberation, and by thinking that even though one can exhaust the sufferings one could reverse from that state.

Understanding the four aspects of the truth of cessation, which are cessation, peace, supremacy and definite emergence, contacts those misconceptions.

Take the subject complete freedom from suffering achieved through the power of the antidote - it is the aspect of **cessation** - because it is the freedom having abandoned suffering; it is **peace** - because it is the freedom having abandoned the afflictions; it is **supreme** - because it is liberation with benefit and bliss; it is the aspect of having **definitely emerged** - because it is irreversible liberation.

Truth of the Path

One is mistaken with regard to the truth of the path by thinking that a path to liberation is non-existent, thinking that meditation on selflessness isn't suitable to be the path, holding certain meditative absorptions alone to be the path to liberation and holding a path reversing suffering to be non-existent.

Understanding the four aspects of the noble truth of the path, which are path, suitable, accomplishment and definitely liberating, counteracts those misconceptions.

Take the subject wisdom directly realising selflessness - it is the aspect of **path** - because it is a path progressing towards liberation; it is the aspect of **suitable** - because it is the direct antidote against the afflictions; it is the aspect of **accomplishment** - because it is a transcendental wisdom directly realising mind's final nature; it is the aspect of **definitely liberating** - because it is the antidote irreversibly eliminating the afflictions.

This list was prepared by Ven. Tenzin Dongak as a supplement to the teachings on 30 July 2002

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

11 October 2016

As usual, we will generate a pure, positive motivation for receiving the teachings, one not stained by self-interest.

You are all aware of what the bodhicitta motivation entails. As I regularly mention, even if we do not have the capacity to fully comprehend the bodhicitta motivation, we can all understand how every sentient being does not wish for any kind of suffering and spontaneously wishes to achieve every happiness. So we can ensure that whatever we do, in terms of listening to teachings and putting them into practice, is for the purpose of benefiting other sentient beings – eliminating all their suffering and presenting them with the highest happiness.

It is important to reflect on the essential points encompassed by the term 'bodhicitta motivation'. A bodhisattva is defined as a noble being whose **mind** is imbued with the aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all living beings – the bodhicitta mind – and their actions are to engage in the six perfections. This is what characterises a bodhisattva's state of mind and their deeds.

Next, to get an overview of the entire path taken by a bodhisattva to achieve enlightenment, as I have often mentioned, the *basis* is the two truths [conventional and ultimate truth]. The *actual path* encompasses method and wisdom and the *result* encompasses the two main bodies of the Buddha [the rupakaya and the dharmakaya]. When one reflects on this overview of the path to enlightenment, it will have an effect on one's mind.

In the teachings, as Mahayana practitioners we begin our practice by generating the bodhicitta motivation. But we must really take to heart what this entails: we have to at least generate a similitude of the bodhicitta motivation in our mind, and our actions should also be a similitude of the six perfections. We should ensure that in our everyday actions we engage in a similitude of the six perfections – generosity, morality, patience, joyous effort, meditation and wisdom. If we assume that we are a Mahayana practitioner and act otherwise, then we are not getting the essence of these points.

This is really important. Normally, we might say, "Oh, but I have a very busy life", but we can, in fact, reflect on these points wherever we may be, and whatever we are doing. And when we have time for practice, we need to bring these points to mind. As I share with you regularly, if you spend some time reflecting on this, and try to take it to heart and implement it in your practice, you will definitely get the benefit. When the benefits start to dawn upon you, this will help transform and subdue your mind. Otherwise, we will be practitioners in name only.

As mentioned earlier, the path encompasses the two collections of method and wisdom. Accumulating merit is said to be the supreme method, and the supreme means

to accumulate merit is the generation of bodhicitta. Without bodhicitta, one cannot possibly attain one of the two results of the path – the rupakaya or form-body of a buddha, and the dharmakaya or truth-body of a buddha. The substantial cause for attaining a buddha's form-body is generating bodhicitta, and then further developing and maintaining that. The cause to achieve the dharmakaya or the truth-body of a buddha is gaining the supreme wisdom, the wisdom realising emptiness. Therefore, the study and recollection of emptiness is essential to achieve our goal of enlightenment, which is encompassed in these two bodies of a buddha - the form-body and the truth-body.

We normally say, "Yes, I aspire to achieve enlightenment", but what does it actually entail? What is the specific method and wisdom that one has to actually cultivate and generate? When we relate to the teachings in this way, we can see that it is a systematic, logical and reasonable approach to achieving the goal of enlightenment. And the teachings are presented in this way by none other than the incomparably kind and compassionate Buddha. Seeing how the teachings of the Buddha are presented can actually move our mind. When we see the real value of the teachings and how they are presented in such a systematic and approachable way, this can help us to be inspired and to generate strong admiration and faith in the Buddha and his teachings.

When we engage in the teachings in this way, with this understanding, it helps us to rapidly increase our understanding of the Dharma, and our intelligence and wisdom also increases.

Did you understand the explanation of Verse 44 from last week's session? Specifically the point that the first two lines state the proposition, and the second two lines state the reason. Was that clear to you?

44 *If the root of the teachings is the essential bhikhu,
Even the essential bhikhu is difficult to abide.
The mind endowed with an object,
Has difficulty even to abide beyond sorrow.*

[Some students respond to Geshe-la] What you are referring to is what was mentioned in the explanation of how the monks and arhats serve as the essence of the Buddha's teachings. Right? However, I'm referring to this particular point that the first two lines serve as a proposition and the second two lines state the reason.

Without going through too much further elaboration, we'll just look at this syllogism: Take the subject, 'a hearer arhat as you assert' – it would be difficult to establish them as an ultimate bhikhu who is the essence of the Buddha's teachings, because their minds still possess grasping at true existence, and thus have difficulty in abiding beyond sorrow.

Thus the hearers, who are proponents of the **Hinayana** tenets, assert that one does not need to gain the realisation of emptiness in order to become an arhat. That is their assertion. The **Mahayana** refute that assertion by saying: "While you [Hinayanas] may accept arhats as being the essence of the Buddha's teachings, if they were to be devoid of having the wisdom realising emptiness, then it would be impossible to establish them as the

essence of the Buddha's teachings, because without that realisation of emptiness they could not possibly go beyond sorrow and achieve liberation".

Basically the proponents of the two lower schools, the **Vaibhashika** and the **Sautrantika** assert that by gaining the realisation of the lack of a self-sufficient and substantially existent person and further meditating on it, one will attain liberation. Thus they assert that one does not need to have the realization of emptiness to become an arhat.

The **Prasangika** say that you cannot become an arhat without the realisation of emptiness. That is because one cannot overcome the grasping at an inherently existent self by merely abandoning grasping at a self-sufficient substantially existent self. Thus, they say that while the mind still possesses grasping at true existence, it is difficult to establish a true or ultimate bhikhu, i.e. an arya being, who has the direct realisation of emptiness.

In fact all the schools below the Prasangika assert that one need not gain the realisation of emptiness of phenomena to become an arhat. They only assert that the realisation of the selflessness of the person is sufficient to become an arhat. According to the **Mind Only** and **Svatantrika-Madhyamika** schools, grasping at true existence is the obscuration to omniscience, and not an afflicted obscuration. It is only the **Prasangika-Madhyamika** who assert that grasping at true existence is an afflicted obscuration, and that in order to overcome the delusions at the very root and become an arhat, one has to realise the selflessness of persons as well as phenomena. This is why, as mentioned previously, the Prasangika assert that whoever has the realisation of emptiness necessarily has to be a proponent of the Prasangika tenets.

There are said to be eight unique presentations of the **Prasangika** system; one of them is the assertion that grasping at true existence is an afflicted obscuration. Another unique presentation is that if one is an arya or superior being then one necessarily has to have the realisation of emptiness.

Following that point, we went through refuting the lower schools' assertion that one will gain liberation by merely meditating on the path of the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths. The Prasangikas' refutation led to the explanation that there are both subtle and gross aspects of the four noble truths; I wonder if you understood that point?

There is a distinction between the gross and subtle aspects of the four noble truths. These were quite clearly presented previously.¹ For example, with respect to the second noble truth - the truth of origination - the craving imbued by the transitory collection of grasping at a truly or inherently existent self is the *subtle truth of origination*. And the *gross truth of origination* is the craving imbued by the grasping at a self-sufficient and substantially existent person.

With respect to the first noble truth - the truth of suffering - the contaminated aggregates obtained through grasping at an inherently existent self or person are the *subtle truth of suffering*. Whereas the contaminated aggregates

obtained through the view that holds onto a self-sufficient, substantially existent person is the *gross truth of suffering*.

Regarding the third noble truth - the truth of cessation - the *gross truth of cessation* is gaining the understanding of the lack of a self-sufficient, substantially existent person, and further meditating on that to eventually obtain a cessation of the manifest level of the delusions. Realising the emptiness, or the lack of inherent existence of the nature of the mind, and further meditating on it and perfecting that realisation to obtain the cessation of completely abandoning grasping at true existence, is the *subtle truth of cessation*.

Similarly, with the fourth noble truth - the truth of the path - the realisation of the lack of a self-sufficient, substantially existent person is the *gross truth of the path*. Whereas gaining the realisation of the lack of an inherently existent self or person is the *subtle truth of the path*.

As explained earlier, with respect to impermanence, which is the first aspect of the truth of suffering, all schools make no distinction between subtlety and grossness. It is not as if the Prasangika assertion of impermanence is more subtle than the lower schools. There is no such distinction, because impermanence is accepted by all schools as being the momentariness of all functional phenomena, and this is the subtlest level of impermanence. Momentariness is the definition of impermanence that is asserted by all schools.

Also, with the second aspect of the truth of suffering, there is no distinction of subtlety and grossness. Regarding emptiness, the person being empty of self-sufficient, substantial existence is gross emptiness, whereas the person being empty of inherent existent is subtle emptiness.

All the remaining aspects of the four noble truths can be understood in the same way. When one understands the four aspects of the truth of suffering, then that can be related to the four aspects of the truth of origination, four aspects of the truth of cessation, and the four aspects of the truth of the path. They are all similar.

From this presentation, one can also understand that the Prasangika and lower schools differ in their distinction between the subtlety and gross understanding of the twelve interdependent links.

2.2.2.1. ESTABLISHING THAT ONLY THE WISDOM REALISING EMPTINESS IS THE PATH TO LIBERATION FROM EXISTENCE

2.2.2.1.2. Establishing it with logic

2.2.2.1.2.2. Establishing it with shared reason

2.2.2.1.2.2.3. Refuting the answer to this (cont.)

Following from our last session, we are now on the second verse under the same heading:

47. *Craving arises from the condition of feeling,
And they have feeling;
It abides for some whose
Mind is endowed with an object.*

As the commentary explains:

A person who has not realised emptiness has not abandoned in the slightest the ignorance grasping at the true existence of feeling, and through the condition of feeling, such a person would generate

¹ See the teaching of 23 July 2002.

craving for not being separated from happiness and wish to be separated from suffering. Because we posit that the arhats have the grasping at inherent existence of feeling, then craving is existing in the continuum. For as long as the mind that possesses the object that is perceived as truly existent is manifest in the continuum of the person, for that long it is impossible to stop the manifest craving that is induced by it.

As explained clearly in the commentary, the *person who has not realised emptiness* implies someone who has not overcome the grasping to true existence. Such an individual *has not abandoned in the slightest the ignorance grasping at true existence of feeling*. As I have explained previously, this is something we can understand from our own experience. For as long as we grasp at a feeling, then due to that grasping we will grasp at the feeling of happiness and crave pleasurable sensations, and not want to be separated from pleasure. We will also crave to be free from unpleasant feelings or suffering. This is something we can all naturally relate to. If we strongly grasp at feeling, we will naturally want to grasp at happy or pleasurable feelings, and not want to experience any unpleasant feelings or suffering.

It is also quite clear here that *because we posit that the arhats have grasping at inherent existence or feeling, then craving exists in the continuum*. Again, as mentioned previously, the **Prasangikas** are responding to the lower schools by saying: "Because what you call an arhat has grasping at the inherent existence of feeling, a craving will definitely exist in their continuum". The reasoning behind this assertion is that, *for as long as the mind that possesses an object, i.e. perceiving the object as truly existent, manifest in the continuum, it will be impossible to stop the manifest craving induced by that grasping at inherent existence*. This is quite clear.

2.2.2.1.2.2.4. *Showing that even those merely wishing to attain liberation need to meditate on emptiness.*

The verse relating to this heading reads:

48. *The mind lacking emptiness
Will arise again despite ceasing,
Like the absorption without recognition.
Thus meditate on emptiness.*

The commentary explains:

Although the manifest afflictions are temporarily stopped in a mind that is devoid of the realisation of the person and the aggregates as being the emptiness of being inherently established, they will again become manifest, just like in the case of the absorption without recognition.

Therefore, not only to attain omniscient consciousness, but also to attain the result of an arhat, or whichever result one wishes to attain, one should definitely desire to meditate on the emptiness that negates the subtle object of negation.

In the statement, *Although the manifest afflictions are temporarily stopped in a mind that is devoid of the realisation of the person and the aggregates*, both selflessness or emptiness, which is that the lack of inherent existence of the person and the aggregates are presented as what is to be realised.

Even while one is devoid of that realisation, the manifest afflictions may be stopped temporarily. It says here that

the manifest afflictions are temporarily stopped through meditating on the selflessness of the self-sufficient, substantially existent person. Through that meditation, one can overcome the manifest level of afflictions, which are temporarily stopped.

However, *they will again become manifest*: that is, the afflictions will become manifest, and the reason used here to establish that is the example, *just like in the case of absorption without recognition*. The *absorption without recognition* - or 'equipoise of no-discrimination' as some translate it - is a meditative state in which all the gross sensation in the meditator's mind is completely stopped. They have no gross conceptions based on gross sensation or feelings in their mind. All of that is completely stopped.

In that meditative state or absorption, all recognition or discrimination temporarily stops. Later, however, when the meditator comes out of that meditative state, all the gross sensations and concepts will resurface. That is because the meditator has not actually stopped recognition or discrimination altogether; they still have discrimination or recognition in their mental continuum. Thus, when they come out of that meditative state or absorption, discrimination will resurface. This illustrates how all of the manifest afflictions are only temporarily stopped because, just like in the case of the absorption without recognition, they can reoccur.

Therefore, not only to attain omniscient consciousness or the omniscient mind, but also even to attain the result of an arhat, or whichever result one wishes to attain, one should definitely desire or one has to meditate on the emptiness that negates the subtle object of negation. As specified here, the meditation on emptiness has to serve as a means to negate the subtle object of negation. This is not just any kind of negation, but the subtle object of negation.

According to the **Prasangika**, the subtle object of negation relates to both the person and the aggregates. Thus, the inherent existence of a person is the object of negation based on a person, and the inherent existence of the aggregates is the object of negation in relation to the basis of the aggregates. The Prasangika assert there is no coarseness and subtleness in relation to the selflessness of a person and the selflessness of phenomena. They do not assert a distinction between coarseness and subtleness in relation to the basis of imputation or the object itself, but they do in relation to the *mind* that realises or perceives the object.

All the **lower schools** below the Prasangika, on the other hand, assert both a coarse and subtle person and phenomena. The selflessness of a person is said to be coarse selflessness, whereas the selflessness of phenomena is said to be subtle selflessness. Only the **Prasangika** assert that there is no distinction between the two.

Now, when we say the object of negation has to be eliminated or refuted in order to gain an understanding of the emptiness of the person and aggregates, we need to first understand what is to be negated.

If a person were to exist inherently, how would they have to exist? If the aggregates were to exist inherently, how would they have to exist? As you already know, if a

person existed without depending on any other factors – such as aggregates or any other causes and conditions for their existence – that would mean the person exists inherently. Likewise, if the aggregates did not depend on any causes and conditions or other factors for their existence, then the aggregates would have to exist inherently. Since a person cannot possibly exist without depending on aggregates and other causes and conditions for their existence, a person therefore lacks inherent existence. This is also true for the aggregates.

The commentary continues to present this point:

Tseg Wang-juk Sengye and others interpret the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* as saying that hearers and self-liberators do not realise the selflessness of phenomena, and posit the fault of non-pervasion for inferring the result from the cause for the line, 'craving arises from the condition of feeling'. Regarding this, the sun of the earlier ones had not risen and it is advice unsuitable to arise collectively.

Master Shantideva posits the true-grasping at the person and phenomena as affliction. If one wishes to understand this topic extensively, then one should read the great commentary that was composed by Je Rinpoche himself on the *Introduction to the Middle Way*.

These points are quite easy to understand, as they have been presented earlier.

The commentary next presents this comment:

There now follows three verses starting with, 'If the words attributed to sutra' which attempt to show reasoning why the Mahayana sutras are the words of the Buddha. There is no occasion to see how they could come above the lines, 'If the root of the teachings is the essential bhikhu', and in addition, the *Great Commentary* states that they are not the words of the master Shantideva.

So the following three verses are said by the *Great Commentary* not to actually be *the words of Shantideva*. However, they are presented here as a supplement to the main text.

49. *If the words attributed to sutra
Are regarded as teachings of the Buddha,
Then why do you not regard most
Of the Mahayana in the same way as your
sutras?*

The commentary states:

However that may be, their meaning is: If the words that show the higher training of the mind belong to the sutras, those that show the training in morality belong to the Vinaya, and those that show the training in wisdom are not in contradiction to the Abhidharma and are posited as the words of the Buddha, then, as the Mahayana sutras show mostly the three trainings, why are they not accepted as the words of the Buddha?

As clearly presented here in the commentary, *if the words of the Buddha that show the higher training of the mind belong to the sutras, those that show the training in morality belong to the Vinaya ...* This explanation is based on the Tripitaka, or the three baskets of the Buddha's teachings. All of the teachings in the Tripitaka are words of the Buddha which belong to either the sutras, the Vinaya, or to the wisdom basket. The counter-argument by the **Prasangika** is that, as the bulk of the Mahayana teachings

fit into one of these three baskets, then why are they not accepted as the words of the Buddha? This implies that they should be.

The next verse reads:

50. *If because of only one
All become faulty,
Then why, through one concordant sutra,
Are not all teachings of the Conqueror?*

As the commentary explains:

If you assert all Mahayana sutras as faulty on the basis of the reason that there is one sutra on which you do not realise the complete definition that you posit to be the word of the Buddha, then why do you not assert all Mahayana sutras as the words of the conqueror when you see the definition that you posit to be the word of the Buddha complete on one Mahayana sutra?

If you assert all Mahayana sutras are faulty based on the reason that there is one sutra on which you do not realise the complete definition that you posit to be the word of the Buddha – in other words, if there is one Mahayana sutra that doesn't fit into this definition of the Tripitaka, or the Buddha's words, then this counter argument is presented.

... then why do you not assert all Mahayana sutras as the words of the conqueror when you see the definition that you posit to be the word of the Buddha complete on one Mahayana sutra? This implies that, in following your reasoning, it should be accepted as the words of the Buddha. The next counter-argument to that is:

Argument: If the extensive *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* and so forth were the word of the Buddha ...

The main difficulty they find in accepting the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* as the word of the Buddha is because of statements such as: "... there is no eye, no ear, no nose ..." and so forth, as in *The Heart Sutra*. They would see that as contradictory to Buddha's words. So it follows that:

... then Mahakashyapa should realise their subject, but he does not. Therefore they are not the word of the Buddha.

What the **Hearer** proponents are presenting is a meticulous argument, saying that the council of the seven prominent disciples of the Buddha who compiled the Buddha's words, (Mahakashyapa being one of the main disciples of the Buddha) should be able to understand the subject. Thus they are arguing that Mahakashyapa did not understand this subject, so how could it be the words of the Buddha?

The verse relating to that reads:

51. *The words are not comprehended
By the great Mahakashyapa and so forth.
Who would disregard them
Just because you do not realise them?*

As the commentary explains:

Answer: Who would disregard the extremely profound, that is asserted to be difficult to comprehend by Mahakashyapa and so forth, as the word of the Buddha because you do not comprehend it? That is unsuitable.

What is being thus explained here is that there are certain words that are extremely profound, such as those that relate specifically to the presentation of emptiness.

Because the nature of the presentation on emptiness is profound, it was *difficult to comprehend by Mahakashyapa and so forth*, meaning the other disciples. So they had difficulty accepting it as word of the Buddha because they did not comprehend it.

This is virtually saying that if it could not be comprehended by the great Mahakashyapa and so forth, how could it be understood by you? That would not be a suitable reason to say that it is not the words of the Buddha.

I was hoping that by the end of this year we could finish this chapter, but it seems like that might be quite difficult.

Once we have completed the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, my intention is to teach *Lamp of the Path*, by Atisha. This is a text I had a keen interest in studying when I was quite young and I really paid a lot of attention. Because I have a fair bit of familiarity with this text, I feel that it would be an appropriate text to teach.

His Holiness presented this teaching in Sydney, as you would recall. I have received it prior to that. His Holiness was using the commentary by Panchen Lobsang Chokyi Gyaltsan and had mentioned that the lineage of this commentary is quite rare, quite an explanation based on the commentary as well.

The reason I am announcing the next teaching topic is so that you may start to collect some commentaries and translations and become familiar with them.

Since that text is the basis of all other Lam Rim teachings, going through it will be a good way to go over the main points of the Lam Rim teachings. It is considered the very root of all Lam Rim teachings – it is the main source.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© *Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱུང་རྒྱུ་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

18 October 2016

Based on the motivation we generated during the refuge and bodhicitta prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [meditation]

As usual, let us set our motivation for receiving the teachings. It is important to generate a bodhicitta motivation as much as possible, even if it is at a very basic level, such as a contrived bodhicitta motivation. When a positive motivation is generated from both sides – from myself as the teacher and yourselves as the listeners – then through that combination of positive motivations we can definitely derive some benefit from our gathering.

As I usually remind you, it is important to be clear about our motivation in all our activities. Whether that activity is virtuous or not is dependent on the preceding intention or motivation. So it is really important to be mindful of that. Indeed, any activity or behaviour that we may adopt is preceded by an intention generated in our mind. Thus there is no activity that is not a consequence of such an intention. Therefore the teachings indicate that the mind is the forerunner of all activities; good or bad.

Trying to maintain a positive frame of mind at all times really helps to secure whatever activity we engage in as most meaningful and beneficial. As I mention regularly, it is not as if we can separate our actions from our state of mind, because there is no action that is not preceded by an intention in our mind.

I've related this story to you previously: one of the younger geshe once asked me, "How does one engage in meditation?" My response was, "by always maintaining a virtuous frame of mind". I emphasised that not being separated from a virtuous mind is my definition of meditation. Then the young geshe put his hands together and said, "Well, that was an unsurpassable personal instruction!"

In the past I've shared stories where I've responded to the queries of younger geshe who are teaching now, and who have many students themselves. For some reason they seem to be fond of having discussions with me, and I respond quite candidly to them. Sometimes I get carried away but I feel that sharing these stories can be relevant and helpful.

2.2. Establishing that even just to obtain Liberation one needs to recognise emptiness

2.2.2. Answer (cont.)

2.2.2.2. ESTABLISHING IT AS THE PATH TO THE NON-ABIDING NIRVANA¹

It is good to take note of the explanations here, because they are very meticulous and precise explanations of this topic. So if we pay attention, we can derive a good understanding.

The verse reads:

52. *For the sake of those suffering due to ignorance
They attain freedom from the extremes of
attachment and fear
And achieve an abiding in cyclic existence.
This is the fruit of emptiness.*

The commentary explains:

The attainment of the non-abiding nirvana definitely depends on the realisation of emptiness. That is because ordinary individuals are attached to the true existence of the aggregates and have fallen into the extreme of eternalism, where they circle in cyclic existence under the control of karma and afflictions. Hearers and self-liberators generate fear of the sufferings of cyclic existence, and have fallen into the extreme of nihilism, where they take the going beyond sorrow that has merely cut birth in existence as their main goal of attainment.

For the sake of the miserable sentient beings circling in cyclic existence due to the delusion that the self and the aggregates exist truly, superior bodhisattvas who are free from these two extremes have achieved an abiding in cyclic existence due to the power of their compassion. This is the fruit of realising emptiness, because if they were devoid of the realisation of emptiness, then although they may abide in cyclic existence, by experiencing true sufferings of cyclic existence, they would become weary and fall into the extreme of nihilism.

In essence, what is being presented here is the faults of being separated from the wisdom realising emptiness and great compassion. This is a precise presentation of, firstly, the faults or the disadvantages of lacking the wisdom realising emptiness, and secondly, lacking great compassion.

The disadvantages of not gaining the realisation of emptiness.

As explained in the commentary, *the attainment of non-abiding nirvana definitely depends on the realisation of emptiness*. That is because *ordinary beings are attached to the true existence of the aggregates and have fallen into the extreme of eternalism, and so are attached to the true existence of the person and the aggregates*.

This means that through grasping at a self of person and aggregates, ordinary beings fall into the extreme of eternalism, *where they circle in cyclic existence under the control of karma and afflictions*. So the consequence of grasping at truly existent persons and aggregates, and not overcoming that grasping by gaining the realisation of emptiness, is that ordinary individuals fall into the extreme of eternalism, and so circle in samsara.

As explained in the commentary, *ordinary individuals are attached to the true existence* and so forth. It is good to take this as a personal instruction by relating it to oneself. What does 'ordinary being' mean? Ordinary beings are those who are ignorant of grasping at a self. Thus, if one grasps at a truly existent self then one is an ordinary being. In order to take this as a personal instruction, we need to apply it to ourselves, rather than relating it to other individual beings. For as long as we have not exhausted previously created karmas, and continue to create new karma uncontrollably due to ignorance of grasping at true existence, then we will definitely be propelled into cyclic existence over and over again. This is what circling in cyclic existence means at a personal level.

¹ This heading, and the next one were introduced in the teaching of 20 September 2016.

The key factor that propels one into cyclic existence is, as mentioned here, falling *into the extreme of eternalism*. The extreme of eternalism is to be understood as holding onto the person and the aggregates as being truly or inherently existent. Of course this is not to say that one cannot accumulate good karmas and merit, but until and unless one has overcome grasping at true existence, and completely nullified it, whatever karma one creates will be just another cause to be reborn in cyclic existence.

Another way of putting it is that until one gains the wisdom realising emptiness, one cannot possibly overcome the root cause for circling in cyclic existence. And for as long as one is reborn in samsara due to ignorance, one will inevitably experience the various types of sufferings.

The fault of lacking great compassion

As the commentary explains, *hearers and self-liberators generate fear of the sufferings of cyclic existence, and have fallen into the extreme of nihilism where they take the going beyond sorrow, which has merely cut birth in existence, as their main goal of attainment*. The driving motivation of hearers and self-liberators on the Lower Vehicle or Hinayana path is wanting to be free from personal suffering. You can't blame them for that; we can relate to wanting to be free from suffering. In fact there is a great danger that we fall into their way of thinking. When we are really weary and fed-up with suffering it is very easy to be driven to just wanting to be free from suffering, and not give much thought to the welfare of all other sentient beings.

When the driving motivation is wanting to be free from personal suffering, then for as long as individuals are on the hearer and solitary-realiser paths, the underlying motivation will always be the dominant force that pushes them towards their goal of self-liberation. It is not as if hearers and solitary realisers - and arhats in particular - don't work for the welfare of other sentient beings, but it cannot be compared with the driving motivation of a bodhisattva, whose only wish is to achieve enlightenment for the sake of benefiting all sentient beings. So the driving force for bodhisattvas to attain enlightenment is to benefit all sentient beings; whereas the driving force for the hearers and solitary realisers is to attain liberation in order to be free from suffering. Thus, hearers and solitary realisers have fallen into the extreme of nihilism.

The commentary goes on to state *that hearers and solitary realisers have fallen into the extreme of nihilism where they take the going beyond sorrow, that has merely cut birth in existence, as their main goal of attainment for the sake of the miserable sentient beings circling in cyclic existence due to the delusion that the self and the aggregates exist truly, superior bodhisattvas who are free from these two extremes have achieved an abiding in cyclic existence due to the power of their compassion*. What one should note here is that all superior beings have equally severed the karma that projects one into cyclic existence, and whether they are a superior bodhisattva, superior hearer or solitary realiser, they will not newly create the projecting karma that propels one into cyclic existence by virtue of being an arya superior being.

Why are superior beings called superiors? Some explain it as being because they are superior to lower beings on the path, but that is a very limited understanding. In the context of the commentary, 'superior' has the connotation of being exalted. That which makes them superior is their state of mind. So the term 'superior' does not refer to the external appearance of a person, but rather to their state of mind. What makes

them a superior is that their mind is free from grasping at a self. Because they are free from the grasping at a truly existent self, they will never again create projecting karma, which is a cause to be reborn in cyclic existence. That is because they have gained the realisation of emptiness, and are thus free from being controlled by grasping at a self.

What motivates one to create the karma that projects one into cyclic existence again? It is grasping at a truly existent self, which uncontrollably motivates one to create karma. Then that karma, created through the influence of grasping at a self, becomes the karma that projects one into cyclic existence over and over.

When the reverse takes place, where one's mind takes control over the grasping at true existence, at that time grasping at true existence cannot overpower one's mind and influence it to create karma. That is when one has true control over one's mind. Thus the precise controlling factor is gaining the realisation of selflessness or emptiness. When one's mind is dominated by that wisdom realising emptiness, then that nullifies grasping at true existence, and thus the creation of karma that propels one into cyclic existence completely ceases. As the antidote, which is the correct understanding of emptiness, becomes stronger in one's mind, the opponent, which is self-grasping or grasping at a self, naturally becomes weaker and weaker.

The commentary states that *this is the fruit of realising emptiness, because if they were devoid of the realisation of emptiness, then they would abide in cyclic existence, experiencing the true suffering of cyclic existence*. If bodhisattvas were to abide in cyclic existence without the realisation of emptiness, then they also have to experience the true sufferings of samsara, just as we do. Any happiness we experience is only a temporary, fleeting pleasure, and not real happiness. Whereas the sufferings we experience are true suffering. So a bodhisattva without an understanding of emptiness would experience the true sufferings of cyclic existence and *become weary*, and that would influence them to *fall into the extreme of nihilism*. If they were weary about their own suffering, then that would cause them to lose interest in benefitting others, and they would strive only for self-liberation, and thus fall into the extreme of nihilism.

The happiness that we experience is not true happiness, because all happiness and pleasure that we experience in samsara is necessarily contaminated. Therefore, as the teachings explain, the samsaric happiness that we experience is necessarily one of the three sufferings, specifically the suffering of change.

We can relate to this with our own experience. When we are very cold we experience the first moment of being in the sun as being very pleasurable, and we experience happiness. But if we remain in that hot sun, very soon we start to feel very uncomfortable, and we want to go back to the cold, which would then be experienced as pleasurable. But then that changes after a short time and we feel uncomfortable again. As explained in the teachings, the nature of what we perceive as happiness is actually contaminated happiness. The fact that happiness does not last is because it is contaminated.

2.2.2.3. THUS, ADVISING THAT IT IS SUITABLE FOR THOSE WISHING FOR LIBERATION TO MEDITATE ON EMPTINESS

The verse reads:

53. *Thus it is not valid
To repudiate the side of emptiness.
Therefore, free from doubt
Meditate on emptiness.*

As the commentary explains:

Thus, it is invalid to repudiate the side of emptiness, as it was explained earlier, because it will also be contradicted by the reasons explained below. Therefore, even those wishing to attain the enlightenment of the hearers and self-liberators should meditate on emptiness free from doubt. True-grasping is the affliction of ignorance that becomes the root of cyclic existence and without negating its grasped or apprehended object it is impossible to attain liberation.

If you recall, the proponents of the lower schools such as the Vaibhashikas and the Sautrantikas, say that there is no need for the realisation of emptiness. The commentary responds, saying that *it is invalid to repudiate the side of emptiness. As it was explained earlier, and because it will also be contradicted by the reasons explained below.* This indicates that further reasons will be presented to explain why it is necessary to meditate on emptiness.

The commentary says, *therefore even those wishing to attain the enlightenment of the hearers and self-liberators should meditate on emptiness free from doubt. True-grasping is the affliction of ignorance that becomes the root of cyclic existence, and without negating its grasped or apprehended object it is impossible to attain liberation.*

This reminds me of a debate in my early days when I was in Varanasi. During a debate session I quoted a few lines from the *Compendium of Knowledge* where it says, 'while there is no beginning to cyclic existence, the end can be seen when one realises emptiness'. The example that is given is that, 'although there is no beginning to a seed, the end of a seed can be seen when it is destroyed by fire'.

One of those attending the debate session was the late Geshe Lobsang Gyatso who was the founder of the School of Dialectics. He came up to me afterwards and said, "Oh, you really made a very good point in the debate", and then we had a further discussion about it.

The point is that what ends cyclic existence is seeing that the cause of cyclic existence is grasping at a truly existent self. Until one can see that this grasping can be destroyed, it is quite impossible to comprehend that there can be an end to cyclic existence. When one is able to negate grasping at a truly existent self, then it is possible to attain liberation and thus end cyclic existence.

Again, taking this as a personal instruction, what is being presented here is that grasping at a self is the root cause of cyclic existence. What that implies is that unless and until one overcomes self-grasping, one cannot possibly overcome the root cause of cyclic existence. Overcoming self-grasping refers to looking within oneself, and being able to identify the grasping at one's own self.

How do we go about holding this mistaken view? How does it manifest? How does that then become the cause for our own cyclic existence? When we are able to identify that grasping within ourselves, then it is like a doorway that opens the possibility for ending our own cyclic existence.

Otherwise, as in the analogy in the teachings, it would be like trying to look for the thief in the plains when they've actually run into the forest. If one knows that the thief has run into the forest then it would be really foolish to be looking around in the plains and trying to find the thief there, when in fact they've run into the forest. In other words it's the wrong place to look for the thief. Similarly we need to be identifying the self-grasping within ourselves!

Next is a presentation on afflictive obscurations and the obscurations to knowledge. The verse further explains the need to meditate on emptiness to attain liberation.

54. *Emptiness is the antidote against the darkness
Of afflictive and knowledge obscuration.
How can those wishing for quick omniscience
Not meditate on it?*

The commentary explains:

Since the wisdom realising emptiness is the antidote against the darkness of the afflictive obscurations and the obscurations to knowledge, how can those wishing to quickly attain omniscient transcendental consciousness, which is free from the two obscurations, not meditate on this emptiness? If one is separated from it, one will not even abandon the seed of the afflictive obscurations.

The seeds of the obscurations to knowledge are the final imprints of the afflictions, and the manifest obscurations to knowledge are the part that is the true appearance of functionalities and so forth. But to posit everything that appears as truly existent as the obscuration to knowledge is unsuitable.

First of all, as defined in the teachings, an obscuration is that which hinders the obtaining of either liberation or omniscience.

There are two types of obscuration:

1. Afflictive obscurations which are specific obscurations that hinder the attainment of liberation;
2. Obscurations to knowledge or omniscience, which hinder the attainment of omniscience or enlightenment.

All afflictions and their seeds lie within the category of **afflicted obscurations**. There are the afflictions themselves and the seeds of these afflictions, which have the potency to generate future afflictions. Both the seed of the afflictions and the afflictions themselves are afflicted obscurations.

The **obscurations to knowledge** or **omniscience** are the imprints of those seeds.

Therefore as the commentary explains, *since the wisdom realising emptiness is the antidote to the darkness of the afflictive obscurations and the obscurations to knowledge, how can those wishing to quickly attain omniscient transcendental consciousness that is free from the two obscurations not meditate on this emptiness? If one is separated from it, one will not abandon even the seeds of the afflictive obscurations.*

As explained further, *the seeds of the obscurations to knowledge are the final imprints of the afflictions.* As specifically mentioned here, the seeds of the obscurations to knowledge are the final imprints of the afflictions.

And the manifest obscurations to knowledge are the part that is the true appearance of functionalities and so forth. The appearance of true existence is said to be a manifest obscuration to knowledge. The seeds of the obscurations to knowledge are the final imprints of the afflictions, which are the cause of the appearance of true existence.

However as the commentary further mentions, positing *everything that appears as truly existent as an obscuration to knowledge is unsuitable*. This means that while true existence itself is an obscuration to knowledge, whatever appears as existing truly doesn't necessarily have to be an obscuration to knowledge. An example of an appearance of true existence that is not an obscuration to knowledge is the eye consciousness of an ordinary being. For the eye consciousness of an ordinary being, there is an appearance of true existence, but the eye consciousness itself is not posited as an obscuration to knowledge.

Thus, as explained, the final imprints of the afflictions are the **seeds of the obscurations to knowledge**, and due to the imprints the parts that make true existence appear to the mind are the **manifest obscurations to knowledge**.

If we take ourselves as an example, when we see a person or the colour blue, it appears to us as solidly existing from its own side. When someone walks in the door, they don't appear as being dependent on different parts, causes and conditions. Rather they appear as solid and existing from their own side; that is how it appears to our eye consciousness. That is the appearance of true existence.

The commentary continues with a summary of what has just been explained. It is presented first as an argument:

Summary

Argument: One should not meditate on emptiness as one is afraid of emptiness.

The opponent is saying, "I don't wish to meditate on emptiness, because it makes me afraid. Why should I meditate on emptiness if it makes me afraid?"

Of course we can't blame anyone for having this fear if they are not familiar with an understanding of emptiness. If one attempts to actually meditate on emptiness with only a partial or incorrect understanding of emptiness, then that can bring about the wrong conclusion that nothing exists. If one thinks that nothing exists, then one has a feeling of losing the sense of reality, which can cause strong fear to arise.

Without a proper understanding of emptiness there is the danger that one will fall into the extreme of nihilism. For example, if we were to take the words of the *Heart Sutra* literally - that 'there is no eye, no ear, no nose', and so forth - then we could start thinking, 'if I don't have any of my senses, then perhaps nothing exists'. If one fails to understand that the implicit meaning of 'no eye', 'no ear' and so forth, is that there's no inherently existent eyes, there's no inherently existent ear, and no inherently existent nose and so forth, and takes the words in the sutra literally, then one has come to the wrong understanding.

One should be able to immediately understand from this passage in the *Heart Sutra* that there is no inherently existent eye and so forth. That is what is meant by emptiness of eye - that it is empty of being an inherently existent eye. When we apply this understanding of emptiness to the entire *Heart Sutra*, then we can imagine how powerful and profound even one recitation of the *Heart Sutra* will be.

If we can develop our understanding of what emptiness really means, and take the time to contemplate it, then due to our acquaintance with the correct understanding of emptiness, we will definitely be suitable recipients for receiving the profound teachings on emptiness; if not in this life then in future lives. As suitable recipients of the profound teachings of emptiness, through hearing the teachings on emptiness we will be able to spontaneously

gain the realisation of emptiness. As explained in the *Madhyamakavatara*, the Middle Way teaching, 'Merely hearing the word 'emptiness' moves a suitable recipient to the point where the hair on their body stands on end spontaneously, and tears flow from their eyes uncontrollably'. That is an external sign that one is a suitable recipient for the profound teachings on emptiness.

As Lama Tsong Khapa mentions in his teachings on the *Madhyamakavatara*, 'even if these signs don't occur, someone who listens to the unmistakable teachings and instructions on emptiness from a qualified teacher, and then thinks about it and contemplates it again and again, can be a suitable recipient of the profound teachings of emptiness'. I've explained this many times previously. These are really important points to bear in mind. Being a suitable recipient of the teachings to the point of gaining a real and profound understanding of what emptiness means, is based on the acquaintance with emptiness that we develop now.

When I taught the *Madhyamakavatara*, the Middle Way teaching, there were some who commented that although they didn't really understand much of it, it moved them to tears. So I'll take that as a good sign. Indeed, the teachings on emptiness do really seem to move the minds of some people. When they hear these teachings their minds are soothed and become very calm. That is definitely a sign that emptiness has a positive effective for some fortunate individuals.

We will conclude the teaching here and with the remaining time we will recite the dedication chapter of the *Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, and dedicate it to Susanna's mother who has just passed away.

Doing a practice like this together, or by oneself, dedicating it to someone else with a good intention and a good motivation, will definitely benefit them. Not only will they benefit, but we will benefit too because we're dedicating our prayers to them. As Lama Tsong Khapa mentioned, when you dedicate yourself to benefitting others, your own needs and purposes will also be fulfilled. This is a really significant point: when we do something for the benefit of others, we also receive benefit from that.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke.

Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

25 October 2016

As usual, let us spend some time in our meditation practice.
(*pause for meditation*)

It is good to generate the bodhicitta attitude, the most positive motivation for receiving the teachings. Spending ample time generating such a state of mind with the sole wish to benefit other sentient beings is most essential.

2.2.2.3. ADVISING THAT IT IS SUITABLE FOR THOSE WISHING FOR LIBERATION TO MEDITATE ON EMPTINESS (CONT.)

Summary of the meaning

Argument: One should not meditate on emptiness as one is afraid of emptiness.

It is good to relate this to the eighteen root downfalls of the bodhisattva vows, which were covered during the *Six Session Guru Yoga* teaching. One of the root downfalls is to teach emptiness to an unsuitable vessel. The significant point here is that there have been cases where, when emptiness is presented, even bodhisattvas who are proponents of the Mind Only school, generate fear, lose faith and fall into the Hinayana path because of their very strong grasping at the notion of inherent existence and a truly existent self. When the lack of an inherently existent self is presented to them, this causes a great shock to their mind, to the point where they lose faith in the Mahayana teachings. In this way they can give up the Mahayana path and enter a Lower Vehicle path such as the hearer's path. If this is true even for those who have already become a bodhisattva, then we need to understand that it is even more crucial to be very careful when presenting these teachings to ordinary beings, who have not yet gained much understanding of the Dharma.

For example, hearers who are proponents of the Sautrantika and Vaibhashika lower Buddhist schools have very strong grasping at a truly and inherently existent self. Thus, presenting them with the correct view of emptiness – that there is no truly and inherently existent self – can cause great fear to arise in their mind. This is why their objection is presented here: *one should not meditate on emptiness as one is afraid of emptiness*. On this note, we need to understand that we need to be mindful not to present emptiness, and indeed even other aspects of the teachings, to those who are not really ready to hear certain points. That is because this can generate more doubts in their mind and possibly lead them to lose faith in the Buddha's teachings. We need to be very mindful of this because, rather than helping, it can turn them off the Dharma.

I have personal experience of people not being really ready to accept certain aspects of the teachings, even certain points from the lower scopes. So we need to be really mindful when presenting Dharma, making sure that it does not cause people's minds to become more disturbed. When there is very strong grasping at something it is very hard for them to give it up right away.

I have witnessed occasions where individuals are not willing to reconcile after having some conflict with one another. This

can occur even amongst close relatives, such as siblings, where they have reached a point of seeing each other as enemies. At that stage even with a good intention, when I try to give them suggestions to make amends and think about the other's wellbeing, I notice that it immediately instils a strong negative reaction. It seems that they have made up their mind that they cannot possibly get along with the other person.

So in this example, even with a suggestion to try to see things from a different perspective and make amends with someone, you can see that when their mind is not ready they totally reject the idea, and they cannot accept it. And it seems to aggravate them even more. This is why one needs to be mindful. In last Wednesday night's teaching I also addressed this point saying that it is good to take initiative to look at oneself and try to analyse one's mind. One needs to try and come to the point where one can accept that anger is a problem for oneself. Then there is a chance to make a transformation. Saying 'you are an angry person' will not help and can be the wrong approach.

Someone had asked the question 'how can I help someone see their afflictions as being harmful to themselves?' My approach is that you have to be very careful and take a skilful approach as you can aggravate them even further. For example, in a family situation with siblings or relatives one does not get along with, I have suggested that even if you want to make a connection with the other, if that other is still very strongly holding onto something against you, then trying to communicate with them may not work right away, and it might just aggravate them further. So what I have suggested is on some occasions, such as Christmas or birthdays, to make a nice gesture of sending a small gift through someone else. You do not have to say much, just send a gift. Next time send another gift again, then gradually they may be able to change their attitude towards you. Then later when you express your interest in having some communication with them, they may feel quite ready and think, 'OK, it would be good to reconnect again.'

The main point is that one needs to be mindful when dealing with others who have difficult, strong grasping at certain feelings or emotions, as it can be very hard to let go. For some individuals we need to be very mindful that even when presenting our suggestions with good intentions, it can aggravate them further, and be more destructive for the mind. Many of you are now in a position of presenting the Dharma to others. So you need to be mindful that just because you have the understanding and knowledge of the Dharma, it does not mean that this validates you to present it to others regardless of whether they are ready to accept it or not. So we have to be very mindful of these points.

The argument as presented in the commentary is *One should not meditate on emptiness as one is afraid of emptiness*.

Then the verse reads:

55 *If one generates fear
Of the phenomena generating suffering
Then why generate fear of emptiness,
Which pacifies suffering?*

The commentary explains the verse as follows:

Answer: If it is suitable to be afraid and to generate fear of the functionality of true-grasping, which acts as the main cause for the sufferings of cyclic existence, then how can one be afraid of the wisdom realising emptiness, which pacifies the sufferings of cyclic existence? It is inappropriate to be afraid of it, as it is that which eliminates all fears.

The commentary explains the nature of the opponents' fear of emptiness: *If it is suitable to be afraid and to generate fear of the functionality of true-grasping, which acts as the main cause for the sufferings of cyclic existence.* Here, while the proponents of the lower schools do not accept true grasping as a cause of suffering, their acceptance of self-grasping as the root cause of cyclic existence is being further extended here. As presented by the Prasangikas, grasping at true existence is the root ignorance that is the cause of cyclic existence. It states here that both agree that one needs to be free from the suffering of cyclic existence, and both agree that to overcome this suffering one needs to overcome the root cause. So based on this mutual agreement the verse presents a way to consider that if grasping at true existence is the main cause of suffering, and since you and I both want to be free from the suffering of cyclic existence, *then how can one be afraid of the wisdom realising emptiness which pacifies the suffering of cyclic existence?*

So the Prasangika put forth this argument: since you want to overcome the suffering of cyclic existence, and since the wisdom realising emptiness is the ultimate antidote for overcoming the root cause of suffering in cyclic existence – which is the ignorance of grasping at true existence – it is inappropriate to be afraid of it as it is that which eliminates all fears of suffering. This is quite straightforward so you should be able to understand it.

In summary, the main point is that one need to rightly be afraid of that which causes all the suffering of cyclic existence, which is grasping at true existence. So that is what one should be afraid of. One should not be afraid of the cause for eliminating that root cause of cyclic existence, which is the wisdom realising emptiness. So basically what is being presented with the next verse is if one has grasping at true existence, that is what generates fear, but if one does not have grasping at true existence then there is no reason to have any fear. That is the point.

The next verse presents this as follows:

**56. If some self existed
And one becomes afraid of any object,
Since there is no self at all
Who is the one afraid?**

The commentary explains the meaning:

If some inherently existent self were to exist then it is suitable to generate fear from any suitable object due to the grasping at that self, but as there is no inherently existing self in the slightest, who is the person that is afraid? If you were to reverse the awareness thinking of inherent existence within and contemplate, then by fully comprehending selflessness you will become liberated from all fears.

As the commentary explains, *if any inherent self were to exist then it would be suitable to generate fear.* As also presented in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, in order to identify the false grasping at the self, one can reflect on it at a time when this self-grasping is most apparent, such as when one has very strong fear in one's mind. On an occasion where one thinks that something terrible is about to happen to oneself and one generates strong fear, there is a very strong sense of an 'I' or 'me', which does not depend on anything else. If one investigates and looks at how that 'I' appears to the mind, at that point one would notice that the 'I' appears as an independently and self-sufficiently existent self. It appears as a very solid entity, existing in and of itself, from its own side and is not dependent on anything else. Grasping at such an appearance of 'I' is what is known as grasping at a self.

When one analyses whether this 'I' exists as it appears, one comes to realise that such an 'I', which seems to truly exist in and of itself and not depending on anything else, in fact does not exist at all. When one has a strong fear, this is when the self - that in fact does not exist - becomes apparent to one's mind. I have presented other examples previously such as when one has a strong opinionated mind e.g. when one says, 'I cannot accept this'; when someone suggests something and you have a very strong opinion in your mind you will say, 'No, I cannot accept this'.

At that moment, when one says one cannot accept this, that referent 'I' that one says cannot accept this is actually the 'I' that appears to one's mind as a truly existent 'I'. Grasping at this 'I' is grasping at a false self – an 'I' that does not actually exist – and further enhances that strong sense of an independent 'I', and thus self-grasping.

When one understands that such an 'I', which does not even exist to begin with, is the object of negation, then the fear associated with that 'I' being in danger will not be present, because one will know that this 'I' does not exist.

What is being presented here is a counter argument to the opponents' argument that meditating on emptiness generates fear: 'Where is that self that is fearful of meditating on emptiness? You say that you generate fear when you meditate on emptiness, but where is that 'I' that you say is afraid?'

This is a counter argument to the point 'I am afraid of emptiness'. It says 'Where is this self that you say is afraid?' The self you propose is an inherently existent self, so if this self were to exist then it might be feasible to generate fear in any situation due to grasping by the self. But since that self that you posit is an inherently existent self that does not actually exist, then there is no self (as you posit) that can possibly experience fear.

The lower schools posit an inherently existent self, which is actually the object of negation according to the Prasangika. If, rather than generating fear in relation to the self, one realises that such an inherently existent self does not exist, then that understanding becomes the optimum means to overcome all fears. That is why the commentary mentions that *as there is no inherently existing self in the slightest, who is the person that is afraid?* This implies that there is no need to be afraid when one comes to that understanding. It further emphasises that if one were to reverse the thought of grasping at an inherently existent self and look within, then one can contemplate whether such a self exists or not. Through this investigation, by looking within, one will be fully able to comprehend selflessness and become liberated from all fears. This is the optimum means to overcome all fears.

In simple terms, the self that the proponents of the two lower schools assert is an inherently existent self, and according to the Prasangika, such an inherently existent self does not exist. What is being pointed out to proponents of the lower schools is that the only reason they generate fear is precisely because they are grasping at a self that does not even exist to begin with. So when you realise that the very self that you grasp at – the one you are claiming you are afraid of – does not even exist, then having negated the object of negation (i.e. the inherently existent self) you will gain the profound understanding of selflessness, which is the optimum means to overcome all fears and all suffering. That is the point.

The following points are profound, so it is important to read through them slowly and carefully.

2.3. Explaining extensively the reasoning that established emptiness¹

This consists of two subtopics:

2.3.1. Explaining extensively the reasoning that establishes the selflessness of person

2.3.2. Explaining extensively the reasoning that establishes the selflessness of phenomena

2.3.1 Explaining extensively the reasoning that establishes the selflessness of person

This has three sub-divisions:

2.3.1.1. Refuting the determined object of innate self-grasping

2.3.1.2 Refuting the intellectually acquired self

2.3.1.3 Refuting objections to the refutation

As explained, the selflessness of person is when the lack of inherent existence is understood on the basis of an individual person. When one understands the lack of inherent existence based on other phenomena, meaning all other phenomena that are not the individual self, then this is referred to as the selflessness of phenomena. As presented earlier, in terms of grossness and subtlety, there is no difference between selflessness of person and phenomena. So the distinction of the two is made on the basis of imputation.

A debating point is: isn't a person also a phenomena, and hence the selflessness of person is actually the selflessness of phenomena? The answer is that within the two categories of persons and phenomena, the reference 'selflessness of person' is made in relation to persons. But in general, of course, all persons are also phenomena.

2.3.2.1 REFUTING THE DETERMINED OBJECT OF THE INNATE SELF-GRASPING

This passage in the commentary quite meticulously presents the explanation of innate self-grasping.

Regarding the difference between the innate true-grasping and the intellectually acquired true-grasping; innate true-grasping is the true-grasping that everybody has, irrespective of whether the mind has been influenced by tenets or not. It is generated through its own power with regards to the person or the aggregates. It grasps at natural existence and at inherent existence independently of an analysis with reasoning.

The term 'innate true grasping' refers to grasping regardless of whether one adheres to a certain tenet or not, or whether one has gained some intellectual understanding or not. All beings, naturally and spontaneously, have innate true grasping.

The commentary highlights:

It is generated through its own power with regard to the person or the aggregates.

This means that whether focusing on individual persons or any other phenomena, the grasping that arises spontaneously and naturally is what is called innate true grasping.

For intellectually acquired true grasping the commentary explains:

Intellectually acquired true-grasping is true-grasping that, in dependence on an analysis with reasons, thinks it is valid that objects exist truly and that 'that objects exist truly'.

Intellectually acquired true grasping comes about as a consequence of analysis using reasoning, when one comes to a wrong conclusion that self and other phenomena exist truly.

The key point about innate true grasping is that it spontaneously and naturally arises in all ordinary beings, regardless of whether they've analysed phenomena or not. However intellectually acquired true grasping is that which arises in those who are proponents of certain tenets. This is why the root cause of samsara or cyclic existence is said to be innate true grasping. If it was intellectually acquired true grasping then only the proponents of certain tenets would have the root cause of samsara, and the rest would not have the root cause of samsara. That would be absurd, as only those who have intellectually-acquired true grasping would be creating the karma to be born in cyclic existence.

These are actually significant points to understand.

The commentary further explains:

In the category of self-grasping at person, there is also an innate grasping at a self-sufficient substantial existent,

This is the lower school proponents' explanation of self-grasping.

... and the grasping at the person as the lord and at the aggregates as the servant, which can only be intellectually acquired.

The grasping at the person as the lord and the aggregates as the servant can only be grasping in the category of intellectually acquired grasping. In the earlier presentation of an innate grasping at a self-sufficient substantial existent, one needs to understand that this is coarse self-grasping, not the subtle or actual self-grasping according to the Prasangika.

The commentary continues:

Likewise, also the grasping at partless particles and partless moments of time can only be intellectually acquired grasping at the self of phenomena.

Again this is coarse grasping at phenomena, not subtle grasping.

Next the commentary presents a summary of the main points Gyaltsab Je has mentioned:

In short, the two types of innate true-grasping are generated through their natural power, independently of analysis. Any other types of true-grasping are intellectually acquired.

The determined object of the earlier is the main object of negation, and the negation of the latter should be understood as part of the negation of the earlier.

The point here is that the determined object of innate self-grasping is the main object of negation, and that, as mentioned earlier, is because the determined object of innate self-grasping is the root cause of samsara. That becomes the main object of negation, whereas *the negation of the latter* i.e. intellectually-acquired self-grasping, *should be understood as part of the negation of the earlier.* In attempting to refute innate self-grasping one would then be able to negate intellectually-acquired self-grasping. The opponent presents this argument:

Argument: If one asserts that a refutation of the teeth, nails and so forth as being the self is for the purpose

¹ This heading was introduced on 12 July 2016.

of liberation from cyclic existence, then that would be unsuitable, as sentient beings, while grasping at them as mine, do not grasp at them as 'I'.

A significant argument being presented here is that the root cause of samsara is grasping at the self, not at the parts of the self, such as teeth, other organs etc. These are not the self, so there is no point in overcoming grasping at the parts of oneself, as these don't serve as the root cause of samsara. So, they are saying that while one needs to overcome the grasping at self, the parts are not the self.

The commentary explains the answer to this with the following explanation:

Answer: Since this is synonymous with the teachings that form and so forth are not the self, ...

This is from another teaching where it says that form and so forth are not the self. It comes down to the same meaning.

The commentary continues:

... out of [the two] focus and aspect, of the innate transitory view, it is the focus that is the mere self-isolates of the mere 'I' and 'mine' that are the basis of karmic cause and effect. The innate transitory view grasps at them as inherent 'I' and 'mine'...

What is being presented here is the view of the transitory collections, which grasps at one's own 'I' and 'mine' as being inherently existent. ***The definition of the view of the transitory collection is an afflicted wisdom that focuses on the 'I' and 'mine' in the continuum of an individual person and grasps at them as inherently existent 'I'.*** So with the transitory view it is the general isolate of 'I' and 'mine' that is being focused on, not the specific aspects of 'mine'. Here we need to understand the distinction between the innate self-grasping that is the transitory view, and general grasping at a person. The transitory view relates to an individual who focuses on their own individual 'I' and 'mine' as holding them as being inherently existent. Holding onto another individual's self and grasping that as being inherently existent is not the transitory view. It is self-grasping but it is not the transitory view.

I will explain more specifically the focus that is the mere isolates of 'I' and 'mine'. When we refer to the parts which make up oneself e.g. 'head', we don't say randomly 'head' or 'nose' in relation to oneself, we refer to them as 'mine'. We say 'my head', 'my eyes', 'my ears,' 'my nose' in relation to the five sense faculties. We attribute the term 'mine' although it is part of oneself. So what is being specifically presented here is that when presenting innate self-grasping in relation to the transitory view, it is presented as an isolate. Grasping at that strong sense of one's own 'I' and 'mine' as being inherently existent is known as the view of transitory collections.

To emphasise the point, the innate transitory view grasps at one's own 'I' and 'mine' as inherently existent. While there is seemingly a distinction here, what we need to understand is that the grasping at 'mine' is actually part of grasping at 'I', it is not distinct. The grasping at 'mine' – my head, nose, and so forth – is actually grasping at the 'I'. The view of the innate transitory collection is grasping at the inherently existing 'I', so even when we say 'mine', that is part of the 'I'. Therefore it has to be posited as grasping at the 'I'. The significant point presented next in the commentary says:

If the 'I' existed inherently, then amongst the examples for the 'I', such as the collection of the aggregates or its continuum, its parts or division, or

something of a different entity from the aggregates, should be established as the example of the 'I'. The point here is that this is not the case.

This means that if there were an inherently existent 'I' then it would have to be found amongst the parts that make up the 'I', as mentioned here; either the collection of the aggregates or its continuum, its parts or its divisions. If it is not found there, or in some different entity from the aggregates, then there is no other way to establish an inherently existent 'I'; either in relation to the aggregates, the whole of it, or the continuum of it, or the parts or the division of it, or something separate from the aggregates. If an inherently-existent 'I' did exist, then it could only be found in these ways.

As a way to get an understanding of the differentiation between innate self-grasping and intellectually acquired self-grasping it would be good to go over the text again, and also try to read other sources to complement it. With innate self-grasping there is the view of the transitory collection. What is that? Within that there are two aspects: grasping at an inherently existent 'I' based on an individual person and there is grasping at an inherently existent 'mine'. Grasping at either of these two becomes the view of the transitory collection. These are points that are good to understand.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke.

*Transcript prepared by Judy Mayne
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱུང་རྒྱུ་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

1 November 2016

As usual let us spend some time in our meditation practice.

Now, based on a good and clear bodhicitta motivation we can set our motivation for receiving the teachings.

2.3.1.1. REFUTING THE DETERMINED OBJECT OF INNATE SELF-GRASPING

Last session we went through the preliminary explanation in the commentary, which meticulously presented important points that we really need to become acquainted with so that we develop a good understanding of them.

Now we come to the actual verses in the root text that present points showing us how to identify innate self-grasping.

It is important that those who are new to these explanations do not misinterpret what 'selflessness' means. What is being negated is not the self, because the person does exist; what is being negated is an inherently existent self of a person.

The terms 'self', 'person', and 'I' are synonymous. While the Tibetan term *ki wu* refers particularly to a human being, the term *gang sak* – translated here as person – is a more generic term that refers to all beings. So a person, the self and 'I' definitely do exist.

When the teachings present the lack of self of a person, one needs to understand this in the context of the basic Buddhist view that is held by all Buddhist schools, known as the **four seals** of Buddhism. When one has a good understanding of these four seals then one gains an understanding of selflessness.

The four seals of Buddhism are:

- All compounded phenomena are impermanent
- All contaminated phenomena are in the nature of suffering
- All phenomena are empty and selfless
- Nirvana is peace

All compounded phenomena are impermanent: Most of you are already aware of this point. 'Compounded phenomena' refers to functional and produced things, which by their very nature are changing moment by moment. Thus, because they are momentary, all compounded phenomena are impermanent.

All contaminated phenomena are in the nature of suffering: This is very true, as the samsaric environment and the beings abiding within it are a constant source of suffering and dissatisfaction.

All phenomena are empty and selfless: The selflessness in the context of the view of the four seals is the selflessness of a person that is empty of being permanent, single or partless and independent, and this is accepted by all Buddhist schools of tenets. This is the gross selflessness of a person. This view is contrary to the self that is asserted by the non-Buddhist schools. As the text will present, the non-Buddhist schools posit a self that is **permanent**, because they say that the self does not change from moment to moment. It is **singular** as it does not depend on different parts for its

existence, and it is **independent**, because it does not depend on causes and conditions.

For all Buddhist schools a self that is permanent, singular or partless and independent, as posited by the non-Buddhist schools, does not actually exist. Therefore such as self is an object of negation. The lack of a permanent, singular and independent person is the 'selflessness of person' – albeit a gross selflessness of person. So understanding the four seals is essential if we are to understand the selflessness that is accepted by all Buddhist schools of tenets.

From the higher school perspective this selflessness is considered to be 'coarse selflessness'. However, at our level it is important to begin with gaining a good understanding of the selflessness as presented in the four seals. Without a good understanding of the selflessness of a person at this basic level then there is no possibility of gaining an understanding of the more profound 'subtle selflessness' of person and other phenomena.

We need to incorporate our understanding of selflessness in relation to ourselves. It is quite clear that **we are not a permanent entity** as we can all see the obvious physical and mental changes we go through. Therefore we cannot possibly be a permanent entity.

Furthermore **we are not a singular entity**, because we know that we are dependent on the many parts that make up who we are. We are dependent on our physical aggregates or our body, as well as our mind, for without our body and mind we could not possibly be called a person. Therefore we are clearly not **singular** or **partless**.

Finally **we could not possibly be independent of causes and conditions** because we clearly depend on many causes and conditions for our existence, in particular the influence of karma. More specifically, our experience of happiness and suffering is dependent on causes and conditions: virtue is the cause of happy experiences and non-virtue is the cause of suffering.

This covers many profound aspects of the teachings. Having a good understanding of this encompasses a good understanding of the cause and effect of karma, as well as the existence of our past and future lives. Because our happiness is dependent on causes and conditions, we also come to understand the need to accumulate merit. We all want to experience happiness and joy, so we need to accumulate the appropriate causes, which are virtue and merit.

So we can see that when we relate this view of selflessness to our own experience, it becomes really tenable. Just saying, 'Oh, I do not accept the non-Buddhist view of a permanent, singular and independent self, because as a Buddhist I am not supposed to believe in that', would be a very superficial way of relating to this presentation. Rather, when we relate it to our own experiences, then we will gain a deeper understanding of what selflessness really means.

If we can begin to really pay attention to what seems simple and practical, then we can derive more profound understanding that will help our practice. We claim to be Buddhists, so it is important to understand what being a Buddhist really means, which basically falls into two main aspects – **right conduct** and **right view**. As presented in the teachings, a Buddhist's conduct is one that **abstains from violence**, and the Buddhist view is accepting the **view of selflessness**, as presented earlier. This explanation of the view is presented in the tenets. Of course, when His Holiness the Dalai Lama presents the Buddhist view he

relates it to **interdependent origination**, which is a higher level of understanding the view. However, on the basic general level, the tenets present the view of selflessness.

The proper understanding of selflessness is derived from the presentation of the four seals of Buddhism, as it is the basic level of selflessness that is asserted by all Buddhist schools. There are other interpretations that posit as the view presented in the four seals as a higher level of selflessness such as a person being devoid of self-sufficient and substantial existence, however this is not tenable. Another example of selflessness is that posited by the Prasangika, which is a person being empty of an inherently existent self.

However, one needs to understand that the higher and more profound levels of selflessness are based on the earlier understanding of selflessness. As explained in the teachings, the presentations of selflessness range from the coarse - asserted by the lower schools and presented in the four seals - up to the subtlest level of selflessness, as asserted by the **Prasangika**. Each depends on an understanding of the previous presentation.

The **Vaibhashika** point of view is that a person is empty or devoid of being a permanent, singular and independent self, although one of the Vaibhashika sub-schools called the *nes-ma bu-pa* or Vasiputriya do not accept that as being selflessness.

Having a good understanding of that level of selflessness helps to develop a better understanding of selflessness as presented by the **Sautrantika**, which is that a person is empty of being self-sufficient and substantially existent. This brings us closer to the understanding of selflessness as presented by the **Mind Only** school, which is that the person is empty of an external existence.

For the **Svatantrika-Madhyamika** school, the view of selflessness of person is that the person is empty of true existence. That in turn leads up to the view of the **Prasangika-Madhyamika** school, which is that the person is empty of inherent existence. So one needs to understand how these views are presented in a consecutive way leading up to the higher levels of understanding.

There are some who say that the view of selflessness presented in the four seals has to be the selflessness asserted by the higher schools. But that couldn't be the case, because the question would then arise as to whether the lower Buddhist schools, which don't have understanding of the higher and more subtle views of selflessness, are Buddhists or not? Or perhaps they are Buddhist only by conduct but not by view, as they lack the correct view of selflessness. That would be an absurdity because the specific demarcation that distinguishes a Buddhist from a non-Buddhist is based on whether one accepts the view of selflessness or not. In fact we need to be careful ourselves, as we might easily fall into the category of being a Buddhist by conduct but not in view if we still hold onto views that are not in accordance with the view of selflessness. So we need to be very mindful of these points.

It is safe to assume that all of you have a basic understanding of selflessness, so there might not be much danger of holding on to a wrong view here. However, it is really important that you further enhance the correct understanding of selflessness and emptiness, especially if you assume yourself to be a practitioner of tantra. Every tantric sadhana begins with the passage 'all phenomena become empty; from within the sphere of emptiness ...' So without an understanding of emptiness one cannot possibly

assume that one is practising tantra accurately. The understanding of emptiness in tantra is as presented in the perfection vehicle.

It is possible for a tantric practitioner to have an understanding of emptiness as presented by the Mind Only, or the view of emptiness as presented by the Svatantrika-Middle Way, not to mention the highest Buddhist school of Prasangika. However, in tantra the understanding of emptiness cannot be based on any of the lower schools' views of selflessness. That is definite.

The main point for those who have received tantric initiation is that you will breach one of your four root vows if you do not remember emptiness. So we need to pay attention to developing a correct understanding of emptiness, as remembering it on a regular basis is part of our commitment. Without a correct understanding of emptiness then there is no possible way to really remember emptiness, but with a proper understanding it is a matter of bringing that understanding to mind. We are working towards developing a more profound understanding of emptiness. That is what it means to remember emptiness at our level.

You will recall His Holiness' recent teachings where, prior to giving the initiation, he referred to the importance of generating bodhicitta with the practice of tantra. He used passages from the *Commentary on Bodhicitta* and went into quite a lot of detail in explaining the importance of generating bodhicitta based on the teachings. So both bodhicitta and emptiness are essential for understanding the practice of tantra.

What is being presented in the following verses of the root text and the commentary is, in summary, the lack of an inherently existent self.

If an inherently existent self were to exist, then it has be findable upon the aggregates that make up a person. Therefore, the first section of this part of the text negates the view of a self or a person as existing within the aggregates of the body.

First the text negates the view of those who assert the physical aggregates as an example of a person. Then it negates the view of those who posit the consciousness as the example of a person.

The Prasangika present the person as a mere label imputed upon the psychophysical aggregates. Thus the example of person is a mere label imputed upon the aggregates, and say that if you search within the psychophysical aggregates you will never find a person there. Thus a person is a mere label imputed upon the aggregates.

Again, it is good to reflect on this at a personal level. When we relate to ourselves, we automatically identify ourselves as 'I' or 'me', but we need to investigate further: Where is this 'I' or 'me' that I hold onto so strongly? Is it upon my aggregates? If it is upon my aggregates, then in which part of my aggregates is that 'I'? Am I able to find the 'I' upon any of my aggregates or anywhere else? When we investigate each and every part of our own body in this way, we will come to the conclusion that there is no 'I' to be found anywhere. We can't find the 'I'. This goes to show that none of our physical parts in themselves could possibly be 'I'.

The lower schools come to their conclusion about the 'I' based on this kind of investigation. The Prasangika, on the other hand, posit the 'I' as a mere imputation upon the aggregates. Thus, in order to posit the 'I' there is no need for investigation. That will be presented later on. This is really the distinguishing point: when the lower schools posit the

'I', they do so by investigating where the 'I' might be found, whereas the Prasangika posit the 'I' without having to do any investigation.

With that basic explanation the verses and the explanations of them should be quite clear.

57. *The teeth, hair and nails are not the self;
The self is not the bones or blood,
Not the nasal mucus or phlegm,
And also not lymph or pus.*
58. *The self is not the fat or sweat,
And neither the lungs nor liver are the self.
The other inner organs are also not the self,
The self is not faeces or urine.*
59. *The flesh and skin are not the self,
The heat and air are not the self,
The holes are not the self, and certainly the
Six primary consciousnesses are not the self.*

The commentary explains:

Refuting parts of the aggregates as examples for the 'I': The teeth and nails are not the self, the bones or blood are not the self, and neither is the nasal mucus or phlegm because the self is established as merely labelled on these. Also, because of the earlier reason, lymph or pus are not examples of the 'I', and neither are the sweat or fat examples of the self. And neither the lungs nor the liver are examples of the self, and also the other inner organs such as the intestines and so forth are not examples of the self. The self is neither faeces nor urine and also the flesh or skin are not the self, as the self is established as merely labelled on them. The heat and air are not the self, and understand that also the holes of the body and so forth are not the self.

This is quite clear. Then the commentary further explains:

If the meaning of this is summarised: The Realists belonging to our side grasp at the aggregates as an example for the person, and non-Buddhists accept a self that is of different entity from the aggregates; the self being like the master and the aggregates like the servant.

What is shown here is synonymous with the refutation of the six spheres as the person in the *Garland of the Middle Way*. 'The holes are not the self' refutes the sphere of space as the person.

Thus it is also unsuitable to hold any of the collection of the aggregates, or its continuum, its parts or divisions, or something that is of a different entity from the aggregates, to be an example for the person even nominally, and also, anything of different entity from them cannot be posited as the person because the person is established as being merely labelled in dependence on these.

I don't need to spend too much time on this explanation, as I presented it in the teachings on the Middle Way. This verse is a presentation of refuting aggregates and so forth as being the self.

When the commentary states, *If the meaning of this is summarised: The Realists belonging to our side* refers to the Vaibhashika who hold the aggregates as an example of the person. When the Vaibhashika search for an example of a person, they conclude that a person cannot be found anywhere else but within the five aggregates; i.e. the physical aggregate, the aggregate of feeling, the aggregate of discrimination, the aggregate of compositional factor and the aggregate of consciousness. The Vaibhashika posit the

person within this collection of the five aggregates. So according to the Vaibhashika, the five aggregates are an example of a person.

The *non-Buddhists accept a self that is of different entity from the aggregates; the self being like the master and the aggregates like the servant*. Another way of explaining this is with the example of a load and the carrier, in which the load and the person carrying the load are of different entities: the self is like the load, and the aggregates are like the person carrying the load, so with this example they posit the self as a different entity to the aggregates. Thus the self is posited as being completely separate from the aggregates.

What is shown here is synonymous with the refutation of the six spheres as the person in Garland of the Middle Way. We covered this in the teachings on *Precious Garland*, which says that because a person is a combination of the six spheres it cannot be truly or inherently existent.¹ The presentation can be summarised with the following syllogisms. Take the subject 'a person': it lacks inherent or true existence – because it is posited upon the six spheres; and the six spheres lack inherent existence – because the six spheres individually are dependent on many other causes and conditions for their existence.

As posited by the higher Prasangika school, the person is a nominal existent rather than substantial existent. Here, nominal existent means that it is merely nominated, or labelled upon the six spheres, and that there is no substantial existence from its own side. Thus nominal existence means that it is merely labelled by the mind.

Thus *it is also unsuitable to hold any of the collection of the aggregates, or its continuum, its parts or divisions, or something that is of a different entity from the aggregates, to be an example for the person even nominally*. This means that even conventionally the example of a person cannot be posited upon any of its parts.

Then, lest one comes to the wrong conclusion that since the aggregates and the continuity of these aggregates and parts and divisions of aggregates are not the self, they must be a separate entity, the words *anything of different entity from them cannot be posited as the person* are added. This is *because the person is established as being merely labelled in dependence on the aggregates*.

This is the point. The person is asserted to be a nominally existent because it is not any of the aggregates. Neither is the person a different entity from the aggregates, because it is imputed or labelled upon the aggregates.

Having refuted what a person is not, the following argument from a lower Buddhist school is presented.

Argument: But then there is nothing that can be posited as the person.

So, what they are saying is, 'if what we posit as a person is not a person, then what is there left to be posited as a person'? The commentary provides this answer.

Answer: Are you not satisfied in positing Devadatta or Yajjadatta [as persons] without analysis?

For if you posit an inherently existent person as the object labelled when saying 'person', then you will fall into the extremes of nihilism or eternalism. Understand that not even one atom of such a self exists.

¹ See teaching of 31 August 2010.

Although Devadatta and Yajjadatta are cited, any modern name can be used. In response to the argument, 'Is it not suitable just to posit an individual as a person without the analysis?' indicates that the Prasangika system presents the nominal person without analysis. It is said that the Prasangika presentation is very much in accordance with the worldly convention. When we call out someone's name or want to point out someone, we don't go through a whole analysis of where they are, and which part of them is them. We just point them out, saying, 'There is the person you want'.

What is being presented here is how *a person is posited without analysis*. Thus, an example of a person is that which is labelled upon that combination of the aggregates. As the commentary states, *if you posit an inherently existent person as the object labelled when saying 'person' then you will fall into the extremes of nihilism or eternalism*.

An example of a person is that which is suitable to posit as a person because of their function. For example, when we ask 'Where is Damien?' people point to his body and say, 'There is Damien'. If we were to go through a thorough analysis to look for Damien, then there is the danger of coming to the wrong conclusion, 'Oh, I cannot find Damien, so Damien must not exist'. That would be falling into the extreme of nihilism!

That which is suitable to function as Damien is who Damien is. Based on what we see of Damien; i.e. his bodily movements, mannerisms and functionality is what we posit as Damien. We don't go through a thorough analysis of determining where Damien is when we posit Damien, do we? If we were actually to do an analysis of where Damien is then we might say, OK, is Damien's head Damien? No. Is Damien's body Damien? His hands and arms? No. We might easily then come to the wrong conclusion that Damien cannot be found anywhere, therefore Damien does not really exist. If Damien can't be found anywhere, then Margie might get really worried!

In preparation for our following sessions it will be good to read some of the commentary texts. You all have access to the transcripts of the teachings that I have presented, as well as your notes. It is best if you have taken good notes and kept them in your memory. But we have all the transcripts of the teachings on the *Precious Garland*, the teachings on the *Madhyamakavatara*, and the teachings on the *Four Hundred Verses*, which all cover this topic.

So it is good to refer to these texts as a way to get a more comprehensive understanding of this presentation. It is my regular practice to have quite a few books around me. I pick up different books at different times and read different passages from them. It is good to refresh one's memory and gain a deeper understanding of these topics.

Merely reading a text will help to settle down a very hyperactive and unruly mind. It is good to understand that one has access to these methods to help calm down and subdue the mind.

For the manifestation of different negative states of mind such as strong anger, refer to the teachings on the antidotes for overcoming anger, such as developing patience and so forth. Through reading those passages one will be reminded of the way to apply the antidotes for overcoming anger. Then the mind will settle down and you will be calmer. Likewise, when strong attachment arises, refer to the passages on how to apply the antidote for overcoming attachment. There are many different sources - you can refer to passages from the *Abhidharma* as well. These are useful

ways to overcome strong attachment, jealousy or pride and other negative states of mind. When one refers to these methods and techniques and reflects on them, it will help to settle the mind down.

We cannot blame those who do not have any understanding of or access to any explanations on how to apply the antidote for delusions, such as intense anger. They have nothing to help them to appease their mind. They are completely enslaved to that mind of rage and anger, carrying weapons and running towards what they perceive as their enemy in order to kill them, because they have no understanding of the ways to overcome the delusions in their mind. So we just have to feel compassion for such people, and not blame them for resorting to such strategies.

But if we, who do have an understanding and access to resources explaining the antidotes for overcoming such negative state of mind, don't do anything about applying the antidotes and just give in to our negative emotions and states of mind, then that would be more than a pity. What could be more disgraceful than knowing there are methods to overcome delusions, but then not apply them?

As I have explained previously, we need to understand the subtle differences between the different delusions and their derivatives. When anger is prolonged for a long time then it turns into belligerence, to the point where one could pick up any weapon as a way to intentionally harm what one perceives as being the cause of one's distress. As I have explained previously, belligerence is only directed at an animate object. While anger is listed as one of the six root divisions, belligerence is listed as a secondary delusion, but being a secondary delusion doesn't necessarily mean that it is less significant.

We see those who, out of frustration and anger, kick their own car. I really pity them. How can kicking the car help them? They just feel so angry, and out of their rage they either hit the car, or hurt themselves further, and some even intentionally engage in self-harm. This is a really pitiful situation.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke.

Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་རྫོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྟུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

8 November 2016

As usual let us spend some time in our meditation practice.

[Meditation]

Now, based on a bodhicitta motivation and attitude, we generate the motivation for receiving the teachings as usual.

2.3.1.2. REFUTING THE INTELLECTUALLY ACQUIRED SELF

This is subdivided into two:

2.3.1.2.1. Refuting the self asserted to be consciousness by the Enumerators

2.3.1.2.2. Refuting the self asserted to be matter by the Particularists

2.3.1.2.1. Refuting the self asserted to be consciousness by the Enumerators

The self that is being refuted here is the self that is asserted by the non-Buddhist Samkhyas or Enumerators¹, which is a mere consciousness.

The commentary begins with:

Although there are infinite kinds of substantially established types of self asserted by non-Buddhists, as they are all either asserted to be matter or consciousness, they can be subsumed into either matter or consciousness by refuting these two, one is able to refute all others, two are refuted here.

It is quite clear that all *types of self* that are posited by *non-Buddhists can be subsumed into either matter or consciousness*. So by refuting these two views i.e. the self as either being matter or consciousness, one is effectively refuting all other non-Buddhist views of the self.

This section of the text is sub-divided into two:

2.3.1.2.1.1. The actual refutation

2.3.1.2.1.2. Refuting the reply

2.3.1.2.1.1. The actual refutation

First there is a presentation of how the Enumerators posit the self:

The Enumerators posit exactly twenty-five types of objects of knowledge, out of which twenty-four, including the great principle are matter, and the twenty-fifth is a consciousness, a knower, experience, or the self endowed with mind.

We don't need to go into all the categories now.² What one needs to understand is that the *twenty-fifth is consciousness*, and that this is what is being asserted here as the self. For the Enumerators there are no other aspects to a person besides the consciousness; basically the self is a mere consciousness.

The commentary further explains:

The great principle knows how to produce expressions but does not know how to use them, ...

The Enumerators assert that *the great principle* is the cause while the expressions are the effects. Furthermore, the great principle *knows how to produce expressions but does not know how to use them*,

... and the person, which is referred to as the knowing consciousness, knows how to use objects but does not know how to produce them.

The Enumerators assert that the person or self has five qualities, which are that it engages – in happiness, suffering and so forth; it is a permanent functionality; it is not the creator; it lacks qualities; and it lacks action. So, they assert these five qualities to be the attributes of the self or person.

As further explained in the commentary:

... This person is asserted to be a permanent functionality.

The specific assertion here is that *the person is a permanent functionality*, which is contrary to the Buddhist assertion of permanence as non-functional and non-produced phenomena.

At the time of using the object, to that called 'awareness' and 'the great' appear outwardly the five mere objects of sound and so forth, and inwardly appears the person, ...

As explained here, the mere person *appears inwardly*, while *outwardly* the person engages in the *five sense objects* such as *sound and so forth*.

As explained further:

Cyclic existence is asserted to come about through the awareness grasping at that used and the user as one.

The Enumerators assert that the user (i.e. the self) and what is being used (i.e. the five sense objects) are actually separate. So, sentient beings circle in cyclic existence because of the misconception that sees objects and object possessor as one.

There are more detailed explanations of the assertion of the Samkhyas in *Precious Garland of Tenets*. Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland of Advice*³ also has a summary of these explanations, and I also taught it when we did the *Madhyamakavatara* or Middle Way teaching⁴. So I do not need to explain it in detail here.

The commentary also states:

I will not explain it here in detail, but you should understand their presentation from other sources, because it appears that through misinterpretation there are many assertions that the school of the Enumerators are the view of Highest Yoga Tantra.

As an introduction to the verse, the commentary then states:

Although there are four possibilities with regard to sound and consciousness being permanent or not, the Enumerators posit both as permanent.

The *four possibilities with regard to sound and consciousness being permanent* means that there are some - such as the Enumerators - who posit that both sound and

¹ These two terms are used interchangeably in this transcript.

² These can be found in the teachings of 31 May 2005.

³ See teaching of 6 July 2010.

⁴ See teachings of 22 April 2003, and 29 April 2003.

consciousness are permanent, and others who posit them as being impermanent.

For the **Enumerators**, consciousness is a mere awareness, whereas in our own system, consciousness includes mind and mental factors, as well as many other aspects of the mind. The Enumerators assert that this consciousness, or this mere awareness, is the person, which doesn't have any other aspects. They also assert that both consciousness and sound are permanent.

Madhyamika: If sound and consciousness were permanent then it would have to be the case that the consciousness constantly perceives sound; there would be no occasions when there's no perception of sound. If there are any instances where there is sometimes an awareness of sound and sometimes not, then it would be impossible to say that sound is permanent. If the consciousness were permanent, then whatever is perceived or apprehended would have to be constantly apprehended. This is the main point.

As adherents to a system of tenets, we assert that the person is impermanent. However as ordinary beings we instinctively grasp at the person as being permanent, don't we? We actually hold the notion that the self is permanent. So when the person is refuted as being permanent, we need to try to apply that understanding at a personal level, as a way to gain a real sense of what is being refuted. For this, we need to first acknowledge our own instinctive grasping at the permanence of the person.

It is not sufficient to just dismiss the view of the Enumerators by saying "oh, it's quite absurd that they assert that the person is permanent!" In fact, the core of their position in asserting that a person is permanent is because they cannot possibly see how it would otherwise be possible for a person to migrate from one life to the next. From a conventional point of view then, they seem to have a valid reason for asserting the self as being permanent, which we can relate to from our own false perceptions. In fact that is exactly how we perceive a person. We consider that the person we see today is the same person we saw yesterday. We may reason, if the person we saw yesterday doesn't exist today, then how could they be here now? And how could the person we see today actually continue to exist tomorrow? With that way of thinking it is easy to assume that the person or self is permanent.

The Prasangika system asserts that while a person is impermanent, its continuum migrates from past lives to this life and from this life to future lives. In Christianity there is no belief in reincarnation, is there? They don't believe in future lives, yet they believe in a soul which is permanent. So, if the soul is permanent but it doesn't reincarnate, then at the time of death where does it go? As Buddhists we believe that the self is impermanent, yet it reincarnates and continues to migrate to a future existence.

Some non-Buddhist schools of thought do not believe that there's a continuity of the self. They hold the view that at the time of death, the self simply ceases to exist. These non-Buddhist schools adhere to the notion that the self and the aggregates are actually of the same substance. Therefore when the aggregates disintegrate, the self

(which is dependent on the aggregates) also disintegrates. The example they give is of drawings on a wall. When the wall collapses the drawings naturally collapse as well, and so therefore the drawings cease to exist. Likewise, according to these schools, when the body disintegrates, the self or the soul also disintegrates and ceases to exist.

Does the person of yesterday exist today or not? Conventionally we would have to say that they do exist. What we have to understand here is that although we might easily say, "the correct view is to assert the person as being impermanent", we need to also understand how the continuum of the person continues to exist. So, while the person or the self is impermanent, it doesn't contradict the continuum of the person as existing continuously. What comes from yesterday exists today and goes on to tomorrow all the way into many future lives, and that is the continuum of the person. So when we hear comments that someone hasn't changed much over the years, we are actually referring to the continuum of that person, which is a similitude of the person that existed in the past.

Next comes the verse from the root text:

60. *If the consciousness of sound were permanent
One would apprehend sound all the time.
If there is no object of knowledge, then what is known
To say it is such a consciousness?*

Here the commentary explains:

If the knowledge consciousness person who engages the five mere objects of sound and so forth is a permanent functionality, then it follows that the knowledge consciousness person has sound as its apprehended object at all times, when sound exists and when sound does not exist – because it is a permanent entity that has made sound its object and apprehends it.

This thesis is unsuitable to be accepted – because if there is no object of knowledge, then what would be the known object in order for the consciousness to be the object-possessor of such and such an object? It would be unsuitable to say such a thing.

As explained here, the **Enumerators** or Samkhya assert that *the knowledge consciousness person engages the five mere sense objects of sound and so forth, which are permanent functionalities.*

Madhyamika: If they were a permanent functionality then it follows that *the knowledge consciousness person has sound as its apprehended object at all times.* As mentioned earlier, they would have to be apprehending sound at all times. What kind of object possessor would it be if there was no object to be apprehended, or perceived? If it is an object possessor then because you Enumerators assert it as being permanent, it will perceive that object at all times.

Can there be a consciousness that does not perceive an object? The point is that if it is a consciousness, it has to be an object possessor. The very function of a consciousness is to perceive objects. Without an object, how can it be an object possessor? The very term 'object possessor' means that if it is a consciousness it has to perceive objects, whatever the object may be.

In the teachings three types of object possessors are presented: person, consciousness and sound. The very term object possessor means that it has to engage with an object. So from the Buddhist point of view we need to understand that if it is consciousness, it necessarily has to perceive an object.

The next verse reads:

61. *If it is consciousness without that known,
Then it follows that also wood is
consciousness.
Therefore one has to say that without
proximity of
The object of knowledge, consciousness does
not exist.*

The argument of the Enumerators is:

Argument: The reason is not established because even if there is no sound, there is the permanent consciousness that apprehends it.

To this the Madhyamikas say:

Answer: It follows that even wood becomes consciousness because it is permitted to accept consciousness without object of knowledge.

Hence, it is confirmed that without the proximity of the object of knowledge of sound or the like, one has to say there is no consciousness. As there is no way to posit consciousness if there is no object of knowledge, you would have to accept there is no time when the person does not apprehend sound.

The Samkhya assert that *the reason is not established because even if there is no sound, there is the permanent consciousness that apprehends it.*

The Madhyamika answer, as explained in the verse, is that *it follows that even wood becomes consciousness.* If one can posit a consciousness that does not apprehend sound, or indeed apprehend any particular object, then even a piece of wood could be considered as consciousness. That is because you Samkhya are saying that *it is permitted to accept consciousness without object of knowledge.* Hence, *it is confirmed that without the proximity of the object of knowledge of sound or the like, one has to say there is no consciousness.* There is no way to posit consciousness if there is no object of knowledge.

The conclusion reached by the Madhyamikas is that according to your assertions *you would have to accept that there is no time when the person does not apprehend sound.* The absurdity of the Enumerator's view is that the person constantly apprehends sound.

2.3.1.2.1.2. Refuting the reply

The Enumerators present this reply:

Enumerator: The consequence that there would be a consciousness without objects of knowledge is not tenable.

The consequence that there would be a consciousness without objects of knowledge is not tenable. Next the following verse is presented:

62. *If, 'they know form',
Why do they not hear anything at this time?
If, 'because there is no proximity to sound,'
Then there is also no consciousness of it.*

The Enumerators reason that:

Because at the time when sound does not exist, this permanent person is conscious of form by taking it as the object of apprehension.

Then the Madhyamika refute that by saying:

Madhyamika: Take the subject 'the being' – at the time of apprehending form by taking it as the object, why does it also not hear sound? It follows it should – because it is a permanent entity that engages the mere five objects without discrimination.

The Enumerators reason that *when sound does not exist, the permanent person is conscious of form, and takes it as the object of apprehension.*

The Madhyamika present their refutation in the form of the following syllogism. *Take the subject 'the being': at the time of apprehending form by taking it as the object, does it not also hear sound? – it follows that it does.*

The reason is that according to you Enumerators it *is a permanent entity that engages the mere five objects without discrimination.* So the Prasangika are saying "You're saying that the person is permanent and it also engages with the five objects equally.

The Enumerators then present this argument:

Enumerator: Because it does not abide close to sound at the time of being conscious of form, it is not conscious of sound at that time.

The Madhyamikas reply to that saying:

Madhyamika: When the object of sound does not exist, then the consciousness that is its object-possessor also does not exist. If you accept this, then the thesis of a permanent pervasive person is lost.

This explanation is quite clear.

Then the next verse is presented:

63. *How could that in the nature of the
apprehension of sound
Become the apprehension of form?
Although one is labelled as father and son
This is not absolute.*

The Madhyamika response is:

Further, it follows that which is in the nature of a consciousness apprehending sound does not become a consciousness apprehending form – because their aspects are mutually exclusive.

Then the Enumerators say:

Enumerator: One person can be presented as father and son from two different points of view. Similarly, from the points of view of expression and nature the expression of sound does not exist at the time of the apprehension of form, but the nature of sound exists because form and sound are of one nature. Therefore one can also posit the object-possessor of sound at that time.

In the verse the Madhyamikas have explained that the aspect of *apprehending sound* and the aspect of *apprehending form* are mutually exclusive.

To that the Enumerators reply that *one person can be presented as father and son from two different points of view. Similarly, from the points of view of expression and nature, the expression of sound does not exist at the time of the apprehension of form.* So they say that the expression of sound does not exist at the time of the apprehension of

form, but the nature of sound exists because form and sound are of one nature. *Therefore one can also posit the object-possessor of sound at the same time.*

The **Madhyamika's** response is:

Madhyamaka: It follows the example does not fit the meaning [of the example of the father and son] – because although one person is labelled father and son from two different points of view, that person does not exist ultimately in either. Yet you accept these natures to be ultimately established.

Then the next two lines of verse are presented:

*64ab. Thus, courage and particles
As well as darkness are neither father nor son.*

The commentary explains:

You accept that the equilibrium of courage, particles and darkness is the great principle, nature and ultimate truth. Regarding this, the very nature at the occasion of the son is not the nature at the occasion of not being the son, i.e., the father, because the Enumerators state,

The supreme nature of qualities
Does not become something visible.
That which becomes visible
Is without any essence like an illusion.

The nature is accepted as something that does not become visible, and the directly visible father and son and the like are accepted as illusory. From this point of view, the very father becomes the son, and the very son becomes the father because both their natures are one.

Having quoted from their own source, the **Madhyamikas** are saying *you accept that the equilibrium of courage, particles and darkness is the great principle.*

For the **Enumerators** the 'great principle' is the equilibrium of courage i.e. happiness; *particles* i.e. equanimity; and *darkness* i.e. suffering. When these three are in a state of equilibrium, then that is the *principle* or *nature*, which is an *ultimate truth*. Therefore, for the Enumerators *the very nature of the occasion of the son is not the nature of the occasion of not being the son or the father.* They cannot be the one entity at the same time.

The Enumerators quote from a text, saying that *the supreme nature of qualities does not become something visible; that which becomes visible is without any essence like an illusion.* They are saying that the supreme nature of qualities is not visible, and that what is visible is like an illusion. That which can be seen by the eyes is actually an illusion. They say *that nature is accepted as something that does not become visible, and the directly visible father and son and the like are accepted as illusory.*

The **Madhyamika** respond that *from this the point of view, the very father becomes the son, and the very son becomes the father, because both their natures are one.* This is the absurdity of your system. If that is the case:

Then, because the natures of the father and the son are accepted as one, it is also impossible to posit individual occasions in dependence on the basis.

So it is not possible to refer to *individual occasions in dependence on the basis.*

The next lines from the root text are:

*64cd. It is not seen as possessing
The nature of apprehending sound.*

65ab. If it is seen in a different guise

Like an actor, then it is not permanent.

The explanation in the commentary reads:

If the apprehension of sound is seen in the different manifestation of the apprehension of form, just like an actor who puts on a new costume upon having abandoned the earlier costume, then it follows that the consciousness knowledge is not a permanent functionality because it takes on a different mode upon abandoning another one.

According to the **Samkhyas**, *the apprehension of sound is seen in the different manifestations of the apprehension of form, just like an actor who puts on a new costume upon having abandoned the earlier costume.*

The **Samkhyas** assert that there is only one consciousness. When engaging through the eyes the consciousness will see forms; when engaging through the ears the consciousness will hear sounds; when engaging through the nose the consciousness will smell odours; and the same with taste and so forth. So there is only one consciousness but function through the five senses. There are no separate consciousnesses that apprehend the different sense objects. One analogy is that it is like a person in a house who looks out through the different windows of the house.

The **Madhyamika** assert that there are different consciousnesses that perceive the different sense objects. Thus, there are the five sense consciousnesses plus the mental consciousness.

As mentioned earlier, the **Samkhya** assert that there is only one consciousness. They use the analogy of an actor who changes their costume in accordance with whatever role they have to play.

The **Madhyamika** refutation is that *it follows that the consciousness knowledge is not a permanent functionality, because it takes on a different mode upon abandoning another one.* How can you Samkhya assert that the consciousness is a permanent functionality if it changes its mode of apprehension, as you say, just like an actor changes their costume? You say that each time the consciousness perceives a different object it changes to that particular perception. So if there is a change occurring, then it goes against your assertion that it is permanent.

The next two lines of verse read:

*65cd. In case, 'the different guise is one
With it,' that is without precedent.*

Basically this is saying, such a thing has never been known before. Then the **Enumerators** say:

Enumerator: Because the apprehension of form, which is a different mode from the apprehension of sound, is of one nature with the apprehension of sound, there is no mistake.

Basically, according to the Enumerators there's no fault.

To this the **Madhyamika** say:

Madhyamaka: This one nature is without any earlier precedent because it only abides individually.

Further: It follows it is unsuitable to accept the later mode as said earlier mode itself – because the later one is one without any past. As it states in the *Great Commentary*.

If this very one is this very one at the time of later generation, then this one is without a past because they are accepted as mutually exclusive ones.

The *Great Commentary* says that *If this very one is at the time of later generation, then this one is without a past because they are accepted as mutually exclusive.* You are saying what was in the past is the same as now, yet you have also said that they are mutually exclusive. This absurdity is quite easy to understand.

The first two lines of the next verse read:

*66ab. If, 'The different mode is not true,'
It is its own nature I say.*

In reply the **Enumerators** begin by stating:

Enumerator: There is no fault because what appears in another mode is not true in the way it appears.

Then the **Madhyamikas** state:

Madhyamaka: It follows that you should, yet cannot, say that it is the singular true nature of that consciousness – because you accept that whatever mode appears, is not true in the way it appears.

Again this is quite clear. The **Enumerator's** assertion is that *there is no fault, because what appears in another mode is not true in the way it appears.*

The refutation presented by the **Madhyamika** is that *it follows that you should, yet you cannot, say that it is the singular true nature of that consciousness – because you accept that whatever mode appears is not true in the way that it appears.*

*66cd. If you say, 'only consciousness', according
To this it follows that all beings are one.*

*67ab. Also the animate and inanimate
Become one because of their shared existence.*

Thus the **Enumerators** say:

Enumerator: Only the continuum of the knowledge consciousness person exists truly.

Then the **Madhyamikas** response to that is:

Madhyamaka: In this case, it follows that all people of different continua become one – because all people are accepted as partless permanent pervading entities.

It follows that also the animate knowledge consciousness and the inanimate matter and principle become one – because they are the same in existing as partless permanent pervading entities. Or, one relates it to the answer that their mere existing nature is true.

Again, this is a clear presentation. In response the **Madhyamaka** are saying that *in this case, it follows that all people of different continua become one, which is an absurdity, because all people are accepted as partless permanent pervading entities.* Then *it follows that also the animate knowledge consciousness and the inanimate matter and principle become one as well, because they are the same in existing as partless permanent pervading entities* according to you **Samkhyas**. That is the absurdity being presented here.

The next two lines of the verse read:

*67cd. When the particulars are distorted
Then what could be their shared basis?*

Then the commentary explains:

Consider: When the different particulars of expression are distorted falsities, then it follows that their

concordant basis, the primary principle, which exists truly, also does not exist – because the expressions are false.

According to the **Enumerators** *the primary principle exists truly, yet according to them, their expressions are false.*

Madhyamaka: *The primary principle, which exists truly, also does not exist because the expressions are false.* So the absurdity is how could something that is true produce something that is false?

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke.

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

15 November 2016

Based on the motivation we generated during the refuge and bodhicitta prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [*meditation*]

With the generation of the bodhicitta motivation, we can now engage in the teachings. The meditation preceding our motivation is a way to help strengthen our motivation. The purpose of generating the motivation is to dispel any improper intentions in our mind, and basically to help subdue the mind. The stronger the positive state of mind we generate, the more likely it is we will be able to benefit others. Then, in turn, the more we benefit others, the more it will help us increase our good qualities and get rid of our negativities, thus bringing us closer to enlightenment.

If we wish to become enlightened, we need to consider practical ways by which we can proceed to get closer to enlightenment. Benefiting others and shunning actions that will harm them is a practical means of getting closer to enlightenment. So, while we're aiming for the long-term goal of enlightenment, in the meantime, on a practical level, we'll be able to contribute to the well-being of ourselves and others.

I'm relating this specifically in relation to a recent practice that some older students have been doing, and where others contributed, which is the fire puja. I've heard it went very well, and that people really helped each other. I see this as a good sign that the intention of helping each other has improved.

On the other hand, if someone is going through some difficulty, or an incident occurs involving someone, then instead of looking for ways to ease that situation, there might be occasions when others add more to the story and elaborate on the incident, or continue to talk about it, or spread rumours, etc. That is something which I consider to be like poison; that's definitely of no use, no benefit, at all.

If the person experiencing the difficulty gets to hear those comments about them, that is going to put them off coming here. They would not want to come to a centre like that, where they feel people are judging them, or talking about them, or spreading rumours about them. They would not want to come here. This is how we, as a centre, begin to close our doors to some people.

For that particular individual, who had an interest to come here initially and then stopped coming because of some incident like that, it would have harmed their ability to progress. For the centre also, even losing one person from coming to the centre, is a loss. If fewer people come to the centre, naturally it weakens the strength of the centre. For a centre to grow, it needs more people coming regularly.

We may think it's only one individual, but in fact those who have a connection with that individual would also be put off coming to the centre. When I was up in Chenrezig, I used to mention that we should not underestimate the gravity of not caring for even one person, because when that one person is

disappointed, it could prevent many others from coming as well.

What I am reminding you about, particularly those who have particular roles in the centre, is that it's very important to be mindful not to cause this kind of rift with people. In effect, it is a reminder for all of us to remember to try to put into practice Shantideva's incredible, practical advice. Shantideva has very effectively presented many methods and techniques, so whenever we have difficulties, we need to remember Shantideva's advice, and try to put it into practice.

One of our members who used to come regularly to the Centre, Susan, is not well now. As many of you will know, she is having difficulty with her breathing. I heard that some of the older students have taken the initiative to help out and go and visit and help in whatever way. When I heard that, I was very pleased, I feel that that is a very good sign of caring for each other.

When I hear about others caring in this way for those in need of help, it makes me feel good that a positive outcome of the Dharma is taking effect, through them giving such practical help and benefit. From my side, I've now reached an age where it's hard for me to go and do service in this way, but if there's others who can do this, it is good to maintain such service to others; I feel that there's a good legacy occurring here.

However, there have been many who have commented that my advice and the teachings that I present are helpful for others. So, I guess this is one way I'm contributing to helping others!

When I was at the Drolkar Centre last Sunday, there were a few who came up to me afterwards to thank me and made comments about how they were very touched and really enjoyed the teachings. Some even made comments later, saying how moved and touched they were seeing us having lunch together joyfully – laughing and in good spirit; apparently some were moved to tears. This shows that they had felt the good connection amongst the people there.

It's good for you to also consider that I am not just using words for the sake of sounding good, or making a lot of noise with no effect, as there are in fact those who feel the benefit. I'm just reassuring you that there is some benefit from what I share in the teachings.

2.3.1.2. Refuting the intellectually acquired self

2.3.1.2.2. Refuting the self asserted to be matter by the Particularists

In the earlier section, we covered the Samkhya's or Enumerators' views. This next section deals with the Particularists.

The verse relating to this is:

68. *The inanimate is also not the self
Because it is inanimate, like a vase.
Then if, 'because it is endowed with
consciousness
It is conscious,' it follows not knowing is
eliminated.*

The commentary reads:

The self posited as matter without mind by the Naiyayika and Particularists is also not the self since it is inanimate, e.g., like a vase.

The Particularists say that:

Particularists: Although the self itself is matter, it possesses mind by way of compounded relation, and therefore one posits it as knowing objects.

The **Madhyamikas'** answer to that is:

Madhyamika: It follows the phenomenon of the self truly not previously knowing objects is then eliminated – because it knows objects through the power of subsequent other phenomena.

What is being presented is quite clear. We've also covered some of these points earlier. The main point is that the **Particularists** don't assert the self as being consciousness; for them the self is the aggregates. Therefore, they posit the self to be matter, rather than consciousness.

Their assertion of the self as matter is actually refuted by the **Madhyamikas** in the very opening line of the commentary, where it says: *the self posited as matter without mind by the Naiyayika and Particularists is also not a self* – in other words, what the **Particularists** posit to be a self is in fact not really a self – *because it is inanimate* – meaning that it doesn't have a mind. The example given is *like a vase* – so, the **Madhyamikas** are saying that this self that you posit is in fact no different to other objects of matter, such as a vase. Because the self you posit lacks a mind, it cannot be asserted as a person.

The **Particularists** respond by saying, *although the self itself is matter, it possesses a mind by way of compounded relation*. Basically, this means that, although the self is matter, because of its inter-relationship with other factors it comes to have a mind, and therefore, they posit the self to knowing objects. So, in dependence on 'other', the self will have a consciousness – and know objects. They also agree that a person or self has to be an object possessor and thus know objects.

The **Madhyamikas** then refute that assertion by saying, *it follows the phenomenon of the self truly not previously knowing objects is then eliminated – because it knows objects through the power of subsequent other phenomena*. In other words, what the **Particularists** posit as a self, which is matter and not consciousness, does not know objects previously; only by coming into relationship with something else does it come to know objects. Prior to that, the self does not know the object.

While the **Particularists** posit the self as matter, they also posit it as being permanent. So, the **Madhyamikas** say that if, due to coming into contact with other factors, the self becomes an object possessor that knows things, then it has basically changed from the earlier self – that is, the self prior to coming into contact with other factors.

We can see the meticulous logic that the **Madhyamika** uses here to refute the **Particularists'** assertions. We should study these methods of logic, basically refuting and making counter arguments to the earlier positions and so forth. Such logic is meticulous. It is good for us to relate to this as a way of enhancing our own reasoning and logic.

Because people resort to arguments in many situations, one may as well learn the skills to present a logical argument. Especially when two people live together it seems that they end up having many arguments, so perhaps it's good to know how to carry out the arguments well, using logic. If you have previously learned how to use logic, you might even win an argument with your partner! (*laughter*)

The next verse is:

69. *If there is nothing that becomes the self,
How does the mind affect it?
Thus, devoid of consciousness and action,
Space has been made the self.*

The commentary explains:

If one accepts that the self does not even have the slightest change, then how does the mind affect the self so that the self knows objects? It follows the self is not affected – because it is accepted that the self is not changeable.

After this the commentary presents a summary:

Summary: Because the self is accepted as lacking consciousness and action, one has effectively accepted space to be self, which makes it pointless to accept - as such a self cannot act in any beneficial or harmful manner.

When the commentary states *if one accepts that the self does not even have the slightest change ...*, it is referring to the assertion of the **Particularists** that the self is permanent. So they are effectively accepting that the self does not have the slightest change. The contradiction presented here by the **Madhyamika** is, how then does the mind affect the self so that the self knows objects? The **Particularists** assert that, while the self is matter, it is when it comes into contact with a consciousness that it knows objects. The **Madhyamikas** are asking, how is it possible for that change to occur if the self is permanent? How can the self later become an object possessor, when in fact you accept the self to be unchangeable?

The **Madhyamikas'** reasoning is then presented further: *... it follows the self is not affected, because it is accepted that the self is not changeable*. Thus, the contradiction of the **Particularists'** assertion is presented.

From the **Prasangika Madhyamika** point of view – which we would claim is the point of view we adhere to – in relation to the self as knowing objects, although we would not say that the self is consciousness, we can still infer that the person knows things. Even from the normal conventional point of view, we would say that a person knows things, and that is because a person possesses a mind.

Some lower schools assert the self as being consciousness, but from the **Prasangika Madhyamika** point of view, the self is neither consciousness nor matter. While the self itself is not consciousness, it doesn't contradict that the self knows things. This is a significant point that we need to understand.

The summary of the **Madhyamika** argument is quite clear. It says that *because the self is accepted as lacking consciousness and action*, the **Particularists** have *effectively accepted space to be self*. If a self can be posited as lacking consciousness and not doing any action, that basically fits the criteria of empty space. So, you could effectively say that space is the self.

If that were the case, it is *pointless to accept such a self because it cannot act in any beneficial or harmful manner*. What the **Madhyamikas** are pointing out here is the contradiction that, if you were to posit a self that does not have any benefit or harm whatsoever, what is the point of even being a self? How can such a self even exist?

2.3.1.3. REFUTING OBJECTIONS TO THE REFUTATION

These are subdivided into two:

2.3.1.3.1. Refuting the objection that karmic cause and effect become invalid

2.3.1.3.2 Refuting the objection that meditation on compassion becomes invalid

With these particular non-Buddhist schools, we can see that they do believe in karma, because the objections they present here are that: "According to you Prasangika Madhyamikas, karmic cause and effect becomes invalid". This indicates that these schools do adhere to the notion of karmic cause and effect, as well as meditation on compassion, and so they value the need to meditate on compassion.

2.3.1.3.1. Refuting the objection that karmic cause and effect become invalid

This is divided into two:

2.3.1.3.1.1. Objection

2.3.1.3.1.2. Answer

2.3.1.3.1.1. Objection

The verse reads:

70. *If it is said, 'In case the self does not exist,
Then karmic cause and effect relationships are
invalid.
If one disintegrates upon creating karma,
Whose karma does it become?'*

From the commentary:

Argument: If the non-existence of the self, which becomes the basis for all bondage and liberation, is taken as momentary generation and disintegration of all functionalities, then virtuous and non-virtuous karmas and the relation to their results are invalid. If the person disintegrates in the next moment upon having created virtuous or non-virtuous karma, then whose karmic creation does it subsequently become? At the time of experiencing the result, the creator of the karma does not exist. If you say however according to our view the person is permanent [...].¹

Here the non-Buddhist **Particularist** schools are presenting a meticulously argued objection to the Prasangika Madhyamika. They say that the self in their system is a permanent self and begin their objection by saying, *if the non-existence of the self, which becomes or is the basis for all bondage and liberation ...* Here we can see that they have a concept of bondage and liberation, just as we have in the Buddhist system. Indeed, the Particularists assert that the self or person is the basis of bondage to cyclic existence, or being in samsara, and so becoming liberated is actually dependent on the self. So in that sense, the self is the basis of liberation.

The **Particularists'** objection to the Prasangika point of view continues: *... then virtuous and non-virtuous karmas and the relation to their results are invalid. If the person disintegrates in the next moment upon having created virtuous or non-virtuous karma, then whose karmic creation does it subsequently become? At the time of experiencing the result, the creator of the karma does not exist.*

In other words, if you, the Prasangika, say that the self doesn't exist, then who is it that actually creates the karma?

It is undeniable that the consequence of a karmic effect is experienced by the same person who created it. However,

the Particularists argue that, because the person who creates the karma is the one who experiences the effect later, this invalidates the Prasangika view, which asserts a self as being impermanent. If the self were impermanent and disintegrated from moment to moment, say the Particularists, who is the person experiencing the karmic effects created earlier?

We need to understand that, from the point of view of the Prasangika system and indeed all Buddhist schools, after the first moment in which a person creates karma, in the next moment that earlier moment will have disintegrated. The next moment after the karma is created, the action of the karma has ceased or disintegrated, but what does remain is the seed or imprint of the karma created earlier. The imprint is thus left on the continuum of the person's consciousness. As the continuum is carried forward, and when that seed later matures, one experiences the result of the karma.

Therefore, we need to understand that the reason why the Particularists feel they must assert the person as permanent is because, according to them, if the person were impermanent then, when the person who creates the karma disintegrates, that person will not experience the effects of the karma that was created earlier. Because to them it is the same person, and that is why they feel there is no alternative other than to accept the person as permanent.

2.3.1.3.1.2. Answer

The first verse and a half is presented first:

71. *The bases of action and result are different,
And although the creator self does not exist,
Since this is the same for both of us,
Isn't this debate here pointless?*

72ab. *It is impossible to see what you say,
That the cause is endowed with the result.*

The commentary explains:

Since it is established for both of us that the persons who are the basis at the causal time of creating the action, and at the resultant time of experiencing the result are of different substance, and that at the time of experiencing the result the self who created the karma does not exist, isn't your debate here at this time of explaining the relationship between karmic cause and effect pointless? You also accept that at the causal time of creating the karma the experience of the result is not there, and that at the time of experiencing the result, the creator of the karma is not there. If this becomes a fault, then it also applies to you. Additionally, your observation that the one endowed with the cause at the time of creating the cause is endowed with the experience of the result, this observation is impossible.

In presenting the answer here, the Madhyamikas say: *since it is established for both of us that the persons who are the basis at the causal time of creating the action, and at the resultant time of experiencing the result are of different substance ...* In other words, they would also assert that the person that experienced the result of the karma is different to the one who created it, in so far that they are of different substances.

The Madhyamikas continue: *... and that at the time of experiencing the result the self who created the karma does not exist, isn't your debate here at this time of explaining the relationship between karmic cause and effect pointless? You also accept that at the causal time of creating the karma the experience of the result is not there, and that at the time of experiencing the result, the creator of the karma is not there. If this becomes a fault,*

¹ Note: the [...] denotes the commentary's continuity with verses 71–74, the answers to the Particularists' argument

then it also applies to you. Additionally, your observation that the one endowed with the cause at the time of creating the cause is endowed with the experience of the result, this observation is impossible.

The **Particularists** then ask the question of the Prasangika Madhyamika:

Particularists: How is it then in your school?

Basically, they are asking, how do you assert the person that experiences both karmic cause and result?

The next two lines from the verse are:

*72cd. In dependence on one continuum,
We refer to agent and engager.*

The **Madhyamika** response is:

Madhyamika: In dependence on one continuum of aggregates we refer to the agent who creates the karma and the engager of the result. That called a continuum is the taker, which possesses parts, possessing that taken, the parts of the earlier, intermediate and later moments. In brief, it is valid to say this person creates karma, as well as experiences karma, but nobody can posit a cause and effect to be simultaneous.

As presented here, the **Madhyamika** school is saying that, *in dependence on one continuum of aggregates we refer to the agent who creates the karma and the engager of the result*. The continuum particularly refers to the continuum of the consciousness that goes from one life to the next. Within the aggregates, it is basically the consciousness that continues from one life to the next. Therefore, the creator of karma in this life is said to be the continuum of the same consciousness in the next life that experiences the result. That is how we posit a person who experiences the karmic consequences – a continuum of consciousness.

What is presented next is quite clear: *That called a continuum is the taker, which possesses parts, possessing that taken, the parts of the earlier, intermediate and later moments*. Here, the **Madhyamika** is positing the continuum as that which includes the earlier parts, the middle parts, and the later parts. That which possesses all of these is what they call a continuum.

The commentary continues, *in brief, it is valid to say this person creates karma, as well as experiences karma*. Here, *it is valid* means that, based on the continuum of the person, it is tenable or valid to posit that it is the same person who creates the karma, and also experiences the results or consequences of the karma. The Madhyamikas continue, *but nobody can posit a cause and effect to be simultaneous*. What is being emphasised here is that while the Madhyamikas assert that it is the continuum of a consciousness that experiences the effects of karma, the creation of karma and the resultant experience cannot be at the same time, as it is not possible for a cause and effect to be simultaneous.

It is important for us to get a good understanding of this point, because often we think that we experience an immediate effect, simultaneous with an action, and that whatever we do brings an immediate result.

The remaining two verses are presented are:

*73. The past and future minds
Are not the self because they do not exist.
Then, if the generated mind is the self
Because it disintegrates, again there is no self.*

*74. For example, like the banana tree,
When taken apart nothing is there.*

*Similarly, when looking with analysis
Also the self is not absolute.*

The commentary then presents the meaning:

The past and future minds are not the self or exist as self because they disintegrate and do not generate and therefore do not exist as self. Then, if the generated present mind were the self, as it disintegrates in the next moment, again the self asserted by you does not exist. For example, when the banana tree is separated into its parts, there is nothing there that exists inherently. Likewise, if one searches with logical analysis whether something is established inherently or not, then also the self does not exist in an absolute manner, because such a self is harmed by the reasoning that establishes the selflessness of a person that is explained below.

What the **Madhyamika** is presenting here is again quite clear: *the past and future minds are not the self or exist as self because they disintegrate and do not generate and therefore do not exist as self*. We can all accept that, if something happened in the past, then the very fact that it happened previously means that it doesn't exist right now. And the very fact that something is yet to come in the future, means that it doesn't exist now, so therefore it cannot exist inherently and permanently.

Having refuted the Particularists' assertion of the past mind as being a self and the future mind as being a self, the Madhyamika continue that, *if the generated present mind were the self...* – that is, if you were to assert the present mind is the self, then that also is invalid. The commentary explains, *if the generated present mind were the self, as it disintegrates in the next moment, again the self asserted by you does not exist*. So the mind of the past has been refuted as being the self, the mind to be generated in the future is refuted as the self, and even the present mind is also refuted as the self.

If you were to investigate in this way, you will not find an inherently existent self. Here, the Madhyamikas present the example of a banana tree, which is made up of different layers. If you were to peel off each layer to try to find the essence of the banana tree, you would actually discover that there is no such real, solid core to be found. Using that as an example, the commentary says that likewise, when one searches using logical analysis to find whether something is established inherently or not, the self, too, does not exist in the same way. If you were to investigate and analyse whether an inherently existent self exists, you could not possibly find such a self.

The commentary also mentions here that, *because such a self is harmed by the reasoning that establishes the selflessness of a person that is explained below*. In other words, when the logical reasoning of selflessness is presented, that will establish that there is no such inherently existent self.

2.3.1.3.2 Refuting the objection that meditation on compassion becomes invalid

75. If it is said, 'If there is no sentient being,

The **Realists** first present their objection:

Realist: If there is absolutely no inherently existing person, then, as there is no focal object for compassion, for whom should one practise meditation on compassion?

The Madhyamika answers:

Madhyamika: Although there is no inherently existing person, it follows there is no such fault that the focal object of compassion is non-existent – because that nominally existing sentient being, labelled by mental confusion, which is accepted for the purpose of achieving the result of liberation, is valid to be the focal object of compassion.

If one relates the ‘labelled by mental confusion’ to the true-grasping at person and phenomena then, since they label the person as truly existent and one refutes that it exists the way it is labelled, the sentient being is not refuted. By having refuted this, the sentient being is established as existing only in mere name, as an imputed existent.

Further, if one relates the mental confusion merely to ignorance, then the sentient being that becomes labelled by it exists as the focal object of compassion.

Here, where it says that *if there is absolutely no inherently existing person*, this objection will not relate to the lower Buddhist schools – the Vaibhashika, the Sautrantika, the Cittamatra or Mind Only, and the Svatantrika Madhyamika Middle Way school. All of these accept an inherently existent person.

The **Realists’** objection to the Prasangika’s earlier argument is that, *if there is absolutely no inherently existing person, then, as there is no focal object for compassion, for whom should one practise meditation on compassion?* This implies that for them, if a person does not exist inherently, then a person could not possibly exist at all. They’re arguing that if, according to the Prasangika Madhyamika, a person doesn’t exist, then who is the object of compassion?

The **Madhyamikas** say, *although there is no inherently existing person, it follows there is no such fault that the focal object of compassion is non-existent*. The reasoning follows, *because that nominally existing sentient being, labelled by mental confusion, which is accepted for the purpose of achieving the result of liberation, is valid to be the focal object of compassion*.

The explanation here is that, when mental confusion or ignorance labels the person as being truly or inherently existent, that is what is called the misconception of true grasping at the person, or grasping at an inherently existent person. When phenomena are apprehended as truly or inherently existent, that is labelled as true grasping at phenomena. That is how the apprehension of grasping at an inherently existent person or phenomena comes about.

As the person and phenomena are labelled wrongly by mental confusion in this way, when the inherently existent person is eliminated, the person itself isn’t eliminated – the nominally existent person remains.

The commentary continues, *since they label*, meaning the mental confusion labelling the person as truly existent, *one refutes that it exists in the way that it is labelled* by the mental confusion. When that inherent existence is refuted, the sentient being is however not eliminated.

How, then, is a sentient being labelled? Having refuted the truly or inherently existent person, *the sentient being is established as existing only in mere name, as an imputed existent*. This is according to the **Prasangika**. In other words, the person is what is referred to as an ‘imputed existent’, meaning it exists merely by label, or by imputation. It does not exist from its own side, but is merely labelled; it exists by mere name, or imputation.

So, the person is merely labelled upon the basis of imputation, which is the aggregates, and thus exists and functions based on that imputation or label on the aggregates. That is how it exists – not existing from the side of the aggregates, but as a label on the aggregates. That is why a person is referred to as an imputed existence.

The next verse reads:

76. *Without sentient beings whose result is it?
True, but even though, it is posited from mental
confusion.
For the purpose of pacifying suffering
Do not stop the resultant mental confusion.*

The commentary explains:

Realists: If there is no sentient being then, because the meditation on compassion loses its result, the buddha resulting from the meditation on compassion is the attainment of which person?

Madhyamika: Although it is true that these causes and effects do not exist truly, it is not contradictory to meditate on compassion that arises from nominal confusion about phenomena.

For the purpose of pacifying the sufferings of sentient beings one should not stop the non-afflictive mental confusion at the time of the subsequent attainment of having attained the resultant buddha. One cannot stop it adventitiously, and although one does not stop it, if one relates this branch of the method for attaining complete enlightenment to the delusion regarding suchness, then it is a delusion of true existence.

One can relate it to the compassion of merely focusing on sentient beings that have not been characterised as lacking true existence, and to the compassion focusing on phenomena, being explained as becoming the cause of enlightenment.

Otherwise the meaning² is that nominalities such as the focusing on only mind by those not realising suchness is not something to be abandoned.

The **Realists’** objection here is, *if there is no sentient being ...*, which, of course, is not what the Prasangika is saying at all. The **Prasangika** say that there is no inherently existent sentient being, but they do not take that as being the non-existence of sentient beings. The **Realists**, however, object that, *because the meditation on compassion loses its result, the buddha resulting from the meditation on compassion is the attainment of which person?* This is a rhetorical question.

The **Madhyamikas** present their answer by saying that *although it is true that these causes and effects do not exist truly, it is not contradictory to meditate on compassion that arises from nominal confusion about phenomena*. Further, *for the purpose of pacifying the sufferings of sentient beings one should not stop the non-afflictive mental confusion at the time of the subsequent attainment of having attained the resultant buddha*.

These are actually very meticulous explanations. If we pay attention to this, it actually relates to our situation, so it is a significant point to understand. While one has not yet completely overcome the misapprehension, or misconception of true existence, by merely focusing on sentient beings, one can still generate compassion. This is the point.

As it mentioned here, *one cannot stop it adventitiously, and although one does not stop it, if one relates this branch of the method for attaining complete enlightenment to the delusion regarding*

² ... of the third and fourth line of verse 76 is ...

suchness, then it is a delusion of true existence. While one has not yet overcome the misconception of grasping at true existence or inherent existence, it is still necessary to develop compassion towards sentient beings. There are three levels of generating compassion: one merely focuses on sentient beings; the next focuses on sentient beings seeing them with the characteristic of being impermanent; and the third focuses on sentient beings seeing them with the characteristic of being empty of inherent existence, i.e. lacking a truly or inherently existent self.

The commentary explains, *one can relate it to the compassion of merely focusing on sentient beings that have not been characterised as lacking true existence, and to the compassion focusing on phenomena, being explained as becoming the cause of enlightenment.* The compassion focusing on phenomena is that which sees sentient beings with the characteristic of them being impermanent.

So, while one has not yet overcome the misapprehension of grasping at truly existent or inherently existent sentient beings, one can still generate compassion for sentient beings by focusing on them merely as sentient beings, or focusing on them as impermanent phenomena.

The commentary further says, *otherwise the meaning is that nominalities such as the focusing on only mind by those not realising suchness is not something to be abandoned.*

The next verse is:

77. *Pride is the cause of suffering,
Which increases due to delusion regarding the
self.
If, 'This cannot be reversed,'
The meditation on selflessness is superior.*

Realist: Why was the mental confusion including the object refuted earlier?

Madhyamika: As was shown earlier in the statement, 'It becomes the cause for cyclic existence', the pride that becomes the cause for cyclic existence, i.e. afflictive ignorance, fabricated the self, and the sufferings of cyclic existence increase. There is no contradiction that the pride needs to be stopped, and can be stopped.

The next argument is:

Argument: There is no stopping of true-grasping aside from stopping this kind of mental confusion, and it cannot be stopped. Although one stops it once, because it arises again, similar to the circling aggregates, it cannot be eliminated completely.

Madhyamika: It is not impossible to abandon true-grasping. It is distorted with regard to the mode of abiding of functionalities, and hence it is very weak and inferior, and the meditation on selflessness is superior compared to it. Because it realises the mode of abiding of functionalities faultlessly, the other can be eliminated from the root.

So, the **Realists** ask, *why was the mental confusion including the object refuted earlier?* And the **Madhyamikas** reply by saying, *as was shown earlier in the statement, because 'It becomes the cause for cyclic existence', the pride that becomes the cause for cyclic existence, i.e. afflictive ignorance fabricates the existence of the self, and thus the sufferings of cyclic existence increase. There is no contradiction as this pride needs to be stopped, and can be stopped.*

After the **Madhyamikas** explain why mental confusion including the object was refuted earlier, the **non-Buddhist Realists** present the next argument that, *there is no stopping of true-grasping aside from stopping this kind of mental confusion, and it cannot be stopped. Although one stops it once, because it*

arises again, similar to the circling aggregates, it cannot be eliminated completely, so this is their argument.

The **Madhyamikas** answer, *it is not impossible to abandon true-grasping, and the reason follows: It is distorted with regards to the mode of abiding of functionalities, and hence it is very weak and inferior, and the meditation on selflessness is superior compared to it.*

I've presented this reasoning in more detail in previous teachings. For those of you who can recall them and can refer to the teachings, it will be quite clear.

As the **Madhyamikas** concisely mention here, *it is distorted with regard to the mode of abiding of functionalities.* So, true-grasping is distorted in relation to the actual mode of things, of functionalities, because it is based on falsity and distortion, *hence it is very weak and inferior. The meditation on selflessness is superior compared to it.* Thus, because the meditation on selflessness is superior, it has the ability to completely destroy true-grasping. The commentary concludes, *because it realises the mode of abiding of functionalities faultlessly, the other can be eliminated from the root.*

2.3.2. Explaining extensively the reasoning that establishes the selflessness of phenomena

We can leave that for our next session.

It is good to read the text slowly, and then revisit it again. Based on the teachings we've received, we can actually get a good understanding. When we refer to one text and get a good understanding of that, one can relate to other texts. That will also help us to get good understanding.

When we begin to understand and grasp the meaning of the texts we read, we will then begin to really enjoy the text. We will reach a point where we don't want to put the text down, but continue reading it. Without a textbook around, one would feel lonely!

Not only will we be able to derive the meaning while reading the text, even after we put the textbook down, we will still be thinking about certain points, reflecting on the meaning and getting more understanding and insight from the passages we have read.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke.

Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་རྒྱུད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྒྱལ་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

22 November 2016

As usual, let's spend some time in meditation.

[Meditation]

Now based on a bodhicitta motivation, we can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings.

2.3.2. Explaining extensively the reasoning that establishes the selflessness of phenomena

Earlier, the selflessness of persons was established with various reasons. Now what is being established is the selflessness of phenomena. To get a good understanding of the explanation of the selflessness of persons and phenomena, consider it from this perspective: if there were to be a self of a person, how would it exist? Think, why is the person empty of an inherently existent self? Likewise with phenomena, if there were to be an inherently existent self or phenomena, how would it exist? Why are phenomena empty of existing inherently? One needs to first clearly understand what is being refuted in order to understand what is being established.

Explaining the selflessness of phenomena has three subdivisions:

2.3.2.1. Explaining the selflessness of phenomena by way of the four close placements by mindfulness

2.3.2.2. Refuting the argument that the two truths would be invalid

2.3.2.3. Stating the reasons that establish selflessness

2.3.2.1. EXPLAINING THE SELFLESSNESS OF PHENOMENA BY WAY OF THE FOUR CLOSE PLACEMENTS BY MINDFULNESS

This is subdivided into four, which are the four placements that I have explained previously:

2.3.2.1.1. Meditating on the close placement by mindfulness on the body

2.3.2.1.2. The close placement by mindfulness on feelings

2.3.2.1.3. The close placement of mindfulness on the mind

2.3.2.1.4. The close placement by mindfulness on phenomena

2.3.2.1.1. Meditating on the close placement by mindfulness on the body.

Meditating on the close placement by mindfulness on the body in general would relate to, for example, meditating on the impure nature of the body. However here it specifically relates to meditating on the selflessness of the body.

This is subdivided into four categories:

2.3.2.1.1.1 Comprehending that the body which possesses parts lacks inherent existence

2.3.2.1.1.2 Comprehending that the parts lack inherent existence

2.3.2.1.1.3 Thus, attachment to the dream-like body lacking inherent existence is unsuitable

2.3.2.1.1.4 This also establishes the person as lacking inherent existence

The earlier reasoning of the selflessness of person also applies here as well. The reasoning why the person was established as lacking a self is that if there were to be a self of a person then it would have to be findable on the basis of imputation, i.e. the aggregates. Similarly, if the body were to exist inherently, then it would also have to be findable on the basis of the imputation of the body, which are the parts and collections of what makes up the body. The same logic applies for both the self of person and the body.

The specific explanation here relates to the assertion made by the Mind Only and Svatantrika Madhyamika school, in which they say, when investigated, an inherently person is found upon basis of imputation. Likewise an inherently existent body can be found on the basis of its imputation. That is how the Mind Only and the Svatantrika Middle Way School actually establish an inherently existent self of a person and the aggregates/body. Here, according to the Prasangika, what is refuted is an inherently existent person and body; neither can be found as existing inherently when searched for on the basis their imputation.

The key point to understand here is that what cannot be found is an inherently existent body. This is then established as the emptiness of the body. This is not to be confused with investigating the body and not finding the body itself; the lack of a body is not the emptiness of the body. But investigating the misconception of an inherently existent body, and not finding it is established as the emptiness of the body.

Thus, according to the Prasangika, the reason an inherently existent person and body does not exist is because if it were to exist, the physical aggregates would have to exist without depending on causes and conditions and any of its parts. Therefore the ability for something to exist that does not depend on either its causes and conditions, or its parts, is the proof that it does not exist inherently. While the lower schools would not accept that things exist without depending on causes and conditions at all, they do establish that things exist inherently, from their own side.

The Prasangika assert that the lack of true existence, inherent existence, and the lack of autonomous independent existence all come to the same point. That is, if they were to exist independently or inherently or autonomously, they would have to exist without depending on causes and conditions or any of its parts. Functional things are dependent on causes and conditions, whereas non-compounded phenomena, for example space, depend on its directional parts. This is how the lack of inherent existence is established, because all phenomena depend on either their causes and conditions or their parts.

In simple terms, the Prasangika are saying to the Mind Only and Svatantrika: you say that having investigated you can find an inherently existent person and aggregates, however we say that this cannot be found.

After investigating, if the person or aggregate is found to exist without depending on either its causes, conditions or parts, then we would accept that there is an inherently existent person and body, but that is simply not possible.

2.3.2.1.1.1 Comprehending that the body which possesses the parts lacks inherent existence

The commentary explains:

It follows the body does not exist inherently - because if it existed inherently, then an example of the body should be findable in the individual limbs of the body, in the collection of the accumulated parts or as a different entity from these, but it is not found.

Argument: The collection of all the accumulated parts is the body. What doubt is there about this?

Madhyamaka: Because one labels the body in dependence on the collection, the collection of the parts of the body is unsuitable to be the body. If it is not like this, then one needs to accept a final partless particle.

The commentary first presents the reasoning for why there is no inherently existent body. If you can get a good understanding of this reasoning, then you can apply it to all the rest. Just as it states in *The Heart Sutra*: 'correctly and repeatedly beholding those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature', similarly this is to be applied to all other phenomena. Thus, it is good to have a clear understanding of what it means to lack inherent existence.

The first syllogism the commentary presents is, *It follows the body does not exist inherently - because if it existed inherently, then an example of the body should be findable in the individual limbs of the body, in the collection of the accumulated parts or as a different entity from these. But it is not found either within the parts or as a different entity from them. An inherently existent body would have to be found, but it cannot be found. That's the reason being presented.*

Then the **non-Buddhist** school says, *The collection of all the accumulated parts is the body. What doubt is there about this?* So they are saying that the collection itself can be posited as the body. The **Madhyamika** refute this by saying, *because one labels the body in dependence on the collection and without the collection one cannot even use the label 'body'.* It continues that, *the collection of the parts of the body is unsuitable to be the body. If it is not like this, then one needs to accept a final partless particle,* meaning that if this were to be the case, by default one would have to assert that there is a partless particle, which cannot be the case.

The verses read:

78. *The body is not the feet or calves,
The thighs and waist are also not the body,
The stomach and back are also not the body,
The chest and upper arms are also not the body,
The rib cage and hands are also not the body,*
79. *The armpits and shoulders are also not the
body,
The internal organs are also not it.
If also head and neck are not the body,
Then what of this is the body?*

The commentary explains the meaning of the verses as follows:

Thus, when one analyses whether and how the basis of engagement for the label that expresses 'body' exists from the side of the body itself: The feet and calves of the person are not the body of the person, the thighs and waist are also not the body, and also the stomach and back are not the body because the body of the person is labelled in dependence on these. The chest and upper arms are also not the body, the rib cage and hands are also not the body, the armpits and shoulders are also not the body and the internal organs are also not it. If also the head and neck are not the body, then which of these parts is the body? Not any of them. Because also their collection is not the body or any different entity from these, the body does not exist inherently.

The statement *When one analyses whether and how the basis of engagement for the label that expresses 'body' exists from the side of the body itself*, is making the point that if the body were to exist inherently, it would have to exist from its own side. There is nowhere else it could exist inherently apart from the parts or the collection of the body. Then the following investigation applies: if the body were to exist from its own side then going through each part of the body, one would investigate whether that part is the inherently existent body.

The reasoning presented here refutes an inherently existent body after having searched for it. Even conventionally, any normal person would be able to accept that *the feet and calves of the person are not the body of the person.* Clearly, we can all accept that the feet and calves are not by themselves the body. Likewise, *the thighs and the waist are also not the body and also the stomach and back in itself are not the body, because the body of the person is labelled in dependence on these.* So these are not individually the body because what is labelled as 'body' is a combination of all of these. The commentary goes on, *The chest and upper arms are also not the body, the rib cage and hands are also not the body, the armpits and shoulders are also not the body and the internal organs are also not it. If also the head and neck are not the body, then which of these parts is the body?*

For an individual meditating on the emptiness of the body, the process is to first investigate whether the body exists inherently or not. That investigation is based on what appears as a body, meditating on whether each and every part are inherently existing parts of the body or not, and whether the collection of these parts make up an inherently existent body or not? When an individual employs this method to realise the emptiness of the body, they come to the conclusion that an inherently existent body is nowhere to be found. Not finding an inherently existent body is in fact realising the selflessness and emptiness of the body. So the investigative meditation and realisation is not based on negating a body, but rather negating an inherently existent body. This is the main point to be understood.

When one first conducts an actual meditation on the emptiness of the body, doing it in a proper way, one can come to a really good understanding of the emptiness of the body. To begin with, if the body were not empty of inherent existence, then it means that it would have to exist inherently. So first one needs to get a good understanding of how the body would exist if it did exist

inherently. If the body exists inherently, then it can only exist upon either the collection of, or the parts of the body. There is nowhere else an inherently existent body could exist. Thus one investigates the various parts that make up the body, and going through each one comes to the conclusion that there is no inherently existent body, neither the parts nor the collection of the body itself can be found as being inherently existent. At a certain point one experiences a sense of vacuity, just like empty space, and it is at that point one maintains one's focus on this vacuity. Having done the earlier profound investigation, it is at this point that one gets a true sense of the lack of an inherently existent body. It is said that when one reaches this stage one should not engage in further analysis, but rather just maintain that awareness of emptiness and meditate on it. This establishes a really good understanding from which you can get closer to the actual realisation of emptiness.

While these points will be explained further on, I will now present the common understanding we have of a person which actually shows one's own wrong perception. It is good to begin to recognise one's own mistaken view when one perceives an individual person, or their body.

When we see the body of a person how does it appear to us? We have an instinctive notion that the body actually exists from its own side, independently of causes and conditions, and we grasp onto that appearance in the belief that the body actually exists in that way, i.e. as existing from its own side. That is the misconception of apprehending a truly existent body. There is no other misconception of true existence other than how we normally perceive and apprehend the body, instinctively grasping onto a body as existing from its own side.

So the body that appears to us as existing from its own side is actually completely mistaken. An individual person, and their body, cannot exist independently from its own side. What we call 'a person and their aggregates' is merely imputed by mind. Therefore they are known as imputed phenomena.

This is really the key point of the Prasangika view as presented by Chandrakirti and Nagarjuna: that persons and phenomena are merely imputed by the mind, and that all existence is merely imputed and labelled by the mind. When one gets a good understanding of this point, one is getting closer to the real understanding of the correct view – the fact that things are merely imputed by mind.

When one has an inkling that there is no substantial existence, but rather that the body is merely imputed by mind, then all the attractive attributes of the body also start to disintegrate within one's mind, and thus one's attachment to the body also disintegrates. This how we need to understand that the right view of emptiness is the optimum means to overcome one's delusions such as attachment and so forth. As explained in the teachings, when one comes close to the correct understanding of emptiness, it begins to shatter the core of cyclic existence and one's delusions. This is the key point in the explanation here.

To summarise the earlier part, the commentary says, *Because also their collection is not the body or any different entity from these, the body does not exist inherently.*

The next argument is then presented: *The coarse body is of a different entity from the limbs and parts.*

This suggests that some think the 'coarse body' is of a different entity from the limbs and parts. The following verses are a way to refute this view.

The first two verses read:

80. *In case this body abides
In all parts individually
Then of course the parts abide in parts.
How can it abide in itself?*
81. *In case the entire entity of the body
Abides in the hands and so forth,
However many limbs such as hands,
Are found, they become bodies.*

The commentary explains the meaning of these two verses as follows.

Madhyamaka: If there is such a coarse body that possesses parts, and it is of a different entity from the parts, does then each part of that coarse body individually abide in one of the parts, such as one part in the hand, one part in the calves and so forth, or does the whole part-possessor [the body] abide in each of the parts without being divided up?

If one looks at the first, as the part-possessor [or body] pervades hands and so forth, with each part abiding on the respective part, then it would become infinite for each part, e.g. the hand has again parts such as the fingers, which then would also abide in their respective parts.

If the part-possessor [the body] is partless, then there are no individual parts that can abide in the individual parts. Rather, as in the later examination, the whole entity would abide in each of the parts of the complete body, and there would therefore be as many bodies as there are parts. As the parts would not touch the body, it is solely false and not in the slightest truly existent.

Then a summary is presented.

82. *If there is no body inside or out,
Then how is there a body in the hands and other
parts?
If it does not exist apart from them,
How can it exist?*

The commentary explains:

Summary: If one analyses well with reasoning in this way, then regardless of whether it is the body of the outer person asserted by the Buddhists or the internally fabricated person by the non-Buddhists, it does not exist inherently. Therefore, how could the hands and so forth be pervaded by an inherently existing body? They are not.

The commentary explains that if one analyses well with the reasoning presented earlier, *then regardless of whether it is the body of the outer person asserted by the Buddhists*, (i.e. the Prasangika) that what the body is, is a mere label upon a base of imputation, which is the aggregates. What is meant by the *outer person asserted by Buddhists or the internally fabricated person by the non-Buddhist* does not exist, is that *it does not exist inherently*. The body which does exist, the merely labelled body, as well as the body

asserted by non-Buddhists (which is a fabricated assertion of the body) do not exist inherently, *therefore how could the hands and so forth be pervaded by inherently existing body? They are not.*

The main point here is, *how could the hands and so forth be pervaded by an inherently existing body?*, which, being a rhetorical question, implies that they are not. With the reasons presented earlier this should all be clear.

The next verse reads:

83. *Thus, there is no body. Body awareness is generated
Through delusion regarding the hands and other parts,
Similar to awareness of a person generated as
A heap of stones; through the specific shape it is placed in.*

The commentary explains:

Although the body does not exist inherently, regarding the cause for being mistaken: Although the body does not exist inherently, there is a reason for being mistaken with regards to it because although it does not exist inherently, by fantasising that the hands and so forth exist truly, the awareness thinking that the body exists inherently is generated. For example, like the generation of the awareness of a person as a heap of stones because of the characteristic of the human like shape it is placed in.

Here the commentary affirms that while the body does not exist inherently, as an ordinary being one apprehends a truly existent, or inherently existent body. Why is that so? The cause for this mistaken perception is that, *although the body does not exist inherently, there is a reason for being mistaken with regards to it because although it does not exist inherently, by fantasising that the hands and so forth exist truly, the awareness thinking that the body exists inherently is generated.* In relation to parts of the body such as the hands, when you perceive these as being truly existent then naturally you will perceive the body itself as being inherently existent.

The next example, *like the generation of the awareness of a person as a heap of stones because of the characteristic of the human like shape it is placed in* refers to further conditions impeding perception. For example, at certain times of the day when the visibility is a bit hazy, and one is at a distance from a heap of stones stacked in a similar shape to a person, one sees a shape which looks like a person. One will have a mistaken perception of a person over there, which arises because all the conditions for that mistaken perception are present. This explains the example presented here. This is explained further in the next verse.

The verse reads:

84. *As long as the conditions are there
The body will appear as the person.
Likewise, as long as they are there regarding
The hands and so forth, they will appear as the body.*

The commentary explains the verse in the following way.

For as long as the conditions for the mistake such as the unclear appearance of the heap of stones are complete, for that long the shape will appear as the person. Likewise, for as long as the causes and conditions of the hands and other parts are complete,

for that long the body will appear as that which has limbs, and the awareness grasping at the body as existing inherently will be generated.

This clearly explains that for *as long as the conditions for the mistake such as the unclear appearance of the heap of stones are complete*, meaning that when all the conditions for perceiving a heap of stones as being a person are there, then for that period of time the shape will appear as a person. Likewise for as long as the causes and conditions for the hands and other parts are complete, i.e. *as long as they appear as being truly existent, then for that long the body will appear as that which has limbs, and the awareness grasping at the body as existing inherently will be generated.*

2.3.2.1.1.2. Comprehending that the parts lack inherent existence

The verse reads:

85. *Likewise, because of being the collection of fingers,
What could the hand also become?
Because they in turn are a collection of joints
Also the joints are divided by their parts,*

The commentary explains the verse this way:

The body of the person is labelled in dependence on the collection of limbs and parts, and does not exist truly. Likewise, as the hand is also labelled in dependence on the collections of parts and fingers, how could it become something inherently existent? It is impossible. Also because the finger is labelled in dependence on the collection of joints it cannot exist inherently. If the joints are also divided into their parts, they do not possess inherent existence. If the parts of the joints are divided into particles, then they also do not exist inherently.

The body of the person is labelled in dependence on the collection of limbs and parts, and does not exist truly. The reason the person does not exist truly is because it is merely labelled by mind upon the parts which make up the body. Similarly when you relate to each part of the body, such as the hand, then *the hand is also labelled in dependence on the collections of parts and fingers.* What we call 'hand' is nothing but the collections of the different parts which make up the hand, such as the fingers and so forth. So, *how could it become something that is inherently existent?* Being a rhetorical question, what is implied is that it cannot exist inherently. That is impossible. Furthermore, even the fingers are made of parts, the joints and so forth, so they cannot exist inherently.

86. *And the parts are divided into particles.
Should the particles be divided into directions,
Since the partitioned directions lack parts,
They are like space. Hence, there are also no particles.*

When the particles are also divided into different directional parts through the division into the directional part of the east and so forth, then they are labelled in dependence on directional parts and do not exist inherently. Also the directional parts do not exist inherently because they lack inherently existing parts, for example, like space.

Then, also the particles do not possess inherent existence because if they did, then one would need to accept partless particles, but this is refuted by the reasoning of 'if six are connected simultaneously'.

The commentary explains that, *When the particles are also divided into different directional parts through the division into the directional part of the east and so forth, then they are labelled in dependence on directional parts and do not exist inherently. Directional parts do not exist inherently because they lack inherently existing parts, for example like space* because space is posited as being a mere negation of obstruction.

The commentary continues:

Then, also the particles do not possess inherent existence because if they did, then one would need to accept partless particles, but this is refuted by the reasoning of 'if six are connected simultaneously'.

What is being presented here is that the particles themselves do not possess inherent existence. Of course, when you divide them into their smallest parts, even then they do not exist inherently, because if they did one would have to accept a partless particle. If a partless particle did exist, the logical refutation here is that it couldn't possibly coexist with other particles, like six other particles, because if it didn't have any parts to it, then in coming together with other particles it would all merge to become one, so they couldn't be separate particles. Then nothing solid could possibly exist as there are no parts to the particles, and all other particles would merge and become just one particle, which is absurd.

2.3.2.1.1.3. Then, attachment to the dream-like body lacking inherent existence is unsuitable

This is one of the points I mentioned earlier.

The first two lines of the verse read:

*87ab Thus, who with discernment,
Is attached to a dream-like form?*

The commentary explains these lines:

The dream-like form appears as something identifiable when not investigated but at the time of immediate investigation, it does not exist inherently. Who that possesses discernment would be attached? It is unsuitable, as there is nobody that comprehends the object of true-grasping.

The dream-like form refers to the body. The real point to understand here is the connotation of form or body being *identifiable* or existing from its own side, because it has not been investigated.

It is very true that with anything we perceive, like the hand, that when we don't investigate and just grasp onto it as it appears, it appears to us as really existing from its own side. The verse refers to the way forms are in fact like dreams; they have no real essence because they do not exist at all from their own side; to us however they appear as something real and identifiable. This is how something appears when it is not investigated, *but at the time of immediate investigation it does not exist inherently*.

As a group we can recite the Tara Praises and dedicate them to the success of Ingrid's treatment and also to Susan who is very unwell and has been admitted to hospital recently. Also dedicate them to Julie's mother who is also apparently very ill. I have been informed that while Susan is physically unwell, her mind is quite stable, quite happy and quite good.

I have advised her to put her complete reliance on Tara and recite Tara mantras and just think that whatever

happens, I rely upon you Tara, wholeheartedly. She commented to me that this has been really helpful for her mind, that it is a good practice.

It is good to give advice that is easy to comprehend and manageable as a practice for people to do. Sometimes a practice can become too much, then of course it becomes overwhelming. That's a point to keep in mind – to make advice simple and manageable. Actually this reminds me of what a geshe (who is quite a great scholar himself) once told me – that it is good to give easily understood, succinct advice for a practice, rather than giving too many things to think about. When people ask for advice we find that many give too much elaboration, not something that is manageable and simple. This geshe told me that when people asked a question, it is good to give a simple answer, something they can manage. This particular geshe has now passed away.

In relation to sharing something simple with people, once I said to someone it is good to remember that your real, true friend is within you; not outside, but within you. This person said that he'd never heard that and it was a very significant point. The person was in distress because he had lost quite a lot of money in a business, but when I mentioned that he hadn't really lost anything, he understood the point and came to realise that if the real true friend was inside, then in losing external things one actually hasn't lost anything. He maintained the internal real friend that is within him. That is the point he got from that simple advice.

On another occasion, again I shared some advice with a Dharma student who was very ill. I mentioned that of course it is preferable if we can all have a long life. However between this life and the next life, wouldn't the next life be more important to consider? And then this person said that advice really helped them. Accepting sensible, good advice was a true mark of them having a good understanding of the future life. This is what we need to prepare ourselves for: that our practice is done as a means of preparing for that inevitable time of death. Otherwise what use is Dharma practice? It is not meant to accumulate worldly possessions.

When we do practices, and accumulate numbers of mantras, remember the main point to think about during the recitation is to think about these points and remember that we have something to rejoice about. The teachings state that when we rejoice in others' good deeds, this is a virtue that further enhances our own virtue. Also, rejoicing in one's own good deeds becomes a means to further accumulate or enhance our virtue. In order to be able to rejoice in one's virtues, one has to accumulate virtues, so one has to have a virtuous mind.

The virtuous mind is something we need to familiarise ourselves with periodically: think about Dharma points during the day, when going out and about. That is how our mind becomes more and more familiar with virtue. There are so many non-virtues we can recall even in this life alone, not to mention all our past lives.

While we can't remember the non-virtues we've accumulated in past lives, we can assume that we have definitely accumulated many grave negative karmas, such as being a very evil person who we'd now condemn

as a murderer etc. We would have been born as animals, who are completely dependent on eating other animals. These are things that we can assume we have done in past lives. In terms of this lifetime, we can definitely recall certain non-virtuous states of mind or actions that we have engaged in and that what we need is to apply a purification practice. The main point of purification is to develop strong regret, because when one develops this it purifies half of the negative karma one has accumulated. In this way we embark on our practice of Dharma.

It is good to think about these points periodically to develop our practice of Dharma on a daily basis and further enhance a virtuous state of mind, and develop regret for the non-virtuous states of mind. That is how we familiarise ourselves with accumulating virtue. Otherwise there will be no end to it if we are completely preoccupied by the affairs of this life, thinking constantly about how things should be going in relation to this life's affairs. There will be no end to trying to fulfil one's wishes in relation to this life's affairs. If that was the case and if this life's wishes could be fulfilled, then there would be many who would already be really satisfied and happy by now. That we can see that this is not sufficient, and that we need to have a bigger scope to prepare us for our future existences, is something that constitutes the practice of Dharma.

There being no end to this life's affairs is illustrated in a story I would have shared in the past. Once there was a teacher and a student. The teacher used to promise that they'd have a picnic someday, and the student would periodically remind him about going on the picnic. The teacher would say, 'We will go. We will go when all our work is finished'. After a while the student would ask the teacher again, 'So when are we going on a picnic?' and again the teacher would say, 'When all the work is completed'. One day the teacher noticed something in the distance. He couldn't see very clearly and asked the student what was happening. It was a funeral procession, so the student said to the teacher, 'Well, that's someone whose work is all completed and who is now going on a picnic'. Whether this is a true story or not, it is a good illustration of our situation.

So when things are well, we constantly think that things are not going well and try to make them better. And during this time one's life will end.

So now we'll do the recitation of the Tara Praises and make the dedications. Since we can assume we here are endowed with morality, then the prayers would definitely be fruitful. The key point about whether aspirational prayers are actualised or not is dependent on the morality of the person who is doing those prayers. That is something which we need to keep in mind because if you are assuming that you are doing a virtuous practice of Dharma, whether that becomes a cause for our good rebirth or not is dependent on observing morality. So therefore we need to understand that morality is essential.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© *Tara Institute*

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

29 November 2016

Based on the motivation we generated during the refuge and bodhicitta prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [*meditation*]

As usual we can now generate a motivation for receiving the teachings based on the bodhicitta motivation.

The four close contemplations

Earlier, we talked about the close contemplation on the body.

As explained in the *Uttaratantra* by Maitreya, the purpose of presenting the four close contemplations is to gain a deeper understanding and insight into the four noble truths, and thereby engage in the practice of adopting and discarding. As presented in the teachings, **suffering** is to be known, **origination** is to be abandoned, **cessation** is to be actualised and the **path** is to be meditated upon.

The first **close contemplation** is **on the body**, particularly on the suffering nature of the body. By contemplating the impurities and basic suffering nature of the body, one gains an understanding of the truth of suffering in relation to the body. Thus the understanding and knowledge of the truth of suffering is enhanced.

The **close contemplations of feelings** refers particularly to the feelings that bind us to cyclic existence. Feelings of happiness generate attachment, and feelings of suffering generate aversion. Thus, by contemplating how attachment and aversion are the main cause that binds us to cyclic existence, one gains a more enhanced understanding of the truth of origination, that which is to be abandoned.

With the third **close contemplation on the mind**, we understand that it is on the basis of our mind that we grasp at an inherently existent self. Further, by using the mind when one investigates and analyses how a person is impermanent, empty and selfless, that grasping at the self will be reversed. When one comes to understand that there is no such inherently existent self, then one realises that grasping at the self is false. At a certain point, when one gains the confidence to completely abandon grasping at the self, then one gains the fearlessness of actualising the cessation of all suffering. This enhances the understanding of the truth of cessation, thereby generating the wish to actualise or obtain the truth of cessation.

The **close contemplation on phenomena** is based on two specific categories of phenomena in relation to our existence: purified phenomena, and defiled phenomena. Cultivating the class of purified phenomena becomes the antidote to overcoming defiled phenomena, and thus adopting what is to be adopted, and discarding what is to be abandoned. Then one actualises the path, and that becomes the means to meditate on the path.

This is a very brief explanation of how to relate the four close contemplations to the four noble truths. When His Holiness the Dalai Lama presents this text, he always relates it to the two truths in the beginning, and then to the four noble truths at this point. I have explained this in detail in my previous teaching on the ninth chapter, so I'm just covering the main points here.

As I mentioned in our last session, if one gains a good understanding of what the lack of inherent existence actually connotes, then the rest will be easily understood. All of these refutations establish the lack of inherent existence upon different categories of phenomena.

2.3.2.1. EXPLAINING THE SELFLESSNESS OF PHENOMENA BY WAY OF THE FOUR CLOSE PLACEMENTS BY MINDFULNESS

2.3.2.1.1. *Meditating on the close placement by mindfulness on the body (cont.)*

2.3.2.1.1.4. This also establishes the person as lacking inherent existence

The second two lines of an earlier verse relate to this heading:

*87cd. When the body does not exist in this way
At that time who is the man, who is the
woman?*

Then the commentary explains:

As a result, when the body of the person does not exist inherently, then at that time who is the inherently existing man, and who is the inherently existing woman? There is no inherently existing person.

In this school one does not realise the selflessness of person completely by merely realising the absence of a person that is a self-sufficient substantial existent. To this end, one needs to realise the absence of a person that is not posited in mere name.

There is no difference in the difficulty of realising the two selflessnesses, because on the basis of the person and the aggregates, one does not divide into the coarseness and subtleness of being an imputed existent, or being a substantial existent. In addition, one does not attribute a difference in coarseness or subtleness to the object to be negated.

In any case, the argument over whether or not hearer and self-liberator arhats realise the selflessness of phenomena while positing that they are unsuitable to realise the selflessness of person, should be understood as lacking comprehension.

What is being explained here should be quite clear when based on the understanding one has gained from earlier explanations. This heading establishes that the person also lacks inherent existence. When one has successfully established that the body lacks inherent existence, then without much further reasoning one is able to understand that the person also lacks inherent existence.

Note that this is not a specific sequence where one first needs to understand the lack of inherent existence of the body, before one is able to understand the lack of inherent existence of the person. This is not like the logical sequence of realising the selflessness of an individual person first before realising the selflessness of phenomena, because the earlier is easier to realise. The sequence under this heading is not because of logical necessity; rather, the commentary is simply saying that

when the body (on the basis of which the person is imputed) is established as lacking inherent existence, then that which is imputed, which is the person, can also be easily understood as lacking inherent existence.

The explanation in the commentary begins with, *as a result, when the body of the person does not exist inherently, then at that time who is the inherently existing man, and who is the inherently existing woman?*, meaning that there is no inherently existing man or woman that can be found.

When the body is established as lacking inherent existence then, if there's no inherent existence of the body to begin with, how could there possibly be an inherently existent woman or man?

Here, in the Tibetan terms for man and woman, there is an implicit connotation that shows an equality between women and men. That in itself shows that in Buddhist terminology, there is no discrimination between male and female. The terms merely connote a difference. As we have established, the basis of imputation of the body is dependent on other phenomena, and thus the body cannot exist inherently. Likewise, what is termed 'a man' cannot exist inherently, as it is dependent on other causes and conditions. The same reason applies to 'a woman', who also cannot exist inherently because she is dependent on other factors. So here we can also derive the understanding that the label 'man' is dependent on the label 'woman' and vice versa. If there's no woman, we can't label man and without man we cannot label woman. So the very labels 'woman' and 'man' are dependent on each other.

It's good to note here that there is no discrimination between men and women in relation to the realisations to be obtained on the path. That's completely clear in the teachings. Within the merit field, there is the whole assembly of the lama, the tutelary deities which are mostly the union of the mother and father deity, as well male and female buddhas, male and female bodhisattvas, dakas and dakinis (heroes and heroines), and so forth. So the merit field includes both male and female aspects of the buddhas and so forth.

Also, the *Heart Sutra* mentions sons and daughters of the lineage as being suitable vehicles to gain the direct realisation of emptiness, and thus obtain the path of seeing. Once the path of seeing is obtained, one is surely on the path to definitely attain enlightenment. Just from this passage, we can see that both males and females equally gain the direct realisation of emptiness, and thus achieve the path of seeing; then there's no doubt about achieving the paths leading all the way to enlightenment.

These are important points to note. Sometimes people misinterpret the Buddha's teachings as discriminating against women. Accusing the Buddha of discrimination would be really heavy negative karma. How could we possibly state that the Buddha has that sort of biased mindset, given his unconditional love and compassion towards all living beings?

On the basis of establishing the body as lacking inherent existence, one can then establish the lack of inherent existence of the person. Similarly, when one establishes the lack of inherent existence of an object where the basis

is a man, then using the same logical reasons one can also establish a woman to be also empty of inherent existence.

Then the text explains that, *in this school one does not completely realise the selflessness of person by merely realising the absence of a self-sufficient and substantially existent person*. We covered this point earlier.

Then the commentary further explains, *to this end, one needs to realise the absence of a person that is not posited by mere name and label*. What needs to be understood is that the absence of a person that is not posited by name implies that what is called a person is merely labelled by the mind.

Next it explains that *there is no difference in the difficulty of realising the two selflessnesses*. There are slightly different interpretations of this in the different texts studied in the monasteries. According to the text studied in our monastery, the selflessness of the person is realised first, followed by realising the selflessness of phenomena. That is because, as explained in our texts, in relation to oneself it is easier to realise the selflessness of the person first followed by the selflessness of one's aggregates.

However following the presentation here, the commentary further explains the reasons why *there is no difference in the difficulty of realising the two selflessnesses*. *One does not divide the basis of the person and the aggregates into the coarseness of a substantial existent and subtleness of an imputed existent*. This refers to the **lower schools**, who posit the aggregate of the body as being substantially existent, and the person itself as being an imputed existent. They say that because the person is imputed upon the body, in order for the person to appear as an object of the mind one needs to first apprehend the body.

In **our school**, *one does not attribute a difference in coarseness or subtleness to the object to be negated*. As explained earlier, the only difference between the selflessness of person and the selflessness of phenomena is the basis of imputation. When the self is negated on the basis of a person then the selflessness of person is realised; when the self is negated upon the basis of the imputation of the aggregates, then the selflessness of phenomena is realised.

In conclusion, the commentary states that *in any case, the argument over whether or not hearer and self-liberator arhats realise the selflessness of phenomena*, while at the same time *positing that they are unsuitable to realise the selflessness of person, should be understood as lacking the correct understanding*.

Having investigated the body in detail previously, one comes to the conclusion that there is no inherently existent body, and that establishes the selflessness of the body. That concludes the close contemplation on the body.

2.3.2.1.2. *The close placement by mindfulness on feelings*

This is subdivided into four:

2.3.2.1.2.1. Refuting that the nature of feeling exists inherently

2.3.2.1.2.2. Refuting that the cause exists inherently

2.3.2.1.2.3. Refuting that the focal object exists inherently

2.3.2.1.2.4. Refuting that their object possessor exists inherently

2.3.2.1.2.1. Refuting that the nature of feeling exists inherently

This is subdivided into three:

2.3.2.1.2.1.1. The feeling of suffering does not exist inherently

2.3.2.1.2.1.2. The feeling of happiness does not exist inherently

2.3.2.1.2.1.3. Advice to abide in the yoga of meditating on the lack of inherent existence of feeling

2.3.2.1.2.1.1. *The feeling of suffering does not exist inherently*

Here again we need to apply the understanding that it is not feelings that are being negated; rather, it is inherently existent feelings that are being negated. As indicated earlier, one needs to gain a profound understanding of what it is that is being negated as existing inherently. Then one will have a really good understanding of the content of the *Heart Sutra*.

The explanation in the commentary begins with this statement: *Showing that like the body, feeling also does not exist inherently*. When the form aggregate, which is actually our coarse body, is established as lacking inherent existence, then the next aggregate, which is the feeling aggregate, can also be logically established as lacking inherent existence. When we can infer in this way, we can also apply that logic to other aspects of the teachings. That is how we gain an understanding of the presentation of the *Heart Sutra*, which says that form is empty, feelings are empty, and so forth.

It may seem that I am skipping from one topic to another, but what I'm attempting to do is give you a broader perspective of the teachings, going beyond the particular explanation given here, and relating it to other aspects of the teachings. When one is able to apply one's basic understanding to other aspects of the teachings, one becomes rich in that understanding.

Then the two lines of verse are presented:

*88ab. If suffering exists in suchness
Then why does it not impede extreme joy?*

The commentary explains:

If that which is experienced, the suffering, and that experiencing, the feeling, exists in suchness, then for what reason does the feeling of suffering that exists on one mental consciousness, since it exists inherently and is unsuitable to change into something else, not harm the feeling of extreme joy and happiness? If it were to harm, and if that harm necessarily cancelled any occasion for the generation of happiness, then, because we can see happiness is generated, the former does not exist inherently.

As presented here, suffering is the experience and that which experiences it is feeling. So we talk about feeling as the experiencer, and what is being experienced, in this case, is suffering.

The term *exists in suchness* here means 'exists inherently'. If, as the **Realists** argue, the suffering and the feeling were to exist inherently, *then for what reason does the feeling of suffering that exists on one mental consciousness, since it exists inherently and is unsuitable to change into something else...* In other words, if the experience, which is suffering, and the experiencer, which is the feeling itself, were to exist inherently, they could not possibly change,

because they existed from their own side. In that case, because ...*it* [the feeling] *is unsuitable to change into something else*, how can that *not harm the feeling of extreme joy and happiness?*

The main point here is that, if the experience of suffering were inherently existent on the stream of consciousness, it would have to be a perpetual experience of suffering, and there would be no opportunity for happiness to be generated. Likewise, if happiness were to exist inherently, it would be the same – there would be no occasion for suffering to be experienced.

However, there are times when suffering is experienced by the consciousness, and other times when happiness is experienced. Therefore, the commentary concludes that, *if it were to harm, and if that harm necessarily cancelled any occasion for the generation of happiness, then, because we can see happiness is generated, the former does not exist inherently*. So if the one were to cancel the other, and since there would be an occasion for happiness to be experienced, the earlier assertion that suffering is inherently existent is not tenable.

2.3.2.1.2.1.2. *The feeling of happiness does not exist inherently*

The last two lines of the earlier verse and the next two lines of verse read:

*88cd. If happy, then why do deliciousness etc.,
Not give joy when overcome with misery?*

*89. If due to being powerful it suppresses
And there is no experience.*

As the commentary explains:

If happiness also existed inherently, then why does fine food and drink not provide joy in the mind at the time of being overwhelmed by misery because of a dead child? It follows it does make one happy - because fine food, drink and the like generate inherently existing happiness.

This is quite clearly explained. If happiness were to exist inherently then, if at a time of feeling great sorrow – for example, after losing a child – a person were given delicious, fine food, they would have to experience great joy and happiness in partaking of that food. But that is not the case.

As explained here *it follows it does* have to make someone in that circumstances happy *because fine food, drink and the like generate inherently existent happiness*, according to you **Realists**.

That is followed by this argument:

Argument: If you say, although happiness is generated at the time of being overwhelmed by misery, because the suffering is strong it suppresses the happiness, and that is why one does not experience happiness.

The **Realists** are responding here that there is some happiness when the person is having fine food and so forth, but because the suffering is so great, it overpowers the experience of happiness. So, they say there is some happiness there, but it is overpowered by the extreme experience of suffering.

The **Realists** are asserting here that there's a happiness here which is not experienced. How could one say there is a happiness which is not experienced, if happiness

itself is an experience? It is this absurdity which is being pointed out here.

*89cd. How can that not in the nature of
Experience, be a feeling?*

*90. Merely subtle suffering exists,
Isn't the coarse one cleared away?
If, 'It is a mere joy apart from it',
The subtle itself belongs to it as well*

In the first part of the commentary, the **Madhyamika** explain:

Madhyamika: How can that not in the nature of experience be the feeling of happiness? It follows it cannot - because it [happiness] is experienced. One can relate the answer likewise to the suppressing of inherently existing suffering by strong happiness.

Next is the argument:

Argument: Because at the time of strong happiness there is a subtle feeling of suffering it is not as if one does not experience any suffering.

This is quite clear. I will just read the next parts:

Madhyamika: If there are subtle feelings of suffering, then what harm did the powerful happiness give to the suffering, so that one posits the experience of powerful happiness? Did the powerful happiness not clear away the coarse suffering?

Argument: This I accept, but this subtle suffering is only a form of subtle joy apart, separate from that great happiness.

Madhyamika: Since this subtle happiness is not outside the definition of happiness, if it is subtle happiness, it needs to be happiness.

The main point being presented here by the **Madhyamika** is that whether the happiness is great or subtle, if it is a happiness, then it is an experience; and because it is an experience, it has to be happiness. That is the point.

If you have read the text carefully, then it shouldn't be too obscure. If you have not done any reading, then even if I attempt to explain it word by word, I don't think you'll get much out of it!

The next verse is:

*91. If, 'since the adverse condition is generated
Sufferings are not generated.'
'Feelings are conceptual fabrications'
Is this saying not established?*

That is presented first with an argument, which is:

Argument: Wishing to repudiate the fault of, 'If it is happiness, then why does fine food and so forth': Because the contrary condition for suffering, i.e., happiness, is generated from things like fine food and drink, therefore no suffering is generated at this time.

Madhyamika: Isn't the saying, 'the feelings of happiness and suffering are mere conceptual fabrications and imputations' established? It follows it is - because one instance of food or drink is labelled as the cause for both happiness and suffering through the power of conceptual thought.

This is relating to the earlier verse where it says:

*88cd. If happy, then why do deliciousness etc.,
Not give joy when overcome with misery?*

This is what is being contradicted by the argument: *Because the contrary condition for suffering, i.e., happiness, is generated from things like fine food and drink, therefore no*

suffering is generated at this time. Here, the **Realists** are saying that, because happiness is generated after having fine food and so forth, there cannot be suffering at that time.

The next point being made by the **Madhyamika** is: *Isn't the saying, 'the feelings of happiness and suffering are mere conceptual fabrications and imputations' established? It follows it is - because one instance of food or drink is labelled as the cause for both happiness and suffering through the power of conceptual thought.*

Thus the reason presented here is: ... *because one instance of food or drink is labelled as the cause for both happiness and suffering through the power of conceptual thought.* This can be quite clearly understood; what we perceive as happiness or suffering is basically dependent on the conceptual thought that interprets that.

2.3.2.1.2.1.3. Advice to abide in the yoga of meditating on the lack of inherent existence of feeling

I've gone through the explanations of this in quite some detail previously. The verse relating to this is:

*92. Because of this very fact this analysis
Should be meditated upon as its antidote.
The mental stabilisation derived from the field
of
Analysis is the food of a yogi.*

Then the commentary explains:

Because of the very fact that feelings do not exist inherently, one should meditate on this analysis, which realises feelings to be lacking inherent existence, as the antidote against the true-grasping at feeling. If one meditates on the mental stabilisation of superior insight in dependence on the superior insight focusing on suchness that arises from the field of pure analysis and investigation, and in dependence on calm abiding, then the body of the yogi will be further and further increased and boosted. Therefore it is called 'food', like the ordinary food that increases the body.

What being presented here is that the wrong conception of grasping at true existence, or inherent existence, perceives feeling as being inherently existent. Whereas when the wisdom realising selflessness perceives feelings, it perceives them as lacking inherent existence.

These two perceptions are focusing on the same object, which is feelings, but are completely opposite apprehensions; while focused on the same object, the apprehension of each is completely different.

In the earlier view held by the **Realists**, which is the mistaken conception of perceiving feelings as existing inherently, that perception has no truth to back it up. It is actually based on falsity. Therefore, on the basis of that false perception, feelings cannot be established. When feelings are perceived as being inherently existent, the actual feelings cannot be established properly, or ultimately.

Whereas the **Madhyamika** viewpoint of the wisdom realising selflessness perceiving feelings as lacking inherent existence is able to establish feelings just as they are. This is how we need to understand what is being presented here.

If one meditates on the mental stabilisation of superior insight in dependence on the superior insight focusing on suchness that arises from the field of pure analysis and investigation, and in dependence on calm abiding ... So, having gained the profound understanding of the lack of inherent existence of feelings, one then uses one's mind to focus on that single-pointedly. Having obtained the calm abiding that focuses on the lack of inherent existence of feelings, if that is further developed, one will gain what we call superior or special insight into the lack of inherent existence of feelings – the emptiness of feelings.

When the yogi reaches the point of being able to apply special insight based on calm abiding focusing on, for example, the lack of inherent existence of feelings, then through that meditation the yogi actually gains sustenance to make the body even more powerful. That is referred to as the sustenance of concentration, or the food of concentration.

When the yogi is engaged in that level of concentration, because it naturally sustains the body, it is referred to as a food. The example given here is *like the ordinary food that increases the body*. As with ordinary gross food, we talk about eating healthy food, because when we consume the food, it nourishes and increases the strength of the body. Similarly, it is said that for the yogi concentration is becomes sustenance for the body.

The commentary concludes:

Through this concentration the ordinary body is also increased. Hence, one should strive in single-pointed meditative placement upon realising emptiness.

The conclusion here is that one needs to first gain a good understanding of emptiness. Then, based on that clear, good understanding, one attempts to generate a single-pointed focus upon the understanding of emptiness – although initially it is only a conceptual understanding of emptiness. Based on that, one then gains the actual direct realisation of emptiness.

Let us conclude the teaching here with a recitation of the dedication chapter of the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*.

Last week we did some prayers and dedicated them for Susie and Julie's mother. Since then, they've both passed away. So now we will dedicate this practice for them.

If you recall, when we mentioned doing the practice for Susie last week, I indicated at that time that she was in quite a happy frame of mind, and that in the past, I had advised to her to focus on Tara, and she has particularly held White Tara as her main deity. I'd mentioned to her to keep that as her main deity, to really focus on that complete reliance on Tara, and that that would be good for her mind. Apparently Sandra went to visit Susie the next day, and Sandra was able to convey that to her, right? So, Sandra what was her response?

Sandra: When I saw her, she was in the heavy breathing phase, and not talking at all. I passed on your message from last week, saying, "It's Sandra. I have an instruction for you from Geshe Doga. He said for you to totally rely on Tara and her mantra." She came out of her heavy breathing and opened her eyes. I then showed her a framed picture of Geshe Doga and one of White Tara. She was very clear and lucid and her face lit up. She gave a big smile and was happy. Moments later, she went back into

the heavy breathing. But she was definitely clear when I gave her the message.

Geshe-la: When I heard what you had relayed and her response, it made me very happy. Susie, as those of us here know, was a very kind lady, a very nice person, with a very nice personality. Thank you, Sandra, because you were there at the right moment to assist someone who was really in need of help. This is what I feel is the great service that we, as Dharma brothers and sisters, can do, being able to help each other at the time of need. So, I really thank you for that, Sandra. It is good.

Now, as mentioned earlier, we will do the dedication chapter and dedicate the merit to late Susie and Julie's mum.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett and Mary-Lou Considine
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱུང་རྒྱུ་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

6 December 2016

Based on the motivation that we have generated, we can now engage in our meditation practice. [*Meditation*]

We can set the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: for the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teachings and put them into practice well. Having just spent time meditating on *tong-len* (the giving and taking practice), it will be easier now to generate the bodhicitta motivation.

The reason why the superior intention is not specifically mentioned in the exchanging-self-with-other technique of developing bodhicitta is because it is cultivated naturally after doing that practice of giving and taking. When engaging in the practice of voluntarily taking the sufferings of all living beings upon oneself, and giving one's entire happiness to others, it initiates the personal responsibility to alleviate the sufferings of all living beings and lead them to the state of happiness. Thus, this practice naturally encompasses the superior intention.

It is essential to have a good understanding of why one needs to generate the wish to take the responsibility to benefit all sentient beings. One also needs to ensure that one generates the mind of taking personal responsibility for the welfare of all sentient beings in one's daily meditation practice. Without developing the mind of taking personal responsibility to free all sentient beings from every suffering and endow them in the ultimate state of happiness, there is no way that one is able to develop the superior intention that serves as the cause for generating bodhicitta. As the teachings present, the altruistic wish to achieve enlightenment is preceded by the sincere, genuine intention to take on the responsibility to free all beings from suffering and lead them to the state of ultimate happiness. With this reasoning we can see why it has to precede bodhicitta.

Bodhicitta consists of a two-fold aspiration: the aspiration to achieve enlightenment, and the aspiration to free all beings from suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness. The second aspiration is generated when one is moved to the point of not being able to bear sentient beings' suffering, even for a second, and cannot bear to see them deprived of happiness. Thus, one takes on the personal responsibility to free all beings from every suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness.

At this stage one investigates whether one has the full ability to do this right now, and comes to realise one does not have the ability. This investigation leads one to ask 'who possesses that ability?' It is at that point, by reflecting on the incomparable qualities of an enlightened being, one comes to understand the true significance of the Buddha Jewel. The Buddha is a supreme being endowed with all the qualities needed to free all sentient beings from suffering. Here one can reflect on the specific qualities of the Buddha's body, the qualities of the Buddha's speech and qualities of the Buddha's mind.

One can reflect on the qualities of the Buddha as presented in the teachings on refuge. In summary, the qualities of the Buddha's body are the ability to manifest infinite bodies to benefit numberless sentient beings in various numberless ways. With speech, he has sixty qualities of eloquent speech; being able to answer many questions asked at one time with one single answer, and so forth, which satisfies the needs of all sentient beings in accordance with their wishes. With his qualities of the mind, the Buddha's omniscient mind knows all existence past, present and future. Everything that exists is known exactly as it is by the Buddha's mind. He also has the quality of great unbiased compassion towards all living beings, regardless of whether the Buddha is respected or not, or treated nicely or not. From the Buddha's side there is unbiased compassion towards all living beings without discrimination, wishing to benefit them all and with the ability to do so. When one thinks about the qualities of the Buddha, this shows the abilities one would also achieve when one obtains the qualities of a buddha oneself. On a practical level, it is said that by contemplating on each of the Buddha's qualities one accumulates extensive merit oneself.

Since we need to accumulate merit, we need to use all the resources already available to us. Otherwise there is a danger of thinking 'I need to engage in some practice to accumulate merit, but I wonder what I should do?' If after receiving all these teachings, particularly the teachings on refuge, one feels one lacks the ways and means to accumulate merit, then one has missed the point.

Refuge explains the qualities of the Buddha so one can contemplate in a concise way the four qualities of the Buddha: that the Buddha himself is free from all fears; he has the means to free all other beings from all fears; he has love and compassion towards all sentient beings without any discrimination; and helps others regardless of whether the Buddha himself has been benefited or not. These four points are said to be the sole qualities of the Buddha. In terms of refuge, only the Buddha Jewel has these four qualities. It is in this way that one reflects on these points. In simple terms, when one goes for refuge or is making a request, basically one is saying that I admire your qualities and I would also like the qualities you have, please help me to do so. In essence, this is what going for refuge means.

The **causal refuge** is the enlightened being to whom one goes for refuge now, as a way to obtain their qualities. The **resultant refuge** is the buddha one becomes in the future. This acknowledges the potential one has to become a buddha. Going for refuge means taking refuge in the causal refuge, and then aspiring to obtain those qualities oneself.

These are important points to keep in mind and regularly mesh into our practice, because we will all reach the point where we cannot rely upon others, even if they want to help us. There will be a point when we cannot possibly ask others on the outside to help us, which is when we are totally at the mercy of what is in our own mind. At the time of death, we cannot rely on others, as there is nothing they can do for us. This crucial moment is the juncture between this life and the next life, when the mind of death occurs.

This is when we are completely dependent on the Dharma Jewel that we have developed within ourselves. Although we might not yet have obtained the actual ultimate Dharma Jewel, we have a similitude of it within our mind, comprised of all the practices we have engaged in such as meditating on love and compassion, observing morality and the practice of patience, generosity and so forth. All these practices we have attempted to engage in is called the similitude of the

Dharma Jewel that resides within ourselves. The extent to which we strengthen the Dharma Jewel now when we have time is what we can then rely upon at the time of death.

We need to be very mindful that the time will come when we must completely rely upon what we have cultivated in our mind. Many have commented to me that they never saw the real value of the Dharma until they had a grave illness such as a terminal disease, and at that time the value and essential nature of the Dharma become very clear. So, it is good for us not to wait until that critical moment, but prepare from now on so that we are familiar with what we need to do, and can maintain a virtuous frame of mind. A virtuous frame of mind, rather than a negative mind or neutral mind, is the best state of mind at the time of death.

As mentioned earlier, while the actual Dharma Jewel is only in the mental continuum of arya beings, the relative Dharma Jewel (or similitude of it) is the practice we bring to mind in our preparation for death. Meditating on death and impermanence is the best preparation for death as it a great impetus for practising the Dharma. With the nine-point death meditation, as you will recall, the three main points are: death is certain, the time of death is uncertain, and at the time of death nothing but the Dharma can benefit. Each of these points has three reasons and three conclusions. The three reasons for the last one being: at the time of death, friends cannot help, one's body cannot help, and one's wealth cannot help. Thus, the conclusion is that only the Dharma can help one at that time. These are essential points to contemplate.

Even during our life there will be times when we are deserted by friends and times when even our bodies might fail us. Definitely, at the time of death our body will desert us and even our wealth will desert us and cannot help. At the time of death we have to leave everything material behind. At that juncture, when one is completely deserted by all we have been so familiar with in our lives - our body, friends and wealth - the only thing that can help is the Dharma. If we don't familiarise our minds with the Dharma now, and assume that the virtuous Dharma mind will arise spontaneously at the time of death then that is wishful thinking.

When we attempt to meditate now, if a neutral state of mind is all we are familiarising ourselves with, then a neutral state will most likely be the state of mind we will have at the time of death. Therefore the focus of our meditation practice now should be on developing a virtuous state of mind and familiarising ourselves with virtue as much as possible. I am sharing these points which I find very significant myself. These are points that I really think about and try to put into practice myself. I find that there are many simple ways to put Dharma into practice. It doesn't have to be something complicated or profound; there are simple, practical ways you can put Dharma into practice. These are some simple points that I share with you.

Meditating on impermanence has many, many practical benefits that we can experience right away, e.g. helping to develop more contentment in one's mind and helping to alleviate a lot of unnecessary sufferings experienced in our daily lives. Attachment is one of the main sources of the agony that we experience. Because of this strong attachment to our body, we experience a lot of agony and suffering in relation to it. If attachment is reduced, contentment with one's body can definitely bring about more ease in our mind. Likewise, if we have a lot of strong attachment to our friends, then this causes a lot of problems and agony in our

mind. Likewise we have very strong attachment to our wealth. If we reduce these strong attachments to our body, friends and wealth, then our mind naturally becomes much more relaxed and calm, and much more expansive. Rather than being narrow minded and neurotic, the mind becomes more expansive and one can feel much more satisfied with what one has now, relieving us from feelings of dissatisfaction. One can think, 'my basic needs are met, I can sustain myself, and things are going quite well, so I can feel happy'. When one doesn't need to spend so much time and energy to focus on protecting and securing the various objects of attachment, there will be more space in the mind to develop a more positive state of mind.

This is where we take the inclination to develop more virtue in our lives. Familiarising ourselves with this way of thinking and putting it into practice is something which will come about through practice, not right away. Just thinking about it a few times and expecting results in a few months is not realistic. But over time, if we keep our mind in this direction, familiarise our mind with virtue, we will begin to see that a transformation takes place. These are points to put into practice in our daily life that I share with you.

I feel the most essential, the most valuable state of mind is a mind of love and compassion. In making attempts to develop this one begins to sense a genuine feeling in one's mind. Because of the unruly mind we have from beginningless lifetimes, it is hard to continuously maintain love and compassion, as self-centredness slowly creeps in. However, the more one familiarises oneself with it the more the mind of love and compassion will develop.

It is good to focus on each of the thoughts: may all beings be free from suffering; may they be endowed with happiness; may they never be separated from joy; and may they be endowed with equanimity. Just thinking about each of these and contemplating 'how wonderful it would be if all beings were free from suffering, may they be free from suffering, I myself will take the responsibility for freeing them from suffering, please gurus and deities bless my mind to be able to do so', encompasses the most essential points of the entire path to enlightenment.

Reflecting on the sequence of cause and effect encompasses the four noble truths, which, in themselves, are the basis for the entire structure of the path to enlightenment. When one thinks of expanding on each one, beginning with wishing beings to be free from suffering and the causes of suffering, it encompasses the points on the truth of suffering and the causes of suffering, the truth of origination. So we can relate to the four noble truths in a concise way as a means to put them into practice.

Indeed, when we go into more detail on the four immeasurables, we can see how they encompass the essence of the entire path, particularly the four noble truths. When we contemplate further on the sufferings, we recall from the classifications of general sufferings of migrators in cyclic existence from the Lam Rim teachings that there are the eight types of sufferings, the six types of sufferings, and the three types of sufferings that one can contemplate. Then having contemplated the sufferings, one generates the thought of wishing others to be free from the causes of suffering.

This is where one contemplates the causes of suffering from the very basic level of the ten non-virtues. Then more particularly, karma and delusion as presented in the truth of origination, which are the cause of suffering, and the various delusions. There are various types of delusions, and the

primary one is the ignorance of grasping at a self. When one relates to that, one wishes for others to be free from the fundamental cause of suffering, which reincorporates the deeper understanding that one derives from the four noble truths. With wishing other beings to be endowed with joy, this joy can be the joy of liberation and ultimately the joy of enlightenment, encompassing the whole path; then contemplating the truth of cessation, and so on. This is how we can use what seems to be a simple practice as a means to incorporate profound understandings.

Meditating on immeasurable equanimity in particular becomes an impetus for generating great compassion for sentient beings. The compassion developed then is much more profound than just wishing beings to be free from the obvious levels of suffering. Understanding that what causes suffering for sentient beings is when they are not in a state of equanimity, when they are feeling close to some and distant to others out of attachment and aversion. When one wishes beings to be endowed with equanimity that is free from being close to some and distant towards others out of attachment and aversion, then it is said that when one goes into these subtle levels of understanding the level of compassion is much more profound.

The different levels of compassion, from the basic to the profound, particularly the three types of compassion, are explained precisely by Chandrakirti in his teachings on the Middle Way. Feeling compassion because one relates to the suffering of suffering experienced by others is something that is quite readily developed.

One could say that even animals have that level of compassion. When an animal sees another animal suffering they do try to help. This shows that they have the wish for the other animal to be free from suffering. The wish to alleviate the suffering of suffering is also something animals naturally have. For example a dog will go around looking for food when it is hungry to alleviate the suffering of hunger. When the dog finds some food it is temporarily satisfied and will have a nice sleep. Whereas we may not be able to have a good sleep even after our stomach is full.

Similarly, some levels of our suffering of suffering can be alleviated quite easily, e.g. when we have a headache and we take a Panadol to alleviate the pain. That is, of course, a temporary relief from the suffering.

The wish to alleviate the suffering of suffering is quite readily felt by all, so wishing others to be free from this is not very profound. Whereas when one develops compassion towards other sentient beings by recognising their plight – the suffering of cyclic existence and the causes they are creating to remain in it – then generating compassion with that understanding becomes much more profound. We can relate to this. For example, when we see someone poor and destitute we might find it is easier to feel compassion towards them. Whereas when someone is rich and famous etc., it is harder for us to even recognise that we need to feel compassion for them. But when we think about it, despite their wealth, they are actually creating a lot of negativities through attachment of being close to some and aversion by being distant to others, and thus constantly creating the causes to be in cyclic existence to experience numerous sufferings again and again. So, when we can think in that way, even wealthy people will definitely become an object of our great compassion.

What I am attempting to share with you now is that it is really important to try to put into practice what one has already understood at a basic level. You've heard a lot of

teachings and have a wealth of knowledge in your minds already. Now it is time for you to put it into practice and try to derive the benefit of understanding what the teachings mean. You might not see immediate results but if you don't put it into practice now the results will never come. By integrating this into your daily practice, gradually your mind will become more and more imbued with the Dharma.

We all naturally look forward to getting more leisure time as we age, so when we finally get this time, we should refer back to all the teachings we have received and contemplate on them. This will definitely help to bring about a genuinely more subdued, calm mind, a more satisfied and happy mind; how wonderful would that be!

2.3.2.1.2.2. Refuting that the cause exists inherently

Preceding this was the explanation with reasoning that established the non-inherent existence of feelings. This section refutes that the causes of suffering exist inherently. This is subdivided into three:

2.3.2.1.2.2.1. Refuting the inherent meeting of sense power and object

2.3.2.1.2.2.2. Refuting the inherent meeting with the consciousness

2.3.2.1.2.2.3. *Contact that arises from the meeting of these three does not exist inherently* 2.3.2.1.2.2.1. *Refuting the inherent meeting of sense power and object*

What is being refuted here is an inherent meeting of a particle of the sense power and a particle of the object. It can also be related to the actual meeting of a sense power and its object. One needs to relate to this explanation as refuting every possibility of inherent existence. If one keeps that in mind then the following explanation will be clear.

The first two lines of the verse read:

**93ab. If there is room between sense power and object,
Then how can the two meet?**

The **Madhyamika** first present a statement followed by a question.

Madhyamika: One needs to refute that particles meet.

If the subtle and coarse particles of the sense power and the object meet, is there space between them or not?

The **Realists** state:

Realist: I say there is.

Madhyamika: How can these particles meet, as they possess the fallacy of having space in between? In the intermediate space there are also the particles of either light or darkness, between which there is again intermediate space, and thus it would become endless.

What is posited as a question is: If the subtle and coarse particles of the sense power and the object meet then is there space between them or not? In simple terms, the question is when they meet is there space in between them or not?

The **Madhyamika** is pointing out the absurdity of their statement by asking *how can these particles meet, as they possess the fallacy of having space in between?* The very term 'space' implies that there is a separation, and therefore they cannot meet. If there was no space in between, then how could you even talk about the meeting of two particles. If there is a meeting then it implies that there is space in between the two that are meeting. The main point is that if there is an inherently existent meeting, then there would be no space in

between at all. How can the particles meet if they possess an intermediate space in between? Then furthermore there are also the particles of either light or darkness. As indicated in the teachings, there is also an explanation of light particles and darkness particles.

Using the example of two fingers, if there is a separation (space between the two fingers) then there can be light particles in between and also darkness particles in between. If this is so, how can you say they are meeting when there is space in between and particles there? The commentary states, *'between which there is again intermediate space, and thus it would become endless*, meaning that there would be infinite regression. The main point to be understood, again, is that there is neither an inherently existent meeting nor inherently existent space in between. To summarise, what the Madhyamika are saying to the opponent is: if you say that there is inherently existent space in between the two particles then the fallacy of infinite regression will follow.

The next part refutes the meeting of two particles if there is no intermediate space.

The next two lines of the last verse read:

*93cd. If there is no room and they are merely one,
What is meeting with what?*

*94ab. Subtle particles cannot enter subtle particles,
They do not have the circumstance and are equal.*

That is followed by the argument.

Argument: There is no intermediate space.

If the **Realists** say that there is no intermediate space, then the **Madhyamika** present reasons to counter this, which are as follows.

Madhyamaka: Again, when two partless particles meet there cannot be the surface where they touch and the surface where they do not touch, and therefore they would need to touch each other in their complete nature. In that case, they merge into one point of reference, become one mere particle, and then what is meeting with which object to be met? It follows there is no such meeting - because there are no two objects.

The reason for that is that one subtle particle cannot enter, i.e. absorb, into another subtle particle, because there is not the circumstance of empty space between these particles, and they are of the same size.

This states the reason why they cannot meet in their complete nature.

The **Vaibhashika** posit that there are partless particles. What is being refuted here by the **Madhyamikas** is that if there were partless particles, how can they possibly meet when there is no surface or no two sides to them? So if there are no two sides since it is partless, then there couldn't be this side or that side. If there couldn't be this side of the particle, as opposed to the other side of the particle, then what is meeting with what? How can the two particles possibly meet if there are no sides to be met? These questions point out the absurdity of the Vaibhashika assertion.

If the particles didn't have separate sides (because each partless particle wouldn't have a side), when they meet, *they would need to touch each other in their complete nature*, or touch completely, meaning that when the two partless particles meet they would have to touch in every aspect and completely merge into one. As there is no one side that doesn't touch the other side - because there are no sides at

all - they will mingle completely and become one. That is the absurdity being presented here.

The commentary continues with the explanation:

In that case, they merge into one point of reference, become one mere particle, and then what is meeting with which object to be met? It follows there is no such meeting - because there are no two objects.

With this, the following reasoning can be clearly understood.

The next lines of verse read:

*94.cd. Without entering there is no mixing,
Those that did not mix cannot meet.*

*95. How could it possibly be valid to say
That the partless can meet.
In case meeting and the partless
Are seen, show it!*

The commentary explains the meaning of this verse:

There is a pervasion because particles that do not enter and absorb into each other cannot mix, and partless phenomena that did not mix cannot meet. How can the statement 'partless phenomena meet' be accurate? Because it is impossible, if you observe the meeting with something partless, then you should show it, but you cannot.

It explains clearly that if there were partless particles, then the earlier reasoning has a pervasion *because particles that do not enter and absorb into each other cannot mix, and partless phenomena that did not mix cannot meet*.

This reasoning is followed by, *How can the statement 'partless phenomena meet' be accurate?* Being a rhetorical question it implies that it is impossible for partless phenomena to meet, because if they were to meet they would become one, and if they became one you cannot call it meeting. Thus, *if you observe meeting with something partless, then you should be able to show it but you cannot*. This implies that the meeting of partless particles is impossible.

The inherent meeting of particles, refuted earlier, also explains that there couldn't be an inherent meeting of sense power and its object as well.

2.3.2.1.2.2.2. Refuting the inherent meeting with the consciousness

Having refuted the inherent meeting of particles, if the doubt arises that there might be a meeting between the consciousness and the object then again that meeting implies an inherent meeting. So, what is being refuted is that there is an inherent meeting between the consciousness and the object. We can cover this in our next session.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

13 December 2016

Based on the motivation that we generated during the refuge and bodhicitta prayer, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [meditation]

Now we can generate the usual positive motivation for receiving the teachings.

2.3.2.1.2. The close placement of mindfulness on feelings

2.3.2.1.2.2. Refuting the inherent meeting with the consciousness

The verse reads:

96. *That primary consciousness without body
Can be met is simply invalid;
There is also no phenomenon on the collection,
Similar to the earlier analysis.*

The commentary explains:

The assertion that primary consciousness, which is without a form or body, can be met inherently is simply invalid because it does not have form.

The refutation of meeting with the coarse: Also the meeting with a coarse object that is a collection of many atoms does not exist inherently because no truly existent object exists on that. It is similar to inherent existence which was refuted earlier through the analysis of the collection of joints.

As quite clearly presented here, *the assertion that primary consciousness can be met inherently is simply invalid because it does not have form.*

The next part of the commentary is *the refutation of meeting with the coarse object that is a collection of many atoms.* This coarse object *does not exist inherently because no truly existent object exists on that collection.* As mentioned, *it is similar to the refutation of inherent existences that was refuted earlier through the analysis of the collection of joints.* So, as explained previously, the body is not the collection of its parts, such as the joints, limbs and so forth.

2.3.2.1.2.2.3. Thus, contact arising from the meeting of these three does not exist inherently

Here 'these three' refers to the object, the sense power, and the consciousness. It is the combination of these three that induces contact, and contact induces feelings. So one needs to understand that a feeling is preceded by its particular cause, which is contact, and that contact is preceded by the combination of the object, sense power, and consciousness. There are other states of mind that can arise simultaneously, but here we need to understand that feeling is preceded by the contact that serves as its particular cause, and that contact is preceded by the meeting of these three; the object, the sense power, and consciousness. The point being explained here is that the meeting of these three does not exist inherently.

We can also take note that this understanding about how contact arises, and how feeling arises is derived from the

study of Mind and Awareness, or *Lo Rig*; earlier studies form the basis of a more enhanced understanding of later subjects. Mind and Awareness was taught in 2001 over eight weeks, and these classes were attended by seventy-five people who made the commitment to come to all of the sessions.¹ At that time we didn't have time to cover the twenty secondary mental factors, but these were presented during the teachings on *Precious Garland*.

The first verse under this heading is:

97. *If thus there is no contact
From what does feeling arise?
What is the purpose of this exertion?
What is giving harm to whom?*

The first part of the commentary is an assertion by **Madhyamikas**.

Madhyamika: As explained earlier, the meeting of object, sense power and primary consciousness do not exist inherently. If, when looking at it from that point of view, contact does not exist inherently, then from what cause does truly existent feeling arise? A false cause does not have the power to generate a truly existent result. If there is no inherently existing feeling, then what good is the exertion and effort for its sake? It is meaningless.

This is again quite clear. Earlier it was explained that *the meeting of object, sense power and primary consciousness does not exist inherently.* The combination of the meeting of these three, which are the causes of contact, does not exist inherently. So the contact that is a result of these three also cannot possibly exist inherently.

As mentioned here *contact does not exist inherently*, because the causes do not exist inherently. So if there is no inherently existing cause *then from what cause does a truly existent feeling arise?* If there is no truly existent contact then how can there be truly existent feelings? *A false cause does not have the power to generate a truly existent result.* If contact itself does not exist inherently, then the feeling that is a result of that contact could not possibly exist inherently either, because a false cause does not have the power to generate a truly existent result. This is quite clear.

The *Madhyamika* then conclude that *if there is no inherently existing feeling, then what good is the exertion and effort for its sake?* So if feeling itself does not exist inherently, then what is the point of exerting oneself to acquire that feeling? In this context 'feeling' relates to a pleasurable feeling. Having presented that absurdity, the *Madhyamika* say that exerting oneself for non-inherently existing feelings *is meaningless.*

Then the **Realists** argue:

Argument: The exertion is for the sake of abandoning inherently existing feeling of suffering.

What the **Realists** are saying is that 'I'm not exerting myself to overcome pleasurable feelings, rather I'm exerting myself to overcome *inherently existent feelings of suffering.*

¹ These can be found on the CD of teachings available in the bookshop or downloaded from <http://www.tarainstitute.org.au/transcripts>.

The **Madhyamikas** refute that objection.²

Madhyamika: This is a fallacy because, as there is no inherently existing feeling, who is the person that receives harm from which cause?

This is a fallacy because, as there is no inherently existing feeling, who is the person that receives harm from which cause? This argues that, since the feeling of suffering does not exist inherently, it could not possibly harm the person who is experiencing it. So what point is there in exerting yourself to overcome a suffering that does not exist inherently?

The commentary continues:

In this world it is merely the happiness that alleviates earlier suffering that exists. While there is true suffering, there is no true happiness. For example, the experience of happiness that one experiences when, on a cold day, one stands in the sun and the suffering of cold recedes a little, is the feeling of happiness. But at that time the suffering of cold still exists. As soon as that suffering of cold ceases, uninterruptedly the suffering of heat begins. Thus, one needs suffering as the basis for imputing happiness, but one does not need happiness as the basis for generating suffering awareness; e.g. like blue and, short and long.

As presented earlier, contaminated or worldly happiness is the mere pleasurable sensation of alleviating an earlier suffering, and because of that it is experienced as happiness. The point here is that *while there is true suffering, there is no true happiness*. This is followed by the example of the *experience of happiness when, on a cold day, one stands in the sun, and the suffering of cold recedes a little*.

The commentary goes on to explain that *at that time the suffering of the cold day still exists, because as soon as that suffering of cold ceases the suffering of heat immediately begins*. Just as the suffering of cold begins to recede, the suffering of heat begins. This is establishing that one needs suffering as the basis for generating happiness, but one does not need happiness as the basis for generating an awareness of suffering.

What we perceive as happiness, i.e. worldly pleasure - which is contaminated happiness, or samsaric happiness - is based on suffering. As mentioned earlier, the alleviation of an earlier suffering is experienced as happiness, and therefore happiness is based on suffering. But one does not need happiness as the basis for generating an experience of suffering.

When we reflect on this from our own experience, we can actually see the truth of this fact. Any worldly pleasure that we experience is based on alleviating some kind of earlier discomfort, and the relief that one experiences when an earlier discomfort is lessened is experienced as pleasure or happiness.

These pleasurable experiences are mostly related to attachment. Nagarjuna said that the pleasure that we experience from attachment is like the pleasurable sensation one gets from scratching an itchy rash. One experiences pleasure from the relief of the itch. But, as Nagarjuna presents very logically, given a choice one would not opt to have the rash just to experience the

pleasurable feeling of scratching it. That is how the analogy that happiness is based on suffering is explained. Many people seem to really relate this to their own experience. Basically, worldly pleasures are just the relief of an earlier discomfort, and that's why they are not true happiness.

The further analogy is that it is *like blue and distance*. The colour blue is not dependent on anything for it to appear as blue - it is blue by nature. This is likened to the experience of suffering, which is that it does not have to be based on happiness for it to be experienced as suffering.

Whereas the experience of happiness is like short and long. The awareness of short is dependent on something that is longer, and the awareness of long is based on something that is shorter. Therefore the perception of long and short are dependent on each other. The perception of long is dependent on the perception of short, and likewise the perception of short is dependent on the perception of long. Whereas the perception of blue is not dependent on anything else, it perceives blue just as it naturally appears - blue.

The commentary doesn't explain the example further in detail, however I think that suffering is like the colour blue, i.e. just as blue is not dependent on another factor to be blue, suffering is not dependent on happiness. Whereas just like long depends on short and *vice versa*, worldly happiness is dependent on the alleviation of suffering.

As an introduction to the next verse the commentary states:

Presenting that craving is reversed, if one realises the non-existence of inherent feeling:

The verse reads:

98. *When there is no-one experiencing feeling,
And when the feeling does not exist as well,
Having seen this circumstance at that time,
Why should craving not be reversed?*

Then the commentary explains:

When there is comprehension that there is no inherent person experiencing feeling, and that the experienced feeling also does not exist inherently, then at this time, having seen this circumstance of no inherent experience and experiencer at the time, why should craving not be reversed? The craving wishing to attain happiness and the craving wishing to be separated from suffering are induced through the force of true-grasping.

As the commentary explains, *when one comprehends that there is no inherently existing person experiencing feeling, and that the experienced feeling also does not exist inherently then, as there is no inherently existing experience and experiencer, why should craving not be reversed?* The implication is that with this understanding of the lack of inherently existent experiences and inherently existent experiencers, craving would indeed be reversed.

The reason why craving can be reversed is that *the craving wishing to attain happiness and the craving wishing to be separated from suffering are induced through the force of true grasping*. It is this true grasping that causes these two

² There are a few typos in the Tibetan text at this point, which have been corrected in this transcript.

cravings of wishing to experience happiness and wanting to be separated from suffering.

When the inherent existence of craving itself is reversed, i.e. when one realises the emptiness of craving, then that understanding will overcome the misconception of inappropriate attention that causes the craving to arise in the first place. It is ignorance that is responsible for this inappropriate attention. So when that inappropriate attention is overcome through the realisation of the non-inherent existence of things, the craving itself will be reversed, or cease.

When we really investigate how attachment arises, we come to see that behind every attachment there is always a mind of ignorance. The mind of ignorance is the forerunner of attachment as well as aversion. This mind exaggerates the qualities of an object through inappropriate attention. So there's this combination of exaggerating qualities that is induced by inappropriate attention, which then develops into attachment to the object.

When there is strong attachment one sees qualities in the object that don't actually exist. And we can verify from our own experience that when strong attachment starts to subside, then one starts to see defects in the object that initially appeared to be so beautiful and desirable in the heat of attachment.

Likewise aversion is due to the exaggeration that is induced by an inappropriate attention that sees only faults in the object, and that is what causes anger. Again, we can verify from our own experience that when the fire of strong anger starts to subside, then one can start seeing qualities in that object. This shows how it is an underlying ignorance that drives craving.

Of the two types of craving, we relate more readily to the craving of wishing to attain happiness. That is because at the most basic level we want to experience happiness, and because we wish for happiness, craving naturally arises. We don't wish for any unpleasant experiences, and when we do actually experience something unpleasant, the craving of wanting to be separated from that unpleasantness arises. That is how we can relate craving to ourselves.

2.3.2.1.2.3. Refuting that the focal object exists inherently

The next two lines of the verse are:

*99ab. Whether seen or felt,
It is due to its dream-like illusory nature*

The commentary explains:

Regardless of whether it is seen by eye consciousness or felt by the body consciousness, because of the dream-like or illusory-like nature of the object empty of inherent existence generating the feeling, the feeling also does not exist inherently.

This is a very cogent explanation. *Regardless of whether it is seen by the eye consciousness or felt by the body consciousness* refers to either the beautiful forms that we see with our eye consciousness, or the pleasant sensations we experience from touching smooth tactile surfaces. Since these objects of the sensory consciousnesses *are like dreams or illusions, they are empty of inherent existence.*

When we see forms, they don't actually exist in the way they appear, so they are like dreams or illusions. When we relate this idea to emotions such as attachment, then these emotions will naturally subside. Attachment arises from thinking that what is perceived is real, and exists as it appears. The more we see and believe an object as being real and attractive, the more our attachment to that object increases. As soon as you see that the object lacks inherent existence, and that it does not exist as it appears to our eye consciousness, this understanding of the emptiness of the object will help cut through our delusions.

As explained in the teachings, while in meditative equipoise the mind of someone who has realised emptiness is completely absorbed in that emptiness. There is no conventional appearance and nothing but emptiness appears to their mind. As a consequence the delusions that arise in relation to conventional appearances naturally subside.

When that meditator comes out of their meditative equipoise into a post-meditative equipoise, they reflect on how things still appear as being inherently or truly existent when, in fact, they don't exist in that way. While in post-meditative equipoise, the trainee bodhisattva sees things as being like illusions or dreams, and thus not truly existent or inherently existent. Then strong negative emotions such as attachment or aversion will subside. This is a very significant point.

We need to understand that the analogies of dreams and illusions are very significant examples that illustrate how our mind is affected by ignorance, and thus misapprehends the things and events around us. In a dream, we believe that there are horses and elephants when in reality there are no such horses or elephants. That perception of horses and elephants is due to the mind being affected by the consciousness of sleep, which alters the mind so that it perceives things that don't actually exist and believes them to be real.

Another analogy given in the teachings is someone whose mind is affected by a spell during a magic show. When an illusionist conjures up horses and elephants, the people in the audience, who are under the spell of the illusionist, will see elephants and horses. Although there are actually no horses or elephants on the stage, they appear to the minds of the audience because their consciousnesses are affected by the spell.

Using these analogies we can understand that even though phenomena don't exist inherently, we perceive them as inherently or truly existent because our mind is affected by the ignorance that grasps at true existence and inherent existence, along with the imprints of that wrong perception.

For as long as one grasps at true existence due to the very imprints of that grasping at true existence, one will have mistaken perceptions, which will be followed by grasping at those mistaken perceptions. The only way to get rid of those mistaken perceptions is by removing their cause, which means removing that grasping at true existence and the imprints of grasping at true existence.

Someone who has completely removed not only grasping at true existence, but its very imprints from their mental

continuum is an enlightened being, a supreme being, who does not have mistaken conceptions and perceptions. A supreme being sees the world as illusory, and so does not have any mistaken conceptions and perceptions. Thus they are not affected by any of the falsities caused by those mistaken perceptions, and hence do not experience any of the sufferings of worldly existence.

If we see the Buddha as a supreme being who is free from mistaken conceptions, then we will be inspired to become like the Buddha. Otherwise we might see the Buddha just as someone sitting there who seems to be very peaceful. If we don't know what the Buddha is free of, we might not be inspired to achieve the same state.

All of the sufferings that we experience are said to arise from the misconceptions that we hold. In the *Lama Chopa* text, after the tsog offering, there's this one particular line that says may all beings be free from the mistaken conceptions. I find that to be a very powerful line because not only does it point out the suffering that sentient beings experience, but it also explains that the very cause of that suffering comes from mistaken conceptions.

When we recite the *Lama Chopa*, as we do regularly, it is good to reflect on that line when we come to it. When we relate it to ourselves rather than thinking about other sentient beings who are suffering because of their mistaken conceptions, it becomes much more profound. Our own mind is affected by misconceptions, and because of this we experience the shortcomings of worldly existence.

If we can actually incorporate more visualisations during the *Lama Chopa* practice it will become much more profound. The tsog you take out is not just to satisfy them by temporarily relieving the suffering of hunger. As the deity when ones visualises transforming oneself into the tsog, then merely coming into contact with sentient beings will help them to be free from all their sufferings, i.e. the sufferings arising from their misconceptions. This is indicated in the verse. That then becomes not only a temporary relief from suffering, but also relieves all the forms of suffering that have arisen from mistaken conceptions.

We will conclude the session for this evening and dedicate the Tara Praises we are going to recite to Helen's oldest son Martin who has undergone surgery today. I've already done my part of doing prayers and as a group we can do the Tara Praises and dedicate them for the success of that operation. As we wait for the results let us pray that everything goes well and that he will be relieved from all physical ailments and recover soon.

As many of you have experienced, there is a definite benefit from prayers.

When they arrived in Australia, some Tibetans lived here at Tara Institute for a while; one of them came to teachings once in a while, on special occasions. One day she came to me looking very anxious. She told me that her sister, who lives in Scotland, had been missing for two days and that the police were looking for her. So she was very, very anxious.

I said: "Don't worry too much. Maybe you will speak to your sister in the future. You can even say that she can

come here if she wanted. Her immediate response was: "Well how can I speak to her when she's missing? I've really come to see you hoping that you can do an observation, a *mo*, to see where she is". My response was: "Well I'm not someone who does *mos*, but I'll do prayers for her", but she didn't seem very pleased about that.

The next day I got a message from her saying that they had found her sister that morning. A year later she introduced me to her sister when they came here recently for a puja. I didn't mention anything then but it did remind me that when I'd suggested that she could bring her sister over she had said: "How could I ever bring her here? She's lost", and she hadn't seemed to relate to what I'd said about doing prayers at all. This is one instance of where prayers definitely seemed to help.

I have quite a few stories like that. Once I was asked to do prayers for a Kopan monk known as Cherok Lama (the older Cherok Lama). He had come to Australia and was in prison in Perth – I don't know what had happened. At that time Lama Zopa happened to be here, and he said to me: "Geshe-la we just got news that Cherok Lama has been imprisoned in Perth, maybe you can do some prayers?" Then the next day Rinpoche said to me: "Geshe-la I think your prayers have worked, because he's been released from prison".

The point is that prayers definitely seem to work if one does the prayers with a sincere mind, wishing to benefit the other, while making strong supplications to the gurus and the deities. The Kadampa masters said: don't rely on humans; rely on the deities. There's definitely a positive effect from prayer.

Your prayers will be very strong when you relate to deities such as Tara, thinking that you are the guru, you are the deity, you are all the protectors and dakas and dakinis, and that you are an unfailing friend and companion.

I have many stories from my days in Kopan when Lama Zopa Rinpoche would ask me to do prayers for certain things. Rinpoche could have done those prayers himself but he asked me, saying, "Oh, it's better for you to do them as they will be more beneficial". So I would do these prayers, and it seems that there were some benefits from them.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷོ་མེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

20 December 2016

Based on the motivation that was generated with the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice.

[meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines: For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will engage in the virtuous practice of listening to the teaching and then put it into practice well.

It is good to set our motivation so that our practice incorporates both method and wisdom, which is the optimum means for creating the causes for enlightenment. Those who have gained the realisation of emptiness will set their motivation to achieve enlightenment for the benefit all mother sentient beings, prior to going into single-pointed meditative equipoise on emptiness. It is said that because their meditative equipoise is held with the bodhicitta motivation - which includes the aspiration to achieve enlightenment, they will be engaging in the practise of both method and wisdom throughout their meditative equipoise. Their single-pointed meditative equipoise on emptiness is not rendered to nothingness because of their bodhicitta motivation.

We need to relate this to all forms of our practice. Prior to engaging in the practice of prostration, for example, we can take a few moments to generate the bodhicitta motivation. Although we have not yet actually generated bodhicitta, we can develop a contrived bodhicitta motivation, and that similitude of the bodhicitta motivation, will help to secure a more meaningful practice. Combining simple practices with the bodhicitta motivation makes the practice really significant.

2.3.2.1.2. The close placement by mindfulness on feelings [cont.]

2.3.2.1.2.4. Refuting that the feelings of the object possessor exist inherently

Having refuted feelings as being inherently existent, we now turn to refuting that the feelings of an object possessor exist inherently.

The first lines of verse relating to this are:

99cd. *Because it is generated simultaneously with mind
Feeling is not seen by it.*

100ab. *Although generated earlier and later
It is remembered but not experienced.*

As the commentary explains:

Because feeling is generated simultaneously with mind, it is not seen inherently by the mind because those that are of different substance and simultaneous are unrelated. Although feelings are generated earlier

and later, they are remembered but not experienced because, at that time, they have ceased and are not generated.

First of all, even though *feelings* are *generated simultaneously with mind*, they are *not seen as being inherently existent by the mind*. That is because even though they are generated simultaneously they *are of different substance and therefore unrelated*. When the commentary states *although feelings are generated earlier and later*, it is referring to feelings that *are remembered but not experienced now because they have*, in fact, already *ceased*.

The main point to be understood is the lack of inherent existence of a mind that experiences feelings. This is then clarified in the following lines of verse.

100cd *It does not experience its own nature,
And is also not experienced by others.*

101a. *Since there is absolutely no one with feeling,*

As the commentary explains:

Summary: That feelings do not experience themselves is refuted with the refutation of self-knowers. They are also not experienced by an inherently existent another because that which is experienced and the experiencer are unrelated. Not only does that producing the feeling not exist inherently, there is also absolutely no inherently existent experiencer of feeling. This was already refuted at the time of refuting the self of person.

The commentary explains - that *feelings do not experience themselves is refuted with the refutation of self-knowers*. Earlier the text refuted self-knowers. From this it follows that feelings cannot experience themselves. In other words there are no inherently existing feelings that experience themselves.

Lest one has the doubt that there might be another factor that experiences feelings inherently, the text clarifies that *feelings are not experienced by an inherently existent other*. That is *because that which is experienced and the experiencer are unrelated*. Experiencing someone else's feeling is an absurdity because there is no relationship between the experiencer, and that which is experienced i.e. the feeling.

Further, as the commentary explains, not only does that producing the feeling not exist inherently, but *also there is absolutely no inherently existent experiencer of the feeling*. This further refutes any doubts that while the feeling does not exist inherently, the experiencer - the person who experiences that feeling - might exist inherently. *There is also absolutely no inherently existent experiencer of feeling as well*. As explained in the commentary *the self of a person was refuted earlier*.

The next few lines of the verse are presented:

101bcd. *Thus feeling is not suchness.
In this way, how can this collection lacking self
Be harmed by this?*

As the commentary explains:

Thus, just as feeling does not exist as suchness, how should the collection of aggregates, that lack an inherently existing self, be benefited by happiness and harmed by suffering? As there is no inherently existing suffering as well as no inherently existing feeling, it is suitable to apply every effort to meditate on the close placement of mindfulness on feeling.

Since *feelings* are not inherently existent, *how could the collection of aggregates, which lack an inherently existing self, be benefited by happiness and harmed by suffering?* This is similar to what was explained earlier. If feelings were to exist inherently and the person experiencing the feeling also exists inherently, then who is there to benefit from pleasurable, happy feelings? Who is there to be harmed by inherently existent feelings of pain and suffering? While feelings of happiness are beneficial and feelings of suffering are harmful, the point here is that inherently existent feelings of happiness cannot benefit anyone and inherently existent suffering cannot harm anyone. This point was also mentioned previously.

As further explained here, *as there is no inherently existing suffering as well as no inherently existing feeling, it is appropriate to apply every effort to meditate on the close placement of mindfulness on feeling.* This conclusion specifically relates to applying the close placement of mindfulness on the lack of inherent existence of feeling, or the emptiness of feeling.

The main point to be understood here is that if one perceives feelings as being inherently existent one will develop attachment to pleasant feelings, and aversion towards unpleasant feelings. It is through such feelings of attachment and aversion that one creates negative karmas. But when one perceives happy feelings as lacking inherent existence, then attachment will not arise, and when one views any feelings of suffering as lacking inherent existence, then one will not develop an aversion to discomfort. Through the correct understanding of the lack of inherent existence of phenomena in general, and the lack of inherent existence of feelings in particular, the delusions will be overcome. In this way we gain a glimpse of the importance of understanding the lack of inherent existence of phenomena.

When someone, who believes that things exist inherently, hears the teachings on emptiness, they might develop the thought that maybe these teachings on emptiness are valid. As the teachings mention, for those who are receptive, generating even a mere doubt¹ about the validity of emptiness in this way can begin to shatter the very core of cyclic existence. Through understanding the lack of inherent existence, and thus the emptiness of phenomena, the delusions are first weakened, then eventually completely eradicated. This is an essential point to understand.

In order to overcome attachment and craving, one needs to develop an understanding of the lack of inherent existence of feelings. That is the only way to overcome attachment and aversion. A quote in the teachings says that 'because love is not a direct opponent, it cannot overcome the delusion of craving'. The point is that while the unconditional love of bodhicitta in a bodhisattva's mind is an invaluable most precious state of mind, it nevertheless cannot in itself overcome the delusions, the reason is because it doesn't serve as a direct opponent to those delusions. Therefore, as the teachings further explain, in order to overcome the ignorance of grasping at true existence or inherent existence, the direct opposite of that mind needs to be developed as an antidote to

overcome that ignorance. This is really the point one needs to understand. So at our level, having this understanding, and applying it in practice means reflecting on these points again and again, and familiarise our mind with this understanding, as a way to get a better and clearer understanding of the lack of inherent existence, i.e. emptiness.

To apply this as a personal practice, we start by sitting quietly in a focused and a concentrated state of mind, and then look within and examine our feelings. How do feelings actually appear to us? Do they appear as independently existing from their own side? Is that actually the mode of existence of feelings? Or do feelings actually exist in dependence on other factors? When one contemplates in this way, one begins to clearly distinguish between the two different modes of existence. One is the erroneous view that perceives the mode of existence of feelings as existing inherently and independently, in and of themselves? The actual mode of existence, however, is that feelings rely on other factors for their existence, and hence do not exist inherently. When we contemplate these two perceptions, we see that they are the complete opposite of each other. So, which perception is the correct one? The perception of feelings as being inherently and truly existent, or feelings as lacking inherent existence, and which do not exist in and of themselves?

The object is the same, i.e. feeling, and there are two modes of apprehending that object of feeling. One is to apprehend it as being inherently existent, and the other is to see that it lacks inherent existence. Which of these two modes of apprehending feelings is true? When one further investigates in this way, one begins to find that the apprehension of feelings as existing inherently does not have any valid reason to support it. So it is based on a false perception rather than a true perception. The apprehension of feelings as lacking inherent existence is, on the other hand, based on a valid cognition, and is therefore true. It is in this way that one's understanding of the lack of inherent existence is enhanced, and this understanding can then be applied to all other phenomena.

Meditating on, and contemplating these points is essential for enhancing our understanding. Otherwise after receiving some teachings we will end up just parroting: "oh yes, the perception of grasping at true existence and inherent existence is false - it's a mistaken perception. It is mentioned in the teachings so must be true", and leave it at that. If we haven't really spent the time investigating it for ourselves, then it will be just another object of knowledge, and not an actual experience.

As it is our last session for the year, it will good to do an extensive dedication for the time that we have spent together throughout the year. It's important to dedicate the merits that we have accumulated collectively throughout the year, and we will do that by reciting the *King of Prayers*.

It is also good to incorporate an understanding of how, when one dedicates virtues, one is able to dedicate the virtues of the three times, which means the virtues that we have accumulated at any time in the past, the virtues

¹ Doubt in this context carries a positive connotation.

we are accumulating at this time and also the virtues that are yet to be accumulated in the future. I explained this in detail during my explanation of the practice of *tong-len* or the giving and taking practice. When we offer virtues to others we can offer the virtues of all three times. On the other hand we can only offer the body and possessions that we possess now. We can't offer the body and possessions of the past because that time is gone and we don't have them any more, and we can't offer our future body and possessions because we don't possess them yet. Thus, we can only offer the wealth and possessions that we have now.

With But we can give in the three times: Yesterday I gave, today I give, and tomorrow I will also give. The reason why one can offer virtues of the past is because we still have in our possession the positive imprints left upon our mental continuum in the past, and that's what we are actually offering - the positive imprints in our mind. That is how it should be understood.

During the recitation of *The King of Prayers* it is good to reflect upon all the virtues one has ever accumulated in the past since beginningless time: "Whatever positive deeds and virtues that I have created intentionally or otherwise, I dedicate for the benefit of all sentient beings, to relieve them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness". So dedicating our virtues to the ultimate state of enlightenment makes one's dedication much more powerful and meaningful.

I want to thank everyone for your participation in the teachings this year, which have gone very well. Thank-you!

After a short break over Christmas the program will resume on Monday evenings on January 2, and the Wednesday program will begin on January 11. Rather than just staying in your room doing nothing, coming along to meditation together would be good. I place great importance not only on practising together, but also on gathering together afterwards, and have tea together. This is a good way to promote good relationships between students. There have been many who have commented that they have found starting the year, and indeed starting any practice with meditation is very beneficial and meaningful.

In discussion with Ross he said that that he couldn't attend the Kalachakra Initiation this year, and also Tina is not going, so I suggested that you would derive the same benefit from watching a live-stream of the event together. It would be good for those who are around to come along, and perhaps bring something to eat and drink, and watch it together. That would be a really meaningful way to spend time together, again promoting good feelings between each other.

On a practical level, if even one hour spent together with good friends and like-minded people relieves feelings of loneliness, then it will have been worthwhile. If you are at home by yourself, your mind might not be content and go wandering off everywhere. If you are a meditator, of course, then that's different. But you might as well come to a gathering like this because it's more meaningful than sitting at home with a distracted mind. I consider a gathering of like-minded people promotes good feelings

and develops good relationships with each other. I personally take great pride in having a good relationship with others and I feel that it's a really important element of our existence.

Apparently not too long ago, the Kalachakra Initiation done in Ladakh was presented on the ABC's Compass program. Two weeks later when I went for my regular check-up with my doctor, he commented on having seen that program. He was very, very impressed and said "oh, it was really very good". Of course I couldn't understand everything he was saying, but what I gathered was that he said "His Holiness the Dalai Lama is doing really good work". The fact that it was presented by Geraldine Doogue, who is very well respected, was important, as having a well-known presenter seems to make a difference.

You don't need to feel that if you can't come to the live-stream every day that there's no point in coming. That's a narrow-minded way of looking at it. Even coming to one or two sessions will bring some benefit, so that's OK.

Of course my intention is that it will be of some benefit and help. I heard that last year over 100 people joined in the Tara Practice and Lama Tsong Khapa puja. It makes me happy when others take an interest and seem to benefit from these practices.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© *Tara Institute*



*Shantideva's
Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱུང་ལུགས་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཟུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Ven. Michael Lobsang Yeshe

2017 Notes

Tara Institute
3 Mavis Avenue
East Brighton VIC 3187
Tel: (03) 9586 8900

A branch of FPMT, the Foundation
for the Preservation of the
Mahayana Tradition, a network of
Buddhist Centres in Australia and
worldwide.

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྟུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

14 February 2017

Having just recited the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, it is important to remember that taking refuge is the means to protect oneself from following a wrong path, while generating bodhicitta is the means to protect oneself from the lower paths. Keeping these two essential motivational points in mind, we can now engage in our regular *tonglen* meditation practice.

[Meditation]

As we do regularly, we now generate our motivation for receiving the teachings, which is extremely important. This can be along the lines of: for the sake of all mother sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will engage in listening to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practice well.

As mentioned earlier, taking refuge is the optimum means to protect oneself from following a wrong path. In very simple terms this means that dedicating ourselves to following the Buddha's teachings, in particular developing faith in his advice, will naturally protect us from following a mistaken path.

The Buddha is an incomparably kind guide who is free from all mistaken concepts and endowed with all possible good qualities. Recalling the kindness and great qualities of this incomparably kind being will instil a strong aspiration to follow the Buddha's advice. Just thinking about this can bring great solace to the mind.

We also need to have a good understanding of how generating the bodhicitta motivation, the essence of the Mahayana path, protects one from following the lower path. Here, the greater path is where one completely dedicates oneself to the **goal** of achieving the ultimate state of enlightenment for the sole **purpose** of benefiting other sentient beings.

The paths of the hearers and solitary realisers are termed the Lower Path only in relation to the goals of the Mahayana or Great Vehicle. Their primary **purpose** for entering the path is to be free from suffering, which is for one's own benefit. Their **goal**, or aim, is to achieve liberation solely for oneself, which is a state of being free from cyclic existence. So, in comparison with the Great Vehicle's purpose and goal their path is called a lower path.

Of course one needs to be mindful that this does not mean in any way that the hearers' and solitary realisers' vehicle is inferior. In fact, achieving liberation is an incredible achievement. The realisations and the achievements gained on the hearer and solitary realiser paths are astonishing compared to any achievements of ordinary beings. However, when compared to the Great Vehicle, their achievements are less significant. Thus, it is

the bodhicitta motivation which protects one from aiming for these lesser goals.

Those who have entered the path of the Great Vehicle are referred to as bodhisattvas or noble beings. The mind of a bodhisattva is imbued with bodhicitta - the altruistic wish to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. Their mind is spontaneously imbued with bodhicitta, and their conduct is to engage in the practice of the six perfections. We can see how amazing bodhisattvas are, just from the description of being endowed with these two qualities! Being engaged in the practices of the six perfections means that their practice is solely for the benefit of sentient beings.

The *tonglen* giving and taking practice that we have just done, is, as I have mentioned previously, a very profound practice and not to be taken lightly; when one actually takes it to heart it is really a very profound and deep practice. It is good to remember that this is the very core practice of bodhisattvas.

Thinking about these qualities of the bodhisattvas can really inspire us. As Buddhists, we naturally have strong faith in the Buddha seeing him as an enlightened being. It is important to reflect on the fact that a buddha is none other than the result of the practices done by a bodhisattva. As reflected in the teachings, the Buddha did not suddenly materialise out of nowhere. Rather, he is a supreme being who engaged in all the causes and conditions on the path, beginning with the very basic levels, going through the entire stages of the path and reaching that ultimate state of enlightenment. So the manner in which the Buddha became an enlightened being is a source of great encouragement for us all.

Of course at our level, we may have not yet developed the bodhicitta mind. However, since we are followers of the Mahayana path we need to aspire to follow the Great Vehicle path. So at the very least we must make every endeavour to generate even a similitude of the bodhicitta motivation. Even if it's a contrived bodhicitta motivation, we need to really develop this as strongly as possible. In its simplest form, we should dedicate our practice and teaching - indeed whatever virtue one engages in - towards the benefit of all sentient beings, and then aspire to achieve enlightenment for that purpose. If we generate this mind again and again whenever we do our practice, then through familiarity with this thought, our mind naturally becomes more and more imbued with this motivation and aspiration. It is through familiarity that one actually develops all the realisations on the path. That is what we need to do at our level.

There are other points about going for refuge and generating bodhicitta that we need to reflect upon and understand clearly. Refuge is a practice that is common to all three vehicles - the hearer vehicle, the solitary realiser vehicle, as well as the greater vehicle. Whereas generating bodhicitta is the uncommon practice of the Great Vehicle, the Mahayana Vehicle. There is a form of refuge that is called the Mahayana Refuge that involves a particular formula. However, in general, refuge is common to all three vehicles, while generating bodhicitta is an uncommon practice for those who aspire to follow the Great Vehicle.

Indeed, we can say that taking refuge is common to all religions; all religions have a form of refuge that they practise prior to engaging in any of their practices. Christians go for refuge to Jesus and God whenever they engage in some ceremony or practice. As a spiritual seeker or a follower of religion it's good to understand that taking refuge is common to all spiritual traditions. These are important points to understand, otherwise people might think: "Oh, going for refuge must be unique to Buddhists? Is it only because I'm a Buddhist that I have to take refuge?" In fact it is good to know that all religions have a form of refuge. However, since we aspire to follow the path of the Great Vehicle, it is good to know that as followers of the Mahayana path we have the additional task of generating bodhicitta.

While taking refuge is common to all religious practitioners, taking refuge in the Three Jewels is unique to Buddhism. Having a clear understanding of what the Three Jewels - the Buddha, the Dharma and Sangha - are, a conviction in the protection the Three Jewels provide, and a heartfelt reliance on the Three Jewels is a unique Buddhist practice. On the basis of taking refuge in the Three Jewels, the principle of non-violence is implemented, which is to refrain from harming any living being. So the practice common to all Buddhists is taking refuge in the Three Jewels, and refraining from harming other sentient beings.

Generating the bodhicitta motivation on the basis of taking refuge and refraining from harming others is what makes Mahayana practice unique. So as followers of the Mahayana tradition, our refuge and other practices become a Mahayana practice, when they are held with - at the very least - a contrived bodhicitta attitude. That is something that we really need to work on as seekers of the Mahayana practice. I have given detailed explanations of this in the past. Because taking refuge and generating bodhicitta are done before every practice, it is really good to have a clear understanding of what they mean.

The most practical and simple way for us, as ordinary beings, to implement the bodhicitta attitude in our daily lives is to follow the advice of His Holiness the Dalai Lama (which I also emphasise again and again), which is to generate the thought: "I will not intentionally harm any living being and I will do my utmost to only benefit sentient beings". Generating this noble thought on a daily basis is, as His Holiness the Dalai Lama says, a substitute of the bodhicitta motivation for us ordinary beings. So we really need to pay attention to these two lines. I'm not boasting, but I really do pay attention to generating this thought. You can also go a little bit further by spending a few more moments thinking: "I will do everything possible to only benefit sentient beings and I will completely shun and avoid harming sentient beings". Just spending a few moments cultivating this thought can bring great solace to the mind, leading to a genuine sense of calmness and ease. So it's very beneficial.

These points are not all that complicated and they are very easy to contemplate, yet they are very, very profound; they can also help to bring about a great transformation in one's mind. When we think about it, these attitudes are very reasonable. There is no sentient

being who wishes to experience any harm, and there is no sentient being who does not wish for benefit. In other words, all living beings naturally want to experience benefit and happiness and do not wish to experience any kind of harm or suffering.

When we commit ourselves to benefitting others and not harming them, which is what they wish for, then we are actually engaging in the very core practices that the great Mahayana practitioners of the past implemented in their lives. If we can follow their example and generate this thought, then, as mentioned earlier, as we become more familiar with these sentiments and thoughts (which will of course take some effort initially) and we will begin to notice a real transformation taking place in our mind. Because our mind becomes gentler and genuinely kinder, we will naturally become less prone to harming sentient beings and more readily inclined to help other beings. This is the transformation that will naturally take place over time. So this is really a very profound level of practice to adopt.

When the Buddha mentioned these profound words: "If you harm sentient beings, you are harming me; when you benefit sentient beings, you are benefitting me", he was saying that "if you respect me and have faith in me, then benefit sentient beings, and don't harm them". It was through the practice of only benefitting sentient beings and not harming any sentient being that the Buddha reached the state of enlightenment. So the incomparable and kind Buddha has given us some very practical advice. When we generate these thoughts and really commit ourselves to engaging in these practices, then our life becomes much more meaningful, and our practices become much more profound, and much more complete. We might be inclined to engage in Dharma practice, but in order to engage in practice we need to know how to practice. These are the instructions on how to conduct ourselves on a daily basis through our thoughts and actions.

It is good to acknowledge the great fortune that we have at this time. We are engaging in none other than the unmistakable Mahayana teachings of the Buddha, so being part of this gathering is incredibly fortunate. We have met with unmistakable Mahayana teachers and we have these incredible conditions to engage in practice. So it is important for us to really utilise them to the best of our ability, because having all of them at the same time is a rare opportunity.

More specifically, as a human being, we have the eight freedoms, which free us from the eight adverse conditions, and the ten endowments. Possessing these is unique to human beings. As Lama Tsongkhapa mentioned, they are more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel. This is a very significant point, when we think about what we can achieve with our present conditions. No amount of money, even hundreds of millions of dollars can buy us our ultimate purpose. But with these eight freedoms and ten endowments of a precious human rebirth, we can achieve our ultimate purpose.

As Lama Tsongkhapa said, we waste our life with meaningless worldly activities if we do not pay attention to the great meaning of our life, which is another very significant point. When we don't think about the

preciousness of a human life, then we naturally fall into a normal pattern of using this life for worldly pleasures, which is how we tend to spend our lives.

Furthermore, the conditions that we have with our precious human rebirth are also rare and very difficult to find. If we didn't think about the rarity and difficulty of acquiring these conditions, then we might relax and think: "Oh, there's no rush to engage in Dharma practices". But as Lama Tsongkhapa mentions, a precious human rebirth is more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel, and we have only found these precious conditions at this time. This indicates that if we were to lose this opportunity, it will be very, very difficult to obtain it again. So these are essential points to contemplate.

The teachings give many examples that explain the rarity of a precious human rebirth. We can think about the rarity of finding a precious human rebirth in terms of the cause. This is another essential point that we need to reflect upon. The cause for obtaining a precious human rebirth is said to be the threefold causes of observing morality as a basis, making aspirational prayers, and finally complementing them with the practices of generosity and so forth. These three factors are the causes for a precious human rebirth.

Another teaching mentions that there is no other cause for obtaining a higher status than morality. This teaching specifically emphasises that morality, or ethics, is the basic cause for obtaining a high status. So we need to really think about the importance of following an ethical life.

We can rejoice in the fact that because of our practice of morality in the past, we have now obtained a precious human rebirth. So we can congratulate ourselves and feel joy in what we have achieved. We made aspirational prayers in the past to engage in good deeds, and dedicated them to obtaining a precious human rebirth such as we have now. The fact that we engaged in practices of generosity and so forth in the past can be seen from our current conditions - we are not lacking for food, shelter and other basic needs such as medicine and so forth. As a result of having engaged in these practices in the past we have obtained these incredibly good conditions now.

However, if we want to secure a precious human rebirth in our future lives, then there is no other way than engaging in the very practices that were the cause for our current precious human rebirth i.e. practising morality, making aspirational prayers, and complementing them with the practices of generosity and so forth. So if we can create these causes now, then we should be in no doubt that we will obtain a precious human rebirth in the next life. It will naturally follow! We have obtained a precious human rebirth now, as a result of previous causes, so if we practise in the same way, we will definitely obtain the good conditions again in the future.

But if we don't practise and engage in the causes now, then that is where it becomes difficult. We need to understand that the great advantage of obtaining a precious human rebirth again in the future is that we will be able to continue with the practices that we have engaged in over this current life. If we continue to do this

from life to life then our conditions will just get better and better, and we will progress to higher and higher levels of achievements and realisations and so forth.

Contemplating the preciousness and the rarity of our precious human rebirth should not be taken lightly. It is a point that is emphasised in many teachings as being an impetus to practice. We should not think of it lightly by saying "oh, this is just a beginners practice". Rather, we need to really contemplate these points again and again, and take them to heart. As Lama Tsongkhapa mentioned, when you think of the rarity of a precious human rebirth, there is no way that you will lie around in a leisurely manner. This is another significant point. If we are lying around leisurely, this means that we are not really contemplating the rarity of our precious human rebirth.

Furthermore, as the teachings emphasise, having thought about the preciousness of the human rebirth, followed by its rarity, we must also contemplate how easily this precious rebirth can end. This means thinking about the fragility of our life. These are all very meticulous and very profound ways of encouraging us to engage in Dharma practice.

If we don't think about the preciousness of a human rebirth, we won't be inspired to use it for a meaningful purpose. If we don't think about its rarity, then we might think: "Oh well, I have a precious human rebirth now, but I can obtain another one at any time. So I don't have to worry about it now". In order to overcome such a misconception, we need to contemplate how easily this precious human rebirth can end. If we don't contemplate that, then again we will fall victim to laziness, thinking, "Yes, I need to use my precious human rebirth in a meaningful way to practice Dharma, but I can do that tomorrow or the day after, or some time in the future". So contemplating death and impermanence is crucial, as it inspires us to not waste our time and opportunity, and to put our good conditions to use.

Lama Tsongkhapa mentions in his work, *Lines of Experience*:

This human existence with its (eight) liberties is much more precious than a wish-granting jewel. Obtained just this once, difficult to acquire and easily lost, (it passes in a flash) like lightning in the sky. Considering how (easily this can happen at any time) and realizing that all worldly activities are as (immaterial as) chaff, you must try to extract its essence at all times, day and night. I, the yogi, have practised just that. You who also seek liberation, please cultivate yourself in the same way.

As Lama Tsongkhapa mentioned, by contemplating the precious human rebirth one develops a sense of seeing the affairs of this life as being meaningless, and lacking essence. They are no more than chaff which, like worldly affairs, has no essence.

These are points to reflect upon. If our worldly life had some essence, then because we are so engrossed and busy with these worldly affairs, we should have gained some sort of real satisfaction and happiness by now. But the fact that we have not gained true satisfaction and happiness, shows that whatever we have engaged in so far has lacked any essence, and we have not really achieved anything meaningful so far. So Lama

Tsongkhapa encourages us to really contemplate these points as a way to lessen our engagement with meaningless worldly affairs, and engage our mind in virtue and the Dharma.

I apologise that I have seemingly gone off on a tangent in mentioning these points again. As I consider you all to be really good Dharma friends, I'm just sharing my thoughts as a way to encourage all of us to make our life more meaningful and to practise a bit of Dharma.

When I think about these points made by Lama Tsong Khapa, I feel that being completely immersed in this life's affairs primarily involves engaging in many negativities to please and protect your dear ones, and engaging in many negative deeds to combat your enemies. That's what this life's affairs are mostly involved with, as a result of which they lack any essence. In the end, engaging in such affairs only brings about more frustration and suffering. Perhaps I'm wrong, but that's what I feel. If I am wrong then I apologise.

As Lama Tsongkhapa said, in a very simple way, when there is attachment to one's own side, then instinctively there will be aversion towards anyone who opposes one's own side. Isn't holding on to such sentiments just a cause for more agony?

Again, I want to say how wonderful it is to have this opportunity to gather together again after a gap of a few weeks. You all seem very well and I'm definitely well, and my trip to India was very beneficial and successful.

The one thing that was a bit difficult and challenging was that Indian food somehow doesn't agree with me these days. I don't know what it is, but when I tried the food, it initially seemed quite tasty but then after a while, it didn't really taste nice at all. Then, although I didn't really get sick from it, I just lost my appetite, so I couldn't eat much. Then I resorted to having a clear soup, which seemed to be quite tasty! But after a while I started thinking "I wonder if this taste is because they've used MSG".

We can see here how you can use logic even in these situations. I was being served a clear broth, but because it was very tasty I was thinking, "How could something very clear and bland have so much taste?" So then I asked, and sure enough I found they had used MSG in the soup!

On a more positive note I can definitely assure you that I enjoyed the teachings very much. The teachings were so clear for me and I didn't even have to use my hearing aids at all. It must be the result of some sort of good, virtuous actions that I created in the past that I was able to hear the teachings so clearly, without the hearing aids. Of course His Holiness' speech has the incredible quality of being very clear and very precise. But I was able to really listen to them very easily. I didn't have any difficulty, and I didn't get tired.

However, when the teachings finished, getting back to my accommodation was a bit of a struggle, as there were big crowds to get through. I was very tired, and I had two young monks helping me back to my accommodation. When I had the younger monks helping me, they were just eager to get back home. Later when I had some of the older monks from house number 15 helping me, they said "Oh, Geshe-la, maybe we will stop and have some tea

here". So we stopped on the way, and didn't head straight back.

While I can assure you that my time receiving the teachings was very meaningful and very good, I also would like to acknowledge those who attended the sessions that were streamed here. I was very happy to hear about that, and I want to thank you for coming along.

My intention in implementing this idea was not just to receive the teachings but to gather together, have tea together, bring some biscuits and share the food together. I felt that would be a good way to build a communal feeling. I was told that people really felt good about that and indicated that in the future, it would be good to have more sessions like these.

We can finish our session today on an auspicious note, and return to Shantideva's profound words in our next session.

Maybe I just babble on about certain things, but I do feel there will be some benefit from the points I have shared with you.

Tara said that she found it very easy to follow His Holiness' teachings in Bodhgaya due to having come to the teaching sessions here regularly. That is one indication that our gathering here has definitely had some purpose. His Holiness actually elaborated quite a bit on the close placement of mindfulness, which we have partly covered in our sessions here.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་རྒྱུད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྟུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

21 February 2017

Based on the motivation we generated during the refuge and bodhicitta prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [*Meditation*]

We can now generate the bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: "For the sake of all mother sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment. So, for that purpose, I'll engage in listening to the Mahayana teachings, and then put them into practice well."

As I've mentioned previously, the meditation practice we engaged in earlier – the *tong-len*, or giving and taking practice – is a core bodhisattva practice that particularly encompasses the practice of the superior intention stage of the sevenfold cause and effect sequence for developing bodhicitta.

Therefore, we need to really keep this practice in our heart, not only during meditation times, but throughout our lives, as a way to further encourage our development of love and compassion.

We all have the potential to develop love and compassion. Not only do we have this potential, but we also have an understanding from the teachings of how important it is to develop love and compassion.

If we put this understanding aside and start questioning what kind of practice or meditation we are meant to be doing, then we are completely missing the point. We need to actually engage in the practices for developing love and compassion. Although we may not develop these qualities right away, through familiarity, we can definitely achieve significant results. Through familiarity with practices such as the *tong-len*, we will see a transformation taking place. It is important that we keep this in mind.

2.3.2. Explaining extensively the reasoning that establishes the selflessness of phenomena

2.3.2.1. EXPLAINING THE SELFLESSNESS OF PHENOMENA BY WAY OF THE FOUR CLOSE PLACEMENTS BY MINDFULNESS (CONT.)

2.3.2.1.3. The close placement by mindfulness on the mind

Under the major heading of the four close contemplations, we have covered the close contemplation on the body and the close contemplation on feelings. Now we will cover the close contemplation on the mind.

The earlier subdivisions analysed, firstly, the close contemplation on the non-inherent existence of the body, and secondly, the close contemplation on the non-inherent existence of feelings. Similarly, here, the close contemplation on mind is the close contemplation of the non-inherent existence of the mind.

This section is further subdivided into two:

2.3.2.1.3.1. Showing that mental consciousness does not exist inherently

2.3.2.1.3.2. Showing that preceding sense consciousness does not exist inherently

Although I've explained this previously I will give a brief explanation of what 'mind' is according to the texts. In the texts on mind and awareness, the Tibetan terms *sem*, *yi* and *nam-shay* which translate in English as 'mind', 'intellect' and 'consciousness', are said to be synonymous and refer to the same entity.

There are six primary (or main) minds or consciousnesses. They are called 'primary' in relation to their functionality. The mental factors are referred to as secondary minds; again, the term 'secondary' is in relation to their functionality. A primary mind or consciousness, serves as the primary factor that cognises the object on which it is focused; it does the primary engagement with the object. The accompanying mental factors or secondary minds, on the other hand, relate to the particular characteristics of the perceived object.

The analogy of the different functionalities or roles of a king and his ministers are used in the teachings to illustrate the difference between the primary mind and the mental factors. In this country, we might use the analogy of the roles of Prime Minister and the ministers. The main point of the analogy is to illustrate how a primary mind or consciousness perceives the mere identity of the object, while the mental factors perceive the particular characteristics of the object – such as the colour, shape and size of a visual object.

There is further explanation on how the primary minds and mental factors are synonymous and arise at the same time. Particular mental factors, such as the omnipresent mental factors, arise at the same time as the primary minds. The difference however is that when the mental factors perceive an object, they don't do so out of their own power. They can only perceive an object in relation to a primary mind, but not from their own accord or by their [needs to be checked as it appears it is referring to the object's own power, not the secondary mind's. Was this intended?] own power. On the other hand primary consciousnesses perceive an object through their own power. So, that is another feature to understand about the mind.

I've explained all of this in detail previously, particularly when we went through the text on Buddhist tenets.

We should note here that the Vaibhashika Buddhist school asserts that main minds and mental factors – or secondary minds – arise simultaneously. The Vaibhashikas assert a unique presentation of a simultaneous arising of cause and effect. While causes and effects are not generally simultaneous, the Vaibhashikas assert that mind and mental factors are simultaneous as well as being causes and effects. So they have this unique presentation of mind and mental factors.

It is good to relate to such explanations as a way of sharpening our reasoning. The reason why the Vaibhashikas say that secondary minds are the effects of a primary mind is that there has to be a primary factor which comes first. They assert that the primary mind

comes first, followed by the secondary mind. This is asserted as cause and effect.

However, mind and mental factors are also said to be simultaneous in relation to the five omnipresent mental factors. The latter are secondary minds that are always present with the primary minds, and thus arise at the same time as the primary mind when it perceives an object.

The Tibetan term for a secondary mind is *sem-jhung* and the Vaibhashikas seem to take that term literally. The literal connotation of *sem-jhung* is 'arising or originating from the mind'. When you take literal meaning of the term in that way, then it implies that a secondary mind arises or originates from a mind that previously existed.

Again, I will not spend too much time on this, as it has already been presented previously and you can do your own research. Understanding mind and mental factors is an essential aspect of Buddhist psychology, as it is a way to understand the function of our mind.

The five omnipresent mental factors – feeling, intention, contact, attention and discrimination – are said to be always present whenever a main mind functions. There is always an associated feeling when an object is perceived by a primary mind, as well as an intention and so forth. Many of you would be aware from previous teachings that the actual definition of karma is intention. We create karma based on the intention at the time of an action. Whenever we engage an object, it is the intention that drives us towards that engagement. When we talk about creating karma, what part of us actually creates it? It is our intention. This has how we need to understand karma on a deeper level.

In relation to omnipresent mental factors, whenever we perceive an object, there is a feeling that arises simultaneously in relation to perceiving that object. As we engage with the object, we are also creating karma, and whether the karma is virtuous or non-virtuous depends on the intention. So, whenever we engage in any object, karma is involved. Discrimination, which perceives the particular characteristics of an object, along with attention and the other omnipresent mental factors, all occur at the same time.

These are important topics to really remember and understand well. Thanks to Margie for remembering the list of the five omnipresent mental factors. That goes to show you've kept them in mind. I'm hoping Margie was speaking on behalf of others who have already studied it. Although Margie doesn't assume an air of knowing much, she actually does remember things well. Whereas there might be others who presume they know a great deal, but I'm not sure how much they would actually remember!

2.3.2.1.3.1. Showing that mental consciousness does not exist inherently

102. *Mind does not abide in the sense powers,
Not on form, and also not in-between,
There is also no mind inside or outside,
And it is also not found elsewhere.*
103. *It is not the body; it does not exist separately,
It does not mix and it also does not stand
alone.*

*Because of not existing in the slightest,
therefore
Sentient beings are naturally gone beyond
misery.*

The commentary presents the meaning of these verses as follows:

Mind does not exist inherently because it does not abide inherently on the six sense powers; it does not abide inherently on the six objects of form, sound, scents, tastes, tactile sensations and objects of mental consciousness, and it also does not abide in between these two or on the collection of these two. Remember the seven-fold analysis of the chariot as explained in the *Introduction to the Middle Way*.

The mind also does not abide inherently in the internally elaborated

person labelled by the non-Buddhists, not on the outer hands and other limbs, and it cannot be found to abide inherently in another way apart from the inside and outside. It is not the body or truly something else other than the body, the mind is not mixed with the body, and it also does not abide as some inherent object apart from the body. Because it does not exist inherently in the slightest way, the emptiness of inherent existence of the mind is naturally gone beyond sorrow.

The explanation starts with the statement *mind does not exist inherently*, followed by the reason. One needs to remember that this does not mean that the mind does not exist at all. Of course the mind, intellect or consciousness does exist, but the point being emphasised here is that it does not exist inherently.

According to the Prasangika Madhyamika or Middle Way School, the mind does not exist inherently, truly or substantially. While some lower Buddhist schools will not assert a truly existent mind, all lower Buddhist schools accept that the mind does exist inherently. So, the unique feature of the Prasangika system is the assertion that mind does not exist inherently.

According to the Prasangika, the main reason for the lack of inherent existence of the mind is that the mind does not exist without depending on an imputation; it does not exist in and of itself, independently, without depending on a label.

By contrast, the lower Buddhist schools would say that if you investigate and don't find anything through your investigation, then that would imply the object does not exist at all. So according to them since it can be found through investigation, it exists inherently.

However, the Prasangika go further, arguing that the lack of inherent existence is not only dependent on whether or not you find the object through investigation, but whether or not it exists independently, without it being labelled or imputed by the mind.

The commentary reasons that mind does not exist inherently *because it does not abide inherently on the six sense powers*. If the question is, 'does the mind exist?', then the answer is 'yes, it definitely does exist'. We cannot deny the fact that the mind exists: our own experience proves it. However, the point here is that while the mind depends on the six sense powers, it does not abide inherently on these six powers.

The eye consciousness, for example, does abide in dependence on the eye sense power. However, the eye consciousness does not abide inherently on the eye sense power. Likewise, the nose consciousness depends on the nose sense power but does not abide on it inherently.

If we go through all of the six sense consciousnesses, we find that none of them abide inherently on the six sense powers. As explained in the commentary, *it does not abide inherently on the six sense objects of form, sound, scents, tastes, tactile sensations and objects of mental consciousness.*

Here again you can refresh your memory. The six primary consciousnesses depend upon the six sense spheres, referred to here as the six sense powers. There are six corresponding types of object perceived by the six consciousnesses – forms by the eye consciousness, sounds by the ear consciousness, tastes by taste consciousness, and so forth.

The point here is that the six primary consciousnesses do abide in dependence on the six sense powers, as well as the six sense objects. Although not specifically mentioned here, when we extend this reasoning, we can see that if the consciousnesses were to exist inherently or independently, they would not have to abide in dependence upon the six sense powers and the six sense objects. The fact that they do depend on these shows that each sense consciousness cannot exist inherently, independently in and of itself.

As the commentary further explains, *it also does not abide in between these two*, i.e. the six sense powers and the six sense objects, *or the collection of these two*. If mind does not abide inherently on the six sense powers and the six sense objects individually, there's no way it could abide on the collection of the sense powers and objects, because a collection is none other than the sum of its individual parts.

The commentary continues: *Remember the seven-fold analysis of the chariot as explained in the Introduction to the Middle Way.*

When I presented this in the teachings on the Middle Way, those of you who attended will recall the reasoning referred to here: the chariot does not exist inherently on its individual parts, such as the wheel, hubs or spokes; and it also does not exist on the shape of the chariot, the collection of all the parts and so forth. Therefore, through this analysis, we come to the conclusion that the chariot cannot exist inherently.

The mind also does not abide inherently in the internally elaborated person labelled by the non-Buddhists... This refers to the different organs within our body, like the liver, gall bladder, intestines, and so forth. So the mind does not abide internally on these organs.

And, as further explained, *...not on the outer hands and other limbs, and it cannot be found to abide inherently in another way, apart from the inside and outside. It is not the body or truly something else other than the body, the mind is not mixed with the body, and it also does not abide as some inherent object apart or separate from the body.*

So, in every instance of what is labelled by some as the person – the very body itself – the mind cannot be found to exist inherently either inside, on the internal organs, or

outside, on the limbs and so forth, or in between, or even outside of the body. This, then, exhausts every possibility for the mind to exist inherently. When the mind cannot be found inside, or outside, or mixed with the body, and does not abide as some inherent object separate from the body, then that exhausts all the possibilities of finding an inherently existent mind.

As the commentary concludes: *Because it does not exist inherently in the slightest way, the emptiness of inherent existence of the mind is naturally gone beyond sorrow.* Having exhausted all possibilities for the mind to exist inherently, the emptiness of inherent existence of the mind within sentient beings is referred to as that which has naturally gone beyond sorrow. Emptiness itself would not be called liberation, but is referred to as an entity that has naturally gone beyond sorrow.

2.3.2.1.3.2. Showing that the preceding sense consciousness does not exist inherently¹

104. *If consciousness exists before the object of knowledge,*

In reference to which object is it generated?

If consciousness and the object of knowledge are simultaneous,

In reference to which object is it generated?

105ab *However, if it exists subsequently to the object,*

At that time what is consciousness generated from?

The commentary explains:

If the sense consciousness exists before the object of knowledge as it is not preceded by a focal condition, in reference to which focal object is it generated? If the consciousness and the object of knowledge are simultaneous, then in reference to which object is it generated? When the sense consciousness is not generated, the focal condition is not generated, so it cannot be generated, and once the focal condition is generated the consciousness is also generated and does not need a generator anymore.

If, however, the sense consciousness exists subsequently to the object of knowledge, at that time from what condition is the sense consciousness inherently generated?

This is not valid.

If it is generated from the disintegration of the previous moment, then a sprout would also have to be generated from a burnt seed. If it is generated without the disintegration of the preceding, then is it generated with another moment in-between or not? In the first case, it becomes impossible to be generated directly. In the latter case, as there is no interval in relation to its full nature, they become mixed within the one moment. If the interval relates only to one part and not to the whole, then its true existence dissolves, and it becomes non-truly existent.

The commentary begins with the statement: *if the sense consciousness exists before the object of knowledge...*, which is clearly an absurdity. If the object of knowledge was, for

¹ Geshe-la indicated that there may have been a typo in the Tibetan text because the nga (five) here should be spelt la nga-ta nga. In Tibetan, the word could read 'five' or 'preceding' depending on the spelling. So the heading refers to 'preceding' or 'existing before' rather than the 'five' indicated in the printed commentary. This revised heading also suits the explanation of the verse.

example, a form perceived by the eye consciousness, and if you were to then say that the eye consciousness perceiving form existed before the form, then how could it be an eye consciousness perceiving form when form was not around at the moment of perception? It could not be called an eye consciousness perceiving form if it existed before the form.

The reason for the absurdity of this possibility is: *...as it is not preceded by a focal condition, in reference to which focal object is it generated?* Again, taking the example of the eye sense consciousness perceiving form, the focal condition for that eye sense consciousness perceiving form is form – that is the focal condition. So, if form itself didn't exist, because the focal condition is lacking, how could that sense consciousness perceiving form arise? This should be quite clear.

Having dealt with that absurdity, the commentary continues: *If the consciousness and the object of knowledge are simultaneous...* Having just explained that a sense consciousness could not exist before its object of knowledge, the Prasangikas proceed to refute the next possibility – that consciousness and the object of knowledge are simultaneous. A sense consciousness can only arise in relation to an object that it is perceiving. So if they were to be *...simultaneous, then in reference to which object is it generated?* This is yet another absurdity.

The commentary further argues that *when the sense consciousness is not generated, the focal condition cannot be generated; once the focal condition is generated the consciousness is also generated and does not need a generator anymore. If, however, the sense consciousness exists subsequently to the object of knowledge, from what condition is the sense consciousness inherently generated?*

Again, because the arising of a sense awareness or a consciousness requires the condition of an object, if there is no condition, then how could it be generated?

Then another hypothesis is presented: *If a sense consciousness is generated from the disintegration of the previous moment, then that implies that a sprout for example, would also have to be generated from a burnt seed.* Again, the logic is quite clear. If the sense consciousness were to arise because of the disintegration of the previous moment, then you would have to say a sprout could be generated from a burnt seed.

The commentary further argues: *If you say it is generated without the disintegration of the preceding, then is it generated with another moment in-between or not?* In other words, is the sense consciousness generated from another moment, between the two, or is it not? *In the first case, if it were generated in the moment between it would be impossible to be generated directly.* Because there is another moment in-between, you cannot say that it was directly generated from the previous moment.

In the latter case, as there is no interval in relation to its full nature, they become mixed within the one moment. This is arguing that if the interval relates only to one part and not the whole, true existence dissolves and the consciousness becomes non-truly existent.

If you were pay attention and follow the reasoning and logic, it will then become quite clear to you. It might not

become clear from just glancing at it once – you need to read it again and again.

The main point to be understood here is that if we were to simply investigate the existence of the conventional or illusory mind, then this analysis does not adhere to the mode of investigation required to find the meaning of ultimate reality. It is only when you attempt to ascertain whether an inherently existent mind exists or not that you will be adhering to an analysis that will bring you to the understanding of ultimate reality – that the lack of inherent existence of mind is the emptiness of the mind.

So, according to the Prasangika, the main point is that if our research and analysis is based on the existence of the conventional mind, we can all agree there is such a mind; rather we need to analyse and ascertain whether the mind exists inherently or not. In order to get an accurate, unmistakable understanding of the ultimate view asserted by the Prasangika, the investigation must be based upon whether a mind exists inherently or not. And, if it were to exist inherently, how does it exist? Where can you find an inherently existent mind?

This process of analysis, of going through every possibility of finding where an inherently existent mind might exist, and then coming to the conclusion that such a mind cannot be found, leads to the understanding of the ultimate reality of the mind, which is that it does not exist inherently. Since the mind cannot be found to exist inherently anywhere, realising the lack of inherent existence of the mind, is realising the emptiness of the mind.

If we are not careful, it is easy to take a wrong turn. If we were to investigate whether a conventional mind exists or not, and came to the conclusion that a conventional mind cannot be found, then we have actually come to a completely wrong conclusion and fall into the extreme view of nihilism. If we came to the conclusion that a conventional or illusory mind cannot be found, then that would mean the conventional mind does not exist. That would be a wrong understanding.

These are really subtle points that one needs to keep in mind when embarking on process of obtaining the correct understanding of the view.

If it were the case that not finding something is understanding its ultimate reality, then quantum physicists who do research on looking for the smallest particle of an atom, would be gaining the understanding of emptiness. From what I have heard, scientists have concluded that there is no such thing as the smallest particle: they come to a point where they cannot say 'this is the smallest particle'. But have they understood emptiness because they haven't found the smallest particle? I don't think that would be the case. Right?

I think you call this particular branch of science quantum physics. His Holiness mentioned this recently in his Kalachakra teaching at Bodhgaya. Do you recall that?

2.3.2.1.4. *The meditation on the close placement by mindfulness on phenomena*²

The next two lines of the verse relates to this:

105cd. *In such a way the generation of all phenomena
Is not realised.*

The commentary explains:

In the way explained earlier the generation of all phenomena is not realised as inherently existent, because, as it is taught in the *Sutra Requested by the Superior Inexhaustible Discriminating Wisdom*, one should realise all compounded and un-compounded phenomena as non-inherently existent.

In the way explained earlier the generation of all phenomena is not realised as inherently existent. This translation here doesn't convey that the Tibetan word for Dharma, *chö*, and the term for all existent phenomena is one and the same. The definition of *chö* or phenomena in general, is 'that which holds its own identity', which can also relate to the Dharma. So, while *chö* in general would refer to all existing phenomena, when we are referring to *chö* as the practice of Dharma, then it carries the meaning 'that which holds you from falling into a lower existence'.

For example, if we hold onto something to stop us from falling into a precipice, that object or factor would be protecting us from falling. In the same way, the practice of Dharma — for example, observing ethics or morality — is the factor that protects us from falling into the lower realms. So this meaning of 'holding its own identity' can be applied here as 'holding us from falling into the lower realms'. So observing morality is what it protects you from falling into the lower realms.

This is definitely the case. It is said that if you put morality into practice, then this will definitely protect you from falling into the lower realms; you will not be reborn in the lower realms in the next life.

Another way of interpreting the meaning of 'holding its own identity' in relation to Dharma practice is to understand that Dharma holds you back from mistaken or wrong conduct. Any form of practice that involves the abiding in, and accumulation of, virtue will definitely protect you from misconduct. The practice of meditation is exactly that — it protects us from wrong views, mistaken and negative states of minds, and so forth.

Coming back to the general meaning of *chö* as 'that which it holds its own identity', I've explained previously that if we were take a glass as an example of a phenomenon, we can see that it holds its own identity. As soon as we look at the glass, we can identify it exactly and refer to it as a glass. We don't mistake it for something else — say, a book or a table — but instinctively and automatically relate to it as a glass, that is because of the functionality of the glass. It is precisely because the glass continuously holds its own identity, that we don't mistake it for something else.

The commentary continues: *In the way explained earlier the generation of all phenomena is not realised as inherently existent, because, as it is taught in the Sutra Requested by the Superior Inexhaustible Discriminating Wisdom...* In

this particular sutra, the Buddha mentioned that *one should realise all compounded and un-compounded phenomena are non-inherently existent*. So, as the Buddha himself said, all existents included in compounded and un-compounded phenomena are to be seen as non-inherently existent.

We will conclude our session for the evening, and follow with a recitation of the dedication chapter of the *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. This is to dedicate our merits to the late mother of Sandup Tsering who passed away recently.

Sandup himself came to visit me just last Friday with a *khatag* and an offering, informing me he was on the way to India to see his mum who was critically ill, in her last stages. So he came with the request for some prayers and made an offering. Then he went to India, and apparently soon after he arrived there, his mum passed away.

Sandup himself is like part of our family. We knew his mother quite well too. Many of the older students would have gone to her home many times, whenever we went to India, for lunch. Sandup would always make sure we were invited to his home. He would hire a small mini-bus — in Indian terms, he had to pay quite a bit to hire it — so that we could go and visit his home and his parents. So we've had many meals with his parents.

It is also good to note that both Sandup and his younger sister Namgyal took the opportunity to really serve their parents well, particularly their mum. This year, Sandup went to India earlier and spent some time with his parents, and last year he went as well. The year before last, Namgyal was there for about three months.

It is good to take note of how they really did serve their parents to the best of their capacity. For example, for Namgyal, staying there three months meant leaving her children here. While she would have had concern for her children, nevertheless she saw the importance of looking after her own mother and went to India, sacrificing her salary for three months. Also, Sandup went last year and this year spent some time with his parents.

These are good examples for us to take note of. If our parents are already deceased, then of course, whenever we do prayers and dedication practice, we dedicate our merits to them. But if we have parents who are still alive, this is a good example for us to serve our parents well, in whatever way we can. While we have the opportunity, we do the best we can.

I understand that when Sandup's mum was taken to hospital in Bangalore for tests and treatment around four years ago, it was actually the first year that His Holiness began Lam Rim teachings there. Her visit to the hospital coincided with His Holiness coming to Bangalore for a day on the way to give teachings at the monastery. So Sandup's mum was able to be brought to the reception of the place where His Holiness was staying. His Holiness stopped and actually came close to her and she had her picture with him. His Holiness advised her that it was good for her to have really good treatment and stay in the hospital for as long as she needed. And if she had any difficulty with the finances, His Holiness said he would ask his office to assist.

² In the enumeration of headings on 22 November 2016, the heading reads The Close Placement by Mindfulness on Phenomena

This again shows the incredible compassion His Holiness has, especially for destitute people. He shows great concern and extends his love and compassion to them.

As for as Sandup's mum, after having that encounter with His Holiness, she commented: "Now I have no regrets. Even if I die I have no regrets."

Sandup's offering consists of one hundred dollars to me. My intention for this is for the Study Group to host the lunch for His Holiness's birthday, as we regularly do. I want to contribute this money towards that. Maybe Margie could keep that for me? Now we can do the prayers for the dedication. *[Group recitation]*

[Serving of tea]

When we recite OM AH HUM three times in the tea offering, the **first recitation** represents purifying all the defilements, such as the bad taste and impurities of the offering, the colour and shape, and so on - all the impurities subside. The **second recitation** transforms the offering substance into uncontaminated nectar. The **third recitation** signifies that the offering, which has now been transformed into nectar, increases expansively. This expanse of nectar is then offered to the gurus and buddhas.

The actual offering occurs when one generates the thought that the offering has been accepted. Accepting these offerings generates unceasing, uncontaminated bliss in the gurus' and buddhas' minds, which is the actual offering. So this is good to keep in mind.

Then we can think about the offering syllables individually. The OM represents the indestructible body of the Buddha Vairochana. The AH is the syllable of the indestructible speech of the Buddha Amitabha. The HUM is the syllable of the indestructible mind of Akshobya.

The HUM represents purifying all the defilements or impurities of the offering substances. There is nothing that cannot be eliminated; there are no defilements or impurities that cannot be eliminated by the indestructible mind of the enlightened being. So the HUM specifically represents that which eliminates all defilements.

The AH represents the transformation of the impure substances into pure nectar. That is because of the indestructible speech of Amitabha. Because AH represents Amitabha, it has mastered all the substances; there is nothing that cannot be transformed by the speech of Amitabha.

The OM is the indestructible syllable of Vairochana, and represents the body of the enlightened being, which represents the body. It is through the enlightened body that innumerable, infinite numbers of manifestations arise and are sent forth. So the OM represents the increasing of the pure substances. To be able to satisfy all sentient beings in accordance to their particular needs – that many bodies of innumerable enlightened bodies are manifested to assist and help each of them. This is how we need to understand the enlightened activities of the buddhas.

So if we can incorporate this understanding when making offerings, it is said that our offering will become highly meaningful.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson and Bernii Wright

Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© *Tara Institute*

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷོ་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

28 February 2017

Based on the refuge and bodhicitta motivation that we have generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [meditation]

As we have just attempted to do in our short session, it is good to engage in meditation regularly like this. Engaging in meditation is a way to help to subdue the mind and in particular to bring the mind to a more peaceful state. The more we experience a calm and peaceful state of mind, the more it will contribute to a genuine sense of happiness.

Having a clear and bright state of mind is essential to our wellbeing. It ensures that wherever we go, and whatever we do will be of the utmost benefit. Meditation practice helps ensure that, through familiarity, we gradually become more and more accustomed to maintaining a positive and virtuous state of mind. The more we practise in this way, the more likely it is that we will achieve that state of mind.

If, along with a calm and peaceful state of mind, we can willingly accept hardships and difficulties then that will help us to overcome those difficulties. The fact is that we are bound to come across challenges and difficulties at different periods in our life. It's safe to say that a problem of some sort is always around the corner, and the best way to deal with any problem is by willingly accepting it.

We have the great fortune of studying this incredibly profound text. Pdraig recently asked me whether there is a specific text on the study of logic. My response was that there is no better text about logic than this very text we are studying now, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. The logic used by Shantideva is in accordance with the logic of the great masters Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti. All three were very, very intelligent logicians who used very meticulous reasoning as a way to refute the assertions of other great masters such as Shantirakshita, who was also a great scholar. It is good to understand that when great scholars debate with each other they use very refined and subtle logic.

When the lineage masters of the lam rim are traced back, there are those who held the Prasangika-Madhyamika point of view and those who held the Svatantrika-Madhyamika point of view and so forth. This distinction is specifically pointed out

His Holiness the Dalai Lama regularly reminds us that we are following the Nalanda tradition. There are seventeen renowned pandits who were great scholars of this tradition, one of whom is Shantideva. Their analysis of the teachings was done in debate using reasoning and logic. Of course, the incomparably kind Buddha's teachings are the basis; however, they are not accepted at face value. Rather, they are analysed and re-analysed through reasoning and logic. Then, having been thoroughly investigated in this way, they have been established as being the ultimate intention of the Buddha. Through this analysis and debate, those who once held, for example, Mind Only School's views are later converted to the Prasangika or Consequentialist Middle Way school of thought. The way this is done is through logic.

We can use this approach on a practical level in our everyday life. Rather than being gullible and accepting whatever others say, we should only accept what is presented after carefully analysing using logic and reasoning. Investigate and use your reasoning skills to see whether what is being presented to you is valid or not, i.e. whether there is a logical reason to accept it or not. Then you will not be easily misled or influenced by negative friends. If you find yourself being easily influenced by negative friends, then that is a sign that you are not using logic and reasoning.

Some consider monks who are engaged in studies with a lot of debate to be somewhat stubborn. That is only because they do not accept things lightly without sound reasoning. For example, what may seem like a simple assertion such as, 'a vase is impermanent', is not simply accepted by saying 'yes, yes, it is impermanent'. Rather, it is debated for many hours, sometimes up to the early hours of the morning: Why is the vase impermanent? How can it proven to be impermanent? What would the consequence be if the vase were not impermanent? ...and so forth.

In the *Bodhisattva's Way of Life* Shantideva, who holds the Prasangika point of view, asserts that conventional (or illusory) truths lack inherent existence. The lower schools, such as the Realists, use reasoning to assert that things and phenomena do exist inherently, and the Prasangika present logical reasons to refute that.

The process presented in the teachings is that one reaches a final understanding and realisation through the process of first hearing instructions from others; then contemplating the understanding gained from hearing them; and finally meditating on the understanding gained from contemplation.

What one understands initially is based on what hears from others. Then based on the understanding gained from hearing, one uses one's intelligence to further investigate and analyse that understanding. This deeper insight and understanding derived from thorough analysis is unlike the understanding gained from merely hearing the instruction. That is because the wisdom one gains through contemplation and thinking is a wisdom that comes from within. One does not leave it just at that analytical understanding, but through meditation one takes it further to gain a deeper, and more profound level of understanding.

As explained in the teachings, the understanding one gains from hearing an instruction is an understanding based on the power of others, whereas the understanding one gains through contemplating the instruction is gained from one's own side. It is good to understand that distinction.

We can apply this on a more practical level to academic studies. I often hear of people finding it hard to choose a subject to study. If they were to use their reasoning and logic to investigate, say, five possible subjects, then through analysis they will be able to see which one of these five is the best choice.

In very simple terms, the advice is to first listen, from which you will gain some understanding. Don't leave it at that, but analyse that understanding further. Then you can use that understanding gained through analysis and investigation for the practice of meditation.

This is all just a prelude to show how, by paying a bit of attention to this seemingly complicated topic, it will become clearer if we just go through it slowly.

2.3.2.2. REFUTING THE ARGUMENT THAT THE TWO TRUTHS WOULD BE INVALID

This has three subdivisions:

- 2.3.2.2.1. Refuting the consequence of absurdity
- 2.3.2.2.2. Refuting the consequence of becoming endless
- 2.3.2.2.3. Showing there is no proof for the true existence of object and consciousness

2.3.2.2.1. Refuting the consequence of absurdity

Here the proponent is a **Realist** who says that if there is no truly existent illusory truth, then there could be no ultimate truth either. Therefore both truths would cease to exist. That, the Realists say, is the absurd consequence of positing the lack of true existence.

*106ab. In case the illusory does thus not exist;
How could both truths exist on it?*

The commentary begins the explanation of these two lines as an argument.

Previously object and object possessor were refuted as inherently existent, having been labelled as earlier and later. In that case, the same fault would apply to their illusory existence and, as there is no basis for the designation of any phenomenon if inherent existence is impossible, the illusory becomes non-existent. As a result, how can the two truths exist on it? They become non-existent.

Previously object and object possessor were refuted as inherently existent, relates back to the previous verse where the consciousness and the object of knowledge are refuted as being inherently existent on the basis of being *labelled as earlier and later*. *The same fault applies* to labelling them as *illusory*, as there will be *no basis for the designation of any phenomena* if inherent existence is impossible.

This is the Realists' presentation of what they see as the absurd consequence that would follow if all phenomena were to lack inherent existence. Their conclusion is *how can the two truths* be something that lacks inherent existence? This is a rhetorical question implying that the two truths could not exist.

Simply put, their argument is that if the illusory does not exist then ultimate truth would also not exist, and thus both truths would be non-existent.

A specific example of this logic is that if a vase, which has a conventional existence (and is therefore an illusory truth) were not to exist, then it would be impossible for the ultimate reality of the vase to exist as well. If the existence of the vase is negated then naturally there is no vase, and the ultimate reality or the emptiness of the vase cannot be established because there is no vase. So their logic is that if the illusory truth lacks inherent existence, then by implication it does not exist, and if illusory truth does not exist then ultimate truth could not exist as well.

The commentary continues:

If it is the case that you accept that the objects of form, sound and so forth exist truly to the perception of the illusion that grasps at them as inherently existent, but lack true existence from their side, and exist in an illusory manner.

Basically, the Realists saying to the Prasangika 'following your logic if you were to accept that the objects of form, sound and so forth exist truly to the perception of the illusory, which *grasps at them as inherently existent, but they lack true existence from their side and thus they exist in illusory*

manner. Then the following assumed absurdity of the Prasangika would arise.

The next two lines read:

*106cd. If it is illusory due to another,
How can sentient beings go beyond misery?*

The commentary explains:

If we look at this, then just as the rope lacks a snake from its side, but exists as snake for the perception of the grasping at the rope as snake, your illusory existence is posited through the mere elaboration as existent by another awareness. If this is looked at, then how can sentient beings go beyond sorrow even conventionally? It follows that liberation becomes impossible – because everything that exists has been established as the mere delusion of a distortion. If this is accepted, then it follows that to comprehend the view for the purpose of liberation becomes meaningless.

In the Realists' arguments against the assumed Madhyamika position *if we look at this* refers to looking from the point of view of the logical consequence (according to the Realists assumption) of why the Madhyamika's assertion of illusory truth is flawed and absurd.

The example used is when under certain conditions a rope appears to be a snake, although in reality there is no snake there at all. To the mind perceiving the rope as a snake, it is as if one is seeing an actual snake and thus fear arises. However, the snake does not exist at all upon the rope.

Similarly *your illusory existence is posited through the mere elaboration as existent by another awareness*. Here the Realists are arguing against the Prasangika position of an illusory existence, saying 'your claim that there is illusory conventional existence is posited through the mere elaboration as existent by another awareness' but actually it does not exist. So *how can sentient beings go beyond sorrow even conventionally?*

It follows that liberation would be impossible, because everything that exists has been established as the mere delusion of a distortion. According to you Madhyamikas, the Realists say, things exist only to a distorted mind, and do not exist in reality. So *if this is accepted* – which is of course is not what the Madhyamikas say – *then it follows that to comprehend the view for the purpose of liberation becomes meaningless*. Here the Realists are using their own form of sound logic saying, 'We both accept that we want to obtain liberation and that the whole purpose of establishing the correct understanding of reality is so that we gain liberation. However, if we follow your assertions that purpose becomes meaningless'.

The next two verses serve as the answer presented by the Madhyamika.

*107. This separate mental superstition
Is not our illusory.
If it is subsequently ascertained, it exists.
If it is not, it is not even an illusion.*

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Regarding what is referred to as illusory existent accepted by the Madhyamika: that which is merely elaborated as existent by the mental superstition of true-grasping by a separate awareness that is mistaken with regard to the grasped object, is not the meaning of existing in an illusory manner in our own Middle Way system. In our system the meaning of existing in an illusory conventional manner is: because all phenomena posited as the objects of the

view realising the mode of abiding are realised as being empty of inherent existence, the illusory actions and activities of being generated, generating and so forth can be posited as existing, through being ascertained by prime cognition in an unconfused manner.

If it is not like this, and in our own system actions and activities cannot be posited as being established by prime cognition, then their illusory conventional existence wanes.

The answer presented here by the Madhyamika, specifically the **Prasangika-Madhyamika**, first presents the incorrect view of illusory truth that the Realists assume them to hold, and say 'this is not how we assert the illusory'.

The commentary reads:

That merely elaborated as existent by the mental superstition of true-grasping, by separate awareness that is mistaken with regard to the grasped object, this is not the meaning of existing in an illusory manner in our own Middle Way system. In our own system the meaning of existing in an illusory conventional manner is: because all phenomena posited as 'the objects of the view realising the mode of abiding' are realised as being empty of inherent existence, the illusory actions and activities of being generated, generating and so forth can be posited as existing, through being ascertained by prime cognition in an unconfused manner.

If it is not like this, and in our own system actions and activities cannot be posited as being established by prime cognition, then their illusory conventional existence wanes.

First the Prasangika-Madhyamika present the Realists' assumption of the Madhyamikas' assertion with respect to conventional or illusory truth, which is *that merely elaborated as existent by the mental superstition of true-grasping, is a separate awareness that is mistaken with regard to the grasped object*. Then they reject this presentation saying: *this is not the meaning of existing in an illusory manner in our own Middle Way system*. What is being established here is that the illusory truth that the Realists' claim is the Madhyamika view is not accepted in our system.

Then the actual the Madhyamika view of the meaning of *existing in an illusory conventional manner* is presented. *Because all phenomena posited as 'the objects of the view realising the mode of abiding' are realised as being empty of inherent existence, the illusory actions and activities of being generated, generating and so forth can be posited as existing through being ascertained by prime cognition in an unconfused manner. If it is not like this, and in our own system actions and activities cannot be posited as being established by prime cognition, then their illusory conventional existence ceases to exist.*

This is really a very profound presentation that establishes how beings and the environment exist in a conventional or illusory manner while being empty of inherent existence. His Holiness Dalai Lama emphasises this point regularly in his teachings. I have also explained the meaning of this essential point previously.

It is to be understood as presented in this verse of the *Guru Puja*:

Samsara and nirvana lack even an atom of true existence
While cause and effect and dependent arising are infallible.
I seek your blessings to discern the import of Nagarjuna's intent –

That these two are complementary and not contradictory.

The presentation here in the text expresses the ultimate view of the forerunners of the Prasangika view, Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti, as well as the great scholars such as Shantideva who followed them. We need to gain a good understanding of that which is the crux of the Prasangika view.

The essential point being presented here is that there is no contradiction between appearance and emptiness but rather a union of the two.

More specifically, as presented in the commentary '*the objects of the view realising the mode of abiding' are realised as being empty of inherent existence*. When phenomena are seen as being empty of inherent existence, that enables the establishment of actions and activities as being generated and so forth in an illusory manner. The point being presented here is that the understanding of emptiness and the understanding of the interdependent nature of phenomena, are not contradictory but rather complementary. As Lama Tsongkhapa mentioned, it is at this point that one's understanding of the ultimate view is thoroughly established.

Understanding the empty nature of phenomena actually relates to subtle illusory or conventional truth. Through not understanding this essential point, other schools take the wrong turn and establish illusory truth as being inherently existent. According to the other schools, if things lack inherent existence then that would negate all existence.

It is essential to have the correct view of emptiness. If one is not able to establish the interdependent nature of all phenomena, and thus the illusory truth or existence of phenomena, then there is a danger of completely negating the existence of all phenomena, and that is where one would fall into the extreme of nihilism. So we really need to understand the non-contradictory relationship between conventional or illusionary phenomena and emptiness. To gain a clear understanding of this, the commentary emphasises this point when it says, *ascertained by prime cognition in an unconfused manner*.

As further explained in the commentary, *if it is not like this, and in our own system actions and activities cannot be posited as being established by prime cognition, then their illusory conventional existence ceases to exist*. The understanding of illusory truth refers here to gaining the understanding of subtle illusory truth.

This point refers to the agent, the action and the activity or karma that is created. The **Svatantrika-Madhyamika** school posits the lack true existence of the agent, action and activity (karma that is created) that is performed, but they are not able to establish the lack of inherent existence of the action, agent and activity.

Only the **Prasangika Middle Way School** is able to establish, through logic and reasoning, that the agent, the action and activity lack inherent existence. There is not even an atom of inherent existence in all three. It is only the Prasangika-Madhyamika School that presents the profound logic and reasoning of how the lack of inherent existence, rather than negating existence, actually establishes the existence of the illusory truth – this is the unique presentation of the Prasangika Middle Way school. It is in this way that one gains an understanding of subtle illusory or conventional truth. As I have presented many times in previous teachings, this has the same meaning as the lines in *The Heart Sutra*

which say, *form is empty, emptiness of is form*. It all comes down to the same point.

When the understanding of interdependent origination dawns upon oneself, it enhances the understanding of emptiness, and when the understanding of emptiness dawns upon oneself, it enhances the understanding of interdependent origination. At that point, one has come to the correct understanding of the Prasangika view.

What this means is that a prime cognition establishes interdependent origination without having to rely on another prime cognition. The right view of emptiness is established when the same primary awareness or cognition that establishes interdependent origination is also able to establish the empty nature of the phenomena and vice versa. When the prime cognition that realises emptiness is also able to establish interdependent origination, one will then have gained the correct and unmistakable understanding of the Prasangika view.

Although elaborate explanations are available to help enhance our understanding, it is good to begin with a simple but correct understanding of what is being presented here. Then, based on that, one can further expand that understanding with a more elaborate explanation. So it is good to begin with this simple understanding, which will shed light on the correct view.

As presented in the teachings we have this mistaken perception of the self as being inherently existent, and existing independently, which is called grasping at an inherently existent self. First, we need to understand what that wrong conception is. What does it mean to grasp at an inherently existent self?

With a good understanding of what that misconception is then, as the teachings present, we can go further. The self that is perceived by the wrong conception of grasping at a truly or inherently existent self does not exist in the way that it is perceived by that wrong conception. What does that mean? If such a self were to exist, then how would it exist? As one begins to understand the absurdity of a self that does not depend on any other factor, existing in and of itself, then the understanding of the lack of an inherently existent self begins to dawn upon oneself. One is getting closer to the correct understanding of selflessness.

When engaging with the explanations in the teachings, we may think, 'Oh, we need to realise selflessness as a way to overcome the misconception of grasping at a truly or inherently existent self'. However, we run the risk of becoming wrapped up in such words. Using these explanations to relate only to other phenomena is the wrong approach.

The proper approach is to relate the teaching to oneself. Setting aside the investigation of other phenomena for the time being, look at how we perceive ourselves, and then try to understand the lack of inherent existence of one's own self. It is essential to understand how grasping a truly existent self, is a misconception that we hold on to at all times. That is what we need to target – overcoming the misconception of grasping at an inherently and truly existent personal self. If we take this approach when contemplating selflessness, then we will reach a point where our meditation practice becomes more meaningful.

We might assume a rigid posture and try to focus single-pointedly on one object, which may have some effect in settling one's mind. But that alone will not help to overcome the afflictions within us, which serve as the very root of all

our misconceptions. Grasping at true existence will not be shattered if we just focus single-pointedly on an object just to calm our mind.

We have access to the teachings, and we have heard them many times, so it is good to actually think about the profound explanations on emptiness again and again. We won't accomplish much of an understanding just by reading the texts just occasionally and glancing at them once in a while. It is only by really contemplating them again and again that we develop a deeper understanding. Of course, emptiness is a difficult topic to understand, and not easy to meditate on.

When I was in India recently, there was a young geshe staying with us. We had quite a few discussions and he commented, 'Oh, there are so many explanations about the right view and so forth. What do you think about it?' I related some points that I understand as the correct view. Of course, I said that this was just my understanding. He is a learned geshe himself, and he was quite interested in what I had to say.

Last year I had a discussion on meditating on emptiness with another geshe, who was from the Gaden Jang-Tse monastery. I commented, that meditating on emptiness might not be too difficult if one has a bit of understanding, however at our level, meditating on impermanence seems to be really difficult. I made the comment that it seems that we really need a good understanding of impermanence to be able to shatter clinging to the worldly affairs focusing merely on this life. One can safely say that without a proper understanding of impermanence, one cannot even practise the Dharma properly. Leaving aside emptiness, we find meditation on impermanence hard enough.

When I responded in that way, the other geshe said, 'I was attempting to dig out some understanding of emptiness from a scholar, but I got only an explanation of how to overcome the eight worldly dharmas'. But then he said, 'Well, of course I agree that it is very difficult to overcome the eight worldly dharmas'. So, he understood my point that without an understanding of impermanence, one cannot overcome the eight worldly concerns.

The main points that I emphasise regularly is that we have this great opportunity now of having access to the Dharma, and we should not waste this incredible fortunate time. The main point of practice, as the great masters of the past have emphasised, comes down to the ways to cultivate love and compassion, and being kind to others. The benefits of this are obvious. You can definitely see that if you are kind and considerate to others, you will receive benefit yourself in return. On the other hand, if you engage in harmful intentions towards others, you will be harmed yourself. This is very obvious. The essential point is developing a sense of genuine concern for others, and then further enhancing that love and compassion. As I often emphasise, this is really the main point of our practice.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© *Tara Institute*

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

7 March 2017

Based on the refuge and bodhicitta motivation generated during our prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [*Meditation*]

As we just did in that short session, it would be good to engage in this *tong-len* practice regularly. When doing so, incorporate in the visualisation that you are surrounded by all living beings in human form who are experiencing all the various types of sufferings. By contemplating the various types of suffering one will then generate the natural wish for them to be free from suffering. This in turn instils the mind of love and compassion towards other sentient beings, wishing them to be free from suffering and to be endowed with happiness.

On this basis, when the wish for them to be free from suffering is further strengthened, one will develop the determination to take their suffering upon oneself. When you develop a mind that is unable to bear their suffering, then at that stage you will be able to willingly accept taking the sufferings of others on yourself and give them your own happiness. When you engage in practice with this visualisation it will help to ensure the practice becomes more meaningful.

Indeed when you contemplate in this way, focussing on all living beings (not leaving any sentient being out) and wishing them to be free from suffering and endowed with happiness, that becomes what is called 'unbiased' love and 'unbiased' compassion. This is the most valuable and most esteemed love that one can extend towards all other sentient beings. There is no doubt that you accumulate extensive merit and also purify heavy negative karmas by engaging in this practice. Thus this is an incredibly powerful practice.

The more we familiarise our mind with unbiased love and compassion, the more readily that sentiment will arise. When we feel an unbiased love and compassion towards others, there is no way for anger towards others to develop in our mind. If we can protect our mind from generating anger, then that's an incredibly powerful practice.

Indeed, when you generate the mind of wishing the other to be free from suffering, then the stronger that mind, the more it will naturally protect the mind from feeling hostility, and causing harm to others. If you don't wish the other to experience any suffering, then you wouldn't in your right mind intentionally go out of your way to harm others. Likewise, the more genuinely you develop the mind of wishing them to be happy, the more natural is your intention to benefit others. 'Benefitting' means engaging in the means and ways to bring happiness to others. So here, you need to see how this is a very crucial practice for developing a really positive state of mind within yourself.

These practices are not to be taken lightly. In terms of your own mental wellbeing, there is no greater practice than to meditate on love and compassion. A lot of unwanted problems and difficulties will naturally subside as you focus on the wellbeing of others. Most of

our problems are actually created by ourselves, to the extent of thinking only about one's own wellbeing. When we focus only on our own selfish needs, our own happiness and wellbeing, then the slightest discomfort becomes a huge problem that is hard to bear.

Most of our problems are actually created by just focussing on 'me, me, me ... my own happiness', and always thinking about oneself. If we were to train our mind to actually focus on others' wellbeing, then naturally our own happiness would no longer be the main focus. Therefore, even when conditions are not so good, you will not feel weighed down, because you are not focussing just on your own happiness. Your own suffering doesn't become a big issue because your main concern would be how to relieve others from suffering and bring them happiness.

You can see these are essential points for your own wellbeing; developing love and compassion actually brings about a more genuine sense of wellbeing and happiness for oneself. On the other hand, when you are obsessed with your own wellbeing all the time, then anything that obstructs your needs will seem like an enemy. The more you focus on your own selfish needs, the more likely it is that there are many who will oppose you, and thus you gain more and more enemies. Whereas when we focus on the wellbeing of others, and develop love and compassion toward them, then they will naturally appear dear and close to you. Then, when you are with others, you'll be at ease, feeling joy and happiness rather than feeling agitated and uncomfortable. That is an essential point to consider for your own wellbeing.

To give a more immediate example, take a relationship between two people. If you adopt an attitude such as, "if it's fine with you, then it's fine with me too", then this brings a sense of ease and harmony to the relationship. But when you hold the opposite attitude i.e. "although it is fine with you, I cannot accept it", then the moment this attitude arises it strengthens the conceited sense of 'me' and 'I'. Then there is much more agitation and unease in one's mind because of the strong sense of self-importance, rather than consideration for the other's needs. These are important points to consider. When we develop a genuine sense of unbiased love and compassion, these negative states of mind, which cause a lot of agony and unrest and even hostility and confrontation, will naturally subside and our minds will be much more at ease. I emphasise that you should try to cultivate, more and more, the attitude of "if it's fine with you, then it's fine with me. I will agree and accept".

It is worthwhile for you to consider what states of mind cause you happiness and what states of mind cause you agony. We all wish for happiness, we all wish for a peaceful mind; no one intentionally wants to have a troubled and agitated mind. So, through this practice, you become aware that the real cause of your happiness is within yourself. And likewise, the real cause for your troubles also lies within yourself. They do not come from an external source; ultimately, the main cause is within.

The main cause that disrupts your own happiness and peace of mind is a mind that wishes harm towards others. This mind of wanting to cause harm towards others comes from none other than only focussing on your own needs, your own personal wellbeing and happiness. This self-cherishing mind focussing just on your own wellbeing at the expense of others' happiness and wellbeing is very tricky because, instinctively, when we think about our own wellbeing, it seems like we are

caring for ourselves. Because we want happiness we think, "I need to take care of my own interests". But because this is an erroneous way of achieving a state of happiness for yourself, in effect it brings you more trouble and more unhappiness. When you exchange that attitude of only cherishing yourself, with focussing on others and cherishing them, then your own happiness is naturally fulfilled on the side.

If we take the teachings literally, they may seem to suggest that by cherishing others we should neglect our own wellbeing and happiness, but actually it is the opposite. If we genuinely cherish others and think about their wellbeing, it contributes to our own happiness and wellbeing. So you are not neglecting yourself, but rather taking care of yourself more holistically and the happiness you gain is much sounder and much more profound. On the other hand, you won't experience true happiness if you focus merely on your own wellbeing with a self-cherishing mind. These are essential points. In our meditation session here, we may focus on these things and do some visualisation, however it is most important to think about these points regularly in our everyday life.

When you go about in everyday situations, really try to contemplate these things, and constantly remind yourself of the value of cherishing other sentient beings and feeling love and compassion towards them. That is how you will regularly be able to protect your mind in everyday life situations.

Another way of protecting your mind from unnecessary angst and unhappiness is in situations where others are doing well. If others are experiencing success and things are going well for them then, depending on your state of mind, these situations can bring you either agony or a sense of joy and happiness. When, through meditation, the mind of love and compassion and the strong wish to benefit the other has taken root, and becomes a core attitude, then seeing others experience success and happiness will bring joy to the mind. If your mind is familiar with wishing beings benefit and happiness, then when they experience success that will naturally contribute to your own joy and happiness. If someone who is not familiar with the wish of benefitting others, particularly with unbiased love and compassion, sees others experiencing success, they can start to feel jealous and that brings agony to their mind.

We can see here that the same situation, depending on our attitude and how we interpret it, can either bring joy or the unhappiness of jealousy. These are essential points to investigate. As I have mentioned in the past, looking at our mind, detecting our states of mind and the follies of our mind, and the tricks that our mind plays, can be quite amusing. We can see what's going on in our mind and that is a more worthwhile investigation rather than investigating what others are doing. Using logic and investigation in the right way is really what practice comes down to. Investigating what brings you and others genuine happiness and adopting that, and investigating what brings misery and suffering for you and others and discarding that, really summarises the essence of Dharma practice.

2.3.2.2. REFUTING THE ARGUMENT THAT THE TWO TRUTHS WOULD BE INVALID

2.3.2.2.1. Refuting the consequence of absurdity (cont.)

The verse reads:

**108. Conceptual thought and that imputed
Are both mutually dependent.**

***Just as in dependence on renown
All investigations are expressed.***

The commentary explaining this verse reads as follows:

Regarding the way of positing something as an illusory conventionality in our own system: Both the object-possessor of the conceptual thought and the imputed object are mutually dependent, i.e., they are posited relative to each other, and do not exist in the slightest out of their own nature. This is explained in the *Root Wisdom*:

The actor is produced in dependence on the action.

Just as being renowned to worldly nominal prime cognition, they are all an analysis in dependence on mere name, i.e. all presentations [or categories of existence] are expressed.

The commentary explains that *regarding the way of positing something as an illusory conventionality in our own system, both the object-possessor of the conceptual thought and the imputed object are mutually dependent*. This is basically talking about subject and object being dependent on each other. The object-possessor (subject) is the consciousness perceiving an imputed object, which is the object itself. Being mutually dependent means that they are dependent on each other. If the consciousness perceiving an object were to exist from its own side, then it would not have to depend on the object, and thus could not be called an object possessor.

Without relying on the object, the consciousness perceiving an object would have to exist by itself. Likewise, the object is also dependent on the consciousness that perceives it. If the object were to exist in its own right, then it would not have to depend on the consciousness perceiving it. But the very establishment of an object as dependent on a consciousness perceiving that object shows that they are mutually dependent.

The commentary further elaborates that, *they are posited relative to each other, and do not exist in the slightest out of their own nature*. As a way to back up this point the commentary quotes from *Root Wisdom* by Nagarjuna: *The actor is produced in dependence on the action*, and then explains: *Just as being renowned to worldly nominal prime cognition, they are all an analysis in dependence on mere name, i.e., all presentations are expressed*.

What is being explained here is that *all presentations* or the various categories of phenomena are posited as existent, and dependent on how they are expressed and perceived by worldly prime cognition. In other words, the existence of things is not posited through investigations, but they are posited in the way they appear conventionally. That is why Chandrakirti mentioned in his teachings 'I do not posit nominal existence through analysis, but rather posit them as accepted or renowned by worldly conventions'. This is a point I have also mentioned previously.

Again, to emphasise this point, *they are all an analysis in dependence on mere name*, indicates that the Prasangika system posits the way in which things are nominally existent, merely labelled or merely imputed by the mind. That is in accordance with the nominal existence of things. For example, when we refer to a glass, merely saying 'glass' will bring about an understanding of the function of the glass, i.e. it has a specific shape and function to hold liquid, without having to resort to any specific investigation. That specific function and the attributes of the glass need not be investigated; rather they are understood when we hear the mere name or label of the glass. Similarly, the way the Prasangika posit existence is by mere name, by an object being merely

imputed by the mind. Thus, it does not exist in or of itself, from its own side.

When explaining the previous verse, I emphasised a crucial point. Have you given any thought to it?

This verse reads:

**107. This separate mental superstition
Is not our illusory
If it is subsequently ascertained, it exists.
If it is not, it is not even illusory**

The crux of the Prasangika-Madhyamika view is presented right here. Would anyone like to shed some light on the meaning of this verse?

Alan Molloy: Perhaps it's to do with that illustration of the snake and the rope. The snake is basically imputed on the rope, but doesn't exist [inaudible] imputed ...

Geshe-la: That relates to an earlier verse.

Denis Marsh: I haven't studied this well since last week, but I recall that the meaning was that emptiness deepens our understanding of dependent arising and dependent arising deepens our understanding of emptiness.

Geshe-la: The main point that I emphasised is as explained here in the commentary

In our own system the meaning of existing in an illusory conventional manner is: because all phenomena posited as the objects of the view realising the mode of abiding are realised as being empty of inherent existence, the illusory actions and activities of being generated, generating and so forth can be posited as existing, through being ascertained by prime cognition in an unconfused manner.

If it is not like this, and in our own system actions and activities cannot be posited as being established by prime cognition, then their illusory conventional existence wanes [or ceases].

I also mentioned this verse from the *Lama Chöpa* (or *Guru Puja*):

Samsara and nirvana lack even an atom of true existence,
While cause and effect and dependent arising are unailing.
We seek your blessing to discern the import of Nagarjuna's thought
Which is that these two are complementary and not contradictory.

Last week I mentioned that I had specifically explained this verse before, and I also explained the meaning, which summarises the essential point being explained here in the commentary. Similarly the passage from the *Heart Sutra* where it says, *form is emptiness and emptiness is form* is what is being explained here in Shantideva's text, and through the explanations of the commentary. All three bring out the same point.

As I have said previously, this is an important verse to understand.

This is another key point mentioned in last week's teaching. Basically, when the independent origination of phenomena dawns upon you, then without relying on another prime cognition, this can bring about an understanding of emptiness, and how, through interdependent origination, you can understand the lack of inherent existence of phenomena, or see the emptiness of phenomena. When you see that things are empty of inherent existence, and through that understand, without relying again on another prime cognition, the interdependent origination of that phenomena, then that is the meaning gaining an understanding of emptiness through the understanding of dependent origination. Therefore,

as the text presents, one sees that they are *complementary and not contradictory*.

[*Geshe la made a comment on Damien's ineffective note taking and then said he was just joking, as friends you would not be offended by things said in jest.* In the monasteries the monks tease each other, and all with a good light-heartedness. When you start teasing each other, if you get upset, then it's not a good gesture. We tease each other because we are friends, and we accept it from each other because of our friendship.

I used to be very good buddies with Geshe Wangchen who recently passed away. In the monastery we played a lot. When we used to play, we used to cut each other's hair with a blade, and once I scratched him with the blade. He announced to the other elder monks in our house that it happened "when we were playing". So he was not accusing me of maliciously cutting him with a blade.

When I was living in Buxa Duar I coughed up some blood. The doctors were very concerned that it was tuberculosis. This incident coincided with some Westerners who were going around checking the health conditions of the monks. Apparently one of them had been to Tibet before, and had come to our camp at Buxa Duar to check on all the monks who had the symptoms of TB. So when he came and checked my condition he said, "We need to be cautious, it could be TB" and then he said, "I think you are quite malnourished". Then he asked me personally, "Would you have an interest in going to a Western country?" And at that time I said, "No, no, I'm not going. I don't have any such intention". Then he said, "Ah well, you need to be cared for well". He took the initiative to bring a lot of good food to me - different kinds of meats, chicken and fish. But I didn't eat fish, so I didn't accept the fish. And when he brought chicken I didn't eat it because I realised it would have been local chickens that had been slaughtered. So I took the initiative to refuse and said "I cannot eat the chicken". He then brought other types of fresh foods. That's when I was segregated. The monks were segregated and it was said, "those who have TB shouldn't be mixing with others". And that's when Geshe Wangchen (who was not a geshe at that time), was asked to help nurse me. Of course I wasn't really sick at that time, I was quite well, but he was there to supposedly nurse me. So we ended up just having fun and playing around and pulling jokes on each other. So maybe he was referring to that time when we were playing around, where I might have cut him with the blade.

We were quite young at the time - I was 24 and Geshe Wangchen would have been 23.

2.3.2.2. Refuting the consequence of becoming endless

The first verse under this heading reads:

**109. When the investigating
Analysis analyses,
When also the analysis is,
Analysed then it has no end.**

The commentary presents the argument:

Argument: When the investigating analysis, which analyses whether phenomena exists truly or not, discerns them to be empty of inherent existence, at that time, as it does not fall under that analysed, does one need to analyse the non-true existence of the analysing awareness or not?

If not, then it is the same for all other phenomena, and their lack of true existence wanes. If yes, then, because the non-true existence of this analysis needs to be in

turn analysed by another analysis, there would be no end to the analysing analysis.

As clearly explained here, the **Realists** first say, *when the investigating analysis, which analyses whether phenomena exists truly or not, discerns them to be empty of inherent existence, then at that time, it does not fall under that analysed.* This explains that the awareness that is analysing, in itself does not fall under the analysed, because it is the analyser. *Does one need to analyse the non-true existence of the analysing awareness or not?* That is the question that is posed.

The commentary continues, *if not*, one does not have to analyse it. *Then it is the same for all other phenomena, and their lack of true existence wanes.* This is quite clear.

Further, it says, *'If yes, then, because the non-true existence' or the lack of true existence 'of this analysis needs to be in turn analysed by another analysis, there would be no end to the analysing analysis'*, which in other words means there would be infinite regression for that analysis.

The commentary presents the **Madhyamaka** response to that, followed by a verse serves as the reason for that.

Madhyamaka: It follows that no other prime cognition analysing the lack of true existence is needed for the prime cognition realising the lack of true existence of all phenomena.

The verse reads:

**110. Having investigated the analysed object
There is no basis for investigation.
Since there is no basis, it is not born.
This is also called going beyond misery.**

The commentary then explains:

That is because when the prime cognition analysing the lack of true existence has analysed the non-true existence of that to be analysed, i.e., all phenomena, no truly existent subject that would be a basis for a repeated analysis of non-true existence, exists in the perception of that awareness for as long as it does not lose that mode of apprehension.

Also, for the person who has realised all phenomena as empty of true existence, and for whom the realisation holds and has not waned, a subject basis that is characterised by an analysis into true or non-true existence, is impossible because immediately upon generating that thought, the mindfulness thinking, 'it does not exist truly' is generated.

The fault of endless analysis into the non-true existence despite having realised all phenomena as lacking true existence, exists for you, because of the necessity of another prime cognition having to analyse that very awareness. If another analysis were needed, then there would remain a leftover of intellectually acquired true-grasping, despite all manifest intellectually acquired true-grasping being stopped by the earlier prime cognition itself.

Because the subject basis does not exist truly, both the object of negation and that negating are not generated inherently, and are therefore called 'naturally gone beyond sorrow'. Realising this and meditating on it is also called 'attaining the liberation beyond sorrow free from adventitious stains'.

The commentary explains that the reason why the awareness that analyses whether the lack of true existence does not have to be further analysed, is that *when the prime cognition analysing the lack of true existence has analysed the non-true existence of that to be analysed, i.e., all phenomena, no truly existent subject that would be a basis for a repeated analysis of non-true existence exists in the perception of that awareness for as long as it does not lose that mode of apprehension.* This makes the point that for as long as the awareness analysing the lack of true existence of all

phenomena is maintained, then for as long as apprehension does not wane or *as long as one does not lose that mode of apprehension*, it does not need further investigation, since there is no true appearance of any phenomena.

While the earlier part of the explanation was in reference to analysing awareness, the next part is in relation to the person engaged in that analysis. The commentary next presents, *also, for the person who has realised all phenomena as empty of true existence, and for whom the realisation holds and has not waned*, for that individual person a subject basis that is characterised by an analysis into true or non-true existence is impossible, because immediately upon generating that thought, the mindfulness thinking, 'it does not exist truly' is generated.

For as long as a person holds onto that awareness of the lack of true existence of phenomena, then any doubt about whether it exists truly or not, will not occur. That is the point in relation to the person, because the mindfulness thinking, 'it does not exist truly' is generated. This mindfulness will be immediately generated because it is still holding onto that awareness.

Then as the commentary explains, *the fault of endless analysis into non-true existence despite having realised all phenomena as lacking true existence, exists for you.* The **Prasangika** are actually saying that for you this fault would exist *because of the necessity of another prime cognition having to analyse that very awareness.* *If another analysis were needed, then there would remain a leftover of intellectually acquired true-grasping, despite all manifest intellectually acquired true-grasping being stopped by the earlier prime cognition itself.* When the lack of true existence of phenomena is being realised then at that time the manifest intellectually-acquired true-grasping has stopped. According to you, if you still need another awareness to analyse whether that awareness lacks true existence or not, then it would be as if there were a remnant of intellectually-acquired true grasping still left that has not yet been negated. That would be the fallacy.

Emptiness is referred to as *naturally gone beyond sorrow*, or naturally abiding nirvana. *Realising this and meditating on it is also called 'attaining the liberation beyond sorrow free from adventitious stains'.* Because emptiness is naturally free from adventitious stains, it is referred to as 'naturally abiding nirvana'. Although emptiness itself is not actually nirvana, the term 'naturally abiding nirvana' is used because it is beyond or *free from the adventitious stains.* This is why that term is used.

Although initially this may seem a little bit complicated, if you read through the commentary slowly and well, over a few times, it will become clearer.

2.3.2.2.3. Showing there is no proof for the true existence of object and consciousness

What is being presented under this heading in the following verse is that there is no proof of true existence of object and consciousness, i.e. object and object possessor. Those who assert the true existence of both object and object possessors are the Realists such as the Sautrantika, the Vaibhashika and also the Mind Only (Cittamatra) schools.

The next verse and the first line from the following verse read:

**111. Whichever way one looks at it,
That these two are true is extremely
problematic.
If, 'The meaning is established through the
power**

Of consciousness', what basis exists for mere existent consciousness?

112a. *If however, 'consciousness is established from that known'.*

The commentary presents the meaning:

Regardless of the way that a Realist looks at it, it is extremely problematic to assert that the two, object and consciousness, exist truly, because there exists no proof.

The **Realists** would then say:

Realist: One can establish the meaning of true existence from the example of truly existent primary cognition consciousness.

And the **Madhyamika** response to this is:

Madhyamaka: What supporting prime cognition is there for the existence of a truly existent consciousness? There isn't any because there is no self-knower, and if it is known by another consciousness, then it would become endless.

The term 'Realist' is used because they posit things as being truly existent. Generally this view is held by the Sautrantika and the Vaibhashika, but because it refers to that which accepts true existence, it also refers to the Mind Only school.

The commentary explains that *regardless of the way that a Realist looks at it, it is extremely problematic to assert that the two, object and consciousness, exist truly, because there exists no proof.* This is what the Madhyamika say.

The **Realists** then say *one can establish the meaning of true existence from the example of truly existent primary cognition consciousness.* The Realists accept a truly existent primary cognition which is a consciousness, and then because of that they say because there is a truly existent consciousness that perceives objects, and therefore objects must also be established as truly existent. That is their logic.

As a response to those assertions, the **Madhyamika** say, *what supporting prime cognition is there for the existence of a truly existent consciousness?* which implies that there cannot be another cognition that actually supports prime cognition of a truly existent consciousness. Therefore the Madhyamika say, *there isn't any because there is no self-knower.* Self-knowers have been refuted earlier, so there is no self-knower, *and if it is known by another consciousness, then it would become endless.* So if there were another consciousness that knows, which sees the awareness as truly existent, then there would have to be another consciousness to know that as well, and then another to know that. Therefore the fallacy of infinite regression would apply here, as it did earlier.

The Madhyamika then refute another hypothesis of the **Realists**.

However if you say, consciousness is established through the direct perception of true objects of knowledge and comprehension.

The verse reads:

112bcd. *What basis is there for the existence of the object of knowledge?
Both exist through their mutual power,
Both again are non-existent.*

The commentary explains the meaning:

Madhyamaka: What support is there for the existence of object of knowledge? If it is posited by prime cognition, then it is certain: Because both object and consciousness exist through the power of mutual dependence, it is clearly established that again both

do not exist inherently, e.g., like long and short or here and there.

What the **Madhyamika** are presenting here is that if the prime cognition is posited in relation to an object then, *because both object and consciousness exist through the power of mutual dependence it is clearly established that again both do not exist inherently.* If consciousness is posited because there is an object that it perceives, and if the object is also posited because there is a consciousness that perceives it, then they are mutually dependent. This implies that they cannot exist in and of themselves independently. The example given is long and short. As we discussed earlier, 'long' is posited only in relation to 'short', and 'short' is only posited in relation to there being 'long'. Therefore long and short are mutually dependent, which implies they cannot exist in or of themselves.

'Long' is posited in relation to 'short' and 'short' is posited in relation to 'long', therefore they are dependent on each other. This means 'long' cannot exist from its own side and 'short' cannot exist from its own side. Likewise the positions 'here' and 'there' are relative. 'Here' is posited in relation to 'there' on the other side, and 'there', which is on other side, is also posited in relation to being 'here'. Therefore both positions of 'here' and 'there' are mutually dependent on each other, and thus cannot exist in or of themselves.

The next verse reads:

113. *If there is no father without a child,
Then from where does the child arise?
Without a child there is no father,
Likewise these two do not exist.*

The commentary explains the meaning as follows:

If there is no child, then the father is not an existent because that which is defining the father does not exist. As there is no cause if there is no father, then from where does the child arise? And if there is no child because there is no father, then the two are mutually dependent on each other and lack true existence; the two, object and consciousness, lack true existence in the same way.

This is quite clear. Again, the verse presents another example of how what is posited as 'father' is dependent on the child. Without the child, an individual person cannot be labelled as a 'father'. How could someone be a father without a child? So therefore 'father' is posited in dependence on the child. Likewise 'child' is dependent on having a father; without a father a child also cannot be posited as a 'child'. Therefore 'father' and 'child' are mutually dependent, and cannot exist independently in and of themselves. This is yet another example to illustrate how 'object' and 'consciousness' are mutually dependent. If an object were to exist independently and in and of itself, then it could exist without there being a consciousness to perceive it. Likewise if consciousness were to exist independently, in and of itself, then it would not have to depend on an object to be called 'an object possessor', a consciousness.

The next verse under this reads:

114. *The sprout is generated from the seed
And just as the seed is realised through it,
Why should one not realise the existence of
The object of knowledge from the consciousness
generated from it?*

The commentary explains this verse as follows:

Realist: The sprout is generated from an inherently existing seed and the seed can be inferred through the valid reason of that very sprout. Likewise, why should one not realise the existence of truly existent

ultimate object of knowledge through the truly existent consciousness that is generated from the object of knowledge?

This again is quite clear. It is positing the **Realists'** argument, which is that *the sprout is generated from an inherently existing seed and the seed can be inferred through the valid reason of that very sprout*. That is what they are asserting. *Likewise, why should one not realise the existence of truly existent ultimate object of knowledge through the truly existent consciousness that is generated ...*

This absurd assertion is then refuted in the next verse, which reads:

**115. If the existence of the seed is ascertained and realised
Through a consciousness apart from the sprout,
From what does one realise the existence
Of the consciousness realising that object of knowledge?**

The commentary clearly explains the meaning:

Madhyamaka: This is not valid. If the existence of the seed is ascertained and realised through a prime cognising consciousness that is of different substance from the sprout and sees the sprout, then from what prime cognition is the existence of a consciousness through the realisation of the object of knowledge realised? Self-knowers have already been refuted, and you do not accept any other way of knowing.

The Realists' position is quite clearly refuted by the **Madhyamika**. *If the existence of the seed is ascertained and realised through a prime cognising consciousness that is of different substance from the sprout and sees the sprout, then from what prime cognition is the existence of a consciousness through the realisation of the object of knowledge realised?* This implies that because *self-knowers have already been refuted, you cannot accept any other way of knowing*. That is the absurdity that is being pointed out.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷོ་མེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

14 March 2017

Based on the motivation we generated during the refuge and bodhicitta prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [meditation]

As usual, let us set our motivation for receiving the teachings:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teachings and then put them into practice well, not just merely in words but in actual actions and deeds.

Thinking in this way is most meaningful.

2.3.2. Explaining extensively the reasoning that established the selflessness of person (cont.)

2.3.2.3. STATING THE REASONS THAT ESTABLISH THE LACK OF TRUE EXISTENCE¹

This is subdivided into three:

2.3.2.3.1. The vajra sliver reason

2.3.2.3.2. The reason of dependent arising

2.3.2.3.3. The reason of refuting generation and cessation of existence and non-existence

2.3.2.3.1. The vajra sliver reason

This is subdivided into five:

2.3.2.3.1.1. Refuting generation without cause

2.3.2.3.1.2. Refuting generation from a separate permanent cause

2.3.2.3.1.3. Refuting generation from a permanent principal

2.3.2.3.1.4. Summarising the meaning of generation from no-cause

2.3.2.3.1.5. Refuting generation from both self and other

The main essence of this presentation was presented in the *Madhyamaka* teachings and also in the *Four Hundred Verses* teachings.² It refutes the self as being generated from either the self, other, both and without a cause.

Although I've presented the meaning previously, I'll remind you of the analogy that is used to explain the name 'vajra sliver'. Adamantine is one of the hardest substances in existence. Even a splinter of it is so powerful that it can destroy huge mountainous rocks and so forth. This analogy indicates that the reasoning presented here can completely shatter the very core of the notion of grasping at the self.

2.3.2.3.1.1. Refuting generation without cause

We need to note here that *generation without cause* does not refer to generation from all causes. Rather it refers to the specific causes that are presented by the **Hedonists** and so forth, who assert that there is a result that does not have to depend upon a specific cause. That is what is being refuted here.

The commentary first presents their assertion:

Hedonists and others: Because one cannot see the products of the colours of the eye in the peacock's feather and others, and one does not see any creator of the movement of the lotus petals or their smooth shape, or the sharpness of thorns and so forth, therefore they exist out of their own nature.

The Hedonists, and others who follow similar systems of thought, use the example of the different *colours of the eye of a peacock's feathers*, which are very detailed. However we can't observe any immediate cause that created them. So the posed question is 'who creates them'? Another analogy they use is the *movement of lotus petals*, which open at different times: some already open, and some are about to blossom. So, who causes the subtle movements of the petals, as well as their smoothness. Another example is the *sharpness of thorns*. How did the sharp tip of the thorn come about?

What they are saying is that since we cannot see anyone actually creating them, and no other immediate causes are apparent, they must exist of their own nature.

These examples are quite obvious: we can see the results, but we cannot see their causes. For this reason, the Hedonists argue that there is no cause for them, and that they must exist out of their own nature.

The first verse under this heading is:

116. *In this instance, the direct perception of worldly beings*

Sees all causes.

The different petals of the lotus

Are generated by different causes.

117. *If it is asked, 'By which different causes?'*

Of course by the preceding different causes.

Why can a cause generate an effect?

From the mere force of that preceding cause.

The commentary explains the meaning of these verses as follows:

Madhyamika: This is invalid. In this instance, the direct perception of worldly beings sees most of the generating causes for the various inner and outer functionalities such as crops and the like. The different results such as the colours of the different lotus petals, their number and the like are generated by different causes. If it is asked, 'By which different causes?', then of course by preceding different causes.

Argument: Why are different causes able to produce different results?

Madhyamika: The fault that they cannot do this does not exist. Through the very force possessed by a preceding cause, different causes have the ability to generate different results.

Thus, these functionalities are not without cause because they are observed as adventitiously generated in relation to place and time.

¹ This heading was first introduced on 22 November 2016.

² The vajra or diamond sliver reasoning was taught:

In the *Madhyamaka* teachings between 15 April 2003 and 20 April 2003

In the *400 Verses* teachings on 8 April 2008

In the Shantideva teachings of 2005 between 16 August 2005 and 13 September 2005

The *Madhyamika* reply to the Hedonists saying, your argument is invalid, because *the direct perception of worldly beings sees most of the causes that generate the various inner and outer functionalities.*

The implication here is that 'although there are inferential reasons that can be used to refute your assertions, I'll begin by using reasons that can be seen by ordinary valid perception'. It is obvious we can see the causes of many of the things that are produced in this world. For example, it is obvious to worldly beings that when you plant barley seeds, they will produce barley sprouts. Thus a farmer who wishes for a crop of barley will sow barley seeds and not any other. Likewise a crop of wheat is dependent on wheat seedlings, and a crop of peas is produced from pea seedlings. It is obvious that the results of particular crops come from their own particular causes, which are the seeds of each. This is something that is readily perceived.

Furthermore, *different results such as the colours of the different lotus petals, their number and the like are generated by different causes.* The different kinds of lotus seedlings produce lotus plants with different types of petals and so forth. That is also readily seen.

The **Hedonists** then ask, if there are *different causes for these different results* then who creates these causes?

The **Madhyamika** answer to that is that the various causes are created by the *preceding different causes*, a fact which is quite obvious. The Madhyamikas make this comment to the Hedonist question: *the fault that different causes cannot produce different results does not exist. Through the very power possessed by a preceding cause, different causes have the ability to generate different results.* The power of a preceding cause has the ability to produce certain types of results. Therefore different causes all have the ability to generate different results.

As a concluding remark, the Madhyamika say, *these functionalities are not without cause because they are observed as adventitiously generated in relation to place and time.* This reason is very profound. If things were to be causeless then they would have to be generated at all times, regardless of time and necessary conditions. The fact that different results are produced only at a certain time and place indicates that they have particular causes. Do bananas or avocados grow in Victoria? No, because it's not the right place – they grow in Queensland. The point here is that growing crops or flowers or fruit depends on an appropriate time and place. Even if the immediate or substantial cause, the seed, is there, it won't produce a result unless the other factors it is dependent upon are there as well, such as water, fertile soil, warmth and so forth. People say 'it's the cherry season now', 'mango season', or 'strawberry season'. If it's out of season then you won't be able to get a particular crop or fruit; you only get the results when the time is right.

2.3.2.3.1.2. Refuting generation from a separate permanent cause

The reason for this refutation is because there are some non-Buddhist schools who say, 'yes there is a cause, and that cause is permanent'. So they assert that a result can come from a permanent cause. This section refutes that.

Here we can understand why different schools of tenets have arisen. Each system of tenets comes about as a result of the different ways of investigating things, and each comes to different conclusions based on their method of investigation. Proponents of some religious tenets, for example, would say there is a creator god, and use their own reasons to present that argument. Others, like we Buddhists, say that there's no creator as such, but we believe in karma. And karma is asserted with reasoning and many examples. This section of the text is subdivided into three:

2.3.2.3.1.2.1. Refuting Ishvara with questions to its meaning

2.3.2.3.1.2.2. If it is permanent, it is unsuitable to be the cause of anything arising from conditions

2.3.2.3.1.2.3. Reminder that permanent particles without cause were already refuted

2.3.2.3.1.2.1. Refuting Ishvara with questions to its meaning

Prior to actually refuting the assertion that Ishvara is the cause, the Hedonists are asked 'What do you mean by Ishvara? What does Ishvara actually mean?

So the first line of verse is:

118a. If Ishvara is the cause of migrators,

Then the commentary explains:

The Naiyayika, Enumerators and Particularists that accept Ishvara as divine: The self-arisen all-knowing Ishvara, produced all places, bodies and enjoyments with a preceding movement of his mind, and is therefore the cause of migrators.

The implication of the *Naiyayika* (or Logicians), *Enumerators and Particularists who accept Ishvara as divine* is that there are some non-Buddhist schools that do not accept Ishvara as a divine creator. There are other non-Buddhist schools that assert the fundamental principal as the cause of all existence. They say that their classifications of causes and effects are due to the various manifestations of the fundamental principal. However all these non-Buddhist schools are the same in asserting a cause that is a permanent substance. The difference between the two lies in the fact that one accepts Ishvara as a divine creator, and the other does not.

As the commentary explains quite clearly, their assertion is that Ishvara the divine creator is a *self-arisen and all-knowing*, i.e. he has arisen as an omniscient being by his own accord, without depending on any other causes. This self-arisen all-knowing entity called Ishvara *produces all places* such as the environment, *bodies* such as the beings or migrators who live in the environment, and *enjoyments*, which are all the objects of the sense enjoyments. These are all created by *a preceding movement of Ishvara's mind*. It is Ishvara's movement of the mind or thought that creates the things and events in the environment. This is negated in the later verses.

The relevant lines of verse read:

118bcd. First, declare what is Ishvara?

*If you say, 'the elements,' that may be, but
Why stress yourself over a name?*

The **Madhyamika** reply:

Madhyamika: First, declare what is posited as the meaning of Ishvara.

Upon being asked that question: If you say due to the increase and decrease of the four elements of earth, water, fire and wind the results also increase or decrease.

That may be so. However we also accept that from the increasing and decreasing of the elements, the results also increase or decrease, why stress yourself over a difference in name of the same meaning out of a great attachment to establish Ishvara? That it is unsuitable to be Ishvara if there is a big difference in reality whether if it is permanent or impermanent and so forth, is shown in the lines '[However....] and so forth.

Furthermore:

Because the four elements are in the nature of different substances, are impermanent and producing generation and disintegration, are not moved in the sense of preceding the production of results with awareness or mind, are not divine and is the very ground that is walked upon, and because they are impure, they are not Ishvara. Ishvara is permanent, unitary and precedes the production of a result with awareness, is accepted to be divine, not to be the very ground walked upon and not as impure.

Having been asked what Ishvara is, the reply from the **opponent** is *due to the increase and decrease of the four elements of earth, water, fire and wind the results also increase or decrease*. So they argue that if there's an increase in the four elements, then the result will also increase, and if there's a decrease in the four elements then the results will also decrease, and that the cause of this is Ishvara.

To that the **Madhyamika** reply, *we also accept that*. If that is what you mean by Ishvara then *why stress over a name?* You may call it Ishvara but if it is in fact relating to the increase and decrease of the elements, then it is the same as we posit.

The commentary then explains, *that it is unsuitable to be Ishvara if there is a big difference in reality whether if it is permanent or impermanent and so forth is shown in the following verse*.

119. *However, since earth and so forth are many,
Impermanent, not moved and not divine,
Since they are the very ground walked upon and
impure
They are not Ishvara.*

The explanation in the commentary is:

Because the four elements are in the nature of different substances, are impermanent and producing generation and disintegration, are not moved in the sense of preceding the production of results with awareness or mind, are not divine and is the very ground that is walked upon, and because they are impure, they are not Ishvara. Ishvara is permanent, unitary and precedes the production of a result with awareness, is accepted to be divine, not to be the very ground walked upon and not as impure.

The refutation by the **Madhyamikas** is that *if the four elements are in the nature of different substances* then they could not be a unitary divine being Ishvara.

The opponent posits that Ishvara is permanent, which our system refutes by pointing out that the four elements are *impermanent* as they are generated and disintegrate.

Since the opponent posits that Ishvara produces things with a preceding awareness, there would have to be a

movement of the mind that produces the four elements. Yet they *are not moved* in the sense of preceding the production of results with awareness. It is not necessary for there to be a movement of the mind in order for the elements to be produced.

Furthermore, the opponents say that Ishvara is divine, but the four elements *are not divine*. For example ordinary beings walk on the earth.

Also the earth and other elements have unclean aspects, so *they are not Ishvara*.

In summary, you assert Ishvara as being permanent, unitary and precedes the production of a result with an awareness, is accepted to be divine, and so therefore is not the very ground to walked upon and is not impure. Because the elements do not fit your description of what Ishvara is, they could not be Ishvara.

Having refuted the four elements as being Ishvara, the next argument by the **non-Buddhists** to be refuted is that space is Ishvara.

Argument: Space is Ishvara.

The next verse is:

120. *Space is not Ishvara because it does not move.
That the self is not Ishvara has been proven
earlier.
Also, a creator beyond thought,
What good is it to describe that beyond
thought?*

As the commentary explains, the **Madhyamika** presentation is:

Madhyamika: Take the subject 'space': it is not Ishvara—because it does not move for the purpose of a result. A permanent self is also not Ishvara—because this has been refuted earlier both from the point of view of matter or consciousness.

The commentary quite clearly explains this with a syllogism. *Take the subject 'space': it is not Ishvara* (which is the predicate)—*because it does not move for the purpose of a result* (which is the reason). According to the assertion of these non-Buddhist schools, Ishvara produces things through the movement of the mind, or with the thought to produce. Space doesn't have any movement to produce things.

Furthermore, *a permanent self is also not Ishvara because this has been refuted earlier both from the point of view of matter or consciousness*. This is as was presented previously.

Then a further argument by the **non-Buddhists** is presented:

Argument: Because Ishvara is a creator beyond thought these faults do not apply.

The **Madhyamaka** refute this by saying:

Madhyamaka: What is the point of taking something that is beyond thought as the creator? In addition, you cannot know who Ishvara is as he is beyond thought.

If Ishvara is beyond thought as you say, then how could you even possibly describe Ishvara? How would you even begin to conceive of him?

2.3.2.3.1.2.2. *If it is permanent, it is unsuitable to be the cause of anything arising from conditions*

What is being refuted here is that if something is considered as permanent then it cannot be a cause of

anything, because anything that arises from a condition has to have an impermanent cause.

Then these lines of verse are presented:

121. *Also what does it desire to create?
Aren't the nature of the self,
Earth and so forth and Ishvara permanent?
Consciousness is generated from the object of
knowledge,*

122ab. *And beginningless happiness and sufferings
from karma.
Tell, what is generated by him?*

The explanation in the commentary begins with a question from the **Madhyamika**:

If the feelings of happiness, suffering, equanimity and other functionalities are generated from previous karma and other causes, then what is the result that the Ishvara asserted by you desires to create?

The **non-Buddhist** replies:

Argument: It is the self.

Then the **Madhyamika** refutation follows:

Madhyamika: It follows that it is not valid—because it follows that this self, the four elements of earth, water, fire and air, and also subsequent similar types of Ishvara are not produced by Ishvara—because aren't the self, the particles of the four elements and Ishvara permanent?

Following this rhetorical question the commentary continues:

So because you accept them to be permanent they are invalid as that which is generated and the generator.

Thus, because the different sense consciousnesses to which blue and so forth appear are generated from the objects of knowledge blue and so forth, and because the feelings of suffering and happiness are generated from virtuous and non-virtuous karma, therefore state the result that is generated by Ishvara. The result generated by Ishvara does not exist.

This explanation is quite clear. There is however one important point. The point that *feelings of happiness, sufferings, and equanimity, and other functionalities are generated from previous karma* is mutually accepted, and the question posed by the **Madhyamika** is 'what causes that?'

The counter argument here is that if the feelings of happiness, suffering, equanimity and other functionalities are generated from previous karma and other causes, *then what is the result that the Ishvara asserted by you desires to create?* In other words, if we both accept the results of karma, then what does Ishvara create?

The **opponents** say that *it is the self* that is created by Ishvara.

The **Madhyamika** say that *this is not valid—because this self, the four elements of earth, water, fire and air, and also subsequent similar types of Ishvara are not produced by Ishvara*. If there's a first Ishvara then that implies that there must be a similar subsequent Ishvara. The self, the four elements (earth, water, fire and air) and subsequent similar types of Ishvara, could not be *produced by Ishvara—because*, according to the opponent, *the self, the particles of the four elements and Ishvara are permanent*. If you accept them as being permanent they cannot be both the

generated and the generator. If something is permanent then how can it be both the generated and a generator?

The **Madhyamika** refutation refers to *the different sense consciousnesses, to which blue and so forth appear, as they are generated from the objects of knowledge blue and so forth*. In other words, the consciousness perceiving blue is generated in dependence on an object that is blue, and the consciousness perceiving yellow is dependent on an object that is yellow. Each consciousness is generated in relation to a particular object.

The next part of the refutation begins by acknowledging that we both accept that *feelings of suffering and happiness are generated from virtuous and non-virtuous karma*. So the **Madhyamikas** state the result that is generated by Ishvara. Can you actually say that they are created by Ishvara? There is not much left that you can claim is created by Ishvara. Therefore, *the result generated by Ishvara does not exist*, and you have to conclude there is no result created by Ishvara.

The next lines of verse under this heading are:

122cd. *If there is no first cause,
How could there be a first result?*

123. *Why should he not always produce?
He does not rely on others.
If there is nothing other that is not produced by
him,
How could he rely on these?*

As the commentary explains:

Because the causal Ishvara is a permanent functionality, if he were to exist since beginningless time, then how can there be a first of his resultant feelings and other results? The direct cause of the feeling generated today possesses its ability since beginningless time.

As he produces all results without depending on other conditions, why would he not produce all results on a continual basis? It follows it is like that—because if there is no other separate result that is not created by Ishvara, then in dependence on what condition does this Ishvara generate these results? That asserted as simultaneously acting condition needs to be created by Ishvara and it is acceptable that it is produced by him.

Again the explanation in the commentary is clear. You state that *the causal Ishvara is a permanent functionality*. So if he were to have existed *since beginningless time*, then how can there be a first of his resultant feelings and other results? The absurdity is that if the cause existed from beginningless time, then the results would also have to also exist from beginningless time. The feeling that you have today would have been there perpetually. If, for example, you were feeling happy today, then because the cause was beginningless, that happy feeling would have to have been a perpetual happy feeling from beginningless time. If the causes exist from beginningless time then the results also have to have existed from beginningless time. That is the absurdity that is being pointed out.

Then as the commentary explains, *as Ishvara produces all results without depending on other conditions, why would he not produce all results on a continual basis?* That is the logical conclusion of your argument, *because if there is no*

other separate result that is not created by Ishvara, then in dependence on what condition does this Ishvara generate these results?

As explained here, having posed that rhetorical question, then *that asserted as simultaneously acting condition needs to be created by Ishvara and it is acceptable that it is produced by him*. The generation of something depends on another condition. The question, then, is what condition does Ishvara depend on? The conclusion would have to be that the *simultaneously acting condition needs to be created by Ishvara and it is acceptable that it is produced by him*. This is saying that the other condition that Ishvara depends on is Ishvara himself. That is what you would have to conclude from this argument.

What is being as clarified in the next two verses is that for anything to be produced it needs both a substantial cause and a simultaneously acting condition. There has to be the substantial cause as well as a simultaneously acting condition for something to be produced.

124. *If he relies, then the aggregation
Is the cause and not him.
If there is aggregation, he is powerless to
prevent generation.
If there is no aggregation, he has no power to
generate.*
125. *If he creates despite not wishing to do so,
Then he is under the power of others.
Although wishing, it depends on the wish.
Although creating, how can it be Ishvara?*

The commentary explains:

With regard to Ishvara generating a result, if it is in dependence on the simultaneously acting condition, the combination of substantial cause and simultaneously acting condition becomes the cause, then it follows there is no cause that Ishvara controls – because once the causes and conditions are complete Ishvara has no power to prevent the result, and if they are not complete, then he does not have the power to generate the result.

If the results of suffering of the lower realms and the like are generated from karma against Ishvara's wish, then it follows that Ishvara is controlled by other conditions, and the position that he is independently the creator of all is lost.

Even if Ishvara creates results upon wishing to create the result, the result would depend merely on the wish, and also if the wish is creating the result, how can that be Ishvara? The wish is impermanent.

As presented here, *if Ishvara generates a result in dependence on a simultaneously acting condition, the combination of substantial cause and simultaneously acting condition would become the cause*. For anything to be produced there has to be a *substantial cause, and a simultaneously acting condition*. For example, when a seed produces a sprout, the four elements serve as *simultaneously acting conditions* in that: the earth holds the seed so that it doesn't fall through; by gathering the essence of the nutrients in the earth the water causes the seed not germinate; fire or warmth ripens the seed; and the wind element expands the growth of the seedling. So the four elements work together as a *simultaneously acting condition*.

In other words, *the combination of substantial cause and simultaneously acting condition becomes the cause*. From that it follows that there is no cause that Ishvara controls. For a result to be produced, there has to be a combination of both the substantial cause as well as the simultaneously acting condition, therefore Ishvara does not have control over the production of a result. Once the causes and conditions are complete, Ishvara has no power to prevent the result. When the causes and conditions are complete and intact, they will definitely produce a result without Ishvara. And if the substantial cause and the simultaneously acting conditions are not complete then Ishvara does not have the power to generate a result. Therefore, claiming that Ishvara is the cause for everything that is produced is spurious.

Next comes the refutation of *the result of the suffering of the lower realms and the like are generated from karma against Ishvara's wish*. Although Ishvara does not wish for the sufferings of the lower realms and so forth, these sufferings are still produced by karma. If that is the case then it follows that *Ishvara is controlled by other conditions, and the position that he is independently the creator of all is lost, is not tenable*.

What is also implied here is that if Ishvara is a divine being with compassion for all beings and so forth, then why would he create the hell realms and allow beings to experience the sufferings there? This is yet another absurdity.

The next refutation is that *even if Ishvara creates results upon wishing to create the result, the result would depend merely on the wish, and also if the wish is creating the result, how can that be Ishvara?* If Ishvara has to depend on a wish in order to produce things, then it is not Ishvara who is the sole cause, i.e. he is dependent on a wish. Once again, it is not tenable to hold that Ishvara is the primary cause for everything.

2.3.2.3.1.2.3. *Reminder that permanent particles without cause were already refuted*

The relevant verse reads:

*126ab. Those asserting permanent particles
Also they have been refuted earlier.*

The commentary explains:

The position of the Particularists that permanent particles create migrators was refuted earlier with the reasoning refuting partless particles, and there is no need to add anything to that which has already been said.

As the commentary itself comments, there is no need for further explanation.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་རྫོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

21 March 2017

Based on the motivation we generated during the Refuge and Bodhicitta prayer, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [meditation]

It would be good for us to incorporate this meditation into our daily practice, as we just attempted in that short session. We need to particularly check that our mental focus is stabilised: making an effort to stabilise a mind which is not yet stable and further stabilising it once it is settled.

Many obvious faults arise because of an unstable mind. When our mind is distracted externally, that brings both physical and psychological problems. If we could maintain our focus inwardly and allow the mind to abide peacefully, then that that would benefit us in whatever we do.

Once we acquire some control over our mind and subdue it to certain degree, we will have begun to establish the foundation for genuine peace in our mind.

Of course, the students here are already aware of these points. Nevertheless, we need to attend to them, because, if we don't use the instructions presented here to subdue our mind, then there will be nothing else that can help subdue it. We all know from our own experience that the unsubdued and crazed mind brings a lot of unwanted difficulties and problems in one's life.

2.3.2.3. STATING THE REASONS THAT ESTABLISH THE LACK OF TRUE EXISTENCE

2.3.2.3.1. The vajra sliver reason (cont.)

2.3.2.3.1.3. Refuting generation from a permanent principal

The **Samkhyas** assert what is called the *principal*, which is the primal cause of all subsequent manifestations or expressions.

This section is subdivided into two:

2.3.2.3.1.3.1. Stating the position

2.3.2.3.1.3.2. Repudiating it

First, we need to understand what the Samkhyas' position is, then we can repudiate it.

2.3.2.3.1.3.1. Stating the position

126cd. *That a permanent principal is the cause
Of migrators is asserted by the Samkhya.*

127. *The equilibrium of the qualities of
Courage, particle, and darkness
Is strongly asserted as principal
And their imbalances are the migrators.*

The commentary explains:

Enumerators (or *Samkhyas*): From nature comes the great, from which in turn pride arises. Pride leads to the collection of sixteen, which are expressions (manifestations) while the person is neither nature nor expression.

The Enumerators posit that out of the twenty-five classes of objects of knowledge, the principal has the five characteristics of being permanent, unitary and so forth and is the cause for the various expressions and the migrators. Courage, particle and darkness are other words or other terms for happiness, suffering and equanimity. When these three characteristics are in equilibrium, they are strongly asserted as the principal, and when they are in disharmony, they are the migrators i.e. the expressions.

The **Enumerators' (Samkhyas')** position is that *from nature* or the principal, the great one arises, followed by pride. Then *pride leads to the collection of the sixteen, which are expressions while the person is neither nature nor expression*. The Samkhyas are asserting that the principal or nature is a primary source of all existence as manifestations. According to them, when a person wishes to experience any enjoyments of the five senses, the principal will manifest those objects, such as sound and so forth.

To summarise the Samkhyas' viewpoint, from the principal (1), the great one (2) arises, and from the great one arises pride (3). Then there is the person (4). This accounts for four of the twenty-five classes of objects of knowledge. Pride leads to the collection of sixteen, which includes the five sense objects – form, sound, odour, taste and tangible objects (9). In addition to these five sense objects, the collection of sixteen includes the eleven faculties: the five mental faculties of the eye, the ears, the nose, the tongue and the skin; the five physical faculties of speech, arms, legs, anus and genitalia; and the intellectual faculty (20). The final five of the twenty-five classes are the elements: earth, water, fire, wind and space (25).

The Samkhyas assert the principal as the great one, which is both cause and effect. The collection of the sixteen – the five sense objects and the eleven faculties – are said to be only effects. The person is neither cause nor effect. As mentioned here, the specific characteristic of the person is that it is *neither nature nor the principal of expression*.

The commentary continues: *The Enumerators posit that out of the twenty-five classes of objects of knowledge the principal has the five characteristic qualities of being permanent, unitary and so forth... – it is permanent because, the Samkhyas assert, it does not change.*

There are actually six characteristics of the principal: it is a permanent entity for it doesn't change (1); it is unitary as it is partless (2); it is all-pervasive (3); it is the origin of all manifestations (4); it is merely an object and not awareness (5); and it is the equilibrium of the qualities of courage, particle and darkness (6).

You can look up these classifications, which I have presented previously.¹

The commentary continues: *...is the cause for the various expressions and migrators. Courage, particle and darkness are other words or terms for happiness, suffering and equanimity. Other terms also used in the texts are 'lightness' (instead of courage) and 'motility' (instead of particle). When*

¹ Tenets were taught in 1986-7, and 2001. References include: Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness*, pp.321-327 and Sopa and Hopkins, *Cutting Through Appearances*, pp. 158-165.

these three characteristics – courage, particle and darkness – are in equilibrium, this is what the Samkhyas strongly assert as the principal. When they are in disharmony, they are migrators or expressions or manifestations of the principal.

2.3.2.3.1.3.2. Repudiating it

Having presented the Samkhyas' position, the **Madhyamika** go on to repudiate it. This has two subdivisions:

2.3.2.3.1.3.2.1. Actual

2.3.2.3.1.3.2.2. The fault does not apply to the Madhyamika

2.3.2.3.1.3.2.1. Actual

This is further subdivided into three:

2.3.2.3.1.3.2.1.1. Refuting that a partless permanent can be the nature of the expressions

2.3.2.3.1.3.2.1.2. Refuting it to be permanent

2.3.2.3.1.3.2.1.3. Refuting that it would be impossible for something to first not exist and then to generate newly

2.3.2.3.1.3.2.1.1. Refuting that a partless permanent can be the nature of the expressions

128. *For one to have three natures
Is invalid. Hence it does not exist.
Likewise, qualities do not exist
Because they each have three aspects.*

129ab. *If there are no qualities, then also the existence
Of sound becomes not tenable.*

The commentary reads:

Take the subject 'object of knowledge' – it follows it is unsuitable for forms and so forth, and for a singular partless principal to have three natures of happiness and so forth – because it becomes impossible for them to be one. If that is impossible, it is also impossible for them to be many, and thus they are completely non-existent.

For that reason, a partless principal in the nature of three qualities does not exist. Likewise, the qualities themselves are not truly existent one, because each of these has again three qualities. If upon this analysis the principal with three equal qualities does not exist, then also the existence of the five objects of forms and so forth becomes far-fetched (not tenable), as the five mere objects are accepted as expressions of the primary principal.

The **Madhyamikas'** logic here is this: if the principal can be said to be three separate qualities, how can you (i.e. the Samkhyas) assert the principal as unitary or singular? This assertion is untenable. Furthermore, the Madhyamikas argue that while the principal cannot be singular, it also is impossible for it to be many. All three qualities could not be the single partless entity you assert, so it couldn't be many either. For anything to exist, it has to be either singular or many. If it is neither, then the conclusion has to be that it does not exist.

The commentary continues: *For that reason, a partless principal in the nature of three qualities does not exist.* So, having refuted the Samkhyas' assertion, with the argument that if such a principal is neither one nor many, it becomes completely non-existent – *a partless principal in the nature of three qualities cannot exist.* It is quite clear if you follow the logic.

Likewise, the mere qualities themselves are not truly existent one, because each of these has again three qualities. The Madhyamikas point out the absurdity in the Samkhyas' assertion – *each of them has a further three qualities, so they cannot be a truly existent one. If upon this analysis, the principal with three equal qualities does not exist, then also the existence of the five objects of forms and so forth becomes far-fetched or not tenable, meaning that it is impossible for them to exist ...as the five mere objects are accepted as expressions of the primary principal.*

The logic repudiating the Samkhyas' position is that the qualities themselves are not truly existent. This means that the qualities themselves would have to have further qualities, meaning they cannot truly exist as a unitary quality. Therefore, the principal with three qualities cannot exist, and if that does not exist, then even the five objects, which the Samkhyas exert as being expressions of the principal, also become untenable.

The next four lines of verse are:

129cd. *It also becomes impossible for non-sentient,
Clothes and so forth to have happiness etc.*

130ab. *If functionalities exist in the nature of the
cause,
Haven't functionalities already been analysed?*

As the commentary explains:

Because they are inanimate matter, it follows it is impossible for the subject of the clothes and so forth to be of one simultaneously established substance with happiness, suffering and equanimity.

If the functionalities that are expressions, such as clothes, exist truly in the nature of happiness, suffering and equanimity, which is their cause, then haven't the true existence of functionalities already been analysed, that is they have already been refuted as true.

It is quite clearly explained here that *the subject of the clothes and so forth cannot possibly be happiness, suffering and equanimity. So, if the functionalities that are expressions, such as clothes, exist truly in the nature of happiness, suffering and equanimity, which is their cause, then haven't the true existence of functionalities already been analysed, implies that they have indeed already been analysed and refuted as true existence.*

The next lines of verse are:

130cd. *Your cause is happiness and the like,
From that, clothes and the like do not arise.*

131ab. *Happiness and the like arise from clothes and
the like,
Because it does not exist, happiness and the like
do not exist.*

The commentary explains:

If, as according to you, the cause of clothes and the like is the principal in which the three parts of happiness, suffering and equanimity are in equilibrium, then clothes and the like cannot arise from the principal because this principal is impossible.

If happiness and the other qualities are generated from clothes and the like then, because clothes and other objects do not subsequently exist, also the principal that contains the three equal parts of happiness and so forth becomes non-existent, because a result without a cause is impossible. It is unsuitable

for you to accept this because you accept the principal to be a permanent functionality.

What is being refuted here is that the clothes and so forth are produced by the principal: if its *three parts of happiness, suffering and equanimity are in equilibrium, then clothes and the like cannot arise from the principal because this principal is impossible*. This principal was refuted earlier, and this argument follows that earlier reasoning.

2.3.2.3.1.3.2.1.2. Refuting it to be permanent

131cd. Happiness and so forth

Are never observed as permanent.

132. If the particulars of happiness exist,

Why is the experience not apprehended?

If it becomes subtle,

How can it be coarse or subtle?

133ab. Since it stops being coarse and becomes subtle

The coarse and subtle are impermanent.

The commentary explains:

It follows that the nature of happiness and so forth never exists as permanent – because it is not observed as such by prime cognition. In case the particulars of happiness exist as permanent functionalities, then why is the experience of happiness not apprehended at the time of experiencing suffering? It follows that one does apprehend it.

If that very happiness becomes subtle at that time, how can it be coarse and then abandon that status and be subtle? It follows it cannot do that - because it is permanent. Because happiness and the like stop being subtle and become coarse, and stop being coarse and become subtle, therefore this subtle and coarse phenomena become impermanent.

The first part here is quite clear. *It follows that the nature of happiness and so forth never exists as permanent – because it is not observed as such by prime cognition*. This follows the earlier Madhyamika presentation that it is not possible for it to be permanent.

In case the particulars of happiness exist as permanent functionalities, then why is the experience of happiness not apprehended at the time of experiencing suffering? The Samkhyas assert that, at the time of the cause, the effect is there but is not yet manifested; in other words, the effect or result is there at the time of the cause. That is what the Madhyamikas are refuting here.

As mentioned earlier, if happiness had the quality of suffering as well, then when one experiences happiness, one would also have to experience suffering as well. *In case the particulars of happiness exist as permanent functionalities, then why is the experience of happiness not apprehended at the time of experiencing suffering?* So, why doesn't one experience happiness if it is also part of the quality? This is a rhetorical question.

The Samkhya then say: *If that very happiness becomes subtle at that time...* They assert that when we are experiencing suffering, there is happiness, but because it is subtle, it is not experienced. This is refuted by the Madhyamika, who say, *how can it be coarse and then abandon that status and become subtle? It follows it cannot do that – because it is permanent*. Since

the Samkhyas said earlier that it is a permanent functionality, which means it cannot change. So if it is coarse, how could it change to subtle? That is the absurdity being pointed out to the Samkhyas.

Because happiness and the like stop being subtle and become coarse, and stop being coarse and become subtle, therefore this subtle and coarse phenomena become impermanent. The Madhyamikas prove there is a change, therefore the subtle and coarse phenomena becomes impermanent, which nullifies the Samkhyas' assertion of happiness and so on as being permanent.

133ab. Similarly, why do you not assert

All functionalities to be impermanent?

134ab. If the coarse is not distinct from happiness,

Then happiness is clearly impermanent.

The commentary explains:

Likewise, why do you not posit the subject of all functionalities as impermanent? It follows that is suitable – because they change in their nature from one to the other.

Is the coarse cause of different substantial establishment from happiness or not? In case of the first, because one still experiences happiness although the coarse cause stops, one has a clear experience of happiness, and it is not a coarse cause. If it is not of different substance, then happiness clearly becomes impermanent because when the coarse cause stops, happiness also stops. If that is accepted, then the permanent nature of happiness and the other qualities wanes.

Here the Madhyamikas ask, *likewise why do you not posit the subject of all functionalities as impermanent? It follows that it suitable – because they change in their nature from one to the other*. If the characteristic of impermanence is that something changes in nature from one moment to the next, then if they change, they have to be impermanent.

Next, the Madhyamikas ask: *Is the coarse cause of different substantial establishment from happiness or not? In the first case, because one still experiences happiness although the coarse cause stops, one has a clear experience of happiness, and it is not a coarse cause*.

In the second instance, *if it is not of different substance, then happiness clearly becomes impermanent because when the coarse cause stops, happiness also stops. If that is accepted, then the permanent nature of happiness and the other qualities wanes*. Thus, the Samkhyas' assertion is untenable.

2.3.2.3.1.3.2.1.3. Refuting that it would be impossible for something to first not exist and then to generate newly

I will go through this section quickly, as it is quite clear when you read it. There are four lines of verse:

134cd. In case you say whatever is non-existent
Cannot generate because of not existing,

135ab. Then although not asserting it,
You abide on the generation of the unclear.

The commentary explains:

If your assertion is that for something to generate it has to exist at the time of the cause, then something that does not exist at the time of the cause cannot generate, because it does not exist in the nature of the cause. So what is your meaning of 'generate'?

Samkhyas: The nature that, although existing earlier, did not appear as object to the awareness at that time, is now clearly revealed.

Madhyamaka: Because you accept the clearly revealed that does not exist as generated at the time of the cause, then although you do not posit the new generation of something that did not exist earlier, you abide on that view. You accept the meaning, and merely do not accept the name.

Or: Although you do not posit the new generation of a previously non-existent particular, i.e. expression, you need to accept that you abide in this view.

If your assertion is that for something to generate it has to exist at the time of the cause... refers to the uncommon way in which the Samkhyas assert or posit cause and effect. They assert that because the effect has the same nature as the cause, it has to exist as a cause. If it does not exist at the time of the cause, they argue, how can something of the same nature be revealed as its effect?

However, asserting that the effect exists at the time of the cause is an absurd position. That is what the **Madhyamikas** are refuting in the commentary when they say: *...then something that does not exist at the time of the cause cannot generate, because it does not exist in the nature of the cause.* So what is your meaning of 'generate' or 'produce'? This is the question being put to the Samkhyas.

The **Samkhya** respond: *The nature that, although existing earlier, did not appear as object to the awareness at that time, is now clearly revealed.* They are saying that, at the time of the cause, the fact is invisible. When the cause generates or produces it becomes visible. For example, the sprout exists at the time of the seed, but it is invisible at that time. When the actual sprout becomes visible to the naked eye of ordinary beings, then that is when we would refer to being generated or produced.

The **Madhyamika** refute that with the following lines:

*135cd. If the effect abides in the cause, then
One would eat faeces while eating food.*

*136ab. One would have to include the price
Of the cotton seeds when buying cotton.*

Then the commentary explains:

In the case where the result abides in the cause without being of different nature, then it follows one would eat faeces when eating food – because the nature of the food and the nature of the faeces are partlessly one. This is because you accept the principal as the nature of phenomena, mode of abiding, ultimate and as a partless permanent, as well as accepting that the nature of food and the nature of faeces as one.

Further, one would have to put the price of cotton onto the cotton seeds when buying cotton. It follows they would be suitable to be worn – because the nature of the cotton cloth and the nature of the cotton seed are partlessly one.

The reasoning here is that, because faeces are the effect or result of eating food, then if the effect exists at the time of the cause, this implies that faeces would exist at the time of the food. So when you consumed food, you would be consuming faeces!

This line of reasoning follows the Samkhya's earlier assertion that the nature of the cause (food) and the effect

(faeces) are partlessly one. *This is because you accept the principal as the nature of phenomena, mode of abiding, ultimate and as a partless permanent, as well as accepting that the nature of food and the nature of faeces as one.*

Further, one would have to put the price of cotton onto the cotton seeds when buying cotton. So, if one were to buy cottonseed, one would have to pay the same amount that one would pay for the clothing produced from the cottonseed, *because the nature of the cotton cloth and the nature of the cotton seed are partlessly one.*

Again, according to the Samkhyas' assertion, the clothing would already exist in the cottonseed. Therefore, one could just wear cottonseed as clothing, as the clothing already exists! These are the logical fallacies brought about by the Samkhyas' position.

The next lines present the **Samkhyas'** answer:

*136ab. If worldly beings do not see it due to delusion,
This reality is determined through knowledge.*

*137. Because also worldly beings have this
knowledge
Why should they not see?
If the worldly are not valid,
Then also the perception of the particulars is
untrue.*

The commentary explains:

Samkhyas: What about if, even though the two are of one nature, worldly beings cannot see the result at the time of the cause because of being deluded, and therefore do not wear the seeds.

Madhyamika: Well then, as you the Enumerators accept your teacher Rishi Lingkye and others to be omniscient, and that you know that the result exists at the time of the cause because they have determined this reality with their knowledge, then you eat faeces when eating food. Because in your system also worldly beings can understand reality, why should they not see that the result exists at the time of the cause? It follows they see it - because they know that the Enumerator has determined that the result exists at the time of the cause.

Or: That the teacher referred to in the earlier line who is accepted to know reality, is seen insisting on wearing cotton clothes and not cotton seeds, makes it clear that the result does not exist at the time of the cause.

Thus, the **Samkhyas** assert that *even though the effect and cause are of one nature, worldly beings cannot see the result at the time of the cause because of being deluded, and therefore do not wear the cotton seeds.*

The **Madhyamikas** refute that by saying: *Well then, as you the Enumerators accept your teacher Rishi Lingkye and others to be omniscient, and that you know that the result exists at the time of the cause because they have determined this reality with their knowledge, then you eat faeces when eating food.* So they are saying that, since this is what is being asserted by your teacher, who you consider as omniscient, then the fallacy would have to follow. What is being refuted here is the Samkhyas' earlier assertion that the effect exists at the time of the cause because they are of the same nature. Yet worldly beings don't see this. So *...because in your system also worldly beings can understand reality, why should they not see the result exists at the time of the cause?*

It follows they see it — because they know that the Enumerator has determined that the result exists at the time of the cause. So since worldly beings know that the principal has determined that the result exists at the time of the cause, then that means you are able to understand or see that.

Another way to present the Madhyamikas' argument is: *That the teacher referred to in the earlier line who is accepted to know reality, is seen insisting on wearing cotton clothes and not cotton seeds, makes it clear that the result does not exist at the time of the cause. So your teacher himself wears clothes and not cottonseed. That in itself shows you cannot possibly see the effect at the time of the cause.*

Samkhyas: Because the perception of worldly beings is not a prime cognition they do not realise it.

Madhyamika: Well then, it also follows that their perception of the particular expression that became a manifest entity is also untrue - because the perception of worldly beings is not a prime cognition.

2.3.2.3.1.3.2.2. The fault does not apply to the Madhyamaka

We can leave this for our next session. Although we have covered quite a lot of material this evening, it is not too incomprehensible or difficult to understand if you go through the text and read it slowly. So you can go over the text and make an attempt to understand the meaning.

The assertions presented in these teachings are those of the Samkhya scholars of the past. I am not sure whether there are still scholars or followers of this system in this day and age.

Again, if you are interested in these different schools of tenets, what their assertions are and how they have been refuted, then it is good to get an understanding as explained here in the text. You can also refer to other texts that explain these systems of thought.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

28 March 2017

As usual let us engage in our meditation practice.

[*tong len meditation*]

We can now generate our motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: for the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teachings and then put them into practice well.

Setting this motivation and then listening to the teachings will ensure positive imprints are left on our mindstream.

2.3.2.3.1.3.2.2. The fault does not apply to the Madhyamika

The first verse under this heading is:

138. *In case prime cognition is not valid
Doesn't what it comprehends become false?
For that very reason your
Meditation on emptiness is invalid.*

The Realists present this argument:

Realist: If, according to you, prime cognition is not ultimately prime cognition, then it is a false prime cognition, and in this case does not its comprehended object also become a false distorted object not existing in the way it is comprehended? It follows that it becomes that – this is the case because the comprehending prime cognition is false. For that very reason, because the comprehending prime cognition is false, that which you posit as meditation on emptiness becomes distorted and invalid.

Then Madhyamika respond as follows:

Madhyamika: Take the subject 'object of knowledge' – for us it is very valid that the prime cognition that comprehends emptiness, and the emptiness posited by it are false. To ascertain the negation of the functionality true for conception depends on the appearance of the object of negation arising in the mind. It follows it is like this – because ...

The Realists' objection to the Prasangika position is that *if prime cognition is not ultimately prime cognition as you say, then it is a false prime cognition*. In that case isn't the comprehended object also a false distorted object that does not exist in the way it is comprehended? According to the Realists, both prime cognition and that which is apprehended exist truly. The Realists are saying to the Prasangika that if prime cognition is false, then what it apprehends should also be false. That is the main point being raised here.

The Realists continue with *it follows that it has to be that, because the comprehending prime cognition is false*. They are saying that if the comprehending prime cognition is false, then the apprehended object that it perceives should also be false.

For that very reason, they say, what you posit as meditation on emptiness is distorted and invalid, or not tenable.

The Madhyamikas say: *Take the subject 'object of knowledge' – it is valid to say that the prime cognition that comprehends emptiness, and the emptiness posited by it are false*. The Realists

have said: "How can you claim a valid cognition perceiving an ultimate reality if the cognition itself is false?"

They are in fact using logical reasoning to point out that a false cognition could not perceive a true object. In response the Madhyamika say: "We accept that the prime cognition is false, and what is being apprehended is also false, i.e. emptiness is also false in so far as it lacks true existence".

We need to be careful not to misunderstand this. By saying that emptiness is false because it doesn't exist truly, the Madhyamika are, of course, not saying that emptiness is not an ultimate reality. What will be explained later in the text is that while the Realists are not able to conceive of a false cognition perceiving an ultimate object, the Madhyamika explain how, through perceiving a false object, a false cognition contributes to comprehending the ultimate.

The main point of the debate here is that the Realists posit all existence as being truly existent, while the Madhyamika say that things actually lack true existence, i.e. that things are not truly existent.

The Madhyamikas' essential point is that *ascertaining the negation of the functionality true for conception depends on the appearance of the object of negation arising in the mind*. The next verse explains the reasoning, which is the essential point.

139. *Without contact with the analysed object
One will not apprehend its non-existence.
Therefore the non-existence of any
False object is clearly false.*

The commentary explains:

... without the conceptual thought making contact with the analysed object of true existence, i.e. if the aspect of true existence does not appear to the mind, then the investigating thought will not apprehend the object of being empty of true existence, which is the lack of true existence. Therefore, because the falsity that is the object of negation is impossible, therefore the negation that is the non-object is clearly also false.

The example of the earlier is: Without the aspect of the child of a barren woman appearing to the conceptual mind, the aspect of a dying child of a barren woman does not appear.

If the emptiness of true existence that lacks the object of negation exists truly, then the appearance of the lack of true existence to the knowing inferential cognition also needs to exist truly.

The explanation in the commentary begins with *without contact with the analysed object one will not apprehend its non-existence*. This is the main point to be understood. *The conceptual thought making contact with the analysed object of true existence refers to the aspect of true existence not appearing to the mind*. The commentary says that the absence of the object of negation will not be understood unless the conceptual thought has clearly identified, and really understood, what the object of negation is.

To make this clearer, the *analysed object* refers to true existence, and *will not apprehend its non-existence* refers to emptiness. What is being explained is that the non-existence or lack of true existence, i.e. emptiness, cannot be understood without first having a clear understanding of how the conceptual mind apprehends things as being truly existent. That is the main point.

If you understand this point then the meaning of this passage is clear. The commentary clarifies *without the conceptual thought making contact with the analysed object of true existence... by adding... if the aspect of true existence does not*

appear to the mind, then the investigating thought will not apprehend the object as being empty of true existence, i.e. lacking true existence.

This explains the meaning of the first two lines of verse 139.

The commentary then explains the remaining two lines of the verse beginning with: *Therefore, because the falsity that is the object of negation is impossible, the negation that is the non-object is clearly also false.*

Then an example is given: *Without the aspect of the child of a barren woman appearing to the conceptual mind, the aspect of a dying child of a barren woman does not appear.* This example is a good illustration of the point that was made earlier, which is that without a clear understanding of what true existence is, the lack of true existence cannot be understood. Although a barren woman's child does not exist, without knowing what a barren woman's child means, one cannot even conceive of the impossibility of the death of a child of a barren woman.

The commentary continues: *If the emptiness of true existence that lacks the object of negation exists truly, then the appearance of the lack of true existence to the knowing inferential cognition also needs to exist truly.* The *knowing inferential cognition* mentioned here refers to the inferential cognition that apprehends emptiness. As explained in other texts, emptiness exists as it appears to the meditative equipoise of an arya being, but doesn't exist as it appears to the knowing inferential cognition, because to this cognition emptiness appears as truly existent. What is being explained in the commentary is that if emptiness were to exist truly then it would have to exist as it appears to the *knowing inferential cognition*, but that is not the case.

The reason why emptiness doesn't exist as it appears to the knowing inferential cognition is because it is a mistaken consciousness. As I have explained in previous teachings, except for the meditative equipoise of arya beings in which there is no true appearance at all, consciousnesses of all other sentient beings are necessarily mistaken. That is because when a sentient being's consciousness apprehends objects, it perceives them as being truly existent due to the imprints of true grasping in their mind. It is only an enlightened mind that doesn't have any true appearance at all. That is the point being made here: while the *knowing inferential cognition* apprehends emptiness, it still has the appearance of emptiness as truly existent.

Then the commentary further explains:

If one looks at this, a collection with only one part negated is impossible, and because the object of negation appears truly to it, the true appearance needs to also exist truly. In this case, true existence should be an existent, which it is not. The emptiness of true existence that has abandoned it, is also false and not truly established.

The point being explained is that *while emptiness* appears as being truly existent, it actually lacks true existence.

The commentary further explains:

This point is shown in the *Root Wisdom*, 'In case something slightly non-empty exists'. Without the meaning generality of the lack of true existence appearing to the mind, one does not properly ascertain the lack of true existence, and therefore one needs to be proficient in identifying the object of negation.

This is another succinct point. *Without the meaning generality of the lack of true existence appearing to the mind* refers back to the necessity for having a good understanding of the way true existence appears to the mind. Without having a proper

understanding of that, one cannot properly ascertain the lack of true existence and therefore one needs to be proficient in identifying the object of negation. So it is very important to have a clear understanding of what is being refuted, which is the object of negation.

In simple terms this means that one should have a clear understanding about how things and events would have to exist if they were to exist truly. One has to have a very clear understanding of this point. This emphasises the point that it is crucial to identify the object of negation.

The next verse under this heading is:

140. *Thus, the thought thinking,
'The dream child has passed away'
Cancels the thought thinking that it
Exists, and it is false.*

The commentary explains:

For this reason: When e.g., in a dream one observes the child dying and thinks, 'Now it does not exist anymore', this thought cancels out the thought thinking that it does exist.

Just as these two, the dream object of abandonment and the dream antidote are false, so it is not contradictory for the false antidote to destroy the false object of abandonment, and for the false prime cognition to comprehend the false object of comprehension.

It is not the same for you because the Enumerators accept all phenomena as truly existent, and do not know how to posit a false prime cognition.

This analogy should be quite clear. *In a dream one observes a child who is dying or who is actually dead and thinks, 'now the child does not exist anymore', and this thought that the child does not exist anymore eliminates the thought of the child as still existing.* Even though *both the dream object of abandonment and the dream antidote are false*, having a false antidote destroy a false object of abandonment is not contradictory. Using the same reason, it is not contradictory for a false prime cognition to comprehend a false object of comprehension.

The contradiction presented by the Enumerators is that if the prime cognition is false, then it could not perceive a true object. But for the **Madhyamika**, of course, this is not a contradiction. *It is not the same*, indicates that it is not the same for us because *the Enumerators accept all phenomena as truly existent, and do not know how to posit a false prime cognition.*

As mentioned previously, for us, a prime cognition can comprehend emptiness. While Enumerators cannot posit a true prime cognition perceiving a false object, for us, a prime cognition, which may be false itself, can also perceive an object that lacks true existence. That is a point being presented here.

2.3.2.3.1.4. Summarising the meaning of generation from no-cause

The first two lines of the next verse are presented:

141ab. *Therefore, by analysing in such a way
There is nothing without a cause*

Then the commentary explains:

Therefore, for these reasons, if one investigates with the reasons mentioned above, not only does generation from discordant causes such as Ishvara and the primary principal become impossible, saying 'there is no result that generates without a cause', it is also the concluding summary of the refutation of causeless generation.

This explanation is quite clear, so not much further explanation is needed. *If one investigates the many reasons that were presented earlier, the generation from discordant causes such as Ishvara, as some non-Buddhists posit, and the primary principal as others posit, is impossible. Saying 'there is no result that generates without a cause' it is also the concluding summary of the refutation of causeless generation.* In other words the argument that something can be generated without any cause is refuted.

A significant point to reflect upon here is that investigating with the various reasons that were presented earlier implies that the arguments and refutations are not just accepted blindly, or that some parts are accepted and other parts are 'left to beg'. Rather, the conclusion that the generation from discordant causes – such as Ishvara and the primary principal – is not tenable arises from thorough investigation with many reasonings. When careful logical reasons are presented the conclusion has to be accepted. Here the conclusion is that causeless generation is not tenable because all the arguments have been refuted, and so the conclusion has to be accepted. This is also in line with what I usually share with you, which is that you need to use your intelligence and wisdom to decide things.

2.3.2.3.1.5. Refuting generation from both self and other

This section begins with the comment in the commentary:

These four lines can be a summary for the refutation of generation from three principles, and can also be related to the refutation of generation from both self and other.

It's important to understand this. What is being refuted here is generation from both self and other.

Generation from self refers to generating from a separate permanent self as the non-Buddhist schools posit. That was refuted earlier. Generation from other refers to an effect that is generated from an inherently existent cause. All schools, including the Buddhist schools below the Prasangika assert such a cause. Here the Prasangika refute generation from both self and other.

The lines relating to this are:

141cd. *It also does not abide on the individual Conditions or their collection;*

142ab. *It does not come from other, It does not abide or go.*

The commentary explains:

The sprout abides neither inherently on the individual causes such as the water, fertiliser, warmth and moisture nor on their collection, as a juniper tree would abide on the bronze base¹. If it abides in such a way it should be observable, which it is not. It is the same for other results. They also do not exist at that time because without the conditions taking shape the sprout cannot be generated. It also does not come from some- thing other than these conditions, it also does not abide inherently upon having been generated inherently, and it does not go somewhere else upon cessation. Hence, it does not exist inherently in the slightest, and therefore there is also no generation from self, generation from other or generation from both self and other.

In short, this establishes the directional property of the argument, 'take the subject the aggregates and the person': it follows they are not generated inherently –

because they are not generated from self, generated from other, generated from both or generated from no cause.

As the commentary explains, *the sprout abides neither inherently on the individual causes such as the water, fertiliser, warmth and moisture nor on their collection.* The assertion is that the sprout is generated from the collection of all of these causes. For the sprout to generate it is initially dependent on the seed and then other conditions such as fertiliser, warmth and moisture. The fact that it depends on all of these causes shows that the sprout does not exist inherently, and it does not abide inherently on any one of individual causes or the collection itself.

The analogy is that they are like *a juniper tree that abides on a bronze base. If it abides in such a way then it should be observable, which it is not and it is the same for other results.* If the cause were to exist inherently then the sprout would have to be observable at the time of the cause, but it is not observable. This indicates that while the sprout depends on causes it does not exist at the time of the cause. That is what refuting generation from self means.

They also do not exist at that time because without the conditions taking shape the sprout cannot be generated means that the sprout cannot exist or be generated while the necessary conditions are being assembled. *It also does not come from something other than these conditions* means that since the sprout does not exist before the conditions such as fertiliser and so forth come together, it does not exist inherently at that time or at any other time.

It does not come from something other than these conditions means that since it depends on these conditions, it cannot be produced from anything other than these conditions. *It also does not abide inherently upon having been generated* means it is not generated inherently nor does it abide inherently. Furthermore, *it does not go somewhere else inherently upon cessation.* The conclusion here is *that it does not exist inherently in the slightest, and therefore there is also no generation from self, generation from other or generation from both self and other.* That is how it is refuted.

A summary of this is presented in the next paragraph of the commentary.

In short, this establishes the directional property of the argument, 'take the subject the aggregates and the person': it follows they are not generated inherently – because they are not generated from self, generated from other, generated from both or generated from no cause.

The syllogism here is *Take the subject 'the person and other phenomena': it follows they are not generated inherently from self – because they are not generated from self, generated from other, generated from both or generated from no cause.* This syllogism is related to the syllogism known as the King of Reasoning as explained in *Root Wisdom*, which is, "take the subject 'persons and phenomena': they do not exist inherently – because they are dependent arising". This syllogism specifically states that, persons and phenomena are not generated inherently, whereas the earlier syllogism said they do not exist inherently. It's a slight difference but it comes down to the same point.

The King of Reasoning is the syllogism that uses the reasoning that the subject, whatever it may be, is a dependent arising, and this applies to all phenomena. Since the subject here, persons and phenomena, is all-inclusive,

¹ Another translation says it's just a metal base.

saying that they do not exist inherently because they are dependent arising applies to all phenomena.

The reasoning in the syllogism presented in the commentary is that since the aggregates and the person are not generated inherently, then that has to apply to all generated phenomena. The *aggregates and persons* are phenomena that have a particular cause, and are therefore generated. Thus, *they are not generated from self, generated from other, generated from both or generated from no cause.*

2.3.2.3.2. *The reason of dependent arising*

142cd. *How is that made true by delusion
Different from an illusion?*

The explanation in the commentary begins with:

What difference is there between the object labelled and made true by afflicted delusion, i.e., ignorance, and an illusion, dream, reflection and so forth? They appear as inherently existent while being empty of inherent existence.

This is a point that supports the earlier explanations. *What difference is there between the object labelled and made true by afflicted delusions, for example ignorance, or an illusion or a dream, or a reflection and so forth? Although things appear as being true, they are actually known to be false. Likewise, though things appear as being inherently existent, they are actually empty of inherent existence.* The point being made here is that conventionally we all accept these as false, which is also the case for the lack of inherent existence.

The next verse reads:

143. *That magically generated by a magician
And that magically generated by a cause
Where do they come from, where do they go?
You should analyse this.*

Then the commentary explains:

If the illusory horse and elephant conjured by the magician and the functionalities conjured by the causes and conditions were to exist truly then, when they are generated, they should come from somewhere else, and when they cease they should go somewhere else. In this case it should be analysed where they come from and where they go to. Because they do not possess inherent coming or going, take the subject 'the person and the aggregates' - they lack inherent existence - because they are dependent arising, e.g., like a reflection of a form.

The commentary starts with an example, *if the illusory horse and elephant conjured by the magician, and the functionalities conjured by causes and conditions were to exist truly, then when they are generated they should come from somewhere else, and when they cease they should go somewhere else.* This is saying that illusions may look like they actually exist, in that they come and go. But that is not the case.

Where do they come from and where do they go? The conclusion is that they do not inherently come or go, which relates to the earlier syllogism that was based on the subject 'the person and the aggregates'. The syllogism here uses the same subject. Take the subject '*the person and the aggregates: they lack inherent existence - because they are dependent arisings.*' The example is *like a reflection of form.*

First of all as mentioned earlier, one needs to contemplate how the person and aggregates would have to exist if they were to exist truly. What would their mode of existence be if they were to exist truly? Once you really understand that question then the syllogism should make sense. The subjects, which are persons and aggregates, lack inherent existence,

because they are dependent arisings. This implies that if they were to exist inherently, then they could not be dependent arisings i.e. they could not depend on anything else. But since they are dependent arisings, they cannot exist inherently.

To gain an understanding at a more personal level, we first need to accept the fact that we still have the misconception of grasping at a truly existent person. What does grasping at ourselves mean? We have this misconception that a person exists truly or inherently, so how do we relate that to ourselves.

The investigation begins by first analysing how we perceive ourselves? How does the misconception of grasping at a self, apprehend the self? As explained in the teachings, the misconception of grasping at a self apprehends a self that exists without depending on any other causes and conditions, existing from its own side in and of itself. That is how the 'I' appears to exist for the misconception of grasping at a true self.

The next investigation is to analyse and check whether the 'I' actually exists in that way or not? We investigate by asking: "Do I exist independently, without depending on any other causes and conditions?". When we realise that such an 'I' could not possibly exist in this manner, then an understanding of how the 'I' lacks true existence will begin to dawn on us. So we need to overcome that misconception of grasping at a truly existent self starting with our own personal individual self.

It is impossible to meditate on emptiness without having scrutinised and really understood how that misconception of grasping at a self appears to us. If whatever understanding of emptiness we have does not actually counteract grasping at the self, then claiming to be meditating on emptiness is quite lame. The very purpose of meditating on emptiness is to overcome the misconception of grasping at a self beginning with our own individual self. If we are indeed meditating on emptiness adequately, then the longer the time we spend in meditation the less intense our grasping at a truly existent individual self will become, and eventually it will be completely overcome. In simple terms, meditation on emptiness has to be able to counteract the misconception of grasping at an individual self.

The manner of conducting the investigation on a personal level is explained very clearly in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*. As presented there, an appropriate time to investigate how the personal 'I' appears to us when a strong sense of 'me' is evoked. For example when someone criticises us, or accuses us of doing something that we haven't done, our self-defence mechanism is triggered and we become outraged: "How dare you accuse me!, I didn't do that!". In that instance how does the 'me' or 'I' appear to us? When we notice that this 'me' or 'I' appears to be completely independent, existing in and of itself, then that is when we are beginning to identify the object of negation.

Likewise when something good happens and we feel elated, thinking: "Oh, I feel so happy, something really good has happened to me". How does the 'I' or 'me' appear to us at that time? If that 'I' appears to be existing independently in and of itself, and not dependent on any other causes and conditions, then such a fabricated 'I' or 'self' is the object of negation that has to be refuted. That how *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* explains how to investigate the 'I'.

For us ordinary beings the usual way that forms appear to us is said to be the appearance of the object of negation.

When we ordinary beings apprehend form, it appears to us as existing independently, in and of itself. Thus the appearance of the object that we apprehend is the object of negation.

It appears to exist independently in and of itself because the form appears as something that exists 'out there'. Regardless of the fact that it is imputed by the mind, it actually appears to exist 'out there', from its own side. That is the appearance of the object of negation for ordinary beings. I have explained this many times in the past, so we need not spend too much time on this again.

The next verse reads:

144. *That which is seen due to proximity
To something, which likens the artificial
reflection
In being not if that does not exist,
How could it possess a true reality?*

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Any result, such as compositional factors or the sprout are seen to generate in proximity to their cause, such as ignorance or the seed and the like. Because they are artificial phenomena that are not generated if these causes do not exist, they are like a reflection of form. How could they exist in the very nature of true existence? They do not.

The four lines of, 'That magically [...] and so forth establish the pervasion of the reason of dependent arising. The next two and a half lines show the reason, and the next half is the example and the last line shows the thesis.

if one wishes study this more extensively, then one should study the great commentary on the Introduction.

As it explains here results *such as compositional factors or the sprout are seen to generate in proximity to their causes, which are respectively ignorance and the seed and the like. Any result refers to any type of result such as compositional factors, which is the second of the twelve links. The cause of compositional factors is ignorance, so ignorance precedes compositional factors in the list of the twelve links. Therefore ignorance is the cause of compositional factors, which is karma. The cause of any kind of sprout is a seed. The seed precedes the sprout and is therefore the cause. So just as the sprout is seen to generate in proximity to its cause, and compositional factors arise from the cause of ignorance, because they are artificial phenomena that are not generated if these causes do not exist, they are like a reflection of form. So how could they exist in the very nature of true existence?* The conclusion is that they are not truly existent.

The commentary explains that *the four lines of verse 143 – that magically generated by a magician and so forth – establish the pervasion of the reason of dependent arising. They show that whatever is a dependent arising definitely can't exist truly or inherently. That is the pervasive reasoning of dependent arising.*

The next two and a half lines of verse show the reason, and the next half is the example, where it talks about the artificial reflection being like an illusion. The last line shows the thesis, which is could they possess true reality if they do not exist? That is the reason that has been established.

Then the commentary concludes by saying that *if one wishes to understand this more extensively, then one should study the great commentary on the Introduction, by Lama Tsongkhapa.*

Another commentary on the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* says that the reasoning of dependent arising is the most supreme of

all reasons as it presents the most succinct logic to establish the view of dependent arising. That is why it was established as the King of Reasonings by Lama Tsong Khapa and his sons, i.e. his main disciples.

Then there is also a quote from the *Madhyamakavatara*, which we have studied previously. You can refer to *Madhyamakavatara* teachings², which explain the syllogism. These are really profound explanations that establish the right view, which the view of emptiness. So it is very good to have a sound understanding of them.

Around the time when we were studying these points in the *Madhyamakavatara* text, His Holiness was visiting to Australia. I saw His Holiness just briefly, and he asked me: "What subjects are you teaching these days?" I mentioned that we were in the middle of the *Madhyamakavatara* teachings and that on another night I was teaching *The Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*. Then His Holiness actually put his palms together and said: "Oh, it's really incredible that these actually include both method and wisdom. That's incredibly good". I'm sure all of you would have also received a blessing when he put his palms together and made that comment.

We should really acknowledge our great fortune in being able to study such texts as these. Further on, the text also explains the great purpose that one can achieve through the understanding of emptiness. So keep this in mind!

The text will also explain the relationship between understanding emptiness in relation to oneself and helping others. As will be explained, understanding emptiness helps to overcome the eight worldly concerns, as well as gaining various ways and means to benefit other sentient beings.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

² See the teachings around 20 April 2004. The teachings on the five types of reasoning, specifically the four extremes of reasoning that have just been completed here, began on 15 April 2003.

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

4 April 2017

While maintaining the motivation generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our meditation practice. [meditation]

Generate the bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teachings.

Our basic understanding of the bodhicitta motivation is a seed of bodhicitta, so it's a matter of further developing and enhancing it. Without putting some effort into increasing our level of bodhicitta it will not just suddenly and spontaneously develop within ourselves. Nourishing the seed of bodhicitta is our personal responsibility.

As explained many times previously, you have received the teachings and have an understanding of the different methods of developing bodhicitta, such as the sevenfold cause and effect sequence and the technique of exchanging self with others. Based on your understanding of these techniques, you need to familiarise yourself with them again and again; that is how you actually engage in the practice of developing bodhicitta.

The bodhisattvas who have already developed bodhicitta did done so by using these very techniques and are constantly increasing their bodhicitta by benefiting sentient beings, There's no other way to develop bodhicitta other than training your mind in the techniques presented.

If the bodhisattvas spontaneously generate the mind of bodhicitta without any effort, then we might also resolve to wait around for the day that we spontaneously generate it too. But since that is not possible, as I regularly emphasise, it is important for us to train our mind to become more compassionate and kind. For every effort we put into doing this, the benefits will definitely be reaped in this life, and in many future lives. So making every attempt in training our mind to cultivate bodhicitta is definitely of great benefit right now and in the long term.

If you wish to experience good results, then that is entirely dependent on generating positive and virtuous states of mind now. Likewise if we wish to avoid the experiences of suffering, then that is dependent on avoiding negative states of mind. What this shows is that we personally have the entire responsibility for securing a good future with positive results for ourselves, and avoiding negative results being experienced.

2.3.2.3.3. The reasoning refuting generation and cessation of existence and non-existence

This relates to refuting the effect and has three subdivisions:

2.3.2.3.3.1. Refuting inherent generation upon establishing the reason

2.3.2.3.3.2. Refuting this refutes inherent existence
2.3.2.3.3.3. Thus, establishing the equanimity of samsara and nirvana

2.3.2.3.3.1. Refuting inherent generation upon establishing the reason

With the earlier explanations from the text, the following passages should be easier to understand.

The first verse reads:

145. *For a functionality to come into existence
What need is there for a cause?
Even in the case that it does not exist,
What need is there for a cause?*

The commentary explains:

For a functionality to come into existence inherently, what need is there for a cause, for that which exists inherently does not need to be generated? Further, in the case that such a result does not exist, then what need is there for a cause as there is an inability to generate it? As all results are never generated at the time of the cause, this is not refuted, but what is refuted is that they are not generated at all.

The refutation of generation of an existing result, is the refutation of the result that exists at the time of the cause as asserted by the Enumerators, and results existing inherently as accepted by most others. But to say that since the effect is already generated it does not need to be generated, is a statement which is completely illogical. Thus, the non-inherently existing causes and effects are accepted to be like the illusion of a reflection.

Regarding establishing that a non-functionality is unsuitable to be created by a cause.

An argument is presented:

Argument: Although one does not need to generate something that is already generated, why should something non-existent not be generated?

The commentary explains, *for a functionality to come into existence inherently, what need is there for a cause? For that which exists inherently does not need to be generated.* This clearly explains that if a functionality comes into existence inherently, which means that it comes into existence independently, in and of itself then by default it would not depend on a cause since it does not have to depend upon anything for its generation.

The commentary continues, *in the case that such a result does not exist, then what need is there for a cause as there is an inability to generate it?* This is also quite clear: if such a result does not exist then there's no need for a cause. This relates to the refutation of generation and cessation of existence and non-existence, particularly in relation to causes and effects. The commentary explains, *as all results are never generated at the time of the cause, this is not refuted, but what is refuted is that they are not generated at all.* The commentary states that it is quite obvious that results are not generated at the time of the cause, therefore there is no need to refute what is quite obvious, but what is refuted is that they are not generated at all.

The *Prasangika* further explain, *The refutation of generation of an existing result, is the refutation of the result that exists at the time of the cause as asserted by the Enumerators, and results existing inherently as accepted by most others.* The Enumerators assert that the effect exists at the time of the

cause and this is what is being refuted. Also, most other Buddhist schools, which are the schools below the Prasangika, assert inherent existence, and thus they accept inherently existent causes and effects; this also what is being refuted.

The *Prasangika* make this comment, *But to say that since the effect is already generated it does not need to be generated, is a statement which is completely illogical.* They conclude by saying, *Thus, the non-inherently existing causes and effects are accepted to be like the illusion of a reflection,* explains that just as the reflexion of a face in a mirror is not the real face, and illusions conjured by a magician are not actual things, similarly although all causes and effects appear to be inherently existent, in fact they do not exist in that way in the slightest.

These analogies of illusions and reflections of a face in the mirror and so forth are very profound, as they can help you get a better understanding of what emptiness is. They are very good analogies to illustrate how although things appear to exist inherently that is not how they actually exist. Even if you don't immediately gain a profound understanding of the lack of inherent existence, at the very least it will help you to reduce strong afflictions like intense attachment and anger.

If you can bring to mind that although the object of attachment appears to be extremely attractive, in reality the beauty doesn't exist as it appears. When you spend some time reflecting on this, your attachment towards that object will definitely become reduced. Likewise, when an object of anger comes to mind, and you see it as being repulsive, if you were to recall that although it appears to be entirely repulsive, that repulsiveness doesn't exist in the way that it appears, then that will definitely help to reduce anger towards the object. These are very good trainings for our mind to see how things don't exist the way they appear to our mistaken consciousness; and thus helps to reduce the intensity of the afflictions.

If you actually contemplate in this way, an understanding of emptiness, on the basis of a lack of inherent existence of phenomena will dawn upon you, and the more you think about it and contemplate in this way, the more understanding you will develop. This is how it is of great benefit for you. The more you contemplate on emptiness to overcome the afflictions the more you will benefit by improving your life, which is only a gain. There is only great gain and no loss at all. Some seem to think that gaining an understanding of emptiness i.e. the lack of inherent existence, particularly in relation to reducing attachments, anger and so forth, will be some sort of loss in their lives. But you need not doubt that there is only gain. All the great masters of the past obtained their great realisations and achievements by overcoming the afflictions through these understandings.

As the teachings say, merely developing a doubt¹ about the validity of emptiness, will begin to shatter the very core of samsara.

The commentary continues to explain that, *regarding establishing that a non-functionality is unsuitable to be created by a cause, there's the argument that: Although one does not need to generate something that is already generated, why should something non-existent not be generated?* This leads onto the next verse.

What is being presented here is based on the earlier explanation and not too complicated to understand. The real essence of this whole presentation is presented in the following verses.

The next verse reads:

146. *Even through one billion causes
A non-functionality cannot be changed.
How can this status be functional?
What else is that which becomes functional?*

Then the commentary explains:

Madhyamaka: Even through one billion causes, a non-functionality cannot be changed into a functionality because a non-functionality cannot fulfil the function of any functionality. If it changes, does it change without giving up its non-functional status or upon giving it up? If we look at the first, how can the status of non-functionality be a functionality? The status of being able to perform a function and the status of not being able to perform a function are mutually exclusive. If we look at the second, what is the cause that changes into a functionality apart from being a functionality or non-functionality? There is no such thing.

This is quite clear, *Even through one billion causes, a non-functionality cannot be changed into a functionality,* means that any phenomena which by nature is non-functional, cannot be changed into something which is functional. That which is by its very nature non-functional cannot be transformed into something which is functional. This is quite clear.

A further question is asked to back up this statement, *If it changes, does it change without giving up its non-functional status or upon giving it up?* This is a reasonable question. In the first instance it says, *how can the status of non-functionality be a functionality?* If something which was non-functional gives up its status of being non-functional and changes into something functional, then how can the state of non-functionality be a functionality as they're mutually exclusive. Then, *If we look at the second,* this explains that, *what is the cause that changes into a functionality apart from being a functionality or non-functionality?* This indicates that something has to be either a functional thing or a non-functional thing, there is no third possibility. It is absurd to say that a non-functionality changes into a functionality, and there is no point asserting that a functionality changes into a functionality, because it is already a functional phenomenon. This is quite clear.

The verse reads:

147. *If an existent functionality is impossible when
non-existent,
When does functionality become existent?
Without having been generated as functionality
It does not become separated from this non-
functionality.*

148ab. *It is not separated from non-functionality
An occasion for the existence of functionality is
impossible?*

¹ Here 'doubt' has a positive connotation in the sense of suspecting that the teachings on emptiness are indeed valid.

Then the commentary explains:

Further, if it does not give up the status of non-functionality, and if it is not possible for a functionality to exist at a time when no functionality exists, when does functionality become existent? Functionality has not been generated at the time of non-functionality.

Further, if it becomes upon having abandoned the status of non-functionality: Without functionality having been generated it is impossible to become separated from non-functionality, and if it is not separated from non-functionality, then there is no chance for the existence of functionality, because these two types of status are mutually exclusive.

Again, this is quite clearly explained in the commentary so there's no need to elaborate further. What can be noted here is that the Vaibhashika assert that if it is existent phenomena it necessarily has to be a functional phenomenon – so even space is functional phenomenon. Their definition of functional phenomena is, that which can be conceived by a consciousness. So whatever can be conceived by a consciousness is what they would assert as a functional phenomenon. However according to the Prasangika system, functional phenomena relates to something which is produced by causes and effects, and thus cannot be permanent.

The next two lines of the verse read:

*148cd. Also, the functionality does not become non-existent
Because it would follow that it has two natures.*

Then the commentary explains:

Just as a non-functionality does not become a functionality, a functionality does not become a non-functionality because if it would be half functionality and half non-functionality, then the consequence would arise that merely one would have two natures.

These reasonings refute all generation from non-existence and non-functionality.

Take the subject 'sprout' – it is not generated inherently – because it is not inherently generated as existent, and it is not inherently generated as non-existent, e.g., like the child of a barren woman. Although its generation is refuted if non-existent at the time of the cause, it is a refutation of its inherent generation at the time of generation, even though it is non-existent at the time of the cause. Therefore, one needs to relate it to the object of negation.

What is being refuted in, *although its generation is refuted if non-existent at the time of the cause*, is that although the effect does not exist at the time of the cause, an inherently existent effect is generated from an inherently existent cause. Thus the commentary explains, *therefore, one needs to relate it to the object of negation*.

2.3.2.3.3.2. Refuting this also refutes cessation as being inherently existent

Having refuted inherently existent causes and inherently existent effects, this also refutes inherently existent cessation. That is what is being presented here.

The verse reads:

*149. Likewise cessation does not exist in such a way
And because functionalities also do not exist*

*All these migrators
Are never generated and never cease.*

The commentary explains:

If we look at the non-inherent existence of generation due to the reasoning explained above, cessation also does not exist inherently and because functionalities do not exist inherently, all these migrators are never inherently generated or inherently cease, they are primordially pacified and naturally liberated.

The main point being presented here is that when inherent generation is refuted by the earlier presented reasons, then inherently existent cessation is also refuted.

2.3.2.3.3.3 Thus, establishing the equanimity of samsara and nirvana

It was mentioned earlier that sentient beings are primordially pacified and naturally liberated, so this point establishes the equilibrium of samsara and nirvana.

The first two lines of the verse read:

*150. Migrators are like a dream
When investigated they are like banana trees*

The commentary explains:

The dream-like migrators of existence have not the slightest nature and they abide individually, without action and activity mixing. When analysed with the reasoning investigating suchness they are like a banana tree, they appear as if there is something identifiable but there is not the slightest inherent essence.

The demarcation that decides whether it becomes an analysis into suchness or not: If one is not satisfied with mere imputation by name and analyses on the basis of wanting to investigate how the basis exists, then it becomes an analysis into suchness, but if one is satisfied with mere imputation by name and investigates whether Devadatta comes and goes, then it is a nominal analysis.

The commentary explains, *the dream-like migrators of existence have not the slightest nature and they abide individually, without action and activity mixing*, which refers to the fact that migrators abide individually by performing actions and activities. When first analysed it appears to be like that but, *When analysed with the reasoning investigating suchness, they are like a banana tree*, means that although they appear like there's something identifiable, there is not the slightest inherent existence.

With the banana tree illustration, when you peel the trunk there is no solid core to be found. Similarly, sentient beings and migrators and their activities appear to exist from their own side, but in fact lack inherent existence. The word identifiable means that although they appear to exist from their own side, independently and in and of themselves, they actually do not exist in the slightest in that way.

The commentary now applies further reasoning with, *the demarcation that decides whether it becomes an analysis into suchness or not*, which is to point out the demarcation between the analyses of conventional reality and ultimate reality.

The statement, *if one is not satisfied with mere imputation by name and analyses on the basis of wanting to investigate how the basis exists*, highlights that when a name is imputed to

a person (e.g. Tom or *Devadatta*), if one is not satisfied with that mere label, and wants to investigate further on how the basis exists, this would be an investigation or analysis into suchness.

On the other hand, *but if one is satisfied with mere imputation by name*, meaning if you are satisfied with just the label that is given, *whether Devadatta comes and goes*, and you don't analyse further than that, *then it is a nominal analysis*. This was also explained previously.

The first two lines of the next verse read:

150cd. *Having gone beyond misery and having not gone
They do not have any distinction.*

The commentary states:

There is no difference in suchness between those gone beyond sorrow free from the bonds that bind them to existence, such as attachment, and those not gone beyond sorrow that are caught in the prison of cyclic existence, because both existence and peace are the same in being empty of inherent existence.

This highlights that as far as lacking inherent existence is concerned, there is no difference whatsoever between those gone beyond sorrow i.e. those gone beyond the deluded state and thus are liberated, with those still caught in samsara. Both are exactly the same in that they both lack inherent existence. It continues that, *because both existence and peace*, existence here referring to the cyclic existence, and peace referring to nirvana, *are the same in being empty of inherent existence*. This is the point.

The commentary then quotes from the *King of Concentration*:

The dream-like migrators of cyclic existence,
They are not born and neither do they die.

This is quite clear. Then from the *Sutra Requested by the Superior Upali*:

If one has comprehended the nature of phenomena,
then all results are non-existent and there is also no
result to be attained.

These again are in reference to phenomena being in the nature of emptiness.

3. ADVICE THAT IT IS SUITABLE TO STRIVE IN REALISING EMPTINESS

These following passages show why it is suitable, and the great advantages and benefits one would obtain by gaining the realisation of emptiness.

What is presented here in the following passages are meticulous and profound explanations. The heading here is sub-divided into three:

3.1. The actual advice

3.2. Showing the object of great compassion by showing the disadvantages of cyclic existence

3.3. Showing the mode of apprehension of the aspect of great compassion

3.1. The actual advice

That is then divided into two:

3.1.1. Showing the meaning of the mode of abiding

3.1.2. It is suitable to strive in realising that

3.1.1. Showing the meaning of the mode of abiding

The verse reads:

151. *How can functionalities thus empty
Be attained or lost?
How could one be praised?
How could one be criticised?*

The commentary then explains:

If one comprehends the actual nature of functionalities that are thus empty of inherent existence in the way explained earlier, then which gain does one attain and become attached? Through the loss of what gain does one generate anger? What is the benefit received by praise, and what is the harm received by criticism, and by whom?

What is presented here is one of the immediate benefits of gaining a realisation of emptiness: to overcome the eight worldly concerns. As previously explained, while the benefits of overcoming the eight worldly concerns are usually expressed as a way to overcome a strong sense of attachment, aversion etc. this passage relates to how the eight worldly concerns are developed, and how we are compounded by that, and how the eight worldly concerns are overcome by the actual understanding of emptiness.

You can do some research on what the eight worldly concerns are, and be prepared to answer questions if I ask you to list them. While the heading here specifically advises that it is suitable to strive to realise emptiness, headings in some other commentaries refer to the following passages as the actual results of realising emptiness.

We have nearly come to the end of chapter nine so I guess in the next few sessions we'll complete it, and then the tenth chapter is on dedication, which serves as a conclusion.

We might be able to start the teachings on the *Path to Enlightenment* in June.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷོ་མེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

11 April 2017

As usual let us spend some time in our meditation practice. [*tong-len meditation*]

Now we can generate the bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teachings

3. ADVICE THAT IT IS SUITABLE TO STRIVE TO REALISE EMPTINESS¹

3.1. The actual advice

3.1.1. Showing the meaning of the mode of abiding

The root text reads:

151. *How can functionalities thus empty
Be attained or lost?
How could one be praised?
How could one be criticised?*

The commentary begins by stating:

If one comprehends the actual nature of functionalities that are thus empty of inherent existence in the way explained earlier...

This refers back to the various reasons that refute or negate the inherent existence of functionalities, which were presented earlier.

The commentary continues:

...then which gain does one attain and become attached? Through the loss of what gain does one generate anger?

This refers to the first two of the eight worldly concerns: being glad when one has obtained gained something and upset and unhappy when one does not gain anything. If we are glad when we gain something, then that can induce attachment to what we have gained. Likewise anger can arise when we are unhappy about not gaining something.

So we need to equalise those states of mind by understanding how the gains that we obtain and the lack of gain both equally lack any inherent existence. Since they do not exist from their own side, there is no independently existent gain to be obtained or lost. By contemplating this fact then our whole attitude towards gain and loss can change to feeling happy when we do not gain anything and unhappy when we gain something.

The misapprehension that perceives things as being inherently or independently existent also explains how that initial grasping at gain, and aversion towards not obtaining gain is actually induced by a self-grasping mind. So there is this combination of a self-grasping mind that is strengthened by the perception of objects as being inherently existent. That is the main point.

Here we need to be careful to not misinterpret this as meaning that we should avoid all gains. The main point is that we should overcome attachment to gain. If we think that it is necessary to completely avoid all gains, then that would imply that bodhisattvas would completely shun all gains, and not have possessions and so forth. That of course is not the case. There are bodhisattvas who have vast riches and so forth, but because of their lack of attachment to those riches they utilise them to benefit many other beings. Great practitioners such as the seventh Dalai Lama, Kelsang Gyatso, and the fifth Panchen Lama, Lobsang Yeshe, had great riches in their lifetimes. Yet it is said that they did not even cling to their robes as being 'mine'. They didn't have the slightest of thoughts that anything 'belongs to me'. This goes to show that it's not gain that we need to avoid, but the grasping and attachment to gains and so forth.

The commentary then asks:

- What is the benefit received by praise, and what is the harm received by criticism, and by whom?

This relates to the second set of the eight worldly concerns: liking praise and not liking any criticism. As they both equally lack any inherent existence from their own side, why be so glad about praise and why be so unhappy about criticism?

The relevant verse reads:

152. *Where do happiness and suffering come from?
What is there to like or dislike?
Having investigated suchness
Who craves, and for what?*

Here the commentary explains:

From what true cause does the suffering of happiness, for which one engages into effort to attain and abandon it, arise? What is the inherent object of aversion and desire that one dislikes and likes? If one investigates suchness with the reasoning investigating the nature of the mode of abiding, then which craving person generates craving for which object, in dependence on which basis is craving generated? The three circles of craving lack inherent existence.

Being glad when experiencing happiness and despondent and unhappy when experiencing suffering is said to be one of the worst worldly concerns, as it is the cause of so much agitation, distress and mental suffering. That is because the happiness we crave eludes us so often, while we keep on experiencing what we really want to avoid. The moment we experience some sort of pleasurable samsaric happiness, attachment immediately arises in our minds, and the moment we experience any kind of discomfort and suffering, aversion and anger arise in our minds. We know this from our own experience. The moment we feel any discomfort, our mind is likely to become upset, and we begin to feel agitated and angry.

The way to equalise and overcome this worldly concern is to contemplate how there is no truly and inherently existent happiness. Likewise, there is no truly and inherently existent suffering existing independently from its own side. With this understanding strong grasping at the experience of worldly happiness, and the desire to avoid suffering is overcome.

¹ The body of the text has three sections: the need to realise emptiness, the method to generate the wisdom realising suchness and this section, advice that it is suitable to strive to realise emptiness.

There is also the exchanging and equalising method that is mentioned in the mind-training teachings. This involves exchanging your attitude from one that likes happiness with an attitude of disliking happiness, and exchanging disliking suffering with the attitude of liking and welcoming suffering and problems. This is, of course, a very profound level of mind-training, but through regular practice it is possible to actually reach the stage of exchanging the mind that craves happiness to being wary about experiencing worldly happiness, and then replacing it with an attitude of looking forward to experiencing difficulties and suffering.

Adopting this technique of exchanging worldly concerns can definitely be assisted by contemplating karma. All of our experiences come from previously created causes and conditions – none of them comes about randomly without any cause. When we apply this to ourselves, then we realise that the happiness we experience is result of our virtuous behaviour and the good karma that we have created in the past. So if we get attached to that happiness, then we are actually using up the virtue that we created in the past. So there's nothing to be happy about in using up and wasting the good karma that we have created in the past. When we think in this way and really understand the implications, it is very reasonable to not feel too elated about experiencing happiness.

Likewise, suffering is the result of negative karma that we created in the past with negativities and non-virtuous behaviour. So whatever suffering we experience now is actually exhausting our previously created negative karma, which is quite a good thing. When we understand things on this level then we welcome problems, because they are exhausting our negative karma. Wouldn't it be great to use up all your negative karma so that there are no more negative karmas left to experience?

Shantideva himself mentions five qualities of suffering. One of these is that when we experience suffering, we can immediately contemplate shunning negativities and accumulating virtue, and in that way see suffering as a way of encouraging us to accumulate virtue. Whenever I drink tea or enjoy a good meal, I contemplate how this is the consequence of good karma. Contemplating in this way actually encourages us to accumulate more virtue. Rather than becoming a cause for attachment, it actually reminds us that we need to accumulate more good karma. Conversely, when we experience any kind of mishaps and difficulties, we can remember that the uncomfortable experience we are experiencing now is a result of past negativities. This reminds us to purify our negative karma so that we won't have to experience the consequences in the future.

Shantideva mentions that we should develop a mind of being cautious about creating negativities, and glad and happy about accumulating virtues.

This is an essential point that we need to really consider. Whenever we have a good experience then, rather than getting too excited and feeling elated, we should immediately remind ourselves, 'OK, this is a result of the virtue that I accumulated in the past. So I should not waste it by becoming attached'. This also reminds us to accumulate more virtue. As soon as we experience any kind of mishap, discomfort and suffering we should

immediately remind ourselves that this is result of the negative karma that we created in the past, and that we must not engage in negativities now. Contemplating in this way develops a very strong impetus to accumulate virtue and shun negativities, which is the essential practice of Dharma.

The next line in the commentary is:

What is the inherent object of aversion and desire that one dislikes and likes?

Again, this is referring to what is liked or disliked such as liking happiness and disliking suffering, and liking pleasant words while disliking unpleasant words. As the commentary suggests:

If one investigates suchness with the reasoning investigating the nature of the mode of abiding, then which craving person generates craving for which object, in dependence on which basis is craving generated?

The conclusion is that:

The three circles of craving lack inherent existence.

The three circles refer to the person who is craving, the object that is being craved and the actual action of craving. All three lack even an atom of inherent existence. When we really analyse the person who likes and dislikes, the object that is liked and disliked, as well as the actions of craving for what we like and craving to be free from what we dislike, we find that all of them lack inherent existence. When we contemplate in this way it definitely reduces strong attachment and aversion in relation to, respectively, beautiful and repulsive objects. What is being presented here is that without a proper understanding of emptiness then it is very difficult to overcome the mental afflictions. Conversely when there is a good understanding of emptiness, the lack of inherent existence of ourselves and other phenomena, then that helps to reduce and ultimately overcome the mental afflictions. This is what needs to be understood.

The next verse is:

153. *When analysed, this life's worldly being,
How can it pass away here?
What will arise, what arose?
Who is a relative or friend?*

Here the commentary explains:

If one analyses thus a result, if one analyses karma and the person accumulating karma, then, because death is empty of inherent existence, how can this worldly sentient being die here in existence? How can it arise in a later life, how could it have arisen in a previous life? As there is not even the slightest inherent existence, who is the benefiting relative, or the attractive friend? Therefore, having worked at gaining a complete understanding of the meaning of the mode of abiding, one should train in equanimity for the eight worldly dharmas.

If we investigate the *karma and the person* who is *accumulating the karma*, then we are investigating on the basis of a living person now, as well as the experience at the time of death, and the future lifetime. All three, the living person now, the person who will experience death, and the person in the future, equally lack inherent existence.

As there is not even the slightest inherent existence, how can this worldly sentient being die here? How can it arise in a later life? How could it have risen in a previous life? What is being pointed out is that the living being now, that which will experience death, that which is to be reborn in the future as well as that which has come from the past, all equally lack any inherent existence. The reference to the *relative* who *benefits and the attractive friend* relates to friends and relatives who we perceive as existing inherently and from their own side, and are thus an object of attachment and craving. Understanding the lack of inherent existence of all the various objects of our attachment and aversion will help to overcome strong attachment and aversion, as well as all other afflictions.

Then comes the exhortation, *Therefore, having worked at gaining a complete understanding of the mode of abiding, one should train in equanimity for the eight worldly dharmas.* Although we may not have a complete understanding of the mode of abiding, i.e. the lack of inherent existence of phenomena, we can strive towards overcoming the eight worldly concerns with whatever understanding of emptiness that we do have now. This is the main point.

3.1.2. It is suitable to strive in realising that

The following two lines of verse are:

154ab. *Everything is like space -
That is how the likes of me should hold
everything.*

The commentary explains:

Therefore, those like me, the author, should hold all phenomena to be like space, because it is the main path to cut the root of existence and progress to all-knowing transcendental wisdom. 'Those like me' is to reduce the pride of the author, and the main reason is as advice to those ordinary individuals that have not yet realised suchness.

The definition of space is the mere negation of obstruction. Emptiness is likened to space as it is a non-affirming negation; i.e. emptiness is the mere negation of inherent existence.

Because it is the main path to cut the root of existence and progress to all-knowing transcendental wisdom explains that the realisation of emptiness is the main path that cuts the root of cyclic existence, and *progress to all knowing transcendental wisdom.*

This is a specific explanation: the wisdom realising emptiness is both the root cause for obtaining liberation i.e. cutting the root of cyclic existence, and for obtaining the all-knowing transcendental wisdom that is enlightenment. So the realisation of emptiness is the unequivocal cause of both liberation and enlightenment.

The remainder of the commentary is quite clear. '*Those like me*' is to reduce the pride of the author. The main reason or purpose, however is to entice *ordinary individuals* who *have not yet realised suchness*, to actually gain the realisation of emptiness.

3.2. Showing the object of great compassion by showing the disadvantages of cyclic existence

The following passages are not difficult to understand if you read through them slowly. They contain essential advice how to engage in practice.

There are five subdivisions:

- 3.2.1. The disadvantages of this life
- 3.2.2. The disadvantages in the next life
- 3.2.3. Contemplating that despite taking rebirth in the happy realm there is no time to practise Dharma
- 3.2.4. Contemplating the difficulty of attaining a birth with leisure and endowment
- 3.2.5. That oneself and others are afflicted by the suffering of cyclic existence is suitable to be mourned

3.2.1. The disadvantages of this life

Contemplating the disadvantages of this life also helps to induce compassion for other beings as well. That is the main point presented in these lines of verse:

154cd. *Those who desire happiness for themselves,
Through the causes of fighting and liking,*

155. *Are agitated or joyful;
Are miserable, striving and arguing,
Cutting, stabbing, and creating negativity
With each other; it is a very difficult life!*

The explanation in the commentary reads:

Even in this life, those desiring happiness for themselves are not beyond the power of suffering. Out of the wish for happiness they fight with enemies and like their friends, and through these causes they are either very disturbed or joyful. They are miserable when not achieving their aim. It appears as if they have to lead a very difficult life with much exertion, and yet attain little fruit due to the effort exerted to achieve the aim of their desires, due to arguing with others, cutting and stabbing each other's bodies, and accumulating infinite negativities of speech, mind and so forth. Therefore, the wise ones should not crave for the perfections of this life.

As the commentary explains, *Even in this life, those desiring happiness for themselves are not beyond the power of suffering.* Although we wish to experience happiness, we constantly experience suffering.

This is the same point that was presented in an earlier verse in the text. Shantideva really hit the mark when he said:

Although not wishing any sufferings,
Beings constantly run towards suffering
And although wishing for happiness,
They destroy the very causes of happiness.

As the commentary explains very clearly, *Out of the wish for happiness they fight with enemies.* We have all seen those who try to overcome enemies with the intention of gaining some happiness. However, far from attaining happiness, their actions just incite more hostility, so the desired result of happiness has become the cause for more suffering. We can see this on a global level. All the current conflicts arose from an initial intention to defeat and vanquish enemies in the name of peace, yet these conflicts have just created more and more hatred, and more combat, and more fighting. It is the same with friends. We try to please our friends, but sometimes that just causes more misery, and we realise that we haven't found the friendship we were looking for.

As the commentary further explains, *through these causes they are either very disturbed or joyful but they are miserable* because they do not achieve *their aim.* It appears as if they have to lead a *very difficult life with much exertion.* We can see this in our own lives: we put so much time and energy into the pursuit of

success and so forth but happiness still eludes us. As the commentary clearly explains people *attain little fruit due to the effort exerted to achieve the aim of their desires*. These efforts include *arguing with others, cutting and stabbing each other's bodies, and accumulating infinite negativities of speech, mind and so forth*. This is all very clear. *Therefore, the wise ones should not crave for the perfections of this life*. Here we are being exhorted to be careful about being overly concerned with the pleasures of this life.

The main point is the need to be mindful of acquiring the right conditions and causes for happiness. If we follow mistaken causes, then instead of experiencing happiness we will experience suffering which, of course, is what we have experienced all too often. The reason why we end up experiencing problems and thus suffering is because we are not acquiring the right causes for our happiness, and we keep on creating the causes for more problems and suffering. That is what we have done in the past, and that is what we are doing now. When you really contemplate these points especially in relation to the next verse, it really instils a strong compassion for those who are completely ignorant of the cause and effect sequence of how to accumulate virtues to experience happiness, and how to avoid the causes of suffering. Because of this ignorance they constantly experience suffering.

3.2.2. The disadvantages in the next life

The next few lines express the plight of sentient beings very succinctly. It is quite difficult for them to free themselves from cyclic existence, because this circle of constantly craving more causes us to experience the sufferings of cyclic existence again and again.

156. *Taking a higher rebirth from time to time,
And having experienced plenty of happiness there
One falls after death into the lower realms,
Experiencing long and terrifying sufferings.*

As the commentary explains:

Through the force of occasionally meeting with a virtuous teacher one takes a happy rebirth from time to time for the shortest of periods, like a flash of lightning in the sky. Having enjoyed much happiness there, one then has to experience the rough hot unpleasant sufferings of the lower realms and fall into the unceasing great hells where one remains for infinite eons experiencing terrifying suffering. Therefore, contemplate the sufferings of the lower realms.

Again this is essential advice, and it's not too hard to understand. It is a very strong reminder to actually practise the Dharma. As the commentary explains, *through the force of occasionally meeting with a virtuous teacher one takes a happy rebirth from time to time for the shortest of periods*. Right now we are enjoying the perfect conditions of a human life with its ten endowments and eight freedoms, because we met virtuous teachers in the past, and accumulated virtuous karma or merit in the past.

However, as explained here, although we have obtained a higher rebirth from time to time in the past, each of those lives were very short. The good conditions that we enjoy now will definitely not last much more than eighty years. As mentioned here, *like a flash of lightning in the sky, having enjoyed much happiness then one has to experience the rough*

hot unpleasant sufferings of the lower realms. When we have exhausted the merit to experience good conditions, then what remains is the negative karma that we created in the past, which then propels us to the lower realms once more.

Contemplating these points definitely brings a sense of urgency about securing a good future by accumulating virtues now. As the commentary explains, the alternative is to remain *for infinite eons experiencing terrifying suffering*. So we need to *contemplate the sufferings of the lower realms*.

In this life we are exhausting the merit that we have accumulated in the past, and unless we accumulate further virtues and merit to secure a good rebirth in the next life, we will have to experience the suffering of an unfortunate rebirth in the lower realms. So the main point here is that we need to develop a sense of urgency about accumulating virtues now. While that definitely inspires me to accumulate virtues and shun negativities, we all can benefit from thinking about this point.

While contemplating the sufferings of an unfortunate birth in the next life encourages us to engage in virtues and practise Dharma, it also induces a sense of compassion for other beings. They are experiencing so much suffering at this time, and they have no understanding of how to overcome the causes of that suffering. Their plight is really pitiful, and contemplating that can induce great compassion for them.

On a very basic level try to avoid negativities and accumulate virtues. While we may not yet have a vast understanding of the teachings, we can definitely practise at a simple and practical level. Understanding the ten virtuous and the ten non-virtuous actions gives us all that we really need to practise morality. There are the three non-virtuous physical actions of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct; the four non-virtuous actions of speech i.e. lying, divisive words, harsh words, and idle gossip; and three mental non-virtues of covetousness, harmful intention, and wrong views. By avoiding these ten non-virtues, and making a promise to practise the ten virtues, you are engaging in the practice of avoiding negativities and adopting virtues.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་པོ་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

18 April 2017

As usual, let us spend some time for our meditation practice. [*tong-len meditation*].

Now let us generate the bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teachings, thinking, 'for the benefit of all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teachings and put them into practice well'.

3.2.2. *The disadvantages in the next life*

Under this heading, we covered the first verse and its explanation in our last session. We are now onto the next verse.

What is being presented here are profound ways for encouraging ourselves to engage in Dharma practice. As explained earlier, although we may have obtained a rebirth in a fortunate realm, the period of time we have in this fortunate rebirth is very short. Therefore, having obtained this precious human rebirth at this time, and particularly having had the good fortune to meet with a qualified Mahayana teacher, we need to seize this opportunity and put the Dharma we have studied into practice well. This is the essence of what is being presented here.

In fact, we covered this yesterday in the last session of the Easter course on *The Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, when we went through the details of contemplating the sufferings of sentient beings as a way to generate bodhicitta. So we can easily relate to this point.

In yesterday's session, we reached the point in the verses about the purpose of realising emptiness. As we didn't have time to go further with that, this can be a continuation of the same topic – how to go about generating the realisation of emptiness.

The first three lines of the next verse read:

*157abc. There are a multitude of precipices in the world.
Suchness does not exist there
And they contradict each other.*

The commentary explains:

Contemplating the general sufferings of existence, in the existence of desire, form and the formless there are great multitude of precipices of harmful sufferings. The cause why one is not beyond this is that this world does not comprehend suchness, which is the method to be liberated from suffering. Situations such as being bound by the noose of existence is mutually exclusive with such an understanding.

Therefore, if one does not comprehend suchness, then one fabricates functionalities as truly existent, and as a result, one will be in contradiction to the cause of liberation. Then there is nothing left but to circle in cyclic existence ...

What is being explained here are the many pitfalls of suffering that exist in the desire, form and formless realms.

Just to explain further about the 'formless realm': we may recall that the definition of a person is 'that which is nominated upon one or more of the five aggregates'. So while beings in the formless realm don't have the form aggregate, by definition they are a person or a being, as they are nominated upon the aggregates of consciousness along with the compositional factors, feeling and discrimination.

Again, we can relate the commentary to what we were discussing in the verse of the *Three Principal Aspects of the Path* at yesterday's session. The purpose of realising emptiness is as explained here: *the cause why one is not beyond this is that this world does not comprehend suchness or emptiness, which is the method to be liberated from suffering*. The commentary goes on: *situations such as being bound by the noose of existence are mutually exclusive with such an understanding*. As was also explained in yesterday's session on the purpose of realising emptiness, beings are bound to cyclic existence due to karma and afflictions. If we recall the analogy of a person bound to a tree, the binding factor – the rope – is analogous to karma and the delusions. As I have mentioned previously, gaining an understanding of one aspect of the teachings, and maintaining that understanding, can help us to relate to other similar explanations. When you have read and understood a particular aspect of the teaching, then whenever you find it presented in a text, that part of the text will be very clear to you.

So if we understand cyclic existence as being our own contaminated aggregates, the binding factor – or as mentioned here the noose – is karma and the delusions, and that which is being bound is the person, ourselves. We are bound to the contaminated aggregates by the noose or rope of the afflictions and karma. Thus, we will not be free of being bound to the contaminated aggregates unless and until we generate the understanding or realisation of suchness or emptiness. This is the essential point.

The commentary further explains:

Therefore, if one does not comprehend suchness, then one fabricates functionalities as truly existent, and as a result, one will be in contradiction to the cause of liberation.

When we have the false perception of grasping at phenomena as truly or inherently existent, this mistaken view will bind us to cyclic existence, which is *in contradiction to the cause of liberation*. If we view things as being empty of true or inherent existence, then that will not be in contradiction to the cause of liberation. In fact, it will be the very cause of our liberation.

Here, we need to understand that the fabricated perception we have that sees *functionalities*, or phenomena *as being truly existent* is the main cause that binds us to cyclic existence, a specific example of which would be our own contaminated aggregates. Until we thoroughly understand why we need to abandon our contaminated aggregates, there is no way we can develop the mind of wanting to be free from cyclic existence.

In relation to the three types of sufferings – from our own experience, we can all relate to the *suffering of suffering* as something we desperately want to overcome. Even animals want to be free from the suffering of suffering. Some translations refer to it as the ‘suffering of pain’ denoting the emotional and physical pain that is experienced. This is not an obscure point; because of the very experience of physical or mental suffering, all beings are naturally inclined to want to be free from that. The next type of suffering is the *suffering of change*, which is a little bit more obscure. It is not, however, unique to the Buddhist tenets, as there are some other traditions that view the suffering of change as something to be abandoned as well. The third level of suffering – *all-pervasive, compounded suffering* – is said to be the subtlest suffering to realise, and thus to be abandoned. But until we see the need to abandon our contaminated aggregates, then there is no way we can be free from cyclic existence. This is what specifically needs to be understood here, which is an uncommon and unique presentation in the Buddhist teachings. If, on the other hand, we are in contradiction to the cause of liberation, *then there is nothing left but to circle in cyclic existence*.

The last line of Verse 157 and the two lines from Verse 158 read:

157d. *Hence, nothing like it exists in the world.*

158ab. *Additionally, there is a terrifying infinite Ocean of suffering without example.*

The commentary explains:

Because in the world of circling there is no such thorough comprehension of suchness, and it is a unique existence in which one experiences an ocean of terrifying infinite suffering without example. Therefore it is suitable to strive in understanding emptiness.

This serves as a reason for the earlier point. The commentary starts by saying that because of the lack of the *thorough comprehension of suchness*, *it is a unique¹ existence in which one experiences an ocean of terrifying infinite suffering without example*. In other words, until we gain the thorough comprehension or understanding of suchness or emptiness, we will not be able to see the end of cyclic existence. In earlier teachings, there were questions about whether or not there is an end to cyclic existence. Here, we are shown that we will not be able to see the end of cyclic existence if we do not have the comprehension, or thorough understanding, of suchness. Such a person will experience a seemingly endless round of rebirth in cyclic existence. But a being who develops a thorough understanding of suchness will be able to see that there is an end to their cyclic existence.

Rather than getting caught in endless debates about whether in general there is an end to cyclic existence or not, it is much more worthwhile for us to understand that, on a personal level, for as long as we do not gain the thorough or complete, unmistakable understanding of the correct view of suchness, there will be no end to our personal cyclic existence. We will have to be continuously

reborn in cyclic existence. But when we gain a good understanding and realisation of emptiness, from then on, we will be able to clearly see that there is an end to our own personal cyclic existence. So, as the commentary concludes, *it is suitable to strive to understand emptiness*.

Here, we need to contemplate our own mistaken view, or the view of the transitory collections. With this view, one grasps at oneself (the individual ‘I’) and the ‘my’ and ‘mine’ which belong to the aggregates as being inherently existent. That core misconception – grasping at the self – is what binds us to cyclic existence. We must then see the possibility of overcoming this mistaken view, and that there’s an antidote to this mistaken view of the transitory collections. The antidote is to cultivate the understanding of the correct view, which is that the ‘I’ and the things that belong to the ‘I’ do not exist inherently. When we comprehend that and realise the view of selflessness, we overcome that mistaken view of the transitory collections.

As the teachings explain, when grasping at the self is overcome, then we release the noose that binds us to cyclic existence. We need to see that the object apprehended by self-grasping – an inherently or truly existent ‘I’ – does not exist. Once we see that there is no truly or inherently existent self, we will have negated the object perceived by self-grasping. That is how we understand the selflessness of the ‘I’.

3.2.3. Contemplating that despite taking rebirth in the happy realm there is no time to practise Dharma

The next verse exhorts us to overcome the thought, ‘although I didn’t get time to practise much in this life, I can certainly aim to practise further in the next life’. What may sound to us like a comforting thought is in fact just a form of laziness, specifically the laziness of procrastinating.

The following passages help us to overcome such laziness by reminding us that, although we may have a good rebirth at the moment, it is very short, and there is not much time to actually practise the Dharma.

So we can relate the following passages to our precious human life:

158cd. *There thus it is weak
And one’s life is short.*

159ab. *There are actions to live
And stay healthy; thirst and fatigue,*

The commentary explains:

There, in that existence, although one takes rebirth in a happy realm, as a consequence the power to create virtue is thus weak, and the basis for achieving virtue, the freedoms and endowments, is short-lived.

Even during the briefest times there, one is engaged in actions with which one hopes to stay with for a long time, such as washing and massaging the body and relying on medicine to stay free from sickness. There is thirst, fatigue on the road, ...

So *although one may take rebirth in a happy realm* such as a human rebirth with *freedoms and endowments*, *the power to create virtue is still very weak*. Even if one has obtained a human rebirth with *freedoms and endowments*, *it is also very short-lived*. It doesn’t last for a long time. We really need to reflect upon this in relation to our own circumstances.

¹ Translator’s note: the Tibetan word here means ‘an existence which has no comparison or has no example’. I think that’s why this translation uses the word ‘unique’ here.

Even during the briefest times there, one is engaged in actions with which one hopes to stay with for a long time... So, although the duration of our stay in the happy realms or in fortunate rebirths is only for a short time, we hope to stay for a long time. Thus, we engage in the means for staying healthy and prolonging our life, by engaging in activities such as washing and massaging the body and relying on medicine to stay free from sickness and so forth.

We know that the daily act of washing or taking a shower – and especially taking a bath – takes some time out of our day. The main point being made here is that if we engage in these activities frivolously or mindlessly, then we are using up our time without taking the opportunity to practise the Dharma. When I take a bath, I incorporate thoughts about the Dharma, such as, ‘By cleaning and taking care of my body, may it be sustained for the purpose of the teachings, for the purpose of benefiting others’. With that attitude, such actions can become meaningful. Otherwise, if we engage in activities like cleaning ourselves or eating simply with worldly concerns, then since most of the day is taken up with such activities, our time will have been used frivolously and we won’t have had the time to practise Dharma. Likewise, when we get sick, we are so absorbed in our aches and pains, it is hard to think about the Dharma at that time.

Most of our day is taken up with such worldly activities. So, if we seek to set a separate time for practising Dharma, there is not much time left. However, if we were to engage in all our daily activities in a virtuous frame of mind, they would become meaningful. That is why, as I regularly recommend, it is important to remember offering every meal we eat and every drink we have, and think that we are consuming food and drink as a way to sustain ourselves for the purpose of Dharma. That then becomes the means for accumulating merit and engaging in virtue. Otherwise, if we think Dharma practice is to be done only at a separate allocated time, and regard everything else outside of this as merely daily activities for our survival, we will carry them out mindlessly, in a worldly way. If that is the case, then definitely there will not be much time left for what we would consider ‘time for Dharma practice’.

The next lines of verse are:

*159cd. Sleep and harm. Likewise, due to
Meaningless association with the childish,*

*160ab. Life passes by quickly, and
The opportunity to investigate is extremely
rare.*

Then the commentary explains:

... sleep and [being harmed by] various inner and outer harms. Likewise, through meaningless association with the childish negative friends, life passes quickly without meaning and disintegrates without the time to practise Dharma.

Because it is extremely difficult to find an opportunity to investigate the meaning of suchness, which is the cause to go beyond existence, for that reason one should strive in the method to reverse cyclic existence.

We could say that up to half of our life is spent sleeping. In 24 hours, up to half the time may be taken up with

sleep. Sleep takes up a lot of time that otherwise could be used to practise Dharma.

The *inner harms* could relate to inner diseases, or psychologically feeling weighed down or depressed. The *outer harms* are harms from external sources that also cause mental agony. If we are not mindful when we are in pain and agony, this time could detract from our practice of Dharma, and become a condition for us to create non-virtue rather than a virtuous state of mind. That is why these harms are considered as times that keep us away from the practice of Dharma.

Likewise, through meaningless association with the childish, i.e. non-virtuous friends, life passes quickly without meaning... This means our life doesn’t wait for a moment. It is passing away continuously, subtracting from our lifespan, while most of our time is used up with these frivolous activities. So our life passes quickly without meaning, and disintegrates without finding the time to practise Dharma.

Because it is extremely difficult to find opportunities to investigate the meaning of suchness, which is the cause to go beyond existence, one should strive in the method to reverse cyclic existence

Returning to the topic of sleep, for those who are not familiar with the mental factors sleep is one of the four ‘changeable’ mental factors. This means that it can be virtuous, non-virtuous or neutral, depending on the motivation preceding the act of sleep. If, prior to falling asleep, one has a virtuous mind, it is said that when one falls asleep, one’s sleep will actually become virtuous, due to the last moment of mind before sleep being virtuous. If one has a negative mind just prior to falling asleep, the rest of the sleep actually becomes non-virtuous. Whereas if one has neither a virtuous nor a non-virtuous mind and just falls asleep within a natural state of mind, then that act of sleep will also be neutral - what we call neither virtuous nor non-virtuous. I mentioned ‘motivation’ earlier, but I think the meaning here is more like your state of mind prior to falling asleep.

In terms of making sleep virtuous by adopting a virtuous mind, I had some personal experience with this last month. I was in bed and reciting the prayer of the Four Immeasurables; I recited it a few times, then I fell asleep. Sometime later, when I woke up, I was actually still reciting it – I woke up reciting that prayer!

As I have shared a few times previously, when I put my head on the pillow to go to sleep, I normally visualise the Buddha just above my head. Then I imagine light rays coming from the Buddha’s heart and pervading my body, imagining that I am receiving the blessings of the Buddha. Then, when I fall asleep in that state, I feel like my sleep has been worthwhile. However, that is just something I have chosen to do. I’m not saying that you all have to do the same. I’m sharing this as an example of how to bring about a virtuous mind just before falling asleep.

It is specifically explained in some instructions that one can visualise the light rays coming from the Buddha, like a net or canopy of light. I guess we could think of the image of a mosquito net draped over a bed. The body is covered with the rays of light descending from the

Buddha: one sleeps within that canopy of light. It is said that one can feel very joyous and very protected under those rays of light. The instructions say that it is one of the best methods to protect one from external harms. It can also help one to ward off nightmares and uncomfortable dreams.

3.2.4. Contemplating the difficulty of attaining a birth with leisure and endowment

First, the argument or hypothetical doubt is presented:

Argument: It is acceptable because one can stop cyclic existence through meditating on emptiness when one takes rebirth in a happy realm and meditates on emptiness.

This is in relation to the earlier point that it is difficult to obtain a human rebirth in the next lifetime. Here, the argument is that, *it is acceptable because one can stop cyclic existence through meditating on emptiness when one takes rebirth in a happy realm and meditates on emptiness.* This is a doubt held by many people, 'Well even in this life if I don't achieve something significant, that's fine! I can relax, because in the next life, I will have the opportunity to practise the Dharma.'

There are those who often say 'I didn't get much time to practise Dharma in this life, but that's okay, because in the next life, I will obtain a human rebirth, and then I will be able to practise.' The text proceeds to remove such wishful thoughts, and encourages us to practise the Dharma now, when we have such good conditions.

160cd. *How can the method to overcome
Habituation with distraction possibly exist there?*
161ab. *Demons work there to throw one
Into the vast hells;*

Then the commentary explains the meaning of this verse, which serves as an answer to the earlier argument:

Answer: Cyclic existence is extremely difficult to stop due to having habituated oneself since beginningless samsaric lives to grasping at functionalities as truly existent, and to the distractions such as outer excitements and the like. How can there be the method to stop it, as conducive conditions are extremely rare and harmful obstructing conditions abound? Even during this limited time to practice, the dharma demons such as the 'Son of Gods' work for one to fall into the great hells. The conditions obstructing liberation from existence are many and difficult to stop.

What the commentary is explaining here is that *cyclic existence is extremely difficult to stop due to having become habituated since beginningless samsaric lives to grasping at functionalities as truly existent, and to the distractions such as outer excitements and the like.* We have a long habituation to grasping at truly or inherently existent functionalities, which include 'self' and other phenomena. This is due to the very deep-rooted seed of grasping at true existence, as well as our habituation to the distractions such as outer excitements, which means being distracted by, and engaging in frivolous activities. Due to this long habituation, we find it difficult to ignore these conditions.

As the commentary asks, *how can there be the method to stop it, as conducive conditions are extremely rare and harmful obstructing conditions abound?* We can relate to the examples or analogies given in the lam-rim teachings that

illustrate how our negativities are plentiful. One analogy compares our negativities to being like an expansive, deep-rooted tree, while our virtue is weak. There's another analogy: it is difficult to make a large quantity of a bitter substance palatable and sweet. Our virtue is like a few small drops of a sweet substance like honey that we put into a huge pot containing a bitter substance – one or two drops definitely cannot make it sweet. It would require a lot of the sweet substance to sweeten it. This analogy illustrates how, while our negativities abound, our virtue is very, very weak, as we have few opportunities to accumulate virtue.

There is a two-fold understanding for us here. On one hand, because our virtues have been weak, we cannot expect a radical, immediate change, expecting that by engaging in a few practices, we will suddenly experience a great transformation. That is too grand an expectation. On the other hand, despite our attempts at virtue being meagre, if we make every small effort to continuously engage in them, then eventually we can overcome our negativities – just like many drops of a sweet substance will eventually sweeten a big pot of a bitter substance.

Because of our habituation to perceiving things mistakenly with the view that grasps at inherent or true existence, and because of our many distractions, just practising a few lines of the Dharma could not possibly immediately change us. That is to be understood here. When the commentary further mentions that *even during this limited time to practice, the Dharma demons* – the Dharma demons mentioned here could refer to the negative influence of others, such as negative friends, but more specifically those who may show us a wrong or mistaken path that is not based on fact and reality, but on misconstrued, fabricated advice and teachings. Due to their influence and by following their advice, we could be misled and thus move further away from achieving the real Dharma, the truth. *The 'Son of Gods'* is the example mentioned here, which causes *one to fall into the great hells.*

Of course, when the Buddha teaches, he is able to subdue many sentient beings with his teachings. Because of the Buddha's majesty, he is able to attract many disciples. However, it is said that certain demons have a miraculous power to show an aspect of looking like the Buddha, just on the outside. When such demons give teachings, they mislead people into engaging in negativities.

It is said that evil-minded beings who do not like virtue and the Dharma, will be jealous when we do good virtuous deeds, and try to influence us to engage in negativities by telling us things that are untrue, leading us away from our Dharma practice and virtue. That is the main point being related here. We need to be mindful to protect ourselves from the negative influences that lead us away from the Dharma.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

25 April 2017

While maintaining the motivation we generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our meditation practice. [meditation]

Now we can generate the bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I'll listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

3.2.4. Contemplating the difficulty of attaining a birth with leisure and endowment (cont.)

Last week we discussed the first two lines of verse relating to this heading. Next comes this argument:

It is not difficult to find opportunity to liberate oneself from existence because when one takes rebirth in the happy realms, then one can achieve liberation through such practices such as meditating on the truth, and faith in the Three Jewels and the like.

Then these two lines are presented:

161cd. *There are many wrong paths,
And it is difficult to contradict doubt.*

The answer to the argument is:

While taking rebirth in the happy realms there are many wrong paths that have fallen into the extremes of eternalism or nihilism, which are opposing conditions to generating the right view. There are false teachers that lead one on these paths, and it is difficult to contradict doubt with regards to the correct view because it is difficult to find the inner and outer conditions to cut that doubt.

We can relate *taking rebirth in the happy realms* to ourselves because we have been reborn with all the conditions of a perfect human rebirth. Yet even though we have this happy or fortunate rebirth now, we still find it hard to utilise these good conditions, because *there are many wrong paths that have fallen into the extremes of eternalism or nihilism, which are opposing conditions for the generation of the right view.*

The first argument is that *it is not difficult to find the opportunity to liberate oneself from existence, because when one takes rebirth in the happy realms, one can achieve liberation through practices such as meditating on the truth, and faith in the Three Jewels and the like.* If the thought, 'Even though I may not be able to practise Dharma fully in this life, I'll achieve all the good conditions in future lives, and then I can meditate on truth and having faith in the Three Jewels and be liberated' arises, then we need to immediately recognise this as the laziness of procrastination.

Although we have obtained a happy rebirth now, *there are many wrong paths of eternalism or nihilism, which are opposing conditions for the generation of the right view.* Then *there are false teachers that lead one onto these wrong paths.* So not

only are there wrong paths, but there are also those who propound the tenets of the wrong paths. Hence *it is difficult to contradict doubt with regard to the correct view because it is difficult to find the inner and outer conditions to cut that doubt.*

As explained in the teachings, it is hard to generate even a doubt about whether emptiness is valid.¹ However eliminating that doubt and moving towards an understanding of emptiness is difficult, because it is difficult to find the necessary inner and outer conditions.

This is followed by a further argument:

Although one may not find these conditions in this life, because one will find the virtuous teacher in the next life, and then practise.

The argument here is that *although one may not find these conditions in this life, it is acceptable because one will find a virtuous teacher in the next life, and then be able to practise.* This argument points out a false sense of certainty that we will definitely obtain a fortunate rebirth in the next lifetime, and be able to continue to practise the Dharma. The assumption is that, although one may not have all the conditions for practice in this life, one will obtain a good rebirth again in the next lifetime and be able to practise then.

The answer is that there is no certainty one will obtain a good rebirth in the next lifetime, as the causes are so difficult to obtain. So on a personal level this is an instruction to overcome the laziness of procrastination. We need to specifically relate this to the difficulty of obtaining a precious human rebirth with its eight freedoms and ten endowments, as presented in the next verse. It is also extensively explained in the lam-rim teachings.

The next verse reads:

162. *Finding freedom again is difficult
And the coming of a buddha is extremely rare to find.
It is difficult to abandon the river of afflictions
And, alas, weighed down by these one continually suffers.*

As the commentary explains:

Answer: If one does not strive well in this life, when one has found a virtuous teacher, then it will be difficult to find freedom again in the future, and since it is extremely rare for a buddha to come to the world, it is very hard to meet with a virtuous teacher.

Although one has met a virtuous teacher and already attained a wholesome basis with freedoms and endowments, if one does not strive well in conscientiousness, then it is hard to counter the river of afflictions. They will continue to pour down until one has attained liberation. 'Alas' contains the meaning of sadness and despondency because one continually experiences one suffering after the next, as well as experiencing extreme suffering. Although one may be free from one suffering, one falls into another suffering. Therefore, one should strive in contemplating the sufferings of cyclic existence while having attained freedom and endowments.

¹ Ed: As mentioned previously, this doubt is the positive doubt that maybe it really is the case that things do lack inherent existence.

This is an explicit explanation of the difficulty of obtaining a precious human rebirth, which is necessary to gain an understanding of the right view that realises emptiness. Of course, this applies in a broader sense as well; let alone realising emptiness, finding the conditions to practise Dharma is very difficult.

As specifically mentioned, it is even more difficult to find a teacher who presents the correct view of emptiness properly, because they are very rare. The significant point here is to *strive well in this life, when one has found a virtuous teacher*.

When the commentary says, *it will be difficult to find freedom again in the future*, it is referring to the conditions necessary for a precious human rebirth with its eight freedoms and ten endowments. Moreover *it is extremely rare for a buddha to come to the world*, which why it will be *very hard to meet with a virtuous teacher*. As explained in the lam-rim teachings, we are said to be living now in what is called a 'light eon', which is a fortunate eon where the Buddha has come and taught the Dharma. The 'light eon' is followed by a 'dark eon' when the Buddhist teachings have declined. If one were to be born in a dark eon, there would be no possibility of meeting with virtuous teachers, because the teachings of the Buddha would not be present.

So we have both the internal conditions of a precious human rebirth and the external conditions of the eon in which we are now living, where Buddha has come and taught in this world. Without these external conditions, *it is very difficult to meet with a virtuous teacher* who is able to present the unmistakable correct view.

When the commentary states that *although one has met a virtuous teacher and already attained a wholesome basis with freedoms and endowments*, it is referring to the argument which says that one will have all the necessary conditions to be able to practise in a future life. In simple terms it is saying, 'What makes you think that you'll be able to practise in a future life with all the necessary conditions, when you are not utilising the good conditions that you actually have right now?'

That is followed with *if one does not strive well in conscientiousness, then it is hard to counter the river of afflictions which will continue to pour down until one has attained liberation*. If we don't utilise all the perfect conditions that we have now by applying conscientiousness, then the afflictions will run rampant, and *pour down like rain*, meaning that we will be completely consumed by them, and have to endure suffering until we *have attained liberation*.

As the commentary further mentions, '*Alas*' contains the meaning of sadness and despondency because one continually experiences one suffering after the next, as well as experiencing extreme suffering. *Although one may be free from one suffering, one falls into another suffering. Therefore, one should strive in contemplating the sufferings of cyclic existence while having attained freedom and endowments*. The conclusion is that we need to reflect upon the fact that having obtained these good conditions now, we need to take the essence of this life and make it most meaningful by contemplating the correct understanding of emptiness, and engaging in the practice of Dharma.

Shantideva is really encouraging us here. Reflecting on these points is an impetus to practise Dharma and make our precious human life with its eight freedoms and ten endowments most meaningful.

There is nothing obscure about this. We can all relate to the comment that *although one may be free from one suffering, one falls into another suffering*. With our contaminated aggregates, we find that we might have a headache, but once we've cured the headache, we might start having aches and pains in our back, or our knees might start to give way, and then we have stomach aches. We find that we experience these sufferings one after another, again and again, in one form or another, which will be the case until we obtain liberation.

The main point that we need to understand here is that we will have to experience these sufferings again and again until we obtain liberation. And until and unless we gain an understanding of the correct view, the realisation of emptiness, we cannot possibly obtain liberation.

As explained previously, grasping at an inherently existent self is the very root cause of samsara. So until and unless grasping at an inherent existent self is completely reversed by applying the antidote of the wisdom realising emptiness or selflessness, there's no way we will be able to reverse the condition of being in cyclic existence.

Gaining the wisdom realising emptiness also depends on having a proper understanding of interdependent origination. Therefore, as presented in Lama Tsongkhapa's *Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, which we covered in our Easter course, we need to strive to gain an understanding of interdependent origination. This is the crucial point.

It is important for us to incorporate whatever understanding we gain from other teachings into whatever subjects we are currently studying, as that will form a concise basis for our practice. There are so many different texts and different practices, and if we view each individual text or practice in isolation, it can be confusing. Rather, we need to try to combine whatever understanding we have from the different texts we study, and whatever practices we are doing, and then we will gain a comprehensive understanding.

3.2.5. That oneself and others are afflicted by the suffering of cyclic existence is suitable to be mourned

This refers to the ways and means of instilling feelings of love and compassion for sentient beings.

The first verse under this heading reads:

163. *Those who do not see their suffering
Despite suffering to the extreme,
They, submerged in the river of suffering,
'Oh dear', they are appropriate to be mourned.*

The commentary explains:

Sentient beings suffer to the extreme, they do not see that they are sinking in suffering by mistaking suffering for happiness, and they are submerged in a river of suffering. Having generated love for these sentient beings that sink in the mud of suffering, they

are suitable to be mourned with the thoughts of, 'Oh dear, how wonderful would it be if sentient beings were free from suffering' and the like. Therefore, one needs to strive in meditating on great compassion.

When the commentary states, *sentient beings suffer to the extreme*, we need to relate this to ourselves as well, as the heading indicates. We need to remember that these explanations apply to ourselves as well as other sentient beings, as we are all in the same lamentable and pitiful situation.

Sentient beings, including ourselves, endure extreme suffering. *By mistaking suffering for happiness they do not see that they are sinking*. This again is very true. A lot of suffering is mistaken for happiness and as a result sentient beings purposely engage in suffering. As I've mentioned previously, we need to be very cautious about creating negativities. We gladly and wilfully engage in some negativities rather than being hesitant about creating them; indeed, there are times where we become upset if we don't get an opportunity to engage in some negativities.

How can we call ourselves true Dharma practitioners if we behave like this? If we willingly engage in negativities and get upset when we don't get an opportunity to create negativities then we are indeed *submerged in a river of suffering*.

Understanding karma means recognising that if we engage in the causes of suffering, we are bound to experience the consequence, which is suffering. If we do not wish for suffering, we need to avoid creating the causes of suffering, which are negativities. Conversely, if we want to experience happiness, we need to engage in the appropriate causes for happiness, which is engaging in virtuous actions.

The commentary continues, *having generated love for these sentient beings that sink in the mud of suffering, they are suitable to be mourned with the thoughts of...* When we relate these sufferings to ourselves, they become a condition to generate renunciation. When we relate them to other sentient beings, then they become a condition for us to generate compassion. We need to understand that the difference comes down to the focus. If the sufferings relate to ourselves, they become a condition for us to generate renunciation. But when focused upon other sentient beings, then contemplating these sufferings and their pitiful situation becomes an impetus for us to generate compassion for them.

Therefore one generates the thought, 'Oh dear, how wonderful it would be if sentient beings were free from suffering' and so forth. This can be further elaborated into these three aspirations: *how wonderful would it be if sentient beings were free from suffering*; may they be free from these sufferings; and I will personally ensure that they are free from suffering. These thoughts are a very powerful way of generating compassion.

Then the commentary concludes with, *therefore, one needs to strive in meditating on great compassion*.

The next verse presents an example of mistakenly taking suffering as happiness.

164. For example, some, after having washed repeatedly,

Go into fire again and again.

Thus, even though abiding in extreme suffering, they project that they are happy.

The commentary explains:

For example, some followers of outside tenets, that were deceived by misleading teachers, repeatedly wash themselves and enter the fire again and again. Although they abide with strong suffering due to the physical austerity, they project happiness onto it by holding it to be a method for attaining liberation.

The commentary explains that *some followers of outside tenets*, i.e. followers of non-Buddhist schools, who *were deceived by misleading teachers, repeatedly wash themselves* seeing it as a means to gain liberation. Just washing themselves again and again doesn't seem so severe, but then the next austerity the commentary mentions is entering a *fire again and again*. To this day, there are those who walk on fire, sleep on nails or thorns, and so forth, holding these severe and austere practices to be a means to gain liberation.

Bathing in the Ganges, however, is believed to have some benefit because the water is actually blessed by bodhisattvas, so it has some positive effect. But if we could gain liberation just by washing, then I guess we wouldn't be too far away from liberation, because we bath ourselves quite often!

It is quite misleading to say that these austere practices, in and of themselves, are a means to gain liberation. Actions such as enduring the pain of putting one's fingertips on fire, or enduring extreme heat and cold, or sleeping on thorns or nails, in and of themselves, cannot be a cause to achieve liberation, and so they are quite meaningless.

Nevertheless, *although they abide with strong suffering due to physical austerity, they project happiness onto it by holding it to be a method for attaining liberation*. In their minds, these followers think they're creating the causes for liberation, when in fact they have been misled.

As a personal instruction, it is not sufficient for us to point the finger at others and say they're meaninglessly enduring such sufferings by following strange practices, while we ourselves create more suffering for ourselves by willingly engaging in negativity. In both cases, the suffering is self-inflicted.

The understanding we need to derive here is that we need to avoid engaging in negativities as a way to stop the causes of our own suffering.

The advice in the next verse is again very pertinent advice for us:

165. Thus those continually acting
As if without old age and death
Are first killed,
And then comes the terrifying downfall into the
lower realms.

As the commentary explains:

In this manner, those that abide acting like arhats without death or sickness, are first killed by the lord of death without any means to stop or abandon him, and then come the terrifying sufferings of having fallen into the three lower realms.

In reference to *those that abide acting like arhats without death or sickness*, real arhats are of course free from

sickness, aging, and death, because they have abandoned the very root of the afflictions. When we, who are still in cyclic existence, fail to utilise our freedoms and endowments to engage in the practice of Dharma, then we are acting as if we are arhats.

We cannot afford to lie around lazily as if we are arhats with no need to free ourselves from cyclic existence, because our life is bound to end. If we fail to put time into practising the Dharma, there's no way to stop the lord of death, and then the terrifying sufferings of having fallen into the three lower realms will be upon us. Here the metaphor of being killed by the lord of death is being used as an exhortation to not lie around in a leisurely manner and waste our opportunity to engage in the practice of Dharma.

3.3. Showing the mode of apprehension of the aspect of great compassion

Basically, this is presenting an aspect of great compassion. The first verse reads:

166. *Thus may I become someone from whose
Clouds of merits rain of a well borne
Accumulation of happiness that pacifies those
Tortured by the sufferings of fire.*

The commentary explains:

Having contemplated the way they who experience terrifying suffering in their continuum in the way explained earlier, are afflicted by suffering, one should meditate on great compassion in the following manner, keeping in mind the sentient beings that are tortured by the fires of suffering:

'When will I become someone that pacifies the sufferings of the lower realms with medicine, food and the like? That which are parts of my collection of happiness, built up from clouds of merits built up by generosity and so forth. How wonderful would it be if sentient beings were free from suffering? May they be free from suffering. May I bring about that freedom.'

Meditate in the following way on great compassion:

Having contemplated the suffering of sentient beings, which have just been explained, *one meditates on great compassion in the following manner.* What are presented in the commentary as questions, are actually aspirational prayers.

Keeping in mind that sentient beings are tortured by the fires of suffering, one asks oneself, *'When will I become someone who pacifies the sufferings of the lower realms with medicine, food and the like?'* This rhetorical question is basically saying, *'May I be the one who pacifies the sufferings of the lower realms with medicine, food and the like?'* *That which are parts of my collection of happiness, built up from clouds of merits built up by generosity and so forth* refers to the accumulation of merit from practising the six perfections of generosity, morality, patience, joyous effort, concentration and wisdom.

With the merit gained from these practices one thinks, *'How wonderful it would be if sentient beings were free from suffering.'* From this arises the compassion that thinks, *'May they be free from suffering, and may I bring about that freedom.'* In other words, by reflecting on the suffering of sentient beings, the mind of compassion thinking, *'May I free them from all the sufferings'* will arise.

So, as the commentary says, *meditate in the following way on great compassion.*

This part of the text is specifically dedicating the accumulation of one's merit towards the alleviation of the suffering of sentient beings, and wishing them to be free from that suffering. Here, compassion is presented as an outcome of having generated merit.

The next verse relates this back to the need for wisdom:

167. *May I, by respectfully building up the
accumulation of merits
In the way that lacks focus,
Be able to show emptiness to those
Who are destitute because of having focus.*

The commentary explains:

'Dedicating as the cause for liberation from the sufferings of cyclic existence: When will I realise that all phenomena lack inherent existence, and respectfully build up the infinite accumulations of merit of generosity and so forth with the method of the objectless wisdom?'²

When will I show emptiness to the sentient beings that are destitute in cyclic existence due to the object of true-grasping, to pacify their samsaric suffering? How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were free from the suffering of cyclic existence. May I free them from that suffering.'

It further mentions:

To fulfil the definition of great love and compassion that are contained in the Mahayana path one needs to wish to place sentient beings in the state of complete enlightenment that is endowed with all happiness, and which is free from all suffering.

Meditate in the following way on great compassion:

'Dedicating as the cause for liberation from the sufferings of cyclic existence: When will I realise that all phenomena lack inherent existence, and respectfully build up the infinite accumulations of merit of generosity and so forth with the method of the objectless wisdom? When will I show emptiness to the sentient beings that are destitute in cyclic existence due to the object of true-grasping, to pacify their samsaric suffering? How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were free from the suffering of cyclic existence. May I free them from that suffering.'

This is a dedication that serves as the cause for liberation from the suffering of cyclic existence. As related here, one dedicates the combination of one's extensive accumulation of merit and one's understanding of emptiness, referred to here as *objectless wisdom*, to liberating all beings from suffering. We need to develop the aspiration by asking ourselves, *'When will I realise that all phenomena lack inherent existence, and respectfully build up the infinite accumulations of merit of generosity and so forth?'* Here *and so forth* refers to the other perfections. So the aspiration is, *'May I actually use these merits combined with the objectless wisdom - the wisdom realising emptiness - to be able to liberate sentient beings'*.

The following aspiration in the commentary has essentially the same meaning: *when will I show emptiness to the sentient beings.*

² Some translations use also 'the wisdom which lacks apprehension'

The next point is the main point:

To fulfil the definition of great love and compassion that are contained in the Mahayana path one needs to wish to place sentient beings in the state of complete enlightenment that is endowed with all happiness, and which is free from all suffering.

One realises that having generated strong love and compassion for sentient beings by contemplating all of the suffering they are experiencing, and instilling a strong sense of urgently wishing for them to be free from suffering and endowed with happiness is not sufficient in itself as a means of actually benefiting sentient beings. What needs to be added is what is called superior intention.

The superior intention that is indicated here is taking personal responsibility for implementing the wish to place them in the *state of complete enlightenment, that is endowed with all happiness, and which is free from all suffering.*

As I've also emphasised many times previously, we need to develop the strong impetus to generate love and compassion, and then engage in practices such as the tong-len meditation. This giving and taking practice is a powerful practice that incorporates the actual deeds of a bodhisattva – taking the sufferings of others on oneself, and giving them happiness.

As I mentioned earlier, these are really essential points that allow one to generate that strong mind of bodhicitta.

I place great emphasis on love and compassion and how practices like tong-len and so forth are a very strong means of generating that mind of superior intention as a way to generate bodhicitta. I have mentioned this again and again, and it is being backed up here by these teachings. This goes to show that I'm not just being a loud mouth, and that it is actually a significant practice!

As the commentary continues:

In short, one should meditate on the mode of abiding in dependence on calm abiding.

So, what is the point being made here by saying *one should meditate on the mode of abiding in dependence on calm abiding?*

Student: You need to have established calm abiding before you can meditate on emptiness.

This point was mentioned in the Mahamudra teachings. There are two specific systems: finding the right view through meditation, and finding meditation through the right view.³ What is being presented here is finding the right view through meditation, which specifically means developing calm abiding first, in order to achieve the realisation of emptiness.

Then the commentary explains:

Further, because the 'I' in reference to thinking of 'me' is established as merely labelled in dependence on the aggregates and does not exist inherently, it does not exist intrinsically, ...

As further explained, this 'I' does not exist intrinsically because:

... it is not established in the slightest in an independent mode. Therefore, the existent person is merely posited in name, it exists only as labelled and in a dependent mode.

So, as the commentary says:

Hence, take to heart, 'It does not exist inherently'.

What is being specifically emphasised here is that *the existent person is merely posited in name.* It exists only as a label that is imputed by the mind, and exists only *in a dependent mode*, meaning that it exists only interdependently. The conclusion that we need to keep in mind is that, for these reasons, the 'I' does not exist inherently.

Finally, the commentary says:

Meditate in the same way on all phenomena such as the aggregates and so forth.

Essentially, this is just a summary of how to meditate on emptiness.

Then the author of the commentary, Gyaltsab Rinpoche, adds these verses as a summary of the chapter:

I say this as summary:

For as long as one does not find a holy master
One will not even realise partially
The Middle Way of dependent arising that is free
from extremes
That can cut the root of existence.

Whatever well-spoken advice I receive
Is due to the kindness of the lama.
May this virtue become the cause
That my mothers meet a Mahayana guru.

Without realising the suchness of the Middle Way,
free from extremes
One cannot touch the state of a superior.
Hence, by deciding that dependent arising is the
meaning of emptiness
Strive accordingly in achievement.

That difficult to find even in a billion eons;
Because the pure school of Nagarjuna pronouncing
the two truths
Because they will disappear before long in this
realm
Those with intelligence will quickly generate joyous
effort.

The meaning of these words is quite clear. They cover many of the points that were presented in the chapter itself, so as we read these verses we can relate them to those points.

II. EXPLANATION OF THE TITLE

This is the ninth chapter called *The Perfection of Wisdom from the Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas.*

This is the commentary on the ninth chapter called the Perfection of Wisdom, from the commentary on *The Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas.*

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke.

Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute

³ See the teaching of 11 November 2008.
Chapter 9

As usual, let us spend some time in our regular meditation practice. [*Tong-len meditation*]

As I mentioned before, if time permits, it will be good for us to recite the dedication chapter together over the following teaching sessions on this chapter. This evening, we can specifically dedicate our recitation to the late John Frigo, who passed away few days ago, and also for Elvira's dad, who is has not been feeling well. With the bodhicitta motivation, let us recite these verses of incredibly powerful aspirational prayers and dedicate the merits accordingly.

If one has actually generated bodhicitta, then this chapter shows how the merits of bodhisattvas are dedicated. The rest of us who are inspired to generate bodhicitta, can at the very least generate the altruistic state of mind thinking, 'May I only benefit sentient beings, not causing the slightest harm to any living being'. Think, 'May all my virtuous deeds become a means for sentient beings to experience only happiness; it is for that purpose that I dedicate all my merits'. The way to dedicate every virtue we have created is explained in this text, which gives us the perfect means to dedicate our virtues.

As we go through explanations of the verses, you'll see how incredibly meticulous and extensive the dedications are. [*Recitation of chapter 10*]

[To explain the context of the next chapter we need to return to the subdivisions introduced in chapter 1.¹]

2. The actual explanation of the stages of the path

2.2. The method for taking the essence

2.2.2. Explaining the individual meanings²

2.2.2.2. The way of training in the practices of generating the two minds

2.2.2.2.2. The way of training in the actions, the perfections

2.2.2.2.2.1. The way of meditating on conscientiousness, the limb preventing the degeneration of the training in the mind of enlightenment³

2.2.2.2.2.2. Explaining the way of training in morality, by relating it to introspection and mindfulness, the methods for keeping virtuous dharmas pure⁴

2.2.2.2.2.3. Explaining the way of training in the remaining four perfections⁵

2.2.2.2.2.4. Explaining with the limb of dedication the training in the generosity of giving away body possessions and roots of virtue for others

CHAPTER 10: EXPLAINING WITH THE LIMB OF DEDICATION THE TRAINING IN THE GENEROSITY OF GIVING AWAY BODY POSSESSIONS AND ROOTS OF VIRTUE FOR OTHERS

The chapter is subdivided into two:

I. Explaining the words of the chapter

II. Explaining the name of the chapter

The commentary clarifies the difference between an aspirational prayer and a dedication, and this is often quoted in other texts.

Whilst the first chapter also presented the practice of generosity, the tenth chapter, as its title indicates, specifically presents the practice of generosity in the form of dedication. Within the six perfections, the perfection of generosity is presented here with the limb of dedication, which is done by dedicating one's body, possessions and root of virtue for the sake of all other mother sentient beings.

I. EXPLAINING THE WORDS OF THE CHAPTER

This first heading is subdivided into:

1. In brief: dedicating that all sentient beings may enter the bodhisattva trainings

2. Elaborate dedication

3. Prostrating by remembering kindness

1. IN BRIEF: DEDICATING THAT ALL SENTIENT BEINGS MAY ENTER THE BODHISATTVA TRAININGS

The brief dedication for all sentient beings to enter the bodhisattva trainings is presented with the first verse.

The verse reads:

1. *By any virtues of my writing the
Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Actions
May all migrators
Enter the bodhisattva's actions.*

Gyaltsab's commentary explains:

The author of the treatise is saying: By any virtue derived from composing this detailed exposition on how to enter the action of bodhisattvas by completely practising the paths of the three beings, the path for one person to attain enlightenment, which is the purpose of all the teachings, and by the virtue derived from explaining, listening to and contemplating the meaning, may all migratory beings practice the bodhisattva trainings accordingly.

Here the commentary highlights that the purpose or essence of all the Buddha's teachings is presented as an entire path for an individual to attain enlightenment through practising the paths of the three scopes. Furthermore, it explains how to dedicate the virtue one derives from explaining, listening and contemplating the meaning of what is presented with the aspiration, *may all the migratory beings practice the bodhisattva trainings accordingly*. This is quite clearly explained as the essential purpose of engaging in virtuous deeds.

As you can see from the dedication, dedicating for the benefit of all other sentient beings is not sullied with even an atom of self-cherishing mind. This is the extent of the altruistic mind that one should develop for an ultimate dedication.

The commentary then quotes from the *Sutra Requested by the Ocean of Wisdom*.

¹ See the teaching of 26 March 2013

² Introduced in the teaching of 2 July 2013

³ Covered in chapter 4, introduced on 25 February 2014

⁴ Covered in chapter 4, introduced on 20 May 2014

⁵ Covered in chapters 6 to 9, introduced on 23 September 2014

From the *Sutra Requested by the Ocean of Wisdom*,

Just like a drop of water fallen into the great ocean
Does not exhaust for as long as the ocean does not
dry up,
The virtue that is thoroughly dedicated towards
enlightenment
Does not exhaust until enlightenment is attained.

The quote from this sutra is presented in many other teachings as it clearly states that even the smallest virtue you accumulate can be dedicated towards enlightenment. The benefits of dedication are presented in the verse with the analogy of *a drop of water fallen into the great ocean. It does not exhaust for as long as the ocean does not dry up.* This illustration highlights that even when just one small drop of water merges into the ocean, we cannot possibly say that this particular drop is exhausted until the whole ocean has dried up. Similarly, even the smallest virtuous deed that you accumulate, when dedicated towards the ultimate state of enlightenment, will never be exhausted or wasted.

The commentary further explains:

Upon contemplating the benefits mentioned above, such as that virtue that would otherwise be exhausted in the interim if undedicated, does not become completely exhausted and rather is increased, and that even small virtue brings forth a great result.

This passage shows the importance of dedicating even the smallest virtue that you may have accumulated towards the end of achieving enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. If you were to dedicate your merits only for a certain length of time e.g. 100 years, then when that period is up the accumulated merit would be exhausted. But by dedicating the merit to the highest enlightenment it will never be exhausted. By contemplating its incredible benefits, you'll be motivated to engage in the practice of dedication.

The commentary then quotes from another sutra:

From the *Sutra of the Wisdom Gone Beyond*,
Dedicate all roots of virtue only for omniscient
transcendental wisdom,
And not for the Hearer and Self-Liberator grounds.

This clearly states that whatever virtues you accumulate need to be dedicated only towards the ultimate goal of omniscient transcendental wisdom. While it is a great achievement on a personal level to attain the hearers' or self-liberators' ground (i.e. liberation from cyclic existence just for oneself), dedicating your merits to this end will only assist you achieve that goal; it will not become a source of merit that causes you to achieve omniscience and the highest state of enlightenment. Hence dedication to a lesser goal actually obstructs the virtues from becoming merits that serve as a cause to achieve the ultimate goal of enlightenment. That is why not dedicating to a lesser goal is mentioned here.

To take this instruction on a personal level, whenever we accumulate virtues, we must be mindful not to dedicate them towards our own personal goal of liberation, but rather dedicate all merits towards achieving the ultimate state of enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. These are profound instructions to keep in mind.

The commentary then states:

These virtues need to be dedicated by being held by the wisdom realising the lack of true existence of the three circles.

This explains the need to ensure that the dedication you make is also held by the wisdom realising emptiness. Whatever merits you accumulate need to be complemented with both accumulations i.e. method, which is the bodhicitta motivation, and wisdom, which is the correct understanding of emptiness.

The commentary then presents the distinction between aspirational prayer and dedication:

Although there is no big difference between dedication and aspirational prayers, a prayer is characterised by an aspiration to obtain a result for that which is aspired for.

While:

A dedication is characterised by an aspiration that transforms a causal virtue into a cause for the desired result.

Apparently this clarification is not presented in many other texts, which is why this passage is often quoted when explaining the difference between dedication and an aspirational prayer. The main point is that aspirational prayers do not necessarily need to be accompanied by actual deeds, i.e. actual virtues one has created. Whereas for a dedication, one needs to have actually engaged in virtue and accumulated merit for it become a cause to obtain a particular goal. Another way to understand the distinction is that whilst all aspirational prayers are not necessarily a dedication, all dedications are by nature aspirational prayers as well.

2. ELABORATE DEDICATION

This is subdivided into three:

- 2.1. Dedication for the purpose of others
- 2.2. Dedication for the purpose of self
- 2.3. Dedication for the increase of the Dharma, the source of happiness

We can feel moved by the very presentation of this outline, as it presents dedication for the purpose of others, dedication for the purpose of oneself and dedication for the increase of the Dharma, which is the source of all happiness. When presented in this way we can see that the outline of the material itself is very inspirational and we can derive a lot of meaning just from going over the outline itself. Indeed Gyaltshab Je, the author of the commentary, was a great master in his own right and we can see his eloquence in his presentation.

2.1 Dedication for the purpose of others

This is subdivided into two parts:

- 2.1.1 Dedicating of the purposes of the world
- 2.1.2 Dedicating for purposes having gone beyond the world

2.1.1 Dedicating of the purposes of the world

This section is further subdivided into four parts:

- 2.1.1.1 Pacification of sufferings such as sickness
- 2.1.1.1 Pacification of sufferings such as sickness
- 2.1.1.3 Dedicating for happy migrations
- 2.1.1.4 Dedicating in a summarised way for the purpose of all sentient beings

2.1.1.1 PACIFICATION OF SUFFERING SUCH AS SICKNESS

This is subdivided into two parts:

2.1.1.1.1 Dedicating for temporary happiness

2.1.1.1.2 Dedicating for ultimate happiness

2.1.1.1.1 Dedicating for temporary happiness

The first to be explained is dedicating for temporary happiness.

The verse reads:

2. *May those found in all directions
Afflicted by suffering in body and mind
Attain an ocean of bliss and happiness
Through my merits.*

The commentary explains:

May those found in all directions, who are held by the sufferings of physical and mental sickness, be liberated from their sickness and be filled with an ocean of physical bliss and mental joy by whatever merits I have for happiness.

As you can see, the dedications are presented with an altruistic mind. *May those found in all directions*, implies one is extending one's scope and dedicating one's merits without any discrimination to all beings in every direction. Not focusing on certain beings, certain locations or certain directions means not leaving out others and shows how encompassing dedications focus on all beings in every direction who might be *suffering physical and mental sicknesses*. For them to be *liberated from their sickness and be filled with an ocean of physical bliss and mental joy by whatever merits I have for happiness*, means whatever merits I have accumulated for my own happiness, I dedicate for others' physical and mental happiness.

2.1.1.1.2 Dedicating for ultimate happiness

The verse reads:

3. *For as long as they are in cyclic existence
May they never fall from happiness.
May migrators attain uninterruptedly
The highest happiness.*

The commentary explains:

May these migrators [referring to all migrators in every direction] never degenerate from happiness until the end of cyclic existence, and in the end, may they attain the unceasing cause for the highest happiness. For the meaning of the first line of the verse, some commentaries explain it as 'until Buddhahood is obtained', however it comes to the same meaning.

This means that by the merits of the conduct of the bodhisattvas, may the migrators *attain unceasing causes for the highest happiness*, or the state of enlightenment.

2.1.1.2. PACIFYING THE SUFFERINGS OF THE LOWER REALMS

This is subdivided into three:

2.1.1.2.1 Pacifying the sufferings of the hells

2.1.1.2.2 Dedicating for animals

2.1.1.2.3 Dedicating for hungry ghosts

2.1.1.2.1. Pacifying the sufferings of the hells

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.1.2.1.1 Dedication for the quick pacification of sufferings

2.1.1.2.1.2 Dedication for pacification through the power of others

2.1.1.2.1.1. Dedication for the quick pacification of sufferings

This is subdivided into three:

2.1.1.2.1.1.1 Pacifying suffering in general

2.1.1.2.1.1.2 Pacifying the sufferings of the cold hells

2.1.1.2.1.1.3 Pacifying the sufferings of the hot hells

2.1.1.2.1.1.1 Pacifying suffering in general

Pacifying suffering in general is presented with the next verse. The verses in this chapter are quite easy to understand, but as with any explanation, if you read through them and try to derive their meaning, they have much more meaning and power.

The verse reads:

4. *May all embodied beings existing
In all the hell realms
Found in the transitory worlds
Be happy and attain bliss through happiness.*

The commentary explains:

May every suffering of every embodied being in all the hot and cold hell realms found in all transitory realms extending to the edge of space be pacified, and may they attain mental joy through the bliss of the Realm of Great Bliss.

With respect to *may every suffering of every embodied being in all the hot and cold hell realms*, recall the classifications of the hells i.e. the eight hot realms and the specific cold hell realms as well. These are mentioned in more detail as all the sufferings experienced in all of these various hell realms extend to the end of space. The dedication is, 'Wherever these sufferings may occur, may all of them be pacified and may the beings *attain mental joy through the bliss of the Realm of Great Bliss*'. Again, we can see that these are very inspirational prayers, and aspirational dedications.

2.1.1.2.1.1.2. Pacifying the sufferings of the cold hells

The first line of the next verse reads:

- 5a. *May those burdened by cold attain warmth.*

The commentary highlights:

May those burdened by the cold of the eight cold hells of blisters and so forth attain the warmth that will generate bliss for them.

The mention of, *those burdened by the cold of the eight cold hells*, again refers to the eight cold hells. Then, *of blisters and so forth attain the warmth that will generate bliss for them*, indicates that as they are suffering from the cold may they obtain warmth to sooth those particular sufferings.

This is again subdivided into four:

2.1.1.2.1.1.3.1 Pacifying suffering with water from the clouds of the two accumulations of bodhisattvas

2.1.1.2.1.1.3.2 Pacifying the sufferings of the neighbouring hells

2.1.1.2.1.1.3.3 Pacifying the sufferings of the actual hells

2.1.1.2.1.1.3.4 Pacifying other sufferings of the neighbouring hells

2.1.1.2.1.1.3.1. Pacifying suffering with water from the clouds of the two accumulations of bodhisattvas

The remaining three lines of the verse read:

- 5bcd. *May infinite water from
The great clouds of bodhisattvas
Refresh the beings oppressed by heat.*

The commentary explains:

May infinite water from the great clouds of compassion, building up the two accumulations of a bodhisattva, refresh those oppressed by heat.

The commentary explains, *may infinite water from the great clouds of compassion, building up the two accumulations*, i.e. the accumulation of merit and accumulation of wisdom, of a bodhisattva, refresh those oppressed by heat. Using this analogy of great clouds full of water that pour down as rain, you can visualise the two accumulations of the great bodhisattvas in the form of clouds laden with rain when you read the verses. This is symbolic of nectar, and so when the nectar pours down from the clouds of accumulation it enters into the beings who are experiencing extreme suffering of the hot realms etc. and completely pacifies them and eliminates their sufferings.

2.1.1.2.1.1.3.2 Pacifying the sufferings of the neighbouring hells

This next dedication of pacifying the sufferings of the neighbouring hells introduces the *neighbouring hells* which are situated around the hot hells.

The two verses read:

6. *May also the forests of blade leaves
Become beautiful sandalwood forests.
May the trees or the Shalmari forests
Become wish-fulfilling trees.*
7. *May they be beautified by the melodious
sounds of
White swans and yellow geese and other water
fowl.
Through lakes with greatly scented lotus
flowers
May the places of hell become enjoyable.*

The commentary explains:

May the forests with blade-like leaves, which exist next to the hot hells, become for the sentient beings there beautiful pleasure gardens like the flourishing groves of Indra.

May these trees be beautified by the melodious sounds of white swans, yellow geese and other water fowl. May the places of hell become enjoyable through lakes with greatly scented lotus flowers.

The commentary states that in the hot hells there are forests with blade-like leaves with spiky thorns on both sides of the leaf. They might be a sort of cactus that has spikes on both sides. When beings who dwell in these hells move about they are cut by these leaves. So the dedication is, *May the forest of blade-like leaves actually transform and become beautiful pleasure gardens like the flourishing groves of Indra*. This transformation into beautiful pleasure groves can occur due to the merits the bodhisattvas have accumulated.

The commentary further explains:

May the iron trees of the Shalmari forest, with the thirty-six downward pointing thorns be transformed

into wish-fulfilling trees becoming the source for everything desired.

An abode called the Shalmari forest is said to have downward-pointing thorns which are like swords. When beings are below a tree, they hear sounds that beckon them to climb upwards, but when they go up they are severely cut by sword-like thorns that point downwards. Then once they reach the top they are beckoned down, but when they go down the sword-like thorns point upwards, and they are cut again. There are detailed descriptions on this in the lam-rim teachings.

The dedication here is, 'May these razor-blade trees which cause so much agony and suffering in this abode, turn into wish-fulfilling trees'. A wish-fulfilling tree allows whatever one desires to magically appear, so this is a dedication for these trees that cause so much suffering to transform into wish fulfilling trees that only bring joy.

Furthermore, once these trees have been transformed into beautiful wish-fulfilling trees, the verse says *May they be beautified by the melodious sounds of white swans, yellow geese and other water fowl*. In conclusion, *May the places of hell become enjoyable through lakes with greatly scented lotus flowers*.

These descriptions create a very good visualisation and a sense of joy, and we can use them as a form of meditation. When your mind is filled with suffering and you are feeling weighed down and uncomfortable, then when you envision places of bliss and happiness for others it helps you too. Furthermore, doing these dedications can also become a cause to diminish the negativities to be reborn in these extreme levels of sufferings that we have created for ourselves. One can incorporate all these visualisations into one's dedication.

2.1.1.2.1.1.3.3. Pacifying the sufferings of the actual hells

The next two verses read:

8. *May the heaps of burning coals become heaps
of jewels.
May the burning ground become like a crystal
ground.
May the grinding mountains become the
crystal palace
Of offerings, and be filled with Ones Gone To
Bliss.*
9. *May the rain of leaves, embers and weapons
Become forthwith a rain of flowers.
May those cutting each other with knives,
Forthwith throw flowers for fun.*

The commentary explains:

May also the heaps of burning coals in the hot hells become heaps of jewels. May also the burning iron ground become like a pleasant crystal ground. May the ram-like grinding mountains, between which one becomes crushed, transform into the crystal bathing house filled with Ones Gone To Bliss.

May the rain of fire leaves, embers and weapons transform forthwith into a rain of flowers. May those in the reviving hells, who slice each other with knives, throw instead flowers at each other for fun.

The first verse says, may the heaps of burning coals become heaps of jewels. The hot hells explained here

have burning grounds, like red-hot sheets of metal. So the dedication here is, *May this burning iron ground transform into pleasant crystal ground.*

Then there are the grinding mountains, which are *ram-like* because they are like the heads of two rams colliding when they fight. These mountains are called *grinding* or *crushing mountains* because beings caught between them are completely crushed. We dedicate that these mountains transform into a crystal bathing house filled with Ones Gone to Bliss, a pleasant blissful abode where only buddhas are present.

In the explanation of the second verse, *may the rain of the fire leaves, embers and weapons* is an aspiration for these hot hells to *transform forth with into rain of flowers.*

Next is a dedication to pacify the reviving hells. Those reborn in this hell are in constant combat with each other using various weapons like swords etc. They fight and pierce each other with their weapons, falling to the ground with cuts and lacerations, but then they all revive again and start to fight all over again. And so it goes on and on. The dedication here is, 'For those who are reborn in this hell, may their weapons transform into flowers, and instead of using them against each other, may they instead engage in the playful gesture of throwing flowers at each other'. This is the aim of the dedication.

There are similar battles happening here on earth, where we see people constantly fighting each other and trying to destroy each other with various weapons. It is good to also reflect on that reality.

2.1.1.2.1.1.3.4. Pacifying other sufferings of the neighbouring hells

The verse reads:

10. *May those sinking in Vaitarani, equalling a fire pit,
Their bones, the flesh boiled off, in the colour of
the Kunda flower,
Through the power of my virtue attain the body
of a god,
Enjoying themselves with goddesses.*

The commentary states:

May also those sinking in the wrathful boiling waters of Vaitarani, the bank-less river of ash and boiling water, whose bones, with the flesh boiled off, are in the colour of the Kunda flower, attain the perfect body of a god through the power of my virtue, enjoying themselves with goddesses in a bathing pool.

May those who are sinking in the wrathful boiling waters of Vaitarani describes beings in hell realms being boiled in a cauldron of molten liquid iron, which is extremely hot. It brings to mind an image of something similar to lava from a volcano, which is basically molten rock. If beings are boiled a cauldron of liquid iron, their flesh is burnt away and their bones are completely exposed. Even the bones disintegrate into ashes. The dedication for those experiencing such extreme sufferings in these hell realms is, *May they attain the perfect body of a god through the power of my virtue, enjoying themselves with goddesses in a bathing pool.* Rather than experiencing extreme sufferings in the boiling cauldron, may the molten iron transform into pleasant water giving them the sense pleasures of the gods and goddesses.

2.1.1.2.1.2. Dedication for pacification through the power of others

The four subdivisions are:

- 2.1.1.2.1.2.1. Vajrapani pacifying suffering through power
2.1.1.2.1.2.2. Chenrezig pacifying suffering through compassion
2.1.1.2.1.2.3. Manjushri pacifying sufferings with emanations
2.1.1.2.1.2.4. The other close disciples pacifying suffering with ability

As indicated in the following outlines, Vajrapani pacifies suffering through power; Chenrezig pacifies suffering through compassion; and Manjushri pacifies suffering with emanations. The 'other close disciples' pacify suffering with ability. These are very meticulously presented.

If we take the concepts presented in the text and the commentary on a personal level, we can see that making a connection with deities such as Vajrapani, Chenrezig and Manjushri can have a very long-lasting positive effect for us. Even if we have to experience the results of our previous karmas with extreme suffering, then due to the power of our connection and prayers now, our sufferings will be quickly pacified. We should recognise the great fortune we have in making a connection with these deities now.

As will be covered later in the text, hell beings, who have the particular karma to see Manjushri, see him and call out to other hell beings to come quickly and see Manjushri. These are indications that even if reborn in the hell realms, positive karmic connections are still there, which occur due to the power of one's previous imprints of positive karma. Such miraculous things can happen. Take this into account when doing prayers for the deceased. Making strong prayers to Avalokiteshvara, and making requests for the being to be liberated from the unfortunate realms will have a definite positive effect. It will also have a positive effect for you, as well as the deceased, when you do this visualisation with strong faith and devotion. When we do these aspirational prayers, it will definitely have a positive effect for the deceased, so it is good to keep that in mind.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་རྒྱུད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྟུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

9 May 2017

As usual, let us devote some time to our regular tong-len meditation practice. [*tong-ten meditation*]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings based on the bodhicitta intention.

We'll begin by reciting the tenth chapter together. As mentioned previously, when we recite these verses it is good to incorporate one's own virtues in the dedication: 'whatever virtues I've created in the past, whatever virtues that I'm creating now in the present and whatever virtues I will create in the future, I dedicate towards the ends of the aspirations just as they are presented in this chapter'.

2.1.1.2.1.2. Dedication for the pacification through the power of others

There are four subdivisions:

2.1.1.2.1.2.1. Dedicating for the pacification of suffering through the power of Vajrapani

2.1.1.2.1.2.2. Dedicating for the pacification of suffering through the compassion of Chenrezig

2.1.1.2.1.2.3. Dedicating for the pacification of suffering through emanations of Manjushri

2.1.1.2.1.2.4. Dedicating for the pacification of suffering through the ability of the other close disciples

2.1.1.2.1.2.1. Dedicating for the pacification of suffering through the power of Vajrapani

Vajrapani is an embodiment of the power of all enlightened beings, so he is regarded as an incredibly powerful deity. Practices relying on Vajrapani are said to be very effective for eliminating various types of diseases and obstacles.

It might be appropriate to relate a true story here, which I felt was an obvious and clear sign of the power of Vajrapani. In 1984 I went up to Chenrezig for a teaching session. I was informed that a young Tibetan man who was married to an Australian was attending the teaching. Later I found out that I knew the man, whose name is Thubten Gendun. His wife Felicity was stricken with a disease on her leg for which there was no known cure.

In 1985, Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey-la was visiting Australia giving teachings and initiations. When he bestowed the Vajrapani initiation Thubten Gendun and Felicity were both present, and after receiving that initiation Felicity's leg (previously believed to be incurable) was completely cured. She is able to walk and no longer needs a wheelchair. Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey-la later said to her, 'Vajrapani turned out to be the most powerful remedy to cure your disease'.

These kinds of practices in relation to powerful deities definitely have a positive effect for some diseases that otherwise seem to be incurable, or for which a treatment has not been found. Of course, one would also need to

have the karma for that practice to be effective, but nevertheless it does definitely seem to have a positive effect.

There was once an American nun at Tara House called Konchog Drolma – Bonnie was her American name. Later she lived in Dharamsala for many years. At one time she apparently had a stomach ailment which could not be cured by any kind of medication. Then she visited Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey. Again through the practices given to her by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, she was completely cured. Apparently this occurred on two different occasions with two different complications! Her faith in Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey-la was unwavering and very strong. She said, 'I don't think there is anyone as powerful as Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey'. Through the advice of Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, those diseases and obstacles were removed.

Vajrapani, Chenrezig and Manjushri are also referred to as the three supreme lineage protectors. Vajrapani is from the lineage of the vajra family, Chenrezig from the lotus family, and Manjushri is of the Tathagata family. Although I'm not 100% certain, it may be that they are called the supreme protectors of the three lineages because each one of them represents a particular lineage.

Here the dedication is for the alleviation of the sufferings of sentient beings through the power of Vajrapani. On a personal level, faith and a strong connection with Vajrapani and the other deities can definitely have a very powerful effect on removing personal obstacles and so forth.

Both the relevant verse and the explanation in the commentary are quite clear.

11. *Thinking, "Why be afraid here of the lord of death's men, crows and vultures?"*

The power creating bliss and happiness dispelling darkness completely, Whose power is this wholesomeness?"

They look up, and see Vajrapani blazing in the centre of the sky. May they accompany him as their joy purifies their negativities.

The commentary reads:

May sentient beings of the hell realms suddenly be freed from their sufferings, making them wonder, 'Why am I now free from the terrifying men, crows and vultures of the lord of death who harm me in this abode of hell. Whose is this wholesome power that creates physical bliss and mental happiness dispelling all darkness completely?' and when they look up into the sky see Vajrapani blazing with splendour in the centre of the sky. May they take refuge in this protector and the power of their extreme joy free them from their previously accumulated negativities and may they then accompany him.

Hell realms are not unique to Buddhism. Other religious traditions such as Christianity believe in hell realms as well. I've heard that some Greek Orthodox churches even have icons representing the hells. Also the Hindu tradition believes in the hell realms.

When beings in the hell realms suddenly find themselves free from suffering, they would wonder, 'Why am I free of these terrifying men, crows and vultures of the lord of death?' We can see these ferocious beings such as the terrifying

guardians and vultures with iron beaks that are depicted in the drawings of the hell realms. Due to the karma of the beings in the hell realms they are confronted by these terrifying denizens of the hells, such as vultures with iron beaks and terrifying guards and so forth. When that cause of so much pain and suffering suddenly disappears, they again wonder, *'Whose is this wholesome power that creates physical bliss and mental happiness? How has this come about?'*. And when *they look up into the sky they see Vajrapani blazing with splendour*.

In one of the various manifestations of Vajrapani, known as the 'holder of the secret', he is lifting up a vajra with his hand facing outwards, and has a wrathful aspect. This manifestation of Vajrapani seems to be the one referred to here as blazing with splendour.

The aspiration here is for the beings in the hell realms to *take refuge in the protector, Vajrapani, and through the power of their extreme joy free themselves from their previously accumulated negativities, and then accompany Vajrapani in great splendour and bliss and happiness. This is the extent of the aspirations in this verse.*

2.1.1.2.1.2.2. *Dedicating for the pacification of suffering through the compassion of Chenrezig*

Chenrezig is an incredibly significant deity, who is the embodiment of the compassion of all enlightened beings. Relying on Chenrezig is said to be incredibly effective in subduing an otherwise unruly and unsubdued mind.

When you make supplications to Chenrezig while reciting the six-syllable mantra OM MANI PADME HUM and visualising your mind as being inseparable from the mind of Chenrezig, you will find this to be very effective method to settle down your agitated mind.

The aspirations in the verse and the explanation in the commentary are quite clear, so we don't need to spend too much time explaining them.

The verse reads:

12. *Having seen the fires of hell extinguished
By a splattering rain of flowers mixed with
scented water,
The hell beings wonder where this sudden
satisfaction of happiness
Came from, and see the One Holding a Lotus in
His Hand.*

The commentary explains:

Further, having seen the fires of hell extinguished by a splattering rain of flowers mixed with scented water, the hell beings wonder what the cause was for this sudden satisfaction of happiness. When they look around may they then see Chenrezig, who holds a lotus flower in his hands.

The aspiration here is to alleviate the sufferings of the hell beings. *Having seen the fires of hell extinguished by a splattering rain of flowers mixed with scented water* indicates a blessing from Avalokiteshvara (Chenrezig). Due to this blessing of Avalokiteshvara all the causes of suffering in the hell realms are transformed when a *splattering flowers mixed with scented water* rains down on them. The hell beings then wonder *what is the cause for this sudden satisfaction of happiness?* When they look around for the source, *may they see Chenrezig, who holds a lotus flower in his hands.*

2.1.1.2.1.2.3. *Dedicating for the pacification of suffering through emanations of Manjushri*

Manjushri is regarded as the essence of the wisdom of all enlightened beings. So here we make supplications to and rely on Manjushri as the enlightened being who is the source of all wisdom.

There are two verses under this heading.

The first reads:

13. *Friends, come hither, far away from the
dangerous ones. May all go
To him, by whose power they shall be free from
all sufferings and enraptured in the power
of joy,
Who generates bodhicitta and love, to rescue
all migrators.
Who will come to the youthful one with the
radiant top knot eliminating all fears?*

The commentary explains:

Some beckon their friends, 'Come here, come here, far away from the dangerous ones of hell. May all go to him, by whose power they shall be free from all sufferings of the body, and all mental fears, and thus be enraptured in the power of joy. He, who is the light and loving mother rescuing all migrators, the youthful one with the radiating crown protrusion who frees our minds from fear.'

The implication here is that some hell beings, having been suddenly affected by a powerful blissful experience, call over to the other hell beings saying *'Friends, come here, come here quickly, there is no danger here! It is a place free from danger and the sufferings of hell'*. Through the power of Manjushri may *they be free from all sufferings of the body, and all mental fears, and thus be enraptured in the power of joy.*

Manjushri is described as *he, who is the light and loving mother rescuing all migrators, the youthful one with the radiating crown protrusion who frees our minds from fear.* The crown protrusion refers to the five layers of the top knot on Manjushri's head, which is one of the marks of an enlightened being.

The next verse under the same heading reads:

14. *A hundred gods make offerings to his lotus feet
with their crowns,
Eyes moistened with compassion, diverse
flower bouquets raining down on his
crown,
Hundred-thousands of goddesses in towering
buildings singing praises, behold him!
Having seen Manjushri like this may their
hellish minds emerge.*

The commentary then explains:

Friends, behold the one to whom a hundred gods make offerings to his lotus feet with their crowns, who has eyes moist with compassion, on whose crown diverse flower bouquets are raining down and who is praised by hundred-thousands of goddesses from towering buildings with verses and music. May the sentient beings of the hell realms be placed in the laughter of joy upon seeing the Melodious One who bestows breath.

Again, the verse and the explanation are quite clear so there's no need for further explanation.

2.1.1.2.1.2.4. *Dedicating for the pacification of suffering through the ability of the other close disciples*

'Other close disciples' actually refer to the eight close disciples of the Buddha who are in the aspect of bodhisattvas.

The verse under heading this reads:

15. *Thus, by the roots of my merits,
May the hell sentient beings be delighted
By seeing fresh, fragrant and blissful rain
falling from the unobscured
Clouds of the bodhisattvas Samantabhadra
and so forth.*

As the commentary explains

Thus, by the roots of my merits, may from the unobstructed clouds of the bodhisattvas Samantabhadra, Maitreya, Sainyingpo, Namkhai, Nyingpo and so forth, these bodhisattvas with powerful prayers, a blissful rain, fresh and fragrant, fall. May the hell beings, upon seeing this rain, be delighted.

The Sanskrit names are: Kshitigarbha; Akashagarbha, and Sarvanivaranavishkambhin respectively. These are three of the eight close disciples of the Buddha, who are said to have manifested as bodhisattvas at the time of the Buddha. The other five are the earlier three, Manjushri, Vajrapani and Avalokiteshvara, along with the bodhisattvas Samantabhadra, and Maitreya.

2.1.1.2.2. *Dedicating for the sufferings of animals to be pacified*

The aspirations presented in the following passages are very important to bear in mind as we contemplate the sufferings in the different realms. We can see how the text includes dedications to beings in all six realms from the hot hell realms through the cold hell realms and the neighbouring hell realms. Then there are the sufferings of animals, the sufferings of hungry ghosts and the sufferings of humans.

The two lines of verse for this heading are:

- 16ab. *May animals be free from the
Fear of eating each other.*

Then the commentary explains:

May, in dependence on each and every root of merit of myself and others, the animals be free from the fear of eating one another.

Although mentioned very briefly here, the sufferings of animals are very obvious and take many forms. In the wild, there is the constant suffering of bigger animals preying on smaller animals. Even those that prey on animals are themselves preyed upon by other animals. That form of suffering is continuous. Humans also inflict a lot of suffering on animals used as beasts of burden, and for heavy work and so forth. When we look around, animals are in a pitiful state due to their extreme suffering. So when we engage in any virtue, it is very meaningful to make strong dedications for the suffering of animals to be completely eliminated.

Contemplating the various types of suffering experienced by animals will naturally lead to a deeper sense of compassion, wishing that they be free from these sufferings. Then we will very naturally and spontaneously dedicate our virtue towards that end.

Here, the text is very meticulously explaining the way to generate compassion and to do something meaningful with it by accumulating virtue and dedicating it. There are so many ways of meditating in this way, which can be very effective for naturally subduing and calming our unruly mind.

If we don't include these practices into our meditation, then of course there is no way that they will move our mind, and we won't see any benefit. We will however benefit if we actually work at putting them into practice. As said before, we can relate to the sufferings of animals as we are surrounded by them. There's nothing obscure about this as we share the same abode, and the same planet: we are so closely associated with animals that we cannot avoid seeing their suffering. We also have the ability to free them from some suffering, especially our immediate pets. If we care for our dogs and cats we are helping them to have a better life, thus making their life a little bit more meaningful.

In fact it is right that we care for animals, as our survival very much depends on them. At an immediate and obvious level our clothing, food and so many other products come from animals. Even within our body, our immune system is very much dependent on bacteria if it is to function well. On that level the animals within our bodies are keeping us alive. So we can see how dependent we are on animals.

2.1.1.2.3. *Dedicating for hungry ghosts*

The second two lines of the earlier verse, and the next verse read:

- 16cd. *May all hungry ghosts be as happy
As the people in Draminyen.*
17. *May the hungry ghosts be satisfied
By a stream of milk flowing down
From the hand of the powerful transcendent
Chenrezig
And be refreshed forever by the bath.*

The commentary explains:

May the hungry ghosts be as happy as the people in Draminyen, who receive food, clothing and possessions merely by wishing for them.

May a stream of nectar milk flowing down from the hand of the powerful transcendent Chenrezig satisfy the hunger and thirst of the hungry ghosts, and may they be refreshed forever by bathing in it.

The commentary then explains quite clearly *may the hungry ghosts be as happy as the people in Draminyen* (the continent called Uttarakuru in Sanskrit) *who receive food, clothing and possessions merely by wishing for them.* The aspiration is for the hungry ghosts to achieve whatever they desire and be relieved from their sufferings of hunger and thirst.

Furthermore, *may a stream of nectar milk flowing down from the hand of the powerful transcendent Chenrezig satisfy the hunger and thirst of the hungry ghosts.* As a visualisation practice it is good to visualise the eleven-faced manifestation Avalokiteshvara with one of his hands holding a vase filled with nectar, which flows down to the hungry ghosts below relieving them of their thirst.

May they be refreshed forever by bathing in it. Here bathing relates to the bathing house that is visualised when we

make the offering of a bath, which was extensively explained in Chapter Three. During an Easter course we did a visualisation of a bathing house where after the enlightened beings have bathed, the water is then used to satisfy beings such as the hungry ghosts. These are visualisations that one can do.

2.1.1.3. DEDICATING FOR HAPPY MIGRATIONS

Having made dedications for the sufferings of the three lower realms to be alleviated, the text now turns to making dedications for happy migrations, which includes the desire realms.

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.1.3.1. Dedicating to be free from suffering

2.1.1.3.2. Dedicating to achieve their purpose

2.1.1.3.1. *Dedication to be free from suffering*

This has four subdivisions which meticulously relate the aspirations to the particular types of sufferings experienced in higher rebirths.

2.1.1.3.1.1. Dedicating to be without incomplete organs and the pain of childbirth

2.1.1.3.1.2. Dedicating to be without the suffering of poverty and mental suffering

2.1.1.3.1.3. Dedicating to be without the sufferings of sickness and encountering hate

2.1.1.3.1.4. Dedicating for the sufferings of travellers and non-human harms to be pacified

2.1.1.3.1.1. **Dedicating to be without incomplete organs and the pain of childbirth**

The verse reads:

18. *May the blind see with their eyes,
And the deaf always hear sounds.
Like the magical goddesses.
May pregnant women safely give birth.*

The commentary explains:

May the blind behold forms with their eyes, and may the deaf always hear sounds. Like the magical goddess, may pregnant women safely give birth.

Here *incomplete organs* refers to congenital defects of organs that are associated with a precious human rebirth, rather than becoming blind or deaf due to secondary circumstances. So *blind* refers to being blind from the time of birth and *deaf* from birth. When people lack these organs, they endure suffering that those with complete organs do not experience. The aspirations here are for the blind to be able to see and the deaf to be able to hear. Of course, this aspiration can also include those whose organs are defective due to later causes.

The term literally translated here as *magical goddess*, refers to Mayadevi who was mother of Prince Siddhartha. When she gave birth to him, it was a miraculous birth which didn't involve any labour pains. Therefore the aspiration here is, 'May all women giving birth also be free from the pain of childbirth'. Those of you who are mothers will know this extreme form of suffering, but the rest of us can only try to imagine what the pain of childbirth may be like.

2.1.1.3.1.2. Dedicating to be without suffering of poverty and mental suffering

One can dedicate for others to be free from mental suffering and the suffering of poverty. This also includes our own future. The verse relating to this is:

19. *May the naked ones receive clothes
The hungry get food, and may
The thirsty get water
And tasty drinks.*

The commentary explains:

May the naked ones receive clothing, the hungry food of perfect colour, smell and taste, and may the thirsty receive water and other tasty drinks.

Again, the commentary is quite clear. *The naked ones* refers to those who are deprived of clothing. The aspiration is 'May those who are deprived of clothing actually *receive adequate clothing*'. The next aspiration is for *the hungry to find food which is of perfect colour, smell and taste*. This supports what I've mentioned before: reciting OM AH HUM clears away the bad, foul colours and smell and taste, and consecrates and purifies the offering of food and drink one makes.

A similar aspiration is the dedication, 'May all find the food and drink that is most suitable', which might be coffee or tea or even alcohol. The main thing is that whatever they consume is tasty! If they have something that is not tasty, then it is not enjoyable. So the aspiration is not only may they be sustained by food, but may their food and drink be tasty as well. We can all relate to that can't we?

We may wonder, 'How, can I possibly benefit others in these extensive ways?' as we do not see any immediate benefit from making these incredibly powerful aspirations. Although we may not see any immediate benefit, these aspirations will definitely reap a positive effect at future time when we do have the ability to help others. For example, while doctors may have the same qualifications, some can more effectively treat patients than others. Their patients are more receptive to their help and so they can help their patients to a greater extent. These are the consequences of previous strong aspirations of really wanting to benefit others. The main thing is that we have this strong wish to benefit others, and when the time comes and we have all the right conditions then we will be able to effectively benefit the other according to their wishes.

However, there are some things we can do now. If we come across someone who does not have any clothes and we have an extra piece of clothing, we can easily give it to them to protect them from the cold. That is not beyond our capacity right now. Giving food to those who are hungry is also something we can do. The implication of 'food' in this context is that it wouldn't be a true act of generosity if we were to give food that we cannot consume ourselves, e.g. out of date food and so forth. Giving away food because we don't wish to consume it ourselves is not really an act of generosity. The implication in this verse is that the food we give is food that we would eat ourselves. If we were to see someone who is hungry, we should be willing to share our food with others. That is how we can benefit others now.

Those of us who believe in future lives need to understand that these aspirations are ways of implanting the seeds to have a greater capacity to be able to benefit others in our future lives – if, that is, we were to be reborn again as a human. Then, due to the aspirations we make and the virtues we collect now, we will be in a much better position to be able to benefit others than we are now. Thinking, ‘Oh, I can’t see any change in my capacity to be able to help others, so what purpose do these aspirations serve?’ is a very limited view. Since we believe in past and future lives, we need to have a broader understanding of this aspiration by seeing the benefits for our future lives.

The next verse under the same heading is:

20. *May the destitute attain wealth.
May the miserable and downtrodden attain joy.
May the depressed be uplifted
And become perfectly stable.*

The commentary explains:

May the destitute lacking possessions attain wealth. May the miserable and downtrodden who are separated from what they wish for attain mental happiness. May the depressed whose fortunes degenerated be mentally restored and attain the excellent and complete stability where they cannot be harmed by suffering or mental unhappiness.

As the commentary explains quite clearly, *may the destitute lacking possessions attain wealth. May the miserable and downtrodden who lack what they wish for find mental happiness. May the depressed whose fortunes have degenerated be mentally restored and attain the excellent and complete stability where they cannot be harmed by suffering or mental unhappiness.* This is all very clear.

2.1.1.3.1.3. *Dedicating to be without the suffering of sickness and not encounter hate.*

The two verses under this heading read:

21. *May all sick sentient beings quickly
Be liberated from their sicknesses.
May all the sicknesses of all migratory beings
Be eternally banished forever.*
22. *May the frightened be without danger.
May serfs become liberated.
May the powerless become empowered
With beautiful minds.*

Then the commentary explains:

By the power of whatever virtue there is of myself and others, may all sick sentient beings quickly be liberated from their sickness, and may all the physical and mental sufferings of migrators be banished forever. May those that are in fear of an enemy be without fear. May serfs, who are bound by others and lack independence and freedom, be liberated from their bondage. May the powerless gain power and strength, and be endowed with the beautiful mind of mutually benefitting each other.

The earlier part of the explanation is clear. At the end *beautiful mind* is another way of saying a compassionate mind. So the aspiration is ‘*May they be endowed with a compassionate mind of mutually benefitting each other.*’ That is the main point.

2.1.1.3.1.4. *Dedicating for the sufferings of travellers and non-human harms to be pacified*

This dedication is for the suffering travellers to be overcome, as well harms from non-humans like spirits and so forth to be pacified.

The first verse under this heading reads:

23. *May all the travellers
Encounter happiness wherever they go.
May the purpose for which they set out
Be accomplished effortlessly.*

The commentary explains:

May all travellers of the ten directions, such as traders and so forth, be happy wherever they go, and may they achieve the purpose of their journey effortlessly.

This is quite clear so there is no need for further explanation on this point.

The next verse reads:

24. *May those who sail on boats and ships,
Achieve their aims according to their wishes.
May they safely reach the shore of their
destination
And joyfully reunite with their family.*

The commentary explains:

May those who set out on the ocean on small boats and big ships to find riches such as jewels, achieve their aims according to their wishes. May they then safely reach the shore and be happily reunited with their family.

Again, this is quite clear. We can all relate these accounts to our own wishes. This is basically wishing for the wishes of others to be fulfilled.

Then the third verse reads:

25. *May those wandering circuitous fearful desert
routes,
Meet with travellers,
And be free from dangers such as bandits,
thieves, or tigers.
May they be able to walk their paths untiringly
and happily.*

The commentary explains:

May those who wander on circuitous fearful routes in sandy deserts, meet with travellers who give them a fresh breath of hope, and may they then be able to walk their paths untiringly and happily, free from dangers such as bandits, thieves or tigers.

This is also quite clearly explained. When we relate it to our own experiences, we can recall our feelings of anxiety and fear when we have travelled an unfamiliar route. If we become lost, especially if it’s deep in a forest or in a deserted area, we become anxious and panic about the uncertainties of the place. Just as we experienced unease and discomfort on such occasions, we are making aspirations for others to be free from becoming lost while on their travels. Wishing them to be *free from the dangers such as bandits, thieves* and wild animals like *tigers* is quite clear.

The final verse under this heading reads:

26. *May those in the wilderness without paths,
fearful and miserable,
Those without protector, the children and
elderly,
Whose minds are deluded by sleep or totally
crazy,
May all of these be looked after by the gods.*

Then the commentary explains:

May children, the elderly, those without protector, whose minds are deluded by sleep or totally crazy, who are lost in isolated wilderness without paths, be looked after and guided by the gods of the white side.

Again the first part of the aspiration is quite clear. *Gods of the white side* refers to gods who support the Dharma. It is also said that these are the gods who help those who are engaged in Dharma practice.

2.1.1.3.2. *Dedication to achieve their purpose*

This is subdivided into two.

2.1.1.3.2.1. General human purpose

2.1.1.3.2.2. Purpose of ordained ones

We can see here again this meticulous presentation of the different levels of the aspirations. In the human realms there is the laity and those who are ordained.

2.1.1.3.2.1. Dedication for the general human purpose

This is subdivided into three:

2.1.1.3.2.1.1. Attaining perfect excellence

2.1.1.3.2.1.2. Entering a correct path

2.1.1.3.2.1.3. Having temporary endowments and happiness

2.1.1.3.2.1.1. *Attaining perfect excellence*

This is subdivided into four:

2.1.1.3.2.1.1.1. Attaining a basis with freedoms and endowments with perfect possessions

2.1.1.3.2.1.1.2. Being free from harm and attaining perfect splendour

2.1.1.3.2.1.1.3. Attaining a perfect form and progressing from inferiority to greatness

2.1.1.3.2.1.1.4. Dedication for perfect virtue

2.1.1.3.2.1.1.1. *Attaining a basis with freedoms and endowments with perfect possessions*

The next verse and a half relate to this:

27. *May they be liberated from all inopportune states,
Be endowed with faith, wisdom, and compassion.
Always having perfect food and actions,
May they always be aware of their lifetimes.*
- 28ab. *May they receive unceasing wealth
Equalling the space-like treasure.*

The commentary explains:

May they always be free from the eight inopportune states for Dharma practice, and endowed with faith, wisdom and compassion thinking about the welfare of others. Having attained perfect food and actions, may they always remember their lifetimes. May all who are destitute of possessions receive an unceasing stream of possessions, equalling the concentration of space treasure.

When the commentary explains, *may they always be free from the eight inopportune states for Dharma practice* it is referring to being endowed with the eight freedoms. This aspiration is for others to *endowed with faith, wisdom and compassion* which is *thinking about the welfare of others*.

Furthermore, as well as having these conditions of *having attained perfect food and actions*, *may they also always remember their lifetimes*. *May all who are destitute of possessions receive an unceasing stream of possessions, equalling the concentration of space treasure*. Here *space treasure* refers to an inexhaustible treasure house where one can take from it whatever one wishes for, and there is always more to take.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© *Tara Institute*

Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱུང་རྒྱུ་མེས་མ་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྒྱལ་མོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

16 May 2017

While maintaining the motivation we generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [*tong-len meditation*]

In the same way that we have briefly engaged in the *ton-glen* meditation just now, we should try to make it part of our daily practice. As I've mentioned previously, when the *tong-len* visualisation is combined with the breath, it is good for the breathing to be a bit more laboured: when visualising taking in others' sufferings you breathe in heavily, and when visualising giving away your happiness, along with your body, possessions and virtues, you breathe out heavily.

So the measure of the breathing for this practice is different to when we do the practice of single-pointedly focusing on the breath. It would be hard to combine the technique used in our normal breathing meditation practice, where we attempt to just focus on the breath, with the *ton-glen* practice as the two techniques are not quite the same. With the *tong-len* practice, we need to imagine that we are intentionally and willingly taking in the sufferings of others, and intentionally and willingly giving away our happiness, so more vigour is needed.

As in our previous sessions, let us first recite the dedication chapter together, based on the bodhicitta motivation that we generated earlier. Indeed, the very first verse of chapter 10 relates to bodhicitta, so it is an essential reminder to first generate the bodhicitta motivation, and then recite the aspirational verses of dedication while holding that motivation. When we generate the bodhicitta motivation, the practice of giving and dedicating becomes the perfection of generosity. It is good to know how that practice becomes a perfection.

The first verse of the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* reads:

*By any virtues of my writing the
Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Actions
May all migrators
Enter the bodhisattva's actions.*

While this dedication specifically relates to the composition of the text, it encompasses all bodhisattva actions, which should be dedicated in a similar manner. It is good to really try to contemplate the meaning of the verses and incorporate that understanding into one's recitation. This chapter presents a very good example of how to dedicate whatever virtues we accumulate. [*Recitation*]

The motivation we generated earlier will suffice as the motivation for receiving the teachings as well.

2.1.1.3.2.1.1. *Attaining perfect excellence (cont.)*

2.1.1.3.2.1.1.2. *Dedication for being free from harm and attaining perfect splendour*

Here, Shantideva relates to the various forms of suffering. It shows he's aware of the many different levels and types of suffering; he includes every type of suffering to be eliminated. He is also dedicating for sentient beings to be free from harm and to attain splendour. This dedication and those following are done out of great compassion – not being

able to bear seeing others suffering in numerous ways, then dedicating any accumulated virtues for the wellbeing of other sentient beings.

The verse reads:

*28cd. May they live together without quarrels and arguments.
May they, without harmfulness, attain independence.*

*29ab. May sentient beings with little splendour
Achieve great splendour.*

The commentary explains:

May they live together harmoniously, without quarrels, and may they live independently, without experiencing harm. May those of little splendour who are the object of ridicule, achieve great splendour.

We can also take this dedication as a personal instruction on how to live harmoniously with others: *may they live together harmoniously, without quarrels, and may they live independently.* This is the way to live with others without having conflict.

The second sentence reads: *may those of little splendour who are the object of ridicule, achieve great splendour.* I find this to be a significant point. It is a pitiful situation when others are ridiculed by those stronger than them, either in strength or in status. When I see the weak being bullied or taken advantage of, I immediately feel very uncomfortable. I've always felt like this. As I've shared in the past, when I was young, I had a few fights. Usually, the fights were because I was taking sides when I saw stronger kids bullying the younger ones. I would always take the side of the weaker ones, and try to fight back against the bullies.

We need to also be mindful to live harmoniously with others in our own lives. Although we consider ourselves to be Dharma practitioners, often, if we are not careful, we can start to quarrel with other practitioners out of jealousy, or find fault with, or criticise, them. It happens in every religious tradition; rivalry occurs, even in a religious context. Therefore, we need to be mindful.

These states of mind – jealousy, ridiculing others, or criticising them – come from not really paying attention to the purpose of our Dharma practice. Thus, if we practise Dharma and dedicate that practice in the ways mentioned here, it will prevent those unruly states of mind from arising. So, we really need to be mindful and take this as a personal instruction.

2.1.1.3.2.1.1.2..3. *Dedication for attaining a perfect form and progressing from inferiority to greatness*

*29cd. May those with wretched bodies such as ascetics
Have beautiful completely perfect and whole bodies.*

*30. May all women existing in the worlds
Become solely men.
May the low achieve high status
And abandon pride as well.*

The commentary reads:

May all those, who with wretched bodies, such as ascetics whose bodies are tormented by heat and cold, have beautiful, completely perfect and whole bodies. May all women in the worlds become men. May all those of low caste achieve a higher status, and abandon pride despite this attainment.

The first part is quite clear: *May all those, who with wretched bodies, those who are downtrodden or their bodies are weak, such as ascetics whose bodies are tormented by heat and cold, have beautiful, completely perfect and whole bodies.*

The next part requires some explanation; otherwise, there is a lot of room for misinterpretation. *May all women in the worlds become men.* If one has a proper understanding, this point will not affect one's mind. Otherwise some may use this one line as a reason to criticise the whole work of Shantideva. Those who don't have a good, broad, deep understanding of the Dharma would find reason to create a negative mind and start being critical.

Even if one were to take this literally, I would add another line, which is 'And may all men become like women'. The Buddha mentioned in another teaching that there are no men who would not desire women, and no women who would not desire men. From this perspective, desire refers to desiring the qualities of the other. In that sense, it is the same thing: all men would desire the unique qualities in women, and all women would desire the unique qualities in men.

In relation to the actual implication here, 'women' would not refer to all women in general, but to women suffering from adverse conditions, such as those who are mistreated, or have no power, or have no real independence, but are dominated by others. Even to this day, we can see this situation occurring in many parts of the world. I've heard that in some countries, women are completely dominated by men, and have no opportunity for individual independence, or even studying or pursuing a personal career, and so forth. These are really unfortunate circumstances.

Furthermore, some women are particularly affected by symptoms associated with the menstrual cycle, which may prevent that person from being able to pursue or to engage in normal activities. I don't think all women have such symptoms, but in these circumstances such women are really disadvantaged.

The aspiration here is 'may such women not have to experience such sufferings, and obtain bodies that are strong with vigour, and may they have ability and independence'. Of course, not all males would have the latter qualities, but this relates to those who do have a supreme male body with these qualities of strength, ability and independence. So the aspiration here is 'may women who are limited by certain physical hardships obtain such bodies of splendour, and be free from these particular sufferings'. When we relate to it in this way, we can see that these are aspirations are for human beings to be free of the particular disadvantages and sufferings experienced by some women.

Apparently, there are many ailments that are unique to the female body. Maybe Alan as a doctor might know more about it? Generally speaking, each individual has his or her own particular ailments. On a broader level, men, because of their different physiology and anatomy, would certainly have some ailments that women don't experience; whereas, women would have certain ailments that men don't experience.

The text here is particularly relating to those ailments that are obstacles in life. Thus the dedication here is for those who are disadvantaged, that they may obtain bodies which have strength, stamina and splendour, in order to be able to optimally practise the Dharma, without any interferences. That is the main point. In verse 10, the text referred to *enjoying themselves with goddesses.* Here again, these are the qualities of those who have perfect bodies.

Next the text reads, *may all those of lower caste achieve a higher status, and abandon pride despite this attainment.* Here, the dedication of one's virtues is made to alleviate the particular sufferings that come from belonging to a socially confined low-caste. In Australia and the rest of the developed world, there is no distinction based on caste, but in India – particularly in the past – the caste system was prevalent, and those of lower caste were underprivileged and disadvantaged. Therefore, the dedication here is for them to achieve high status, and after achieving high status to abandon pride despite that attainment.

In Buddhist communities in India, there has never been any distinction between castes.

2.1.1.3.2.1.1.4. Dedication for perfect virtue

The verse reads:

31. *By my merits,
May all sentient beings without exception,
Having abandoned all negativity,
Continuously practise virtue.*

The commentary explains:

By my merits from meditating on bodhicitta and so forth, may all sentient beings without exception, who are the purpose, abandon all obstructive conditions of negativities such as killing and the like, and continuously practise virtue.

By my merits from meditating on bodhicitta and so forth includes the virtues accumulated through the practices of generosity, morality, patience, joyous effort, and cultivating wisdom. So, through the virtues accumulated from these practices, *may all sentient beings without exception, who are the purpose* – that is, who are the purpose of one's dedications – *abandon all obstructive conditions of negativities such as killing and the like*, and thus be free from negativities such as the ten non-virtues, and *continuously practise virtue.* This again can be taken as a reminder to refrain from such non-virtuous actions oneself.

2.1.1.3.2.1.2. Dedication for entering a correct path

This dedication is specifically made for others to be protected from entering a wrong path which would otherwise lead to destructive behaviours and activities.

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.1.3.2.1.2.1. Dedicating to be endowed with correct motivation and practice of the path to liberation

2.1.1.3.2.1.2.2. Dedicating for complete conducive conditions and no obstructing conditions

2.1.1.3.2.1.2.1. Dedicating to be endowed with correct motivation and practice of the path to liberation

- 32ab. *May they be inseparable from bodhicitta,
And engage in the bodhisattva practices.*

The commentary explains:

May all sentient beings never be separated from bodhicitta and always engage in the bodhisattva practices, such as generosity.

This is a profound dedication: dedicating towards sentient beings to be *never be separated from bodhicitta and always engage in the bodhisattva practices such as generosity, morality, and so forth.*

2.1.1.3.2.1.2.2. Dedicating for complete conducive conditions and no obstructing conditions

These are particularly in relation to the accumulation of virtue, since there are conducive conditions we need to

acquire and obstructing conditions we need to avoid. That is the dedication here.

*32cd. May they be looked after by the buddhas;
May they abandon actions induced by demons.*

The commentary explains:

May they be looked after by the virtuous teachers, the buddhas, and may they abandon the actions induced by demons, who obstruct the creation of virtue.

Here, the virtuous teachers, the buddhas, are seen as the conducive conditions for practising virtue, whereas the influence of demons or negative friends, is the obstruction.

This as a profound dedication. It is good to reflect upon this when doing our normal dedications, and make the strong aspiration: 'May I never be separated from the buddhas and virtuous teachers in this life and in all future lifetimes. In all future lifetimes, may I always be guided by the buddhas in the forms of virtuous teachers'.

2.1.1.3.2.1.3. Dedicating for having temporary endowments and happiness

This is again subdivided into three:

2.1.1.3.2.1.3.1. Dedicating for long life and pure environment

2.1.1.3.2.1.3.2. Dedicating for being made happy by benevolent beings

2.1.1.3.2.1.3.3. Dedicating for complete necessities and pacification of harm

2.1.1.3.2.1.3.1. Dedicating for long life and pure environment

Here, we can recall the aspirations we make to be reborn in the pure environment of the blissful lands. The first verse here is:

*33. May all those sentient beings
Have a limitless life span.
May they always enjoy a happy life, and
May the very sound of death never ring.*

The commentary explains:

May all sentient beings take rebirth in a happy migration and be able to have a long limitless life span. May these long lives always be happy, and even the sound of death never ring.

Again, the explanation in the commentary is quite clear. The next two verses under this heading are:

*34. May all directions be filled with
Groves of wish-fulfilling trees,
Full of buddhas and bodhisattvas
Proclaiming the melodious sound of Dharma.*

*35. May the grounds everywhere be pure,
Without pebbles and the like,
Smooth like the nature of lapis lazuli,
Similar to the palm of one's hand.*

The commentary explains:

May all directions be filled with groves of wish-fulfilling trees, filled with buddhas and bodhisattvas proclaiming the melodious sound of Dharma. May the ground everywhere be lush, pure and smooth, without stones, thorns or pebbles, smooth like the nature of lapis lazuli, similar to the palm of one's hand.

The description of 'wish-fulfilling trees' was presented earlier in verse 6.

May the ground everywhere be lush, pure and smooth, without stones, thorns or pebbles, smooth like the nature of lapis lazuli, which is similar to the palm of one's hand. The description

given here indicates that the ground of the pure lands is very smooth and without any sharp objects. The ground itself is said to be like walking on a soft cushion that slightly sinks in when you walk on it, (but of course doesn't sink in completely). When you put your foot down, you feel an expansion, so it's very pleasant to walk. These are the descriptions given of the pure lands, where there's no cause for any discomfort or any kind of suffering.

So we make the aspiration 'may beings be reborn in such blissful lands, and have the opportunity to practise Dharma'. This is a very meaningful object of meditation: while dedicating for others, we can also make the aspiration 'may I be reborn in such pure lands, that are always surrounded by buddhas and bodhisattvas'.

If we can meditate on these points now, it will definitely have a positive effect at the time of death, because one will be more likely to have visions of such pure lands at that time. One would have a strong premonition of being reborn in the pure lands, where buddhas and bodhisattvas are residing everywhere, where everything is easy, without any stress, and so forth. How wondrous that would be, to have such visions at the time of death! The buddhas and bodhisattvas are not just residing there, but are spontaneously teaching, so wherever one goes, one continuously hears the sound of the Dharma. That's the main point - it's not just a pure blissful land where you relax and do nothing, but you also have access to the Dharma, and you are continuously able to engage in Dharma practice. If one were in such a land, there would be no suffering at all, because of the ever-present, positive influence of the Dharma.

While the descriptions here relate to pure lands, even today on this planet we can see places that don't have any of the conditions for hearing the Dharma, and where the land itself is uncomfortable, rough, and so forth. So we can see that similar descriptions fit certain environments on this Earth today.

In terms of abodes similar to pure lands, I've seen on TV certain places - I'm not sure if they are in America or elsewhere - that are really beautiful and seem to fit the description of the pure lands. On Channel 7, there are two presenters in the morning on the Sunrise program, I think, who recently went to America. The TV program showed some really lush and beautiful places, estates and so forth. I thought at the time that the people who live there would have definitely created the good causes and merit to be in such beautiful places. Whether they actually enjoyed their homes, I'm not really sure! But visually, they were really beautiful abodes.

When I see individuals living in these beautiful places and big, luxurious homes, I immediately think how wonderful it would be if they were happy as well. That would be nice. If they could actually enjoy their homes, that would be really great for them. But after that I think, 'Of course, what would be best is that they didn't have to die'. That thought stops my mind from craving to live in such places, because no matter how beautiful and luxurious, in the end, you have to leave it all behind.

If one thinks about death, grasping at such a nice abode will not occur. But if one does not think about death and impermanence, a craving for such nice places might develop. Indeed, meditating on death and impermanence is really helpful for spiritual practitioners. If one considers oneself a spiritual practitioner but does not recall death and impermanence occasionally, one's practice becomes difficult.

2.1.1.3.2.1.3.2. *Dedicating for being made happy by benevolent beings*

The first verse under this heading reads:

36. *May, wherever mandalas of retinues are,
A multitude of bodhisattvas reside,
Adorning the ground
With their goodness.*

The commentary reads:

May wherever mandalas of retinues of dharma students are, a multitude of bodhisattvas reside, adorning the ground with the goodness of their excellent qualities.

May wherever mandalas of retinues... means that wherever beings engage in practising and listening to Dharma, may a multitude of bodhisattvas reside, adorning the ground with the goodness of their excellent qualities in that abode. One is dedicating one's merits by saying, 'whatever virtues one has accumulated, may these become a cause for places where people are engaged in Dharma practice, to always have bodhisattvas residing there'. Here the aspiration is for the bodhisattvas to remain for a long time to assist and benefit the beings in such places.

These are really meaningful dedications. For me, personally, whenever I see someone – whether they're men or women, from a religious tradition or not – doing any good for others and benefiting them, it really brings joy to my mind. I immediately think, 'May they have a long life, may they remain for a long time to continually be able to help and benefit others'.

37. *May all embodied beings
Hear uninterruptedly the sound of Dharma
From all birds, trees, and sunlight,
And even from space.*

The commentary explains:

May all embodied beings hear uninterruptedly the sound of Dharma from all trees, light rays, and even from space, like bodhisattvas who have attained power.

The dedication relates to those bodhisattvas who have obtained certain high powers. Due to their attainments, they're able to hear the Dharma everywhere. Every sound becomes the sound of Dharma – from trees, birds, even light rays and space. The dedication here is that may all beings be born with such conditions.

38. *May they always meet buddhas
And the children of the buddhas.
May they offer infinite offering clouds
To the highest of migrators.*

The commentary explains:

May these sentient beings always meet buddhas and the children of the buddhas. May they offer infinite oceans of offering clouds to the highest of migrators, the buddhas.

May they offer infinite oceans of offering clouds to the highest of migrators... This could be easily misinterpreted; *highest of migrators* refers to those amongst migrators who are held in the highest esteem – that is, the buddhas. So it refers to making offerings to the buddhas.

A practical way to relate to this is to offer our meagre virtuous acts and deeds now, that they will also become a cause for one, in the future, to be able to make abundant material offerings. While we may not have much in the way of material means to make extensive offerings now, we can

offer our virtues, which then become a cause for us to be able to make abundant offerings in the future.

2.1.1.3.2.1.3.3. *Dedicating for complete necessities and pacification of harm*

The first verse reads:

39. *May the gods bestow timely rain,
And may a perfect crop ripen.
May kings act in accordance with the Dharma
And may the worldly realms increase.*

The commentary reads:

As conducive conditions for Dharma practice, may the gods bestow timely rain, and may the crops be perfect and complete. May the powerful among human beings, such as kings and princes, act in accordance with the dharma and may the worldly realms be increased through being adorned with happiness and joy.

Here, timely rain would refer to rain that falls at the right time to ensure *perfect and complete* crops. As farmers would know, soon after seed is sown, if there's rain, that is said to be the best condition for the seed to germinate and sprout. Then, as it sprouts, it needs further rain to grow into a bigger, mature crop. At a certain time, when the crop is about to ripen, it requires little or no rainfall, because that could destroy the crop. So, following the general pattern of the seasons, a crop would be sown when the rains are just right for the crop to grow, and this dedication is for the rains to fall in a timely way.

May the powerful among human beings, such as kings and princes, act in accordance with the Dharma. This is again a significant point. If rulers, such as the kings and princes of ancient times, were to be imbued with the Dharma, their rule would be a righteous one. The interests of their rule constituency would naturally be at the front of their minds, rather than their personal interests. Thus they would be able to rule justly and bring benefit to everyone.

Furthermore, *may the worldly realms be increased through being adorned with happiness and joy.* This is again a very meaningful dedication for the benefit of others.

Of course, the opposite would be true if kings and rulers were unjust and took advantage of their subjects. That would create much difficulty for the people living in that country.

40. *May medicines be effective and
May the recitations of secret mantra be
successful.
May sky dwellers, yakshas, and so forth
Be endowed with the mind of compassion.*

The commentary reads:

May medicines be effective in curing disease, and may the purposes of the recitations of secret mantras accomplishing pacifying, increasing and other activities be accomplished the way they were intended. May sky dwellers, yakshas, carnivorous beasts and the like become endowed with the mind of love.

The dedication being made here is, may whatever medicines that are administered be effective in curing diseases. *And may the purposes of the recitations of secret mantras accomplishing pacifying* includes the four types of actions associated with the different purposes of reciting mantras – peaceful or pacifying; increasing; controlling or influencing; and wrathful activity.

When one recites mantras, it could be for any of these four purposes. Pacifying would be to pacify ailments, or to have good conditions, and so forth. When a mantra recitation is done for these ends, it would be for peaceful purposes. Increasing is for the purposes of increasing one's life force, or merit, for example. When mantras are recited for that purpose, the recitation is said to be done for the purpose of increasing.

Controlling refers to the purpose of controlling others. Also, when one recites the mantra for a particular deity, it is said that we are aiming to have control of the deity. That may seem a little presumptuous, but basically one is getting closer to the deity so that one can ask the deity to remove obstacles for oneself and make one's practice virtuous, and so forth.

Then there are recitations for wrathful purposes. Wrathful here implies, for example, subduing those who harm other sentient beings or harm the teachings. In order to subjugate such beings, certain mantras are recited for that purpose.

So for whatever purpose the recitation is done, may all of that *be accomplished* according to one's wishes. Of course, this would imply a Dharma purpose with the proper motivations, so may *increasing and other activities be accomplished the way they were intended*.

Then, the text mentions *sky dwellers*. I think this relates particularly to malicious beings. *Yakshas* are like demons. So may such beings *and carnivorous beasts and the like become endowed with the mind of love*. The aspiration here is in relation to those beings that may feel malice or harmful intent towards others: 'May their harmful intentions and malicious thoughts be supplemented with a mind of love, so that they do not harm other sentient beings'.

Although I've presented this in the past, in terms of knowing how rituals are practised, if one is doing mantras for the purpose of pacifying, the mala is held between one's thumb and first (index) finger. That's generally how it's explained. The second (middle) finger and thumb are used for mantra recitations done for the purpose of increasing. For the purposes of controlling, one uses the thumb and fourth (ring) finger. During what is called an approximation retreat, the mantra recitation is usually done using the thumb and fourth finger. You hold the mala between the thumb and fifth (little) finger for the recitation of wrathful mantras.

While this is the traditional practice, there are different presentations for reciting mantras. For example, if you recite mantras other than the pacifying ones, it would not be wrong to use the mala between the thumb and first finger, because the first finger is above all the other fingers, so it's not a mistake.

If one doesn't know these distinctions, and why things are done in certain ways, one could become very fixed and rigid about certain ways of doing things, and one may even turn around and tell others, 'You're doing it wrong, you've done it incorrectly!'. This brings up all sorts of doubts in people's minds. If you say things that create doubt in the mind of someone who's inclined to engage in virtue, they may lose the opportunity to create virtue. That would be a great disadvantage for them. So those who understand the implications of what they say to others will not say such things.

There is an additional subheading here which is:

Dedication to be separated from that which is unwished for

The verse is presented under this:

41. *May sentient beings not experience the slightest suffering,
Be free from dangers and criticism,
And not have the slightest mental unhappiness.*

The commentary explains:

May sentient beings be utterly free from physical suffering. May their minds be free from fears, may they not be humiliated by others and may they be utterly free from mental unhappiness.

Because there are no sentient beings who like any kind of physical suffering, the dedication here is that they may *be utterly free from physical suffering*. And there is no sentient being who wishes to feel any kind of fear in their mind, so the next dedication is that may they be free from all fears. Similarly, there's no one who likes to be humiliated, so may all beings be free from humiliation *by others and may they be utterly free from mental unhappiness*.

So, it's good for us to recite these verses and contemplate the meaning. This, in itself, can be a really inspiring and helpful practice for our mind.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྟུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

23 May 2017

Based on the motivation we have just generated, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice.

[*tong-len meditation*]

Now, based on that positive motivation, we will read the tenth chapter together. We can make particular dedications for Elvira's father, who passed away recently, and for the victims of the Manchester tragedy. It is really terrifying to see how so many innocent people have been killed and the disruption to the lives of those who survived. Indeed the whole world is affected by this act of terror.

As we read in the chapter, there are dedications for the minds of malevolent spirits and non-humans and so forth to be pacified. We have just seen an example of people who invoke terror and suffering, so we dedicate for their minds to be pacified.

When there are terrorist actions such as these there is no benefit whatsoever. There is only harm for the victims and also the perpetrators. Actions such these arise from very evil negative states of mind, which only lead to harm. So we need to remember that the perpetrators are also an object of great compassion, as they have engaged in such negative deeds motivated by anger, or whatever strong negative mind that might be influencing them at that time. Because they create so much negativity for others and themselves, they are indeed a great object of compassion.

It seems that they are retaliating out of their own ignorance, as a result of the deeds of some leaders of a few nations. Their minds have been disturbed and that is why they are retaliating. This is no small matter for them, but the way that they respond is harmful. This kind of resentment, which is like a sickness, can be passed down over many generations and cause a lot of harm.

May the bodhicitta motivation that we generate bring about only benefit for sentient beings, may all their suffering be removed, and may they create the causes to achieve enlightenment. This is the extent of the motivation we generate. In particular, we are dedicating for the minds of others to be pacified.

Personally, I rely on deities such as Avalokiteshvara and Tara and make strong requests to these enlightened beings to bestow blessings and pacify the minds of those who are completely overwhelmed by ignorance, thus creating negative karma. At our level right now, making strong prayers and seeking blessings is the most we can do. Whenever someone requests to me to pray, I make strong prayers to the enlightened beings to please extend their help and blessing to those in need.

[*Recitation of chapter 10*]

We can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: 'For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teachings and put them into practice as best as I can'.

Along with this motivation we generate the really strong complementary aspiration, 'May I be never separated from the precious Mahayana teachers in all my lifetimes, and may I be able to meet with these same conditions that I have now, from life to life, in all my future lifetimes.'

2.1.1.3.2.1. Dedicating for the purpose of ordained ones

This is subdivided into five:

2.1.1.3.2.1.1. Dedicating for the Sangha in general

2.1.1.3.2.1.2. Dedicating for the purpose of gelongs

2.1.1.3.2.1.3. Dedicating for the purpose of gelong-mas

2.1.1.3.2.1.4. Dedicating for the purpose of complete morality

2.1.1.3.2.1.5. Dedicating for the enjoyment of the result

2.1.1.3.2.1.1. Dedicating for the Sangha in general

We need to keep in mind that the actual Sangha Jewel refers to the arya Sangha.

Here Sangha in general refers to the ordained Sangha. The teachings mention that an assembly of four pure ordained Sangha suffices as the actual Sangha Jewel. Therefore, ordained Sangha are held in high esteem, and respected in many traditions. The Sangha Jewel refers to those who are actively engaged in preserving the Dharma by propounding and practising the teachings. If we were to think about it in practical terms, then since the buddhas are already enlightened and in the state of perpetual bliss, they don't have to face any challenges and hardship. Whereas the Sangha are the ones who face many challenges and hardship while adopting various means to preserve the Dharma. For the preservation of the Buddha's teachings, along with the Sangha Jewel there is the Dharma Jewel – true paths and true cessation. These are significant points to take note of.

The verse says:

42. *May the monasteries abide well,
And be adorned by reading and recitation.
May the Sangha always be harmonious and
May the purpose of the Sangha be
accomplished.*

As the commentary reads:

May the Sangha who live in the monasteries abide well by spreading and increasing the Dharma through reading the teachings of the Buddha and the elucidations of his thought, and reciting prayers. May the Sangha always be harmonious while engaging in virtuous activities and may the purpose to benefit sentient beings and so forth be accomplished just as intended.

The specific Tibetan term used here is *tsuk la-khang* which is translated as 'monastery', however a more literal translation would be 'temple'. The connotation of *tsuk la-khang* is an abode where the vinaya and the three baskets of the Buddha's teachings are preserved. So in that sense a *tsuk la-khang* is a place where the sutras of the Buddha are kept and honoured, such as on the altar here at Tara Institute.

The word *gompa* is usually translated as ‘monastery’, a place where Sangha i.e. monks and nuns reside. The term ‘gompa’ has the connotation of an abode that is removed from places where there is sexual activity. That is why monasteries are usually found on the outskirts of villages or towns.

As the commentary states, *May the Sangha who live in the monasteries abide well by spreading and increasing the Dharma through reading the teachings of the Buddha.* The meaning here is to recite the Buddha’s teachings again and again, as a way of remembering them in order to be able to expound them. There are of course the recitations that are part of our commitments; however, here it refers to the texts explaining the Buddha’s teachings. Thus the Sangha in the monasteries memorise many different texts and recite them from memory.

In monasteries such as Sera Monastery, there is a tradition where the monks memorise a text during the day and then in the evening the memorised texts are recited from memory. As part of the curriculum, some monks spend from seven in the evening to about four or five o’clock in the morning reciting the texts they have memorised. I did this several times in my youth when I was studying at Sera.

The English translation ‘reading’ does not bring out the full meaning of the Tibetan word *lokpa* which has the connotation of listening to the teachings, contemplating and then meditating on them. This is the ultimate means of preserving the Buddha’s teachings, to keep them fresh and alive.

The next part of the dedication is, *may the Sangha always be harmonious while engaging in virtuous activities.* The Tibetan term *gen-dun*, which is translated as Sangha, has the literal meaning of ‘abiding in virtue’. The emphasis here is on engaging in virtuous activities harmoniously. This is said to be one of the essential elements for the wellbeing of the community of the Sangha. Furthermore, *may the purpose to benefit sentient beings and so forth be accomplished just as it was intended.*

2.1.1.3.2.1.2. Dedicating for the purpose of gelongs

The verse relating to this is:

43. *May the gelongs who aspire towards the trainings
Attain isolation and
Upon having abandoned all distraction,
Attain a mind of pliant meditation.*

As the commentary reads:

May the pure gelongs who wish to protect their training from degeneration attain physical isolation from the bustle of worldly affairs, which is an obstacle to morality. Having abandoned all mental distractions and having become adorned with the bliss of mental and physical pliancy, may they meditate on virtue with pliancy.

May the pure gelongs who wish to protect their training from degeneration attain physical isolation from bustle of worldly affairs, which is an obstacle to morality. In order to practise pure morality, one has to protect it from adverse conditions. Conversely, if there are no adverse conditions, then there is no need to protect anything. The Sangha have taken vows and commitments as a way to protect

themselves from obstacles; if there were no obstacles to be protected from, then there would be no need for those vows. As the Vinaya text indicates, the early disciples of the Buddha didn’t have many vows, but as the early ordained Sangha started to engage in misdeeds, more and more vows were laid down.

These are indications of the need to protect the Sangha from external obstacles, referred to here as the *bustle of worldly affairs*, or being around people who engage in worldly excitement. Physical isolation in this context refers to refraining from bustling worldly affairs, while mental isolation refers to refraining from engaging in superstitious or discursive thoughts. These are the two main obstacles.

As the teachings indicate, one needs to practise in isolation. Although this usually refers to an isolated physical abode, real isolation encompasses both physical isolation i.e. refraining from mingling with the hustle and bustle of worldly life and people and engaging in frivolous activities, and mental isolation, which means refraining from engaging in superstitions or discursive thoughts. You can be physically isolated, but if your mind is constantly engaging in these superstitious or discursive thoughts, you will not be able to maintain your focus on your practice. These are instructions for all of us to keep in mind.

As further explained in the commentary, *having abandoned all mental distractions and having become adorned with the bliss of mental and physical pliancy, may they meditate on virtue with pliancy.* We need to understand how to acquire all the conditions to develop calm abiding, and then actually develop it. In the process of developing calm abiding, one obtains mental pliancy first, followed by physical pliancy, then one experiences the bliss of physical pliancy, which induces the bliss of mental pliancy. Then, having obtained actual calm abiding, one can meditate on virtue effortlessly for as long as one wishes. These achievements are essential for one’s practice.

2.1.1.3.2.1.3. Dedicating for the purpose of gelong-mas

The next two lines of verse are:

44ab. *May gelong-mas have gain, and
May they abandon harm or quarrel.*

As the commentary explains:

May gelong-mas have the gain of being endowed with the Dharma, and abandon the harm of quarrelling, being seduced by others and such.

Being endowed with the Dharma, as translated here, implies being able to sustain oneself without much effort. It is essential that practitioners, particularly bhikshunis, have sufficient resources to engage in the practice of Dharma, because having to expend a lot of effort to secure basic necessities is an obstacle to practice.

Furthermore, *may they abandon the harm of quarrelling* refers to disputes and quarrelling with each other. *Being seduced by others* refers to being led astray by those who speak pleasant words and act as if they are friends, but who have the negative motivation of wanting to disrupt the morality of the bhikshunis. So the dedication is, ‘may

bhikshunis be free from all these adverse conditions and obtain all of the good conditions for the practice of Dharma’.

2.1.1.3.2.1.4. *Dedicating for the purpose of complete morality*

This refers to being able to practise pure ethics, unstained by faulty morality. The first four lines of verse read:

44cd. *Similarly may all those who are ordained
Never degenerate their morality.*

45ab. *Having renounced mistaken morality.
May they always abandon negativity.*

Here the commentary states:

Likewise, may all ordained ones complete their morality and be without degeneration. Should they receive individual mistaken moralities, then may they renounce them by generating regret and always abandon negativity.

As the commentary clearly explains, *likewise may all ordained Sangha complete their morality and be without degeneration*. So the dedication is for the Sangha to abide in pure morality without allowing it to degenerate. *Should they receive individual mistaken moralities, meaning if their moral ethics were to lapse, may they renounce them by generating regret and always abandon negativity*. While making every effort to observe morality, in the event that some breaches do occur due to strong delusions, may that become a cause for the Sangha to develop even stronger renunciation, and with the aid of regret, may they engage in purification practices.

On a personal level, it is good to note that although we may not intend to engage in negativities, if we do create negativities then that can become an impetus to engage in strong purification practices. So in this sense, it becomes a means to engage in further virtues.

The next lines of verse are

45cd. *On having attained a higher rebirth
May their discipline never degenerate.*

46. *May the scholars always be praised,
And always receive enough alms,
May their continuum be perfectly pure, and
May they be renowned in all directions.*

The commentary explains:

Then, having attained a higher rebirth in the next life, may even then their discipline not degenerate. May the scholars of the world receive praise and alms. May their continuum be completely pure, free from pride and such, and may they be pleasantly renowned in all directions.

This dedication for the purpose of perfect morality is framed around the positive results of observing morality. What is the benefit for the Sangha in abiding by all these vows? It is *a higher rebirth in the next life*; the consequence of observing morality is obtaining a higher rebirth the next life.

Furthermore, *may their discipline not degenerate* even in the next life. In other words, may they be able to maintain their morality even in the next life.

Next there is a dedication *for the scholars of the world to receive praise*, which means that those who have great knowledge are acknowledged with due praise. *May their*

continuum be completely pure, free from pride means that when they receive that praise may their mind not be affected by pride.

These are really significant aspirations, which we need also be mindful of applying to ourselves. If we have some specific knowledge and so forth then while we may receive acknowledgement or praise for that, we need to be mindful of not letting that become a cause for pride, because that would ruin our own ethics and positive virtuous mind.

Finally, *may they be pleasantly renowned in all directions.*

2.1.1.3.2.1.5. *Dedicating for the enjoyment of the result*

The next verse is:

47. *May they not experience the sufferings of the
lower realms.
May they, without any difficulties,
Quickly attain enlightenment
Through the body superior to gods.*

The commentary explains:

May they not experience the sufferings of the lower realms. May these proficient ones quickly attain enlightenment, without any difficult hard actions of the three doors, with the body that is the ripening result superior to the ripening result of the gods, this body that possesses the seven qualities of higher status for attaining omniscient consciousness.

May they not experience the sufferings of the lower realms. May these proficient ones quickly attain enlightenment, without any difficult hard actions. Here we can refer to the earlier explanations of how some austere practices involve a lot of physical endurance and so forth. So the dedication here is, may those engaging on the practices be free from such hard and difficult practices *of the three doors, with a body that is the ripening result superior to the ripening results of the gods*’.

This body possesses the seven qualities of higher status that are essential for obtaining the mind of enlightenment. A body that is endowed with the eight freedoms and ten endowments is said to be the body that is needed for obtaining higher status and liberation. To achieve enlightenment, however the seven qualities are necessary. These, as I have presented in earlier teachings, are having: (1) a good lineage; (2) a sound body with all the faculties intact; (3) sufficient wealth; (4) power and control; (5) wisdom; (6) long life and (7) freedom from sickness.

These are the essential qualities that are needed in order to be able to benefit others. Being of good lineage is good condition in itself, but if you are attractive as well as from a good lineage, then apparently that is very appealing to others, and you can accomplish great deeds. Having sufficient wealth, power and control gives you a positive influence over others, making them amenable to being led to virtue and conducting themselves in accordance with the Dharma. Without wisdom or intelligence, of course, you cannot really benefit others, and without a long stable life, you may do some good deeds, but will not be able to continue to do so for long. Being free from illnesses or sickness also enables you to help without interruption.

2.1.1.4. DEDICATING FOR THE PURPOSE OF ALL SENTIENT BEINGS

The lines of the verse relating this are:

48. *May all sentient beings repeatedly
Make offerings to all buddhas and
Through the infinite happiness of the buddhas,
May they always be endowed with happiness.*

The commentary reads:

By the might of whatever virtue there is, may all sentient beings in every action repeatedly make offerings to all buddhas with devotion. In dependence on this may they practise the actions of bodhisattvas, and thus continuously become endowed with happiness, through the infinite happiness of the buddhas.

By the might of whatever virtue there is, or through the power of whatever virtue one may have accumulated, may all sentient beings in every action repeatedly make offerings to all the buddhas with devotion. Here every action includes making an offering of actions that we would normally consider as mundane, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, and walking about. As I regularly emphasise, it is important to make offerings of everything we eat and drink, and this is being backed up in these teachings. In this way, even our normal activities and deeds can become the means to accumulate great virtue and merit. This is the point we need to understand here.

Thus *in dependence on this, may they practice the actions of the bodhisattvas and thus continuously be endowed with happiness through the infinite happiness of the buddhas.* Here we can also derive the understanding that the good, positive results obtained from these aspirations and dedications, such as the happiness of the buddhas, is dependent on causes and conditions. These again are points that we should recall.

2.1.2. Dedicating for purposes having gone beyond the world

This is subdivided into three:

2.1.2.1. Dedicating for the accomplishment of the wishes of the bodhisattvas

2.1.2.2. Dedicating for the completion of the Buddha's actions

2.1.2.3. Dedicating for accomplishment of the wishes of hearers and self-liberators

2.1.2.1. DEDICATING FOR THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE WISHES OF THE BODHISATTVAS

The dedication here is for the incredibly extensive wishes that the bodhisattvas have to benefit sentient beings be accomplished just as they intended. The lines of the verse read:

- 49ab. *May bodhisattvas accomplish the purpose
Of migrators they intent in their heart.*

The commentary reads:

May, in dependence on the virtue of composing this commentary and other virtues, bodhisattvas accomplish the actions for the temporary and ultimate purpose of all migrators the way they intend in their heart.

May all the virtues that have been accumulated become the means for *the bodhisattvas to accomplish the actions for the temporary and ultimate purpose.* Here we need to understand that *temporary* refers to obtaining the high status of a good rebirth in the next life, such as in the human and god realms, and *ultimate* refers to liberation and enlightenment.

2.1.2.2. DEDICATING FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE ACTIONS OF THE BUDDHAS

The relevant lines of verse read:

- 49cd. *Whatever the protectors' intent,
May that happiness be received by sentient beings.*

The commentary states

May sentient beings receive whatever infinite happiness the buddha protectors intend for them

Again, this is very clear. As the commentary explains, *may sentient beings receive whatever infinite happiness the buddha protectors intend for them.* May beings experience happiness and wellbeing, free from suffering as the buddhas intended.

2.1.2.3. DEDICATING FOR ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE WISHES OF HEARERS AND SELF-LIBERATORS

May the wishes of hearers and self-liberators be fulfilled.

The text reads:

50. *Likewise, may self-liberated buddhas
And hearers also attain happiness.*

The commentary reads:

Likewise, may self-buddhas and hearers also attain the happiness of peace.

This is quite clear. *May self-buddhas and hearers also attain the happiness of peace.* Their intended goal is to achieve self-liberation, a state mainly focused on themselves, where they are free from suffering and achieve the state of happiness. May they achieve that state of liberation.

2.2. Dedication for the purpose of self

This is subdivided into four:

2.2.1. Praying for the attainment of the temporary result

2.2.2. Praying to be directly guided by Manjushri

2.2.3. Praying to abide within the bodhisattva trainings

2.2.4. Praying to complete the purpose of others

Here the term 'praying' also means aspiring.

2.2.1. Praying for the attainment of the temporary result

51. *May I also, through the kindness of Manjushri,
Until attaining the ground of supreme joy,
Always remember my lives
And attain ordination.*

The commentary explains

By the power of these virtues may I also, through the kindness of Manjushri, until the attainment of the ground of supreme joy always have mindfulness of my lives and attain ordination, the vessel for qualities.

As explained here the aspiration is, *'may I have mindfulness and attain ordination through the virtues that I have accumulated through the kindness of my teacher*

Manjushri until I achieve the ground of *supreme joy*, which is the first ground of the ten bumis or grounds of a bodhisattva.

The remaining verse under this heading is:

52. *In spite of inferior food
May I have splendour and livelihood.
May I in all my lifetimes abide in solitude
And attain perfection.*

Despite inferior food that is bad and scarce, may my body be endowed with splendour, and may I have a happy livelihood. In all my lives may I remain in isolation from physical and mental distractions, and attain perfection.

This dedication is really very meaningful. 'Although my food may be meagre and not very tasty, may my body be endowed with splendour' means, 'may my body be nourished and thus lustrous and strong'. Rather than a happy livelihood, a more literal translation from Tibetan is, 'may I be able to sustain myself well'. Finally, in *all my life may I remain in isolation from physical and mental distractions*. This refers back to achieving mental and physical isolation, which was explained in an earlier verse.

2.2.2. Praying to be directly guided by Manjushri

The implication here is receiving direct guidance from Manjushri as a teacher.

53. *Whenever I wish to study,
Or have even small questions,
May I be able to behold without obstructions
The protector, Manjushri.*

The commentary explains

Whenever I wish to study the teachings of the conqueror and so forth, or wish to ask a small question regarding some meaningful words, may I be able to immediately, without obstructions, behold directly the protector Manjushri himself.

This is a very meaningful verse, which I recite daily as a personal initiative. As the commentary explains, the prayer is *whenever I wish to study* or have even the smallest of questions, may I be able to behold without obstruction the protector Manjushri himself. *Whenever I wish to study the teachings of the conqueror and so forth*, refers mainly to the teachings of Buddha. The intention here that whenever one wishes to ask a small question regarding some meaningful words, 'may I be able to immediately, without obstructions, behold directly the protector Manjushri and receive answers from Manjushri himself'.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱང་ལྷན་སྐྱེས་མཉམ་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

30 May 2017

As usual, let us spend some time in our regular Tong-Len meditation practice.

[meditation]

2.2. Dedication for the purpose of self (cont.)

2.2.3. Praying to abide within the bodhisattva trainings

The verse reads:

- 54 *May my actions, to accomplish
The purpose of all sentient beings,
Extending to the edge of space of the ten
directions,
Equal the actions of Manjushri.*

The commentary explains:

To accomplish the temporary and ultimate purpose of sentient beings extending up to the edge of space of the ten directions, may my actions equal the actions of Manjushri.

The commentary says that, *to accomplish the temporary and ultimate purpose of sentient beings extending up to the edge of space of the ten directions*, one needs to visualise sentient beings extending as far as space exists. Accomplishing *the temporary purpose* refers to the temporary happiness of achieving a higher rebirth (in the human or the god realms – called good status). The *ultimate purpose* is a dedication for sentient beings to achieve the state of liberation, and ultimately enlightenment. The wish for your actions to equal the actions of Manjushri is an incredibly profound dedication and an aspiration which is important to make regularly.

2.2.4. Praying to complete the purpose of others

The verse reads:

55. *For as long as space abides,
And as long as sentient beings remain,
For that long may I also remain and
Eliminate the sufferings of sentient beings.*

Then as the commentary explains under this verse:

For as long as cyclic existence and the migrators circling within it remain, may I remain and eliminate all sufferings of sentient beings.

This is a verse His Holiness the Dalai Lama takes to heart as a strong aspiration. We can see from the extent of the aspiration embedded in the dedication that it is very profound and meaningful. The commentary clearly states that, *For as long as cyclic existence and the migrators circling within it remain, until then, may I remain and eliminate all sufferings of sentient beings*. This shows the extent of the incredibly powerful aspiration and dedication of the bodhisattvas.

The next verse reads:

56. *May any suffering of migrators
Ripen upon myself.*

*By the power of the bodhisattva Sangha,
May all sentient beings enjoy happiness.*

The commentary explains:

May any suffering of migrators that exists ripen upon me. By the nature of the power of the bodhisattvas' Sangha may all migrators enjoy happiness.

This verse describes what we actually intend to do in our regular *Tong len* meditation practice. It specifically encourages us to aspire to engage in the actual practice of giving and taking.

2.3. Dedication for the increase of the Dharma, the source of happiness

Recognising that the Dharma is the source of all happiness, and making aspirations for it to expand and go in all directions is an incredibly profound dedication.

The verse reads:

57. *May the sole medicine for the suffering of
migrators,
The source of all happiness,
The Dharma, abide long
With praise and high regard.*

The commentary explains:

In dependence on whatever virtue there is, may the sole unrivalled medicine for all sufferings, the holy source from which every happiness of migrators arises, the teachings of the Buddha Bhagawan, abide with praise and high regard for a long time, until the end of cyclic existence.

The words, *In dependence on whatever virtue there is*, refer to all the virtues one has ever accumulated. The text uses the analogy of a panacea – i.e. *the sole unrivalled medicine for all suffering*. The dedication thus infers that when one understands the profundity and the expansiveness of the teachings, and how they are a source for alleviating sufferings, Dharma is like an unrivalled medicine to end all the sufferings of sentient beings. In stating, *the holy source from which every happiness of migrators arises*, the aspiration is for *the teachings of the Buddha Bhagawan* to abide with praise and high regard until the end of cyclic existence.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama particularly recites this verse when consecrating new monasteries or temples. There are similar verses in the prayer *Benefits of Constructing images of Maitreya*, and few other verses proclaiming auspiciousness such as '*placing the victory banner in all directions*'. These are some of the verses which are recited. I'm just giving you this extra bit of information to know how the verse is used during certain occasions.

3. PROSTRATING BY REMEMBERING KINDNESS

Prostrating by remembering kindness particularly refers to Manjushri, with whom Shantideva himself had close personal relationship, and relied upon as a guide and teacher. Remembering Manjushri's kindness is highlighted in the first two lines of the verse.

The verse reads:

- 58ab. *I prostrate to Manjushri,
Through whose kindness virtuous minds arise.*

The commentary explains:

I prostrate to the special virtuous teacher Manjushri, the empowering condition through whose kindness the meditation on bodhicitta and then training in the actions as well as the virtuous awareness to compose the treatise taking these as the subject, arose.

From this we can see that Shantideva in no way boasted that he composed this work by himself, but rather relied on his own virtuous teacher Manjushri. In accordance with the lam-rim, this point relates to relying on the virtuous friend or teacher. After stating, *I prostrate to the special virtuous teacher Manjushri*, the empowering condition (to compose the treatise) relates to the fact that any virtuous state of mind does not arise out of nowhere, but rather everything that arises has its own causes and empowering conditions. The empowering condition of the virtue arising from this composition, Shantideva states, is his virtuous teacher Manjushri. In explaining, *through whose kindness the meditation on bodhicitta arose*, the commentary indicates that the ability to meditate on bodhicitta also arises through the kindness of the virtuous teacher Manjushri. Then, having meditated on bodhicitta *training in the actions* means engaging in actions based on the bodhicitta mind also arises through the kindness of Manjushri. Then, *the virtuous awareness to compose the treatise taking these as the subject*, also arose through the kindness of Manjushri. What is being presented here is the need to remember the kindness of the virtuous teacher.

The second two lines of the verse refer to the actual prostration:

*58cd. I also prostrate to the virtuous teachers,
Through whom one develops.*

One section in the lam-rim outline pays special respect to the virtuous teacher by remembering their kindness. You can see that this verse definitely relates to that point in the lam-rim.

The commentary explains:

I also prostrate to the virtuous friend through whose kindness I was inspired to engage in the trainings and who gave strength for the virtuous side by generating the realisations of listening, contemplating, and meditating in my continuum.

As presented here, these are indications of how, when we take it as a personal instruction for our own practice, it is by remembering their kindness that one will naturally develop respect for one's teachers. We can all remember the time when we didn't have any understanding of the Dharma or how to practise it. Now, however, we have reached the level of having gained knowledge of the teachings and received instructions on how to practise. So, gradually our understanding has increased which is all due to the kindness of the virtuous teachers. By contemplating and thinking about that, naturally remembering the kindness of the gurus and the teachers will arise, which is followed by paying respect.

The commentary continues:

This last chapter explains elaborately the training in the generosity of giving away body, possessions, and roots of virtue for the purpose of others with the dedication taking as objects and transforming them with strong aspiration into the temporary and

ultimate objectives of prayer. Since the training in generosity was also explained earlier, I did not write a separate chapter on generosity.

As explained here, this chapter explains elaborately the training in the generosity of giving away body, possessions, and roots of virtue for the purpose of others. As earlier stated, this is mentioned here specifically, *with the dedication taking as objects and transforming them with strong aspiration into the temporary and ultimate objectives of one's aspiration or prayer*. Since the training in generosity was also explained earlier, I did not write a separate chapter on generosity implies that it is included here in this last chapter. This next concluding verse is by Gyaltsab Rinpoche himself.

It reads:

Whatever virtue there is from listening, contemplating
and meditating,
Whether it is the mere virtue of prostration or
offering,
To make all virtues inexhaustible
And to increase them, I adorn them with dedication.
This is the condensed explanation.

Again, this passage reveals an essential instruction to take into our own practice. The commentary's author, Gyaltsab Rinpoche himself, says here that *whatever virtue there is from listening, contemplating and meditating*, that is, whatever time and energy one spends in listening to the Dharma, thinking about it and then meditating on it, *whether it is the mere virtue of prostration or offering*, which includes all other means for accumulating merit - such as doing prostrations and making offerings, the way *to make all virtues inexhaustible* so they do not dissipate or go to waste *and to increase them, is to adorn them with dedication*. This shows how it is really essential and significant to make dedications to ensure that one's virtues are not wasted, and for them to further increase.

As mentioned previously, whenever one accumulates virtue or merit, the way to secure them so they don't go to waste is by making a dedication. That is why we have the dedication at the end of every practice.

II. EXPLANATION OF THE NAME OF THE CHAPTER

As presented here:

This is at the tenth chapter of dedication of the Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life.

The commentary reads:

This is the commentary on the tenth chapter called *Thorough Dedication* from *The Introduction to the Bodhisattvas Way of Life*, called *The Entrance for the Children of the Conquerors*.

The title *The Entrance for the Children of the Conqueror* is the the name Gyaltsab Rinpoche gave to his commentary.

THE MEANING OF THE END

There is a part at the end which has not been translated into English. It comes from under a heading used at the very beginning of the text, where it was the last of the four main headings.

This essentially explains who composed the text and who translated it.

This text is called Introduction to the Bodhisattvas Way of Life and is composed by the renowned master Shantideva, who was guided directly by

Manjushri himself. Shantideva personally engaged in incredibly profound deeds of the bodhisattvas way of life, and in particular, having mastered the highest yoga tantra practices, obtained the state of Vajradhara.

So the treatise propounded by this great master is completed.

It was translated by the Indian abbot Sarvajnadeva and the translator Pal-tzeg, from a manuscript that comes from the Muslim continent.

This probably refers to Afghanistan. There were many great Buddhist scholars in Afghanistan at one time, and there are quite a lot of references to the masters who came from the Muslim continent. That is my assumption knowing that there have been great scholars from Afghanistan.

At one time Buddhism flourished in countries like Afghanistan, but now there seems to be little or no trace of any practitioners there. However through artefacts we can see very obvious signs in carvings of Buddhas etc. still in Afghanistan that prove the strong influence of Buddhism at one time. I don't have a clear understanding of how many artefacts still exist. You might know better yourselves.

This concludes the teaching on the explanations of *the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* which we can safely say went very well.

Now we can make a strong dedication, of the studies done together, with the recitation of the Tenth Chapter.

[Recitation]

For the next session I would like you to have a discussion on the two truths according to the four different schools of Buddhism. How the Vaibhashika assert the two truths, and the two truths according to the Sautrantika, the Cittamatra or mind-only school and then the Prasangika. How do they each assert the two truths? What are their points of distinction and so forth? This is something I had in mind previously, but didn't find the right time for you to have the discussion.

In terms of doing the teachings on the lam-rim *Lamp on the Path*, my intention is just to go over the meanings of the verses.

For your homework, in preparation for these teachings, I would like you to read the lam-rim texts which are translated in English. The lam-rim text begins with the small scope. When it comes to classifications of certain topics, I would ask you to check what the classifications of certain topics are so as I go through the verses we will relate them to the specific classifications presented in the lam-rim text.

My intention is to present the lam-rim as material for you to actually put into practice. The lam-rim teaching is essentially tailored for that. The small scope begins with relying on a virtuous teacher. The actual topics are then: a precious human rebirth; death and impermanence; karma and then refuge. They will be the main topics of the small scope.

So you read from the lam-rim text, then as we go through the verses, we can relate to those topics in the lam-rim.

For example, when we come to the first topic of the precious human rebirth, when the text indicates the eight freedoms, you will be the ones to tell me what the eight freedoms are and what the ten endowments are. This is something to be prepared from your side. Then as we go through the text, we will come to those types of lists such as death and impermanence. We will look at the benefits or the advantages of thinking about death and impermanence and also the disadvantages of not thinking about death and impermanence, and what the measure is of thinking about death and impermanence, or how to go about that. These are the classifications presented in the lam-rim, and something you can familiarise yourself with.

In fact, it is particularly essential to reflect upon the topic of death and impermanence in order for our practice to become a real and pure Dharma practice. Without recollecting death and impermanence, almost everything we do would just focus on this life, and our practice could not be a pure Dharma practice. When the focus is on this life's pleasures or this life's gains, then it is not a Dharma practice. These are essential points. As I also presented during the recent Easter course on *The Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, until one reverses clinging to this life, one has not really engaged in the practice of Dharma.

The verse itself says that a precious human life is difficult to find and that one does not have leisure time with that life. By contemplating this, the clinging to this life will be reversed. Understanding points like those explained in *The Three Principals of the Path* are essential and can be related back to the lam-rim teachings.

Indeed when one starts to reduce the clinging to and the grasping at this life, one's mind starts to become more joyous, more calm and happier. Otherwise, for as long as we have a strong clinging to this life, we will never be satisfied, and never content. No matter how much we try to gain, there is never a sense of contentment in one's mind.

I think that an example of those with external signs of discontentment are those with tattoos on their bodies. They begin with a small tattoo somewhere, and then it seems that they are not content with that and then they have to get a bigger tattoo, and then they get more tattoos covering all parts of their body. Then when all the other parts of their body are completely tattooed, they even start to tattoo their forehead and face! So I feel that clearly shows discontentment.

Then there are also accounts of someone owning three to four thousand pairs of shoes – another external sign of discontentment. Another instance I saw personally was when I was staying at a home in Perth owned by very rich woman whose father got rich in mining. Now she (Gina Rinehart) is a mining tycoon and has apparently made a lot of money. In any case, the father remarried a Filipino woman (Rose Hancock/Porteous). We were shown the house and there was a small room full of cosmetics! When I saw all that I felt it was a sign of discontentment. Perhaps a few would be okay, but a whole room full of cosmetics! All of those cosmetics

didn't seem to have helped to beautify her body, and surely didn't stop her from ageing!

Then again on the other hand, I have seen well-known and apparently quite rich individuals wear very simple clothes and go around helping those who are poor. I see that that as a really a good sign. The money they would have saved on expensive clothing etc. is rather used to help the poor and the needy, and that is very noteworthy. When we see accounts like that, it can remind us how suffering is really the suffering of dissatisfaction. It is not the suffering of not having, but rather it is the suffering of dissatisfaction. Even if someone has things in abundance, they are still not happy.

I am just indicating here that the main topic of the small scope is an explanation of how to develop a disenchantment with the pleasures of this life, and thus overcome the clinging to and grasping at it. Then when the strong clinging to this life is reduced, even in this life itself one starts to experience the positive consequences of the mind being more relaxed and happier, not to mention the benefits in the future lives.

When we can understand these teachings, and how putting them into practice can begin to transform our mind, we can see how the actual practice of Dharma is a means to bring about a more genuinely happy mind now, and in future lives.

This reminds me of a remark made by a Mongolian abbot when he was abbot of the Gomang Monastery in Drepung. One time when I was visiting that monastery he was asking about the wellbeing of a prominent teacher Khensur Lobsang Wangchuk, who was indeed a great teacher and master. The Mongolian abbot asked me "How is Khensur Lobsang Wangchuk?" and I said "Oh, he is actually quite well". Then he replied to me "Indeed, he would be well whether he is sitting, whether he is moving about, wherever he is going, whatever he is doing he would be happy!".

The main point here is that as our mind becomes more subdued and naturally becomes happier, then whatever we do, on every account we will be more joyful. Of course in terms of this life it is a only certain number of years, but it is especially a good preparation for the time of our passing, at the time of death, when our mind could be much more joyful and more peaceful. We see these accounts occurring. So for the future life it will also be the best preparation.

Basically death and rebirth in an everyday experience is similar going to sleep and then waking up again. By going to sleep with a happy mind, it is more likely you will wake up with a happy mind.

There are accounts of prominent masters and teachers making remarks like "I have no hesitation for an old person in the evening to come back again as a young vibrant child in the morning". Even children appreciate this notion. When a mother was asked by her child "What happens when we die?" and responded with "Oh well, when we die we will just come back again", the young child remarked "Oh, how wonderful. That is very nice". This idea seems to give some solace that everything you know doesn't just disappear, but there is a continuation

and you will come back. This is quite a comforting notion.

Then there are accounts of child prodigies where young children show great skills which usually would have taken years to learn. Without any teaching they spontaneously become great experts in, for example, playing the violin or playing the piano. Those who do not believe in past lives are astonished and wonder how this can be explained, whereas past lives easily explains it as a strong imprint from the past.

On TV recently a child of barely one year old was swimming like a fish with no fear of the water. By now he's probably a bit bigger, but he was swimming then under water with no hesitation and no fear. I don't know what you would relate it to but whenever I see accounts like this I think it's quite astonishing. There are many signs of what seem to be amazing things which are something to be learned about and something to know about.

For the discussion, could those of you who have resources bring them along because we can't expect the newer students to know where to find them or to have access to them. If you can bring those resources it would be good to share them or to show them during the discussion.

This approach will be good for teachings like the tenets, which I have presented previously. There is a particular tenet called *The Precious Garland of Tenets* which is quite a short text that has been translated to English. I think Geoffrey Hopkins has also translated the Changkya tenets by Changkya Rolpay Dorjee. Of course now in my old age I might not recall specific passages, but I have read it many times and it is really good text.

In my youth I memorised the whole lam-rim and its outline, and I was able to quote and recite it. Now, in my old age I may not be able remember it all, however in my youth I definitely made the effort to memorise many texts.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version

© Tara Institute