
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

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

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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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
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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 Bunnnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

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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་ལྡན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་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

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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

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¹ See teaching of 9 March 2010.