

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་བལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

14 April 2015

Based on the motivation we have just generated, we can now engage in our meditation practice. *[meditation]*

It is very important that we generate a proper motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

2.1.4.3.2.1. Anger at obstructions to worldly dharmas is unsuitable

2.1.4.3.2.1.1. Anger at obstructions to receiving praise and reputation is unsuitable

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.4. The reason for it being distorted

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.4.2. If it is suitable to be wished for because it makes others happy, then it is suitable to like all others¹ (cont.)

The main point to be understood in this part of the text is that it is encouraging one to practise patience with many different reasons.

Indeed, the practice of patience is essential for our wellbeing. The reality is that we repeatedly experience all sorts of hardships and difficulties in daily life, which can cause us so much mental agony, and without the practice of patience it would be very difficult to bear those hardships and difficulties. More specifically, the patience of bearing these difficulties lies within the category of being patient with suffering. As you will recall, the definition of patience is a mind that remains undisturbed in the face of harm or suffering. Through the practice of patience we are able to protect our minds from becoming disturbed when difficulties and hardships arise, and thus maintain a happier state of mind.

Whenever we think, 'Oh, I have difficulty', or 'I have a problem', then the primary method for dealing with hardship and problems is the practice of endurance, willingly accepting that problem or difficulty. If we are able to practise the patience of willingly accepting hardship then we will not fall victim to that hardship. Conversely, if we lack that patience of willingly accepting hardship, then we will always be controlled by hardships. Then we will always be controlled by problems rather than being in control of those problems.

This is also true with our pursuit of studies. When we are willing to accept hardships, then whatever circumstances we may face we will be able to continue our studies and complete them. Otherwise when we encounter the slightest difficulties we might find excuses not to continue, saying things like, 'Oh, I'm just too tired', or 'I feel hungry', or 'I don't feel like doing it right now' and so forth. These sorts of excuses in the face of small hardships mean that we procrastinate, and may end up not completing our studies.

It's inevitable that we encounter hardships and difficulties with our study and so forth. However, the difficulties that you may face now are nothing compared to the hardships that I have gone through to complete my studies. In spite of many hardships, it was not giving up and willingly accepting those hardships that allowed me to continue, to keep up with my studies and complete them. I'm not saying this to boast about what I've endured. Rather, from my own experience I'm sharing with you what is possible when one has the mindset of willingly accepting hardships. With such an approach one will have the endurance to continue with one's studies.

In fact, willingly accepting difficulties is the optimum means for overcoming difficulties and hardships. If we don't willingly accept difficulties, then we will not find the means to overcome them. As a result we will be perpetually dominated by difficulties and one hardship after the other, to the point where we may feel that we are not be able to cope with them any longer.

Liking being praised brings about childish behaviour²

What is being addressed here is attachment to praise and so forth. When one has strong attachment to seeking praise and so forth, then that resembles childish behaviour. So we need to practise patience to overcome our attachment to this worldly desire for praise and so forth. As will be pointed out later on, our main goal is seeking liberation, and so being attached to praise and so forth is not conducive for attaining our goal.

The verse relating to this heading reads:

97. *Therefore, if one generates joy,
By saying 'I am being praised',
Since this is again invalid,
It resembles childish behaviour.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Therefore, if it generates joy in one's continuum saying 'I am being praised', then when this is analysed it does not have the slightest essence. In this way, since mere praise is not valid as the cause for happiness, it only resembles childish behaviour.

As the commentary explains, if one actually analyses the *joy in one's continuum* when one is *being praised*, then one would find that *it does not have the slightest essence*. When one analyses the situation, one finds that praise is merely conventional, and thus it doesn't have any real essence. So when one actually looks for the joy that one experiences when one is praised, one will find that there is no real essence to it.

The commentary continues, *In this way, since mere praise is not valid as the cause for happiness...* This means that mere praise is not the actual cause for happiness, so liking praise only *resembles childish behaviour*. What we need to understand here is that if there is attachment to praise, then the implied converse is that one will be unhappy when one is criticised. The two go hand in hand.

If one is attached to praise then that naturally means that one is averse to criticism. When one is attached to praise and seeks it out, then the slightest criticism becomes a cause for great unhappiness. Whereas if one has trained one's mind to not be overly attached to praise, then criticism will not cause so much unhappiness and mental pain. Liking praise and not liking criticism are joined at the hip.

¹ Last week it was given as *It is distorted to make merely this as one's objective*
Chapter 6

² *Through liking being praised one becomes a childish person*

In fact criticism can even become a cause for joy; great practitioners train their minds to welcome criticism. By applying the mind training techniques it is actually possible to like criticism. This is the main point that we need to understand: attachment to praise is ultimately the cause for unhappiness, rather than a cause of happiness. When one understands this point then one will be able to see that seeking praise, and always wanting to hear nice words and so forth, does indeed resemble childish behaviour. This is what needs to be understood.

These points are very significant points in relation to our everyday encounters with others. There are so many occasions where even the slightest provocative or unpleasant word can immediately cause great anger, leading to conflicts between individuals. So these are definitely relevant points.

2.1.4.3.2.1.2. Thinking of it as beneficial

There are two subheadings under this heading:

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.1. Anger at obstruction to praise and reputation is unsuitable, as it obstructs [the path leading to] the lower realms

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.2. Anger is unsuitable as one wants to become liberated from cyclic existence

From these headings we can see that when there is some obstruction to receiving praise, then that is actually a great cause to be happy, because it obstructs the path leading to the lower realms. Also, obstructions to praise and reputation liberate one from cyclic existence, thus there is no reason to be upset and angry about that. That is what is being explained under these two headings.

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.1. Anger at obstruction to praise and reputation is unsuitable, as it obstructs [the path leading to] the lower realms

This is subdivided into two

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.1.1. Through grasping at praise and reputation all faults are generated

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.1.2. Obstructing them obstructs the lower realms

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.1.1. Through grasping at praise and reputation all faults are generated

Before the verse is presented, the commentary presents this statement:

It is unsuitable to be angry at that which destroys praise and reputation.

Then the verse is presented.

**98. Praise and so forth distract one
And also destroy disillusionment,
Jealousy for those with qualities
And degeneration of excellences**

Here, Gyaltsab Je explains:

Praise, reputation and gain distract one from the virtuous object and also destroy disillusionment with cyclic existence. They also cause jealousy for others with qualities and also destroy one's virtues and the excellences of others. As such, they are the source of all faults.

The line *praise, reputation and gain distract one from the virtuous object*, presents an extremely significant point. It indicates that attachment is the main obstacle to one's meditation practice. This is explained in great detail in Chapter 8. When one has strong attachment to worldly concerns and so forth, one will always have a distracted mind. Consequently, because of these distractions, one will not be able to maintain one's focus on the virtuous object when meditating.

Furthermore, as mentioned here, praise, reputation and gain *also destroy disillusionment with cyclic existence*. The basis for developing renunciation is to first generate a sense of disillusionment with cyclic existence. So being attached to the joys and pleasures of cyclic existence, and being concerned with worldly things, such as liking praise and so forth, opposes the development of disillusionment with cyclic existence. Since attachment to praise and so forth destroys disillusionment with cyclic existence it is an obstacle for developing renunciation.

Then, as further explained in the commentary, *they also cause jealousy for others with qualities and also destroy one's virtues and the perfections of others*. When one cannot bear hearing about the good qualities and virtues of someone else, then that is due to jealousy. That jealous mind escalates to the point where it actually generates a mind of anger. Through not being able to bear hearing about the good qualities of someone, a mind of aversion or anger can arise. That mind of anger then destroys one's own virtues and excellences, and other good qualities that we have. So it is the mind of jealousy that leads one to generate the mind of anger, which then causes one's own excellences and virtues to decline and be destroyed.

Furthermore, *the excellence of others* is also destroyed. Through the mind of jealousy you can disturb the minds of others in various ways, causing their excellences to also decline and be destroyed. So, while a mind of jealousy and anger destroys one's own excellences and qualities, it also serves, indirectly, as the means to destroy the excellences and qualities of others as well.

Thus, the commentary concludes, *As such they are the source of all faults*, which means that attachment to praise and reputation is the basis of all faults.

These are really significant points of advice that speak right to our hearts. When others are praised one should find reason to be joyful and happy about that, rather than being unhappy. The only reason for being unhappy is because of jealousy. When we are jealous, we will feel uncomfortable and unhappy the moment others are praised. As jealousy increases, that discomfort turns into being unable to bear hearing others being praised for their good qualities and excellences, and that leads to anguish and anger.

Further, one needs to change one's attitude from one of acceptance, to one of actually liking it when others are praised for their qualities and so forth, thinking, 'Oh, how wonderful they have such qualities! These people are indeed praiseworthy because of their qualities and so forth. How wonderful it is to hear that praise!' This then creates a happy mind for oneself. Just as others experience joy when others praise them, one can also experience joy and happiness when they are praised. All it takes is a change of attitude, replacing a mind that would otherwise feel unhappy out of jealousy into a mind that feels joy when others are praised. Then, hearing others being praised for their qualities and so forth will bring happiness to oneself, which is a great benefit.

This is what we can refer to as the Buddhist science of the mind, which is really very profound. Indeed, Western psychologists and scientists also recognise how profound these passages are. They comment that this is not an exclusively Buddhist approach, but one that is universal. If everybody adopted these ways of thinking and changing attitudes, then there would be so much benefit in the world. We can describe these parts of Buddhist teachings as being the psychology or science of the mind. In fact the Buddhist

world is rich in the science or psychology of the mind, although perhaps somewhat lacking in the science of the external world, whereas the western developed countries and so forth are quite rich in the science of the external world, while lacking in the science of the inner world, or science of the mind.

To reemphasise the main point, as a Dharma practitioner one needs to adopt an attitude of not being attached to receiving praise while being happy when others are praised. That is because being attached to receiving praise only contributes to the decline of one's own virtues and so forth. On the other hand, being happy to hear others being praised only brings about good qualities and virtues, while at the same time preventing mental agony.

The reason why I emphasise these really significant points is because they may be not be apparent right away. But if you really pay attention you will find that a lack of appreciation of the excellences and goodness of others actually causes lot of mental pain, more specifically jealousy, to arise. Many have confided in me saying that when they notice that their siblings or relatives are doing well, they feel uncomfortable, and even experience a lot of mental pain. Indeed, the people we are most likely to be jealous of are those with whom we have a close connection. It is less likely that we will be jealous of those with whom we are not acquainted, strangers and so forth.

As mentioned previously, we might not initially notice that the pain and discomfort we feel actually comes from jealousy. But if we really take the initiative to think about these points, we will check our mind as soon as we start feeling uncomfortable. Then we will be able to notice jealousy and be able counteract that jealousy. We can then replace the agony of not feeling comfortable with their excellences with an attitude of appreciation. Training the mind to be happy about the excellences of others definitely relieves much unnecessary mental pain and agony.

To retain a sense of balance, one really needs to pay attention to these points. As the teachings mention, it is the afflictions that cause us so much mental pain. To see this, all we need to do is to consider these practical examples of the effects of jealousy and anger. We can all relate to how they disturb our state of mind. Whereas the person who is practising, finding antidotes and counteracting these afflictions, is someone who is really at ease and who maintains a sense of joy. People will be at ease with them, and they will be welcome guests wherever they go!

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.1.2. Obstructing them obstructs the lower realms

Here *obstructing them* refers again to obstructing the worldly concerns of grasping at praise and reputation. And obstructing them is a means of obstructing the path to the lower realms. The implication here is that there is no reason not to accept that.

What we need to understand from this presentation is that this mind training is a supreme means of engaging in Dharma practice. If we want to consider ourselves as Dharma practitioners, then we need to take these points on board, and try to incorporate them into our mindset.

The relevant verse reads:

**99. Therefore, aren't those that are closely involved
In destroying one's praise and so forth,
Engaged in protecting one from falling
Into the lower realms?**

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning as follows:

Therefore, aren't those taking great care in destroying one's praise, reputation and so forth, engaged in protecting one from falling into the lower realms?
How can one be angry at them?

This rhetorical question implies that they are indeed protecting one from falling into the lower realms. When others are critical and destroy one's reputation, they are also destroying attachment to praise and reputation. Those who pamper us with praise and reputation could, in fact, lead us to become more inclined to be attached to that. Whereas those who are critical and who destroy one's reputation are, in fact, destroying one of the causes, i.e. attachment to reputation and praise, for one to go to the lower realms. When someone destroys that attachment to praise and reputation, then in fact they are ultimately taking care of one. *So how can one be angry at them?* This implies that one should actually like them.

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.2. It is the means to become liberated from cyclic existence and thus it is unsuitable to be angry³

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.2.1. Since obstructing praise and so forth liberates one from cyclic existence it is unsuitable to be angry

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.2.2. Anger is unsuitable as it cuts the door to suffering

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.2.1. Since obstructing praise and so forth liberates one from cyclic existence it is unsuitable to be angry

**100. Oneself, who aspires to liberation,
Does not need the restraints of gain and
veneration,
How can one be angry
At that which liberates one from bondage?**

Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning of this verse as follows:

Further, since one aspires to attain liberation from cyclic existence, and since gain and veneration bind one to cyclic existence, one does not need such restraints. How can one be angry at that which liberates one from bondage by obstructing gain and veneration? It would be appropriate to like it.

The commentary begins by pointing out that we *aspire to liberation from cyclic existence*. Following this affirmation the commentary goes on to say that *gain and veneration bind one to cyclic existence*. Here we need to understand that attachment to gain and veneration binds one to cyclic existence. *One does not need such restraints*, relates to the earlier affirmation that one is seeking to be free from cyclic existence. Since attachment to gain and veneration actually binds one to cyclic existence, hence the affirmation, 'I don't need them, because I aspire to be free from cyclic existence'.

So, *how can one be angry at that which liberates one from bondage by obstructing gain and veneration?* Having pointed out earlier that attachment to gain and veneration binds one to cyclic existence, how could one then be angry with someone who actually obstructs the binding factor of gain and veneration? The words *how can one be angry at that* implies that one shouldn't be angry with them. In fact, as mentioned here, *it would be appropriate to like it*. Thus, rather than becoming angry with these obstructions, it is appropriate to like them.

³ The text uses *Anger is unsuitable as obstructions to praise and such liberate from cyclic existence*

2.1.4.3.2.1.2.2.2: *It is unsuitable to be angry since it cuts the door to suffering*

Again this is referring to obstructions to praise and so forth. Obstructions to praise actually cuts the door to suffering, therefore anger is unsuitable. The verse relating to this reads:

101. *One wishes to enter suffering
But like the blessings of the buddhas
It becomes the threshold not allowing to pass.
How can one get angry at that?*

One wishes to enter the house of suffering, but like the blessings of the buddhas, it serves as a bolt to the door, not allowing one to pass into that house of suffering. How can one become angry at that? Since it is a great friend it is appropriate to like it.

Being attached to praise is like wishing *to enter the house of suffering, but, like the blessings of the buddhas*, the obstruction to gaining praise and veneration is like a bolt that locks the door, *not allowing one to pass into that house of suffering. How can one become angry at that?* In this analogy, just as you cannot enter a house when the door is bolted, obstructing attachment to gain and veneration obstructs one from entering the house of suffering. Therefore *how can one become angry at that?* This rhetorical question is implying that one should not be angry.

Since it is a great friend it is appropriate to like it refers to those who obstruct one from entering a situation that involves great suffering; they are the greatest of friends. That is how this line is to be understood.

ANGER AT OBSTACLES TO THE GENERATION OF MERIT IS UNSUITABLE⁴

Having just explained the unsuitability of anger at that which obstructs gains, one might now wonder whether it might be acceptable to be angry at those who obstruct one's merits. This section counteracts that thought in three subdivisions:

1. It is unsuitable to be angry due to obstructions to merit
2. It is not an obstruction to merit
3. Think of it as an object worthy of respect

1. IT IS UNSUITABLE TO BE ANGRY DUE TO OBSTRUCTIONS TO MERIT

Here there are two subdivisions:

- 1.1. Abide on the supreme austerity
- 1.2. Obstructing it becomes an obstacle to one's merits

1.1. Abide on the supreme austerity

The commentary begins by referring back to the previous section.

Argument: Though it is unsuitable to be angry at obstructions to worldly dharmas,...

The implication of this is, 'OK, I accept that it is unsuitable to become angry with obstructions to worldly dharmas, but it must surely be fine to be angry with that which obstructs one's merits. Then the next verse is presented:

102. *They are an obstruction to merits it is said;
It is also unsuitable to be angry at them.
If there is no austerity like patience
Then wouldn't one abide on it?*

The commentary then completes the opening sentence:

... enemies obstruct the merits of generosity, morality and so forth, thus one gets angry.

Answer: It is unsuitable to be angry at them, because since one aspires to accumulating merits then wouldn't one abide in patience, since there is no other austerity that equals being patient with anger? It is extremely suitable to abide on patience.

The opening line makes this hypothetical statement: *enemies obstruct the merits of generosity, morality and so forth, thus one gets angry*. This is indirectly saying that they are obstructing our opportunity to gain merit. When others obstruct our gain, 'they are obstructing my means for engaging in meritorious activities such as generosity and so forth, and therefore I don't get an opportunity to accumulate merit'. Therefore, one becomes angry.

To counteract the hypothetical assertion that it may be suitable to be angry at those who obstruct the means for one to accumulate merit, the commentary says, *It is unsuitable to be angry at them because since one aspires towards accumulating merits then wouldn't one abide in patience, since there is no other austerity that equals being patient with anger?* As presented at the very beginning of the chapter, there is no higher form of austerity than the practice of patience. So because the practice of patience is a supreme form of austerity, it is the supreme means to accumulate merit. Since you aspire to accumulate merit, then rather than becoming angry at those who obstruct your means of accumulating merits, wouldn't you rather practise patience, since that is the supreme means to accumulate merit? The conclusion here is *it is extremely suitable to abide on patience* since there are no other practices equal to the practice of patience for accumulating merit. Therefore it is far more appropriate to abide on patience, rather than retaliating with anger.

1.2. Obstructing it becomes an obstacle to one's merits

The verse relating to this heading reads:

103. *If, through my own fault,
I do not practise patience with them,
I obstruct myself from
Abiding close to the cause of merits.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary on the verse reads:

If, through one's own fault of being greatly angry, one generates anger to abiding close to the cause of merits of being patient with the enemy, then one obstructs one's merits and not the other person.

Here we are being told that it is not the enemy that is the real obstacle to one's generation of merit. Rather it is the way one's own mind relates to the enemy. If one becomes angry with the enemy, then one's merits will decline, whereas keeping the enemy close will be a means to accumulate more merit through the practice of patience. As the commentary says: *through one's own fault of being greatly angry, one generates anger to abiding close to the cause of merits of being patient with the enemy*. So the enemy is actually a cause for one to accumulate merit through being patient with them, while becoming angry one destroys that merit. This is really quite a subtle presentation. In saying, *then one obstructs one's merits and not the other person*, the commentary is stating that the other person is not responsible or obstructing one's merit. Rather, through becoming angry one obstructs one's own merit.

⁴ ed. Technically this is the second part of the earlier heading 2.1.4.3.1. *It is unsuitable to be impatient with obstacles to one's own benefit and obstacles to the benefit of those belonging to one's side*, which was introduced last week. Because it contains a number of nested headings the numbering system is being restarted here.

Thus, it is all related to one's own state of mind. Depending on one's mindset, an enemy can be a great cause to accumulate merit by practising patience with them. But if one becomes angry with the enemy then what would otherwise become an opportunity for one's merit to increase, actually causes merit to decline.

To emphasise the point, it is the way we relate to the enemy that actually causes our mental agony. If we become angry with the enemy then of course our mind becomes disturbed. Whereas if we accept the enemy, even if they are near by, and don't allow ourselves to become angry, then there will be no mental pain or agony. So what is clearly being shown here is how it actually depends on our own attitudes rather than on the other person. Now this might differ from western psychology, which might say, 'If the cause of distress is the other person, try to avoid them'. However in Buddhism it is not the external person who is the cause of our agony, but our own mind.

This point was presented earlier in the chapter with an analogy of how it is impossible to subdue and overcome all enemies, but subduing one's own mind and overcoming anger is equivalent to subduing all enemies. The analogy was that it is impossible to cover the whole earth with leather so that one's feet will not be punctured with thorns and so forth. But if one covers one's own feet with leather then that will protect one's feet in the same way as covering the whole world.

2. IT IS NOT AN OBSTRUCTION TO MERIT

This has two parts, which are very profound presentations about how to practice:

2.1. General

2.2. Establishing with example

2.1. General

The verse relating to this reads:

*104. When it does not exist it does not arise,
When it exists it does arise,
If it is its cause
Then how can it be called an obstruction?*

The commentary explains:

The merit of patience does not arise when there is no harmer; when there is an enemy then the merit of patience exists. If this very enemy is the definite cause of the merit, then how can it be called an obstruction? That which is conducive is not suitable as an obstruction.

The merit of patience does not arise when there is no harmer, relates to the first type of patience, which is the patience of not retaliating to harm. The second two types of patience is the patience of definitely thinking of Dharma and willingly accepting suffering, which is much more pervasive, and relates to many different circumstances in life.

That first patience of not becoming angry and retaliating to harm is only practised in relation to there being a harmer. So there has to be someone who is harming us if we want to practise this type of patience. Gaining merit through the practice of patience does not arise when there is no harmer. It is only *when there is an enemy that the merit of that patience of not retaliating to harm can be gained.*

Further, the commentary explains, *if this very enemy is the definite cause of the merit then how can it be called an obstruction?* This refers back to the earlier presentation of how to

counteract the false reasoning that it is suitable to be angry with an enemy because they obstruct our merit.

Here the text is saying that far from being an obstruction to one's merit, the enemy is the very cause of one's merit, because without an enemy who harms one, one could not possibly practise the patience of not retaliating in the face of harm. It is only because there is a harmer that the need to practice the patience of not retaliating to harm arises. Therefore, there is a cause and effect sequence where the enemy who is the harmer is the cause for the generation of patience of not retaliating.

Therefore *that which is conducive is not suitable as an obstruction.* Because something or someone is conducive to one's practice of patience, and thus the accumulation of merit, it cannot possibly be an obstruction. This is a very profound reasoning showing us how to see an enemy as our best friend.

If we can cover at least eight verses in each session, then we should be able to move quite rapidly through the text. The discussion and test nights should then take us through to the end of May.

We will also do our recitation of the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* on 24 May. Please make a note of that date, as this recitation is part of the Study Group commitments. I have scheduled the recitation to coincide with Saka Dawa, the holy month of the Buddha's birth and enlightenment. Because that is such an auspicious time, reciting the text will be a means to accumulate extensive merit.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

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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

21 April 2015

While maintaining the motivation just generated, we can now engage in our meditation practice. [*meditation*]

It is very important that we generate a proper motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practice well.

2. IT IS NOT AN OBSTRUCTION TO MERIT (CONT.)

2.2. Establishing this with an example

The word 'this' refers to the earlier point that the enemy is not an obstruction to gaining merit or practising patience. The example is presented in the verse that reads:

105. *The beggar at the time of generosity
Is not an obstruction to generosity.
Those facilitating the renunciate
Are not an obstruction to a renunciate.*

The commentary reflects the meaning:

At the time of having the means and delight to give, the beggar is not an obstruction to generosity. Also, the abbots and preceptors facilitating the renunciate are unsuitable to be called obstructions for becoming a renunciate, of those wishing to do so.

If a beggar happens to come by when one has the material means, and delights in giving, then at that time they are not an obstruction to the practice of generosity. In fact the beggar is a condition enabling one to practise generosity and gain the merit associated with being generous.

Similarly, for someone who wishes to practise patience, the harms inflicted by an enemy are not an obstruction to the practice of patience. Rather, the harmer is actually a cause for one to engage in the practice of patience, and thus accumulate the merit associated with that practice.

The second example in the verse states that abbots and preceptors who facilitate those wishing to become renunciates, or be ordained, are not an obstruction but rather the required condition for them to actually become renunciates.

3. THINK OF IT AS AN OBJECT WORTHY OF RESPECT

This is subdivided into two:

- 3.1. One should be respectful since it generates qualities
- 3.2. One should be respectful because one has faith in the Buddha

3.1. One should be respectful since it generates qualities

This is subdivided into three:

- 3.1.1. Great benefit to oneself

3.1.2. Not dependent on the thought to benefit

3.1.3. Viewing them like the Buddha

3.1.1. Great benefit to oneself

This is subdivided into three:

3.1.1.1. Supreme fields are rare

3.1.1.2. It is suitable to like them

3.1.1.3. It is appropriate to have the thought of benefiting them

3.1.1.1. SUPREME FIELDS ARE RARE

The objects of generosity are plentiful whereas objects of patience, particularly the patience of not retaliating to harm, are relatively rare. A supreme field can be related to something which is rare and precious. In this sense, those who harm one can be considered to be a supreme field, as they are rare.

The verse reads:

106. *In the world there are indeed beggars,
Those harming are much rarer,
If one thus does not harm them,
Then nobody will inflict harm.*

The Tibetan word *long-wa* literally means those who seek, and people who seek something from others don't necessarily have to be beggars. So while the word is loosely used for a beggar, in general it means someone who is seeking something from you. For example, we would not refer to Buddha Shakyamuni as a beggar, although he would have sought alms in the community as a means for others to accumulate merit. The term beggar here has a larger context, and should not be limited to those who are viewed as destitute and poor.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on the verse reads:

Since the field of patience is rarer than the field of generosity it is suitable to like one's enemies. In the world there are indeed beggars who are the field of generosity, but those who harm, who are the field of patience, are much rarer. If asked why, that is because if one does not harm others, then one will not be harmed in return.

The first part of the explanation highlights that *the field of patience is rarer than the field of generosity, and thus it is suitable to like one's enemies. The field of patience* refers to others who harm one and thus give one the opportunity to practise patience. Because those who intentionally harm one are rare, it is suitable to like them. Worldly examples confirm that rare things are more highly valued than common things e.g. the rarer a jewel, the higher its value. The field of patience refers to the harm giver, and because they are rare *it is suitable to like one's enemies.*

The commentary explains that *in the world there are indeed beggars who are the field of generosity.* This fact is easy to see. In these times of the five degenerations there is so much conflict, strife and poverty prevalent in the world. Thus, those in need of material aid are very easy to find.

In comparison, the text states that *those who harm, who are the fields of patience, are much rarer. If asked why, the explanation here is that is because if one does not harm others then one will not be harmed in return.*

This relates to subtle points of the karmic cause and effect sequence. If one is harmed now, then this is a result of having harmed others either in this life, or in previous

lifetimes. This may not be immediately obvious, but consider the possibility that those we have harmed in the early and middle part of our life might start harming us towards the end of our life. This type of cause and effect sequence is quite prevalent. The key point here is that because of the harm you have extended to others, there will be others who will harm you. What is being pointed out here is that if one does not intentionally go out to harm others, then naturally others won't harm you. So, if you don't harm others it is unlikely that you will have many enemies harming you.

Normally we would think that if someone harms us we are entitled to harm them in return because 'they hurt me first'. This indicates that if someone has initiated the harm first, then there is a justification to return harm for harm in retaliation. Even in a legal context where there is a fight, the punishment is given to the one who initiated that fight. For those who retaliate, perhaps in self-defence, the punishment seems to be less.

The worldly perspective is that if someone harms you it is quite acceptable to harm them back. In fact it is considered brave and courageous to fight back. This thought is strongly ingrained into the psyche of ordinary beings. However Shantideva is pointing out that this is not suitable, and that one should not retaliate harm with harm.

The truth of what is being explained here is evident when related to a bodhisattvas' level of practice, because a bodhisattva, whose only intention is to benefit sentient beings, would not intentionally harm any living being in the slightest. Using a Tibetan expression, they will not inflict even an atom of harm on other sentient beings.

For noble beings such as bodhisattvas, whose very practice is only to benefit and refrain from the slightest harm to sentient beings, others will naturally appreciate them. When they are highly respected and admired, there would hardly be anyone wishing to intentionally harm them. This should hold true for human sentiments. Even animals, who are considerably dumber than humans, when nurtured and cared for can recognise that kindness, show affection and do no harm in return. If an animal can recognise those who have benefitted them and give affection in return, then surely, for humans with intelligence, that would have to be the case too.

Those harming a bodhisattva are rare because of the bodhisattvas' own dedicated practice to benefit sentient beings. When bodhisattvas do encounter someone with the intention of harming them, then rather than becoming upset they would show great respect to them. They act as if they are encountering a rare and precious gem that is a cause for them to further develop their practice of patience.

To take this as a personal instruction, we need to practise as much as possible not to harbour any kind of harmful intentions. If we were to actually practise not intentionally harming others, not even in the slightest, then others around us would naturally appreciate us and like us.

When the intention of refraining from harm and wishing to benefit others is extended to one's companion, someone who one lives with, then if those two people can

practise in this way, then their relationship will be healthy and harmonious. This is something I emphasise regularly, as it is the means of leading a more meaningful and happy life.

These are significant points to keep in mind as one needs to reflect upon what causes a happy relationship with someone else. It is not dependent on wealth. Clearly just because one is wealthy doesn't mean one will have harmonious relationships. Also, just because one is influential or has status doesn't necessarily mean these will become conditions for having harmonious relationships. So what is the key factor to having harmonious relationships? It is one's positive mind, and the intention of wishing to benefit the other, and not intentionally harm them. Such a mind based on love and compassion is the key factor for harmonious relationships.

3.1.1.2. IT IS SUITABLE TO LIKE THEM

Having covered that the fields of patience are supreme and rare, the next point emphasises that it is suitable to like them.

The verse reads:

107. *Hence, just like a treasure
Received effortlessly in one's house,
One should like one's enemies,
Since they become a condition for
enlightenment.*

The commentary explains the meaning as follows:

The fields for patience are rare. Therefore one should like one's enemies with the thought of wanting to repay their kindness, since they become the condition to meditate on the bodhisattva action of patience, just like a treasure that one receives effortlessly in one's house.

The first part uses the example, *just like a treasure that one receives effortlessly in one's house*. For example, if a destitute person suddenly found some treasure in their house, without intentionally seeking for it, how glad they would be! It would be a cause for tremendous relief and joy in their mind.

Further, *The fields for patience are rare. Therefore one should like one's enemies with the thought of wanting to repay their kindness*, and the reason is *since they become the condition to meditate on the bodhisattva action of patience*.

Using the example of finding a treasure without effort, the enemy that harms one is also incredibly rare and precious. Far from becoming an obstruction to one's ultimate goal of achieving enlightenment, the enemy who harms one becomes the supreme cause for one to quickly achieve enlightenment.

It is appropriate that one generates a mind of wanting to repay the enemy's kindness, as *it becomes the condition to meditate on the bodhisattvas' actions of patience*, thus becoming the cause for one's enlightenment.

The point here is that by regarding the enemy as extremely precious and kind, rather than retaliating with harm when they harm you, you should think about repaying their kindness.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama mentions that the supreme object of practising patience is the one who harms you. It

is not our kind teachers who teach us how to practise patience, as there is no need to practise patience towards one who doesn't harm you. The actual practice is integrating the opportunity that one gets to practise patience when someone harms you.

3.1.1.3. IT IS APPROPRIATE TO HAVE THE THOUGHT OF BENEFITING THEM

The verse reads:

*108. Since it is established through this and myself
It is suitable to dedicate the result of patience
First to them -
They are the cause of patience.*

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse clearly:

Since it is established through this enemy, and myself practising patience, we are both the cause for patience. Therefore it is suitable to dedicate enlightenment, which is the result of patience, first to the harmer. The enemy is a powerful cause for the patience that creates my enlightenment.

Since it is established through the enemy and myself practising patience, we are both the cause for patience. In a practical sense, one's own initiative to practise patience is the ultimate cause for one to practise patience with an enemy, but it is through a combination of both practices that one is actually able to practise patience. Therefore it is befitting to dedicate enlightenment, which is the result of patience, first to the harmer.

This indicates the great extent of the bodhisattvas' aspirations and dedications. The altruistic mind of a bodhisattva acknowledges that the one who intended to harm them is actually a rare cause for them to practise patience.

When enlightenment is attained, the cause for the resultant enlightenment is thus dedicated first and foremost to the one who caused one to attain it, which is the enemy—the one who harmed us.

In bodhisattvas' practices that are completely dedicated to the benefit of others, there is no sense of self-centredness and no ulterior motive. Their practice is solely to benefit other sentient beings and acknowledge their contributions. The conclusion is that *the enemy is a powerful cause for the patience that creates my enlightenment.*

The aspirations and dedications we make in our daily practice come from the bodhisattva's supreme practices and positive way of dedication. Normally, when we do a practice one of the first dedications is to benefit all sentient beings to the ultimate state of enlightenment. This encompasses everything we are able to practise, and everything we receive is due to the kindness of other sentient beings. Recognising this it is befitting that we dedicate whatever practices we engage in first and foremost to the welfare of sentient beings, which is a very noble and selfless way of dedicating one's virtues. The merit one accumulates from this becomes expansive, and it is good to keep the significance of this in mind. If you use these explanations as a personal instruction to enhance your own daily practices, and give them impetus and deeper meaning, then it becomes beneficial.

3.1.2. Not dependent on the thought to benefit

This is divided into three:

3.1.2.1. It is incorrect that they are not an object of offering due to not having an intent to benefit

3.1.2.2. It is incorrect that they are not an object of offering as they have the intent to harm

3.1.2.3. They are a suitable object for offerings since they act as objects for patience

3.1.2.1. IT IS INCORRECT THAT THEY ARE NOT AN OBJECT OF OFFERING DUE TO NOT HAVING AN INTENT TO BENEFIT

What is being countered here is the thought of how could one consider an enemy as an object of offering, or to repay their kindness when they had no intention of benefitting you? The verse aims to overcome such doubts.

The verse reads:

*109. If enemies have no intent to establish patience
And therefore are not an object of offering,
Then why make offerings to the holy Dharma
Which is a suitable cause for practice?*

The commentary begins with a hypothetical argument:

Argument: Since they do not have the thought to establish patience in my continuum, they are not to be made offerings to.

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse, which provides the answer:

Answer: Then it follows one also should not make offerings to the holy Dharma jewel that is suitable as a cause for practice, because it does not have the thought thinking, 'I shall cause the generation of virtue'.

The argument is presented as *since they do not have the thought to establish patience in my continuum, they are not to be made offerings to.* One may think, 'because enemies just want to harm me, why should I venerate them and consider them kind'?

The answer: If you used this logic as a reason not to honour or make offerings to the enemy, what follows is that you would also *not make offerings to the holy Dharma jewel* which is in fact a supreme cause for one's practice. So while the Dharma jewel *is* one of the most supreme causes for one to practise, *because it does not have the thought 'I shall cause the generation of virtue'*, one may as well think that there is no need to make offerings and venerate the Dharma jewel.

If the doubt is based on the harmer not having the intention to establish virtue in one's continuum, one could say that there's no point in honouring the Dharma as well, because the Dharma, being inanimate, doesn't have the intention to establish virtue in one's continuum.

This reasoning would not apply to the two other jewels, the Sangha jewel and the Buddha jewel. But the Dharma jewel as an inanimate object definitely doesn't have any intention to benefit one. However it is one of the greatest sources for one gaining understanding and knowledge, and the causes for developing realisations. When one thinks about the words of the Buddha as the Dharma Jewel, then it is the advice and instructions the Buddha gives that become one of the supreme means for gaining understanding and realisations to progress along the path. They are indeed an object of veneration and respect.

The commentary meticulously presents this very sound logic as a way to overcome one's doubts.

Seeing that an enemy only has an intention to harm, and thus seeing no reason why one should venerate them, is due to the ordinary worldly way of thinking. These arguments and answers are presented to counteract ordinary thoughts, where we find it reasonable to retaliate or harm an enemy. These are essential points for those who intentionally want to practise patience, particularly the patience of not retaliating to harm. For someone who intends to practise this, one has to use this reasoning as a way to counteract false justifications for harming an enemy.

3.1.2.2. IT IS INCORRECT THAT THEY ARE NOT AN OBJECT OF OFFERING AS THEY HAVE THE INTENT TO HARM

The verse reads:

*110. If: this enemy has the intent to harm,
And therefore they are not the object of offering.
If they were to strive to benefit like a doctor
Then how could one practise patience?*

Again a hypothetical doubt or argument is presented:

Argument: It is not the same. The enemy is not an object of offering because they have the intent to harm me.

As a way to counteract that reasoning, the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Answer: If they strove to accomplish benefit and happiness, like a doctor, then they would not be the object of patience. How would one then practice the patience that does not think anything of harm? It is suitable to like the harmer.

Using the earlier example of the Dharma having no wish to benefit, yet still being an object of veneration and offering, similarly the enemy should be an object of veneration and offering. The hypothetical argument states that it's not the same, because while the Dharma has no intent to harm oneself, an enemy does have the intention to harm one, and therefore the enemy cannot be an object of offering.

The way to counteract such flawed reasoning is that it is because of the very fact that they harm you that you need to practise the patience of not retaliating to harm. If they had the intention to benefit you, like a doctor, then they would not be an object of patience, and you would not get the benefit of practising patience.

As I mentioned earlier, one does not practise patience in relation to a teacher because a teacher only has an intention to benefit one. In general, a teacher is not an object that you need to practise patience with, because they only wish to benefit you. Likewise, a doctor only intends to benefit you, so they are not an object on which you would need to practise patience.

How would one then practise the patience that does not think anything of harm? Without someone intending to harm oneself, how could one possibly practise the patience of not retaliating to harm? What is emphasised here is because they are the supreme object for practising patience, it is suitable to like the harmer.

3.1.2.3. THEY ARE A SUITABLE OBJECT FOR OFFERINGS SINCE THEY ACT AS AN OBJECT FOR PATIENCE

The verse reads:

*111. Hence, since patience is generated in dependence
On a strong mind of hatred,
It alone is the cause for patience
And suitable for offerings just like the holy
Dharma.*

The commentary explains the meaning as follows:

Since patience is not completed in dependence on a mind intending to benefit, it is generated in dependence on the harm inflicted due to strong hatred. Hence, only the harmer is the cause of patience and is suitable to be made offerings to just like the holy Dharma, despite not having the intent to benefit.

The earlier points clearly explained that patience cannot be completed in dependence on a mind intending to benefit. Rather it is generated in dependence on the harm inflicted due to the strong hatred of the harmer. What is further explained here is that there would be no need to practise patience with someone who benefits you.

Taking an example of a so-called enemy hitting you with a stick compared to a doctor giving you an injection. The injection still hurts us and we feel pain, but we don't find reason to get angry with the doctor. In fact we are glad that the doctor is giving us an injection so that we'll be cured of our illness. We are actually grateful and thankful for that.

If an enemy or someone who intends to harm one comes around with a needle and starts pricking us with it, we would become very angry. It doesn't even take a needle to prick us, even an inappropriate look will make us very upset and angry.

What this goes to show is that it is because of the intention to harm that we get hurt. When there's an intention to harm then the slightest inappropriate gesture, or physical harm, will become a cause for one to become extremely upset and angry and want to retaliate. Whereas when there's intention to benefit, even if there is some actual pain caused, then because of the intention in the other's mind, we don't consider it harm, or the other as an enemy.

The main point is that someone who harms us allows us to actually practise patience. *Hence, only the harmer is the cause of patience and is suitable to be made offerings to, just like the holy Dharma, despite not having the intent to benefit.*

The thing to understand here is the distinction between someone who harms, and someone who benefits. It really comes down to the intention they have in their mind. With an intention to benefit one, even when some discomfort is caused, such as when a doctor gives us treatment, we don't label them as a harmer. Whereas when someone has the intention to harm, then even the slightest inappropriate gesture causes us a lot of distress.

So what really differentiates a harmer from someone who benefits is the intention they have in their mind.

As mentioned in an earlier teaching, Lama Tsong Khapa said that without wishing the other to gain happiness and be free from suffering one cannot possibly have the

intention to benefit the other. These are profound points that Lama Tsong Khapa is sharing with us: a genuine intent to benefit others has to be preceded by a wish for them to be happy and not to experience suffering.

3.1.3. Viewing them like the Buddha

Here, *Viewing them* refers to sentient beings, including the harmer, as being similar to the Buddha.

3.1.3.1. Extensive explanation

3.1.3.2. Summary

3.1.3.1. EXTENSIVE EXPLANATION

This is subdivided into three:

3.1.3.1.1. It is stated in the scriptures that sentient beings and the buddhas are equal in being a field for merit

3.1.3.1.2. Establishing this with reasoning

3.1.3.1.3. Refuting objections

3.1.3.1.1. *It is stated in the scriptures that sentient beings and buddhas are equal in being a field for merit*

The Tibetan word translated literally as equal can also denote similarity, so the heading could read *are similar in being a field of merit*.

The first two lines of the verse relate to this heading:

*112ab. Therefore the Able One said: "The field
Of sentient beings and the field of conquerors."*

The commentary explains that:

Since it is necessary to treat sentient beings with respect it is stated in the *Sutra Perfectly Containing Dharma*:

The field of sentient beings is the field of the buddhas. From the field of the buddhas the Buddhadharma is obtained. It would be unsuitable to mistreat them.

In this and other quotes the Able One stated that the field of sentient beings, where one can plant the extensive seeds for merits, is as much a field to accumulate merits as the field of the buddhas.

Since *it is necessary to treat sentient beings with respect it is stated in the Sutra Perfectly Containing Dharma, that the field of sentient beings is the field of the buddhas*.

The term *field* is used in the context of the fields that serve as a basis for crops to grow. Likewise sentient beings reap the realisations leading all the way to enlightenment.

The field of sentient beings is the field of buddhas, relates to the cause and effect sequence of obtaining enlightenment. It is by relying on sentient beings, and engaging in the practices of the six perfections, that one implants the seeds of enlightenment to finally reap the result of becoming a buddha.

Furthermore, from *the field of the buddhas the Buddhadharma is obtained*, thus *it would be unsuitable to mistreat them*. The quote is explained with, *in this and other quotes the Able One stated that the field of sentient beings, where one can plant the extensive seeds for merits, is as much a field to accumulate merits as the field of the buddhas*.

What is explained here is that while we have great respect and veneration for the buddhas as a supreme field from which to accumulate merit and gain realisations etc., it is in relation to sentient beings that one actually engages in the practices of the six perfections. With the example of generosity this is very clear—

without sentient beings as objects to be generous towards, how can one possibly practise generosity?

So it is in relation to sentient beings that we are able to practise generosity, morality and so forth. It is the same with the practice of patience, as presented here, without the harmers we cannot possibly practice patience. It is only in relation to sentient beings that we are able to engage in all the forms of practice.

Without relying on sentient beings one cannot possibly practise the six perfections. Therefore sentient beings are an extremely precious field for one to accumulate merit. In that light, as a cause for one's ultimate goal of enlightenment, the buddha fields and the fields of sentient beings are equal, or similar, in providing one with the causes.

When we generate faith there is a natural inclination to make offerings and pay respect to the enlightened beings. That is because we consider the enlightened beings as a supreme field of merit. But since sentient beings are an object for one's accumulation of merit, and without them one cannot engage in practices of generosity and so forth, they are also to be seen as a similar field of merit. The point here is that one should apply one's practice of veneration, respect and offerings to the buddhas as well as sentient beings, because they are a similar field of merit. In the teachings, the source of the points which emphasise that one needs to pay respect, venerate and honour sentient beings, is none other than Shantideva's explanations.

3.1.3.1.2. *Establishing this with reasoning*

This is subdivided into two:

3.1.3.1.2.1. By having faith in the buddhas and sentient beings one will attain the ultimate aim

3.1.3.1.2.2. To discriminate between them, accepting one and rejecting the other, is unsuitable, since they are the same in that one will attain enlightenment by having faith in them.

3.1.3.1.2.1. *By having faith in the buddhas and sentient beings one will attain the ultimate aim*

The next two lines of the verse read:

*112cd. Many a one, by making them happy,
Have thus gone to the perfection beyond.*

The commentary explains:

It is suitable to respect all sentient beings, because by having faith in the buddhas and sentient beings, and by making them happy, many have gone to the perfection beyond that has completed the two purposes.

Gyalsab Je says that *it is suitable to respect all sentient beings, because by having faith in the buddhas and sentient beings, and by making them happy, many have gone to the perfection beyond that has completed the two purposes*. This emphasises that it is both the buddhas as a supreme field of merit, and sentient beings as a supreme field of merit, and the combination of making offerings, paying respect, and doing practices to both fields, that one obtains one's ultimate goal of enlightenment and thus fulfils the two purposes.

As buddhas and sentient beings equally assist one to achieve one's ultimate goal of enlightenment, both are equally an object of veneration, respect and offerings.

3.1.3.1.2.2. To discriminate between them, accepting one and rejecting the other, is unsuitable, since they are the same in that one will attain enlightenment by having faith in them.

The verse reads:

*113. The dharmas of a buddha are equally attained
From sentient beings and the conquerors.
What behaviour would it be to please the
conquerors
But not sentient beings?*

The commentary explains:

For these reasons one attains the resultant dharmas of a buddha, such as the powers and so forth, equally from sentient beings and the conquerors. What kind of behaviour would it therefore be to respect the conquerors but to not respect sentient beings likewise? It would be unsuitable.

As explained earlier, both the buddha and the sentient beings are equal fields of merit, and so for these reasons one obtains the dharmas or the qualities of a buddha, such as the ten powers and so forth. This encompasses all the qualities of a buddha's holy body, speech, and mind. The particular qualities specified in the teachings are all obtained as a result of the fields of merit. As *sentient beings and the conquerors* are equal in this respect, *what kind of behaviour would it therefore be to respect the conquerors but to not respect sentient beings likewise*. This implies that it is indeed suitable, and that one needs to pay equal respect to both.

So what is being highlighted here is that, if on the one hand one is very pious, and shows a lot of respect, making offerings and veneration to the enlightened being, but on the other hand ignores and pays no respect to sentient beings, then this would be inappropriate and shameful behaviour as both are an equal cause for obtaining such qualities.

The personal instruction is that one really needs to incorporate this understanding and show genuine respect to all sentient beings, in whatever form they take, to always extend respect to all beings equally.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

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Edited Version*

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Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱུང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

28 April 2015

As usual we will now engage in our meditation practice.

[meditation]

Now we can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

It needs to be understood that generating a motivation prior to receiving the teachings secures the time we spend as a meaningful practice. In fact, with a proper motivation, the attention one pays to the topic being presented is actually a form of meditation. The purpose of meditation is to keep the mind in virtue. While a single-pointed meditation focuses on one particular object, listening to a teaching with a proper motivation is also a form of meditation practice. That is because it is a means for keeping one's mind in virtue. The teacher definitely has to maintain a focused mind, because they have to be focused on the teaching material. Likewise the listeners also need to take the initiative to keep their minds focused on what is being presented. When the attention that one pays listening to the teachings is complemented with the earlier positive motivation, then it definitely becomes a very meaningful meditation practice.

As I regularly mention, we need to incorporate the practices that we do here into our daily life, and then we will have integrated the Dharma into our lives. Just sitting piously for a few minutes at a time may not be really enough if we want any real transformation to take place.

3.1. One should be respectful since it generates qualities (cont.)

3.1.3.1.3. Refuting objections

This has three subdivisions:

3.1.3.1.3.1. Refuting that it is unsuitable to meditate on equal faith, because of not having equal qualities

3.1.3.1.3.2. It is suitable to equally meditate on faith, because the greatness of having faith in both is equally the cause for enlightenment

3.1.3.1.3.3. It is suitable to have faith, because the merits of making offerings to sentient beings, who possess parts of the qualities of a buddha, is infinite

3.1.3.1.3.1. Refuting that it is unsuitable to meditate on equal faith, because of not having equal qualities

This section refutes the thought that since sentient beings and enlightened beings don't possess the same qualities, it would be unsuitable to think that one could have equal faith in both.

This is a very reasonable doubt, and the following verse is a presentation of the way to overcome that doubt.

114. *Not through the qualities of thought,
But through the result, sentient beings
Also equally have qualities.
Therefore they are equal.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je begins with a statement of the doubt or argument:

Argument: Even though sentient beings are a field of merit, since they do not have equal qualities it is unsuitable to make offerings to them as to the buddhas.

Then he explains the meaning of the verse, which serves as an answer:

Answer: There is no such fault, because they are not made equal through the qualities of thought, but because they are the same in being the cause for enlightenment. Thus if one is equally respectful to sentient beings, because they also have the qualities of enlightenment, they are therefore equal fields of merit.

The main point is that sentient beings and enlightened beings are *equally a field of merit*. As explained previously, a field of merit is an object through which one accumulates merit. Enlightened beings are a field of merit for making offerings, and sentient beings are also a field of merit as an object of generosity. Indeed, sentient beings are a supreme field for accumulating the merit of generosity. Making offerings to the enlightened beings and holy objects is, of course, also considered to be a practice of generosity. However the real beneficiaries of an act of generosity are sentient beings. Therefore they are the supreme object of one's generosity, and since one accumulates merit in relation to them, they are considered to be fields of merit.

While accepting that both sentient beings and enlightened beings are fields of merit, the doubt being expressed here is that since *they do not have equal qualities, it is unsuitable to make offerings to them as to the buddhas*. The main point about this doubt is thinking, 'because buddhas and sentient beings don't have equal qualities there is no reason to have equal faith in both'.

They are not made equal through qualities but because they are the same in being the cause for enlightenment explains that even though they are not equal in having the same qualities, they are equally the cause for enlightenment. The lam rim teaching also makes this same point in stating that the cause for one's enlightenment relies equally both on the teacher, who presents the teaching, and sentient beings, on whom one relies as an object for engaging in the practices. As both are the same in being the cause for enlightenment, one needs to rely equally on the buddhas who present the teachings and sentient beings who are a condition for one's practice.

In simple terms, if one has to rely equally on both as causes for one's own enlightenment, then how can it be reasonable to only have faith in one and not the other? It would be quite unreasonable. *If one is also respectful to sentient beings then one will gain the qualities of enlightenment. Therefore they are equal fields of merit*. They are equal in being the causes for one's enlightenment.

3.1.3.1.3.2. It is suitable to equally meditate on faith, because the greatness of having faith in both is equally the cause for enlightenment

This further emphasises how it is suitable to meditate on faith in both enlightened beings and sentient beings, as both are equally the cause of enlightenment. The relevant lines of verse present this point very meticulously.

115. *Any offerings to those with the mind of love
Are the very greatness of sentient beings.
Any merit of having faith in the buddhas
Is again a greatness of the buddhas.*

116.ab *There is a part establishing the dharmas of a
buddha
And therefore they are asserted to be equal*

Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning as follows:

The offerings to those endowed with the mind of love for all sentient beings, which is taught to be infinite merit, are the very greatness of the sentient beings that are the object of that love.

Any merit of having faith in the buddhas is again a greatness of the object of the faith, the buddhas alone. Therefore, having faith in both contains equally the causes that establish the dharmas of a buddha and therefore they are both equally asserted as suitable.

The offerings of those endowed with the mind of love refers to limitless love, focusing on limitless *sentient beings*. Therefore, the infinite amount of merit that is accumulated from developing a limitless mind of love for a limitless number of sentient beings is said to be the *greatness*, i.e. the qualities, *of sentient beings*. One obtains *infinite merit* because of the greatness of the object, which is limitless sentient beings.

Likewise, the merit of having *faith in the buddhas is again a greatness of the object of that faith*, which are *the buddhas alone*. When one generates faith in a buddha, one again accumulates an infinite amount of merit because of the greatness or the qualities of the buddhas. As one accumulates infinite amounts of merit through the greatness of the objects, *they are both equally asserted as suitable objects of faith*.

From this we can derive a personal instruction. When we do the *tong len* meditation, for example, we are attempting to generate love and compassion. The scope of the love that we are attempting to generate is, as explained here, love for an infinite or limitless number of sentient beings. When one ensures that one is focusing on the practice of giving and taking in relation to limitless sentient beings, then that becomes a means for one to accumulate an infinite amount of merit. So we can see that if we do our regular *tong len* meditation with a proper motivation and proper recollection, then it is not just a simple practice. Because it is very profound, it is a means to accumulate great merit. So one needs to ensure that one fully embraces the practice, on the basis of a deeper understanding of the explanations that have been presented here.

In summary, the main point is that the infinite merit that one gains by generating a limitless mind of love for a limitless number of sentient beings, is due to the greatness that are the qualities of sentient beings. Likewise the merit that one gains from generating faith in the buddhas is due to the greatness, or the qualities of the

buddhas. Since both are equally a part of the Buddhadharma that one practices as a means to accumulate the causes for enlightenment, they are equally an object of faith.

3.1.3.1.3.3. It is suitable to have faith, because the merits of making offerings to sentient beings, who possess parts of the qualities of a buddha, is infinite

The next six lines of verse, which relate to this, read:

116cd. *Not at all equal to the buddhas
With an ocean of infinite qualities*

117. *Even giving the three realms for the purpose
Of making offerings to those few in whom
appears
A mere part of the qualities of those
That are only an accumulation of qualities, it
would be too little.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

From the side of the qualities of thought they are not equal, because they are not at all equal with the qualities of the buddhas that possess an infinite ocean of extensive and difficult to fathom qualities. Although the qualities are not equal, there are some that have parts of the qualities of the buddhas who are an unequalled accumulation of supreme and great qualities. To give all objects of the three realms for the purpose of making offerings to them would still be too little. What need is there to mention others?

What is being explained here is that in relation to the qualities of thought or mind, the qualities of sentient beings do not equal the qualities of the buddhas, who possess an infinite ocean of extensive, and difficult to fathom, qualities.

Although the qualities are not equal, however *there are some who have parts of the qualities of the buddhas*, and *to give all objects of the three realms for the purpose of making offerings to them would still be too little*. This indicates that making offerings to someone who has even a part of the qualities of the buddhas is a cause for extensive merit. *What need is there to mention others?* This rhetorical question implies that if the merit of making offerings to someone who only has a partial quality of the buddhas is extremely extensive, then there is no need to mention the extensive merit gained by making offerings to all sentient beings.

3.1.3.2. SUMMARY

The verse relating to this reads:

118. *A part of that which generates the supreme
dharmas
Of a buddha exists in sentient beings.
Merely through this they become equal
And it is suitable to make offerings to sentient
beings.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Though they do not have qualities equal to the buddhas, since a part of the cause that generates these supreme qualities exists in sentient beings, they become equal merely through this. Hence it is suitable to respect sentient beings and make offerings to them as to the buddhas.

As the commentary clearly explains, *though they do not have qualities equal to the buddhas*, *a part of the cause that generates these supreme qualities exists in sentient beings*. While sentient beings don't have equal qualities to the

buddhas, the enlightened beings, there is a part that serves as cause for one to accumulate those great qualities of the buddhas. Through this they become equal in being a field of one's faith. *Hence it is suitable to respect sentient beings and make offerings to them as to the buddhas.* This is the summarising point.

3.2. One should be respectful because one has faith in the buddhas

This is subdivided into two:

3.2.1. One should be respectful because they view all sentient beings like an only child

3.2.2. Showing subsequently as a summary that one also needs to be respectful to sentient beings

3.2.1. One should be respectful because they view all sentient beings like an only child

This has three subdivisions.

3.2.1.1. Establishing the main method needed for becoming enlightened

3.2.1.2. To confess the disrespectful things engaged in earlier

3.2.1.3. Refraining from future disrespectful actions

3.2.1.1. ESTABLISHING THE MAIN METHOD NEEDED FOR BECOMING ENLIGHTENED

This is subdivided into two:

3.2.1.1.1. Identifying the main method for repaying the kindness of the buddhas

3.2.1.1.2. Achieving that very action

3.2.1.1.1. Identifying the main method for repaying the kindness of the buddhas

Having presented that, through to the buddhas' teachings and kindness in presenting those teachings, one gains the means to accumulate the merit for achieving enlightenment, the question is what is the best way to actually repay that kindness?

The relevant verse reads:

*119. Further, apart from making sentient beings happy,
How can one repay the kindness
Of those that are honest friends
And accomplish boundless benefit.*

Gyaltsab Je's explanation in his commentary reads:

Further, another reason for treating sentient beings respectfully: The buddhas, induced by great compassion, are honest friends of all migrators who act without being asked and establish boundless benefit for them. Apart from making sentient beings happy, how can one repay their kindness? There is no better offering to please the buddhas than to work for the benefit of sentient beings.

The buddhas, induced by great compassion, are honest friends, means that the buddhas have no ulterior motive in benefiting others—there is no deceit and no intention of getting something in return. In other words, they benefit *sentient beings selflessly*, and they do so *without being asked*. Thus they *establish boundless benefits* for sentient beings. So the enlightened beings, in serving sentient beings, are honest and extend their benefits, even without being asked, and are thus *friends of migrators*, which establishes boundless benefits for sentient beings.

The great compassion of the buddhas was developed in the countless lives of their training on the path to enlightenment, where, as bodhisattvas, they repeatedly and unceasingly familiarised themselves with the mind of great compassion. Having attained enlightenment, the compassion with which they acquainted themselves over numberless lifetimes, transforms into unsurpassed compassion. Due to that, sentient beings regard the buddhas as great, honest and unfailing friends, who will be ready to help without any request being made. Unlike temporary small benefits, the buddhas offer boundless benefits that extend to alleviating all the sufferings and problems of sentient beings.

The second part of the commentary indicates that the way for sentient beings to repay the kindness of these unfailing, honest friends, who help without being asked, is by making other sentient beings happy. Apart from that there is no other way. This is expressed as a rhetorical question: *how can one repay their kindness, apart from making sentient beings happy?* This implies that there is no other way to repay the kindness of the enlightened beings, the buddhas, apart from actually making other sentient beings happy.

Furthermore, *there is no better offering to please the buddhas than to work for the benefit of sentient beings.* There is no other way to repay the kindness of the enlightened beings than by actually benefiting sentient beings by making offerings to them, making them happy and so forth. This is yet *another reason for treating sentient beings respectfully.*

3.2.1.1.2. Achieving that very action

Here there are three subdivisions:

3.2.1.1.2.1. Being patient when harmed by sentient beings

3.2.1.1.2.2. Abandoning the arrogance that focuses on sentient beings

3.2.1.1.2.3. Abandoning harm

3.2.1.1.2.1. Being patient when harmed by sentient beings

Even though this was presented earlier, it refers here to being patient when harmed by sentient beings, as a means of repaying the kindness of the buddhas.

As one doesn't want to upset sentient beings and make them unhappy, one needs to practise patience when harmed by sentient beings. The verse relating to this reads:

*120. If one repays the benefit of those
That give up their life and enter without respite,
Then even if one is harmed greatly by them,
One solely treats them with everything
wholesome.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning as follows:

Benefiting sentient beings repays the kindness of the buddhas, who gave up their life for sentient beings, and who would even enter the hells without respite. Hence, even if one is harmed greatly by sentient beings one not only does not get angry, but one should strive solely to benefit them through one's three doors with everything wholesome that establishes all happiness for them.

As explained here, the act of *benefiting sentient beings repays the kindness of the buddhas, who gave up their life for*

sentient beings, and who would even enter the hells without respite. This is explaining the unimaginable extent of the buddhas' practices to benefit sentient beings—their unceasing toil, giving up their bodies for the sake of other beings, and even going to the hells without respite. This is in accordance with the *Commentary on Bodhicitta*, which explains how, for the sake of sentient beings, bodhisattvas have no hesitation in engaging in any austerities in order to work for sentient beings. Their sacrifices are all for the sake of sentient beings.

If one is harmed by sentient beings now, then, as a way to remember and show faith in the buddhas, one should not only not become angry with them, but one should strive to benefit them through one's three doors *with everything wholesome that establishes all happiness for them.*

Engaging in the practice of being able to return harm with benefit is in fact possible when one contemplates and trains one's mind in thinking in this way. As the teachings have mentioned, there is nothing that one cannot achieve through acquaintance. Therefore acquainting oneself with this way of thinking will make it possible to actually return harm with benefit, rather than retaliating. With the practice of patience it is possible to return harm with benefit rather than harm.

At a practical level, the best way to apply this advice is with one's closest companion. As I emphasise regularly, in any kind of relationship one cannot expect to always hear pleasant words, and never hear unpleasant words. That is unrealistic. Indeed there will be times when, while a bit upset, or not in the right state of mind, the other might make some inappropriate comment or gesture. If one takes the initiative to not return that unkind word or gesture with unkindness, and tries to practise a bit of patience, and show an appealing gesture or a smile, then that will prevent a lot of difficulties that might otherwise arise. If one fails to practise patience, and decides to become upset and angry and retaliate with more inappropriate gestures and unkind words, then the problem will just escalate and worsen. Then that relationship will be harmed.

Of course this advice is not limited to sorting out the problems of couples and helping them to maintain a good relationship. The scope is much greater than that. Nevertheless ordinary life is where we really need to practice. We need to begin our practice with the individuals that we are dealing with on a regular basis. That is how to incorporate the teachings into our life in a practical way.

There have been people who have confided in me that this advice has been helpful when they have put it into practice. When someone comes home from work, don't get into the habit of querying them about their day if they come in with a worried face. Say 'Go and relax. Have a shower. I'll make you tea and a nice meal'. Speak quietly, and don't insist on asking 'Why are you upset?' which will only aggravate them even more.

3.2.1.1.2.2. Abandoning the arrogance that focuses on sentient beings

This is, yet again, very practical advice for our daily life. The verse relating to this is:

121. *One should not be ignorant and generate pride
Or be competitive with those
That even the very ones that are one's lords
Regard without concern for their own bodies.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

Further, one should not be ignorant and generate arrogant pride or be competitive in any action with the sentient beings for whose purpose the very buddhas, that are one's lords, work without concern for their own bodies. One should abandon pride and be respectful.

As the commentary explains, one should not allow an *ignorant* mind to *generate* arrogance, *pride or be competitive with the sentient beings, for whom the very buddhas that are one's lords work, without concern for their own bodies.* This is explaining that it is inappropriate to generate pride and arrogance towards sentient beings, who are the very beings the buddhas have sought to benefit by sacrificing their lives and giving away their body, wealth and so forth.

If the enlightened beings hold these sentient beings so dearly and work endlessly for their benefit, then it would be totally inappropriate to develop a sense of arrogance and competitiveness with sentient beings. If anyone should have pride, it would be the buddhas, but in fact they only benefit and help sentient beings. So one should not develop pride and arrogance towards the very objects the buddhas help.

The really crucial advice here is that if one follows the example of the enlightened beings, the lords, who one holds in high esteem and respects, then one should refrain from harming sentient beings. Rather than arrogance and pride and so forth, they should only think of benefiting sentient beings. That is what has to be kept in mind.

3.2.1.1.2.3. Abandoning harm

This is subdivided into two:

3.2.1.1.2.3.1. The reason why it is unsuitable to harm

3.2.1.1.2.3.2. If one harms them there is no way to please the buddhas

3.2.1.1.2.3.1. *The reason why it is unsuitable to harm*

The text and the explanation in the commentary is quite clear. The verse reads:

122. *Those whose happiness makes the conquerors
pleased,
Those then when harmed causes unhappiness to
arise,
The conquerors are pleased when they are
happy
And harming them will harm the conquerors.*

The explanation in the commentary reads:

The conquerors are pleased when sentient beings are happy, and are not pleased when they are harmed. Therefore the best offering to all the able ones is to make these sentient beings happy, by benefiting them. This makes the conquerors pleased, and harming

these sentient beings becomes harming the conquerors.

As clearly explained here, *The conquerors are pleased when sentient beings are happy, and are not pleased when they are harmed. So the best offering to all able ones is to make these sentient beings happy by benefiting them. This makes the conquerors pleased, and harming sentient beings is in fact harming the conquerors.*

What is being explained here reflects a point that I regularly emphasise: the Buddha said that if you benefit sentient beings you are benefiting me, and if you harm sentient beings you are harming me. Thus, if one considers oneself to be a follower of the Buddha then the best way to please the Buddha is by pleasing sentient beings, and the best way to refrain from being disrespectful to the Buddha is by refraining from harming sentient beings. This is the point to be understood here.

We will break early, and recite the tenth chapter of the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* together.

We will dedicated this first of all to Wendy Pullen's mother who passed away recently. And, as we all know, there has been that disaster in Nepal. So many people have perished there and we need to dedicate our prayers and practices to them. I haven't heard anything directly, but some acquaintances of mine might have been affected. So we also need to dedicate to them.

I have two nieces, who some of you met when we were in Nepal, and one of them has a son. The first time I met one of the nieces was when she came to the last Kalachakra in Bodhgaya, and later the boy came to Sera, which was the only time I met him. They live in Nepal in the Tibetan settlement, and I am not sure if that has been affected. I haven't heard anything specific, but I have quite a few acquaintances in that area. In any case, it is good to dedicate to all who have been affected.

Also Lama Zopa Rinpoche's brother, Sangay, lives in the next village after Boudha. His wife is the sister of Donyo, the Gyuto monk who used to live here. I was once invited to the house and had lunch there with Lama Zopa. I am not sure about the father but the mother passed away not long ago. There are some other relatives as well.

Student: There are also the men who are to be shot in Indonesia tonight. Many are holding a vigil tonight.

The nuns over the road said that they were doing some prayers for them. As spiritual people the only help that we can extend is by doing prayers and sending our good wishes and good intentions, and dedicating that to them.

What is happening in Indonesia seems to be because the Prime Minister apparently tried to say something quite forcefully, and then there was retaliation. Then he became very quiet. So if one is not careful it makes others very cross.

These are just some examples, and of course there are many who are suffering, and so we dedicate this recitation to all of them.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

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Edited Version
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Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

5 May 2015

Let us do our regular meditation practice.

[meditation]

Now we can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practice well.

3.2.1.1. ESTABLISHING THE MAIN METHOD NEEDED FOR BECOMING ENLIGHTENED

3.2.1.1.2. Achieving that very action

3.2.1.1.2.3. Abandoning harm

3.2.1.1.2.3.2. *If one harms them, there is no way to please the buddhas*

The following explanations are quite easy to understand. The verse relating to this heading is:

123. *Just as one will never be mentally happy despite all sense objects
When the whole body is completely in flames,
Similarly there is no way to please the greatly compassionate ones
When one harms sentient beings.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads

For that reason, just as one will never be mentally happy despite all sense objects such as food and so forth, if one's body is completely in flames, there is no way to please the greatly compassionate ones if one harms sentient beings.

The analogy here is that if *one's body is consumed in flames* then not even *objects of the sense pleasures such as delicious food, beautiful sights and so forth*, will bring mental happiness. The agony is so great that one cannot experience any joy from the sense pleasures. Similarly, *there is no way to please the greatly compassionate ones if one harms sentient beings*. The point of this example is if one were to harm sentient beings then, even if one were to present extensive offerings to the enlightened beings, it will not please them.

We need to understand how *great compassionate ones'* love and concern for sentient beings exceeds a mother's love for an only child. The love of a mother for her only child is a contemporary example that illustrates the extent of the love and compassion that a sentient being can have for another being. The buddhas' love and compassion for each and every living sentient being far exceeds that. It is hard to measure the love and compassion the buddhas have for all living beings. Thus, when one harms any living being, then that definitely displeases the buddhas. What we need to understand from this explanation, and put into personal practice, is to make every effort to avoid harming any living being.

No amount of offerings or practice can please the buddhas if one is harming sentient beings, as that is completely contrary to their wishes. So refraining from harming sentient beings is one of the optimum offerings to the enlightened beings. The real meaning of the Sanskrit word *punja*, which we pronounce as *puja*, has the connotation of pleasing the mind. Therefore since whatever pleases the mind of the enlightened beings is the real offering, avoiding harm towards any living being is the optimum offering.

It is good to understand the real connotation of *offering* as a way to incorporate it into our practice. With the proper understanding we can then adopt this resolution: 'To the utmost of my ability I will refrain from harming sentient beings, as this is the optimum means to gain genuine peace and happiness, as well as the supreme offering to the enlightened beings'. Of course, as mentioned earlier, it only becomes a real offering when we incorporate this understanding into our daily life and put it into practice. Nice offerings laid on the altar don't really amount to much if we neglect this essential practice.

One needs to understand that the practice of non-harmfulness is an actual antidote to harmful intentions. That is what practising non-harmfulness means. If one resolves to practise non-harmfulness, then one is applying the antidote to harmful intention. This is how the practice actually works—when it is applied as an antidote to overcome negative states of mind.

If we fail to understand this, then even though we might be able to extensively explain a topic, we will not know how to put it into practice.

3.2.1.2. TO CONFESS THE DISRESPECTFUL THINGS ONE DID EARLIER

This, of course, relates to the need to confess the negativities that one has committed, and then purify them. These negativities will have been driven by the influence of the three poisons, namely anger, attachment and ignorance. The way to please the minds of the buddhas is by accumulating virtue, and any negative actions will be a source of displeasure for them.

So one confesses all these negative actions. This involves developing strong regret for having committed those negativities, clearly recognising them as being such; understanding that it has been a great fault; feeling a strong sense of remorse; and resolving not to commit them again.

A point to keep in mind is that one will resolve to the extent of one's regret. This is where you need to refer back to the second chapter on confession, which explains how to engage in the confession practice. Otherwise, one might wonder what the practice entails.

The verse relating to this heading reads:

124. *Hence, whatever harm to migrators
That caused displeasure to the greatly compassionate ones,
That negativity I confess today individually
And request the conquerors to be patient with
anything causing displeasure.*

Gyaltsab Je's explanation reads:

Since harming sentient beings causes displeasure to the buddhas, I will confess the negativities that

brought displeasure to the greatly compassionate ones, because of my previous harm to migrators. From today I will confess them individually, and not conceal them, and I request them to be patient with any harm to sentient beings that causes displeasure.

With the words, *since harming sentient beings causes displeasure to the buddhas I will confess the negativities that brought displeasure*, one recalls all the negativities one has engaged in previously, particularly those numerous ways where, under the influence of strong anger, attachment, or jealousy and so forth, one has harmed sentient beings. When one's mind is afflicted by strong negativities, then one engages in such negative actions as taking the life of other sentient beings, stealing, engaging in sexual misconduct, lying, engaging in slanderous, or divisive and harmful speech, and so forth. These negativities, along with covetousness, deluded doubt, and wrong view, are called the ten non-virtues.

As further explained, *these negativities brought displeasure to the great compassionate ones because of my previous harm to migrators*. Here it is specifically stating that these actions displease the great compassionate ones, i.e. enlightened beings, as well as the noble beings. So one is confessing all of the negativities that displease the minds of these holy beings.

Having identified the negativities one has engaged in previously, and with clear recognition of those negativities, one confesses them as follows, *from this day on I will confess them individually and not conceal them*. This refers to recalling all the negativities one has previously engaged in. Confessing them individually refers to confessing and purifying the negativities accumulated by engaging in physical actions, through speech, as well as negative thoughts. Thus one confesses and purifies the negativities created through one's body, speech and mind.

Not concealing them means that having acknowledged them, one proclaims those negativities verbally. One does this as a way of not concealing them. This is followed by requesting the compassionate ones *to be patient with any harm to sentient beings that cause displeasure to the minds of the buddhas*.

In summary, one identifies the negative actions that have harmed sentient beings which have caused displeasure to the buddhas' minds; one acknowledges one has committed them; one confesses them individually; one does not conceal them; and finally one requests the buddhas to be patient with the negativities that one has created.

3.2.1.3. RESTRAINING FROM FUTURE DISRESPECTFUL ACTIONS

Following the confession one makes a pledge or resolution to refrain from future negative actions.

The verse relating to this heading is:

125. *In order to make the tathagatas happy
From today I will be absolutely subdued and
the world's servant
Though many beings pound my head by kicking it
Or even kill me, I won't retaliate but please the
protectors of the world. Gyaltsab Je explains
this verse as follows:*

In order to make the tathagatas happy, from today I will be absolutely subdued and harm nobody and become and accept myself as the servant of the world. Subdue here refers to accepting oneself as servant of the world with firmness in one's mind. Though many beings pound my head by kicking it or even kill me, I shall not retaliate but bear it and in such a way act to please the minds of the protectors of the world.

As explained here one makes the pledge: *In order to make the tathagatas happy, from today I will be absolutely subdued and harm nobody*. Here, *subdued* refers to subduing one's mind from harmful intention, and we can also relate it to delusions such as pride. *And then become and accept myself as a servant of the world* indicates that one will place oneself in a lowly position, where one shows great respect for all sentient beings, refrains from harming them, subdues harmful intentions and delusions such as pride, and pays respect to all sentient beings. This is what one resolves to do.

One should not misinterpret 'holding others as being supreme' as meaning that one should regard oneself as insignificant. That is not what it means. Rather, having respect for other sentient beings relates to remembering their kindness. As explained in the teachings, particularly in the *Abhidharma*, when one remembers the kindness of others one generates respect for them, and when one remembers the qualities of others one generates faith in them.

In relation to one's parents, for example, we develop a sense of respect when we remember their kindness. One wouldn't necessarily call that faith, but one will definitely have respect for one's parents, which comes from thinking about the kindness that they have shown. Whereas, by remembering the qualities and kindness of one's spiritual teachers, one can generate both respect and faith in the spiritual masters.

However, as explained in the text, it is appropriate that one generates respect for, and faith in, sentient beings. Earlier it was emphasised how enlightened beings and sentient beings are equal in terms of being a cause for enlightenment. Therefore one can have equal faith in, and respect for, sentient beings, as well as enlightened beings. In the example referring to respecting one's parents a distinction was made between faith and respect, but in general one develops both attitudes towards all beings.

When we relate to these explanations, we can see how Shantideva very meticulously shows how one needs to regard sentient beings, enlightened beings and one's teachers who present the teachings, in an equal light. The commentary clearly clarified that the causes for enlightenment relies fifty percent on the enlightened beings as well as the gurus who present the teachings, and fifty percent on sentient beings. Therefore, enlightened beings and sentient beings are equal in their kindness to us.

This is a presentation of the reasons why we should benefit and respect sentient beings, and not harm them. When we look into these explanations, we can see that they have a general aspect, as well as being a specific Buddhist practice. When it explains that harming sentient beings displeases the enlightened beings, and that the way to please the enlightened beings is to practise being

kind to other sentient beings, then that is a specific Buddhist practice. Whereas explaining that one should respect sentient beings and not harm them, because they have been kind to oneself, is a more general approach. We can see that this is a presentation that everyone can relate to.

Next the commentary clarifies a point, explaining that, *subdue here refers to accepting oneself as servant of the world with firmness in one's mind.*

Finally there is a resolution or pledge:

Though many beings pound my head by kicking it, or even kill me, I shall not retaliate, but bear it, and in such a way act to please the minds of the protectors of the world.

Having confessed all these actions that have harmed sentient beings, and which displease the enlightened beings, and regretting that, one pledges, 'I will see myself as a servant of sentient beings. If they *pound my head by kicking it or even kill me, I will not retaliate.* I will not become angry, and I will bear it in such a way as *to please the protectors of the world.*

By presenting such a profound pledge, we are being encouraged to resolve to practise in this way.

3.2.2. Showing subsequently as a summary that one also needs to be respectful to sentient beings

126. *There is no doubt that all these migrators
Are regarded by those possessing compassion as self.
Those seen in the identity of sentient beings
Are in the nature of the protector, why not be respectful?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

Having meditated on equalising and exchanging self with others, the compassionate buddhas have come to regard all these migrators as self. Hence without doubt, when seeing the nature of sentient beings they are to be regarded as the very protector of oneself, since respecting them gives enlightenment. Therefore why not be respectful? It is appropriate to have faith and be respectful.

When the commentary states *having meditated on equalising and exchanging self with others, the compassionate buddhas have come to regard all these migrators as self*, the word *self* is not to be taken literally. Rather it refers to cherishing them as one would normally cherish oneself. The compassionate buddhas previously engaged in practices of exchanging self with others and developed the altruistic mind of bodhicitta. They consistently engaged in the practice of giving up cherishing themselves while cherishing other sentient beings. Having engaged in that practice, and developed the altruistic mind of bodhicitta, and then becoming enlightened, they reached the perfected state where all sentient beings are dearly cherished equally.

Without doubt when seeing the nature of sentient beings can also relate to the ultimate buddha nature in all sentient beings. It is that essence of sentient beings that will transform into the state of enlightenment. On seeing that, one regards that *as the very protector of oneself.* Having seen the nature of sentient beings in that way, and since respecting them leads to enlightenment, *Why not be respectful?* This is a rhetorical question, implying that

indeed *it is appropriate to have faith and be respectful* to all sentient beings equally.

2.2. Meditating on the benefits of patience¹

Having extensively explained how to practise patience, the text now goes on to explain the benefits of practising patience.

This section is subdivided into three:

2.2.1. In brief

2.2.2. Explaining the benefits with an example;

2.2.3. A summary of the list of benefits

2.2.1. In brief

127. *It alone pleases those gone thus,
It alone perfectly establishes the purpose of self,
It alone also clears the sufferings of the world,
Therefore I will continuously practise only this.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

To be patient and respectful when harmed by sentient beings, this alone is the supreme method for pleasing the buddhas. To work for the welfare of others, this alone is the supreme method to complete the accumulations in one's own continuum. This alone also clears the sufferings of all sentient beings. Therefore, since it perfects the two purposes, I shall continuously meditate on the three types of patience.

Earlier the text showed, with reasoning and logic, why one needs to practise patience, and be *respectful when harmed by sentient beings*, which *is alone the supreme method for pleasing the buddhas.* Also, *To work for the welfare of others, this alone is the supreme method to complete the accumulations in one's own continuum.* So working for the welfare of others becomes the supreme method to complete the accumulations of merit and wisdom.

Furthermore, as explained in the commentary, *This alone also clears the sufferings of all sentient beings.* So the supreme means to clear away the suffering of sentient beings is to practise patience, which means not retaliating, and refraining from harming other sentient beings.

Since it perfects the two purposes, i.e. the ultimate purpose for oneself and the ultimate purpose of benefiting other sentient beings, *I shall continuously meditate on the three types of patience.*

The three types of patience are:

- Not retaliating when others harm one
- Enduring suffering
- Definitely thinking about the Dharma

These three types of patience are the optimum means to please all the buddhas, they are the ultimate means to work for the welfare of others, and the ultimate means to refrain from harming other sentient beings. For all of these reasons one holds practising and meditating on these three types of patience as one's core practice.

Verse 127 has, in fact, been a summary of why one needs to respect sentient beings.

¹ At this point the numbering reverts to the larger structure of the chapter. The point where this started was 14 April 2015.

The sequence just completed began with the heading 2.1 Eliminating The Cause For Anger which was introduced on 30 September 2014. It is the second part of the heading 2 Applying the Mind To The Methods To Establish Patience.

2.2.2. Explaining the benefits with an example

This is subdivided into two:

2.2.2.1. Example and meaning from the point of view of benefit

2.2.2.2. Explaining it to be superior to the example

2.2.2.1. EXAMPLE AND MEANING FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF BENEFIT

This is further subdivided into two:

2.2.2.1.1. Example

2.2.2.1.2. Meaning

2.2.2.1.1. Example

128. *For example, though some of the kings men
Inflict harm on many beings,
The farsighted people
Will not retaliate even though they can.*

129ab. *This is not because of them alone,
But due to the king's power, that is their
support.*

Then the commentary explaining the meaning:

For example, though a few people belonging to the entourage of the king harm many others, the farsighted people that look at the long-term benefit or harm, will not retaliate even though they can.

That they cannot retaliate is not just because of the entourage's power alone, but due to the power of the king.

The *example* that is clearly explained in the commentary is when *a few people belonging to the entourage of the king harm many others*. In the event that some of the king's men go out and harm others, *farsighted people* who can see short and *long-term benefit or harm, will not retaliate, even though they can*.

If some of the king's men come out and harm many people, there will be some who, through their farsightedness are able to properly assess a situation to see potential benefit or harm, and thus see the long-term benefits of not retaliating, even though they could do so if they wished. They don't retaliate *because the entourage* of the king, or soldiers, are backed up by *the power of the king*. Retaliation would involve dire repercussions!

2.2.2.1.2. Meaning

Then the meaning of that example is presented.

129cd. *Likewise, one should not dismiss
An insignificant harmer.*

130ab. *The wardens of hell
And those endowed with compassion are their
support.*

The commentary on these lines reads:

Likewise, as in the example, one should not dismiss any weak harmer, because they have as their support the ripening fruit of the hell guardians, and the displeasure of the compassionate conquerors and their children.

In comparison to the might and power of the king, a few of his men would be relatively weak. This refers to the fact that when the person who harms oneself is quite weak in nature, one should not think of retaliation just because they are easy to overpower. That is because it is as if they are supported by the hell guardians, and also because one would displease the compassionate conquerors and their children.

One might well be able to retaliate and easily overcome and vanquish a weak individual who harms oneself. However by contemplating and thinking about the negative karma one creates by retaliating in that way, one will realise that one would have to experience the ripening results of the hell realm and so forth.

The point is, as explained and emphasised in other teachings, that practising patience with someone who is much weaker is, in fact, a supreme practice of patience, and much more effective than practising patience with someone who is much more powerful and mightier than oneself. One is much less likely to engage in retaliation with someone who is mighty and more powerful, so practising patience then is easier. Whereas practising patience with someone who is much weaker is much harder, because it would be so easy to retaliate. But if one were to contemplate the repercussions, and the heavy negative karma that one would create, one will refrain from returning that harm.

2.2.2.2. EXPLAINING IT TO BE SUPERIOR TO THE EXAMPLE

130cd *Thus, like people and the wrath of the king,
One should please sentient beings.*

131. *Even if one gets angry at someone like a king,
Do they give the harm of the lower realms
That one will experience due to
Making sentient beings unhappy?*

The commentary of these verses reads:

Because of this one should please sentient beings like the people fearing the wrath of the king. Even if one gets angry at someone like a king, do they give the harm of the lower realms, which one will experience as a result of making sentient beings unhappy? They cannot.

People fear a wrathful king because of the severe punishments that he can impose, such as imprisonment for long periods of time, or confiscation of land and wealth, and even execution. These are the repercussions of displeasing a wrathful king. Likewise one should please and not harm sentient beings out of fear of the consequence of going to the lower realms.

Can someone as powerful as a wrathful king *give the harm of the lower realms, which one will experience as a result of making sentient beings unhappy?* This rhetorical question implies that they cannot. What is being explained is that no matter how mighty and wrathful the king may be, the most he can do is confiscate your land, or your house, or your belongings. Even if you were condemned to death the most the king has done is to take your life. But he cannot take you to the lower realms. However, when one harms sentient beings, the negativity that one accumulates from that act is definitely a cause to be reborn in the lower realms.

132. *Even if one pleases someone like a king
That which one will attain
By pleasing sentient beings,
The very enlightenment, they cannot offer.*

The meaning of this verse is presented in contrast to the earlier point, which is that while the repercussions of getting angry at a king are quite severe, you do not receive all that much in return when you please the king.

Whereas the results of pleasing sentient beings are immense. The commentary explains:

Even if one pleases someone like a king, they cannot offer that which one will attain by pleasing sentient beings, the very result of enlightenment itself.

If one were to do something that pleased a king, the most the king can give back in return is some sort of recognition, such as the medals that generals and some soldiers wear. That is the most a king can give: some sort of status or gift, but nothing more significant than that.

The king *can* definitely *not* offer that which one will attain by pleasing sentient beings, which is, as mentioned here, the result of enlightenment itself. So the most one can receive from pleasing a king is some sort of recognition, or gift. However, by pleasing sentient beings, one can obtain the ultimate result of enlightenment. Thus what one achieves from pleasing sentient beings far exceeds anything that one could gain from a king.

This also reflects on how the meaning of the example is far greater than the example itself; that what one attains is much greater than what one would obtain from a king.

2.2.3. A summary of the list of benefits

Here there are three sub-divisions:

2.2.3.1. The main result

2.2.3.2. The seen result

2.2.3.3. The ripened result

2.2.3.1. THE MAIN RESULT

The relevant lines from the text are:

*133ab. Leaving aside the future buddha
That is attained as a result of pleasing sentient
beings.*

The commentary explains the meaning as follows:

Leaving aside it being appropriate to please sentient beings and being patient with them by contemplating the benefit of obtaining buddhahood in the future a result of pleasing sentient beings, it is also appropriate to meditate on patience in relation to results ripening in this and future lives as well.

As clearly explained here, the results of pleasing sentient beings are found not only in the ultimate result of becoming a buddha oneself, but also in this and future lives as well.

Then the commentary presents a further clarification.

Although the meaning is clear, an earlier proponent says:

Since it is difficult to cognise a buddha, *for the moment* leave it aside.

Answer: It is not tenable to interpret the meaning in this way because although the phenomena of this life are easy to cognise, the extremely hidden future results are harder to cognise than a buddha. That a buddha can be cognised by depending on reason, without depending on quotations, but the very hidden meaning can only be cognised subsequently to this, accords with the view of all great pioneers.

What is being explained is the interpretation of the words *leaving aside* from the first line of the verse. An opponent says that the meaning of *leaving aside* reflects that it is very difficult to cognise a buddha. The commentary refutes this interpretation by stating that *although the phenomena of this life are easy to cognise, the extremely hidden*

future results are harder to cognise than a buddha. That is because, a buddha can be cognised by depending on reason, without depending on quotations, but the very hidden meaning can only be cognised subsequently to this. This means that understanding very hidden phenomena, like the subtleties of karma, are dependent on valid quotations which are pure of the three-fold analysis.² Thus cognising a buddha is easier than understanding subtleties of karmic results.

The ripening results of specific karmas created in a previous life can only be understood by relying on quotations that are pure of the three-fold analysis. They thus fall into the category of extremely hidden or subtle phenomena, in contrast to the qualities of the Buddha, which can be understood through logical reasoning.

In particular, the subtleties of karma, such as a particular time, the place a karma was created and so forth are said to be only seen directly by a Buddha's mind, and thus can't be seen by ordinary sentient beings.

2.2.3.2. THE SEEN RESULT

The seen or obvious results are explained in these two lines:

*133cd. In this very life one will attain great glory,
Fame and happiness. Why does one not see
this?*

Here, Gyaltsab Je explains:

Also in this life there are seen results that arise from patience, such as glory of increased excellences, being well regarded and happiness. Why does one not see this? Therefore, one should strive in making sentient beings happy.

As explained clearly, even in this life there are seen or obvious results that arise from patience, such as glory of increased excellences. As one's excellences increase and one is well regarded by others, one has a happier mind. Why can't one see these obvious positive results? This question implies that it is obvious, and that one should be able to see them. Therefore the conclusion is that *one should strive in making sentient beings happy.*

2.2.3.3. THE RIPENED RESULT

The next verse is:

*134. While circling, one will attain from patience
Beauty and so forth, absence of sickness, and
fame,
Due to which one will live very long,
And one will attain the extensive happiness of a
wheel-turning king.*

Here the commentary reads:

Also, while circling in cyclic existence one attains a beautiful form, the samsaric excellences, good health and great reputation. Through that one will have a long life. One will also have the extensive and vast happiness of a wheel-turning king.

² The three criteria for validating a phenomena are:

1. Obvious things are not contradicted by valid bare perception.
2. Slightly obscure things are not contradicted by valid inference based on the force of evidence.
3. Extremely obscure things are not contradicted by valid inference based on scriptural authority.

See the teaching of 15 November 2011 for more details.

The ultimate result of practising patience is that it becomes the cause of enlightenment. It can take a long time to achieve the state of enlightenment, but while one is circling in cyclic existence the ripened results of practising patience include, as explained here, obtaining a *beautiful form* and so forth. This is something that we can all relate to, because everyone longs to have a good, sound body and good features, as these contribute to one's good conditions. Then there are *the samsaric excellences* such as wealth, and having *good health* and a good *reputation*, which are also favourable conditions for our wellbeing. Added to those conditions, we *will* also *have a long life*.

One will have the extensive and vast happiness of a wheel turning king indicates that while in cyclic existence one can even reach the highest status of a wheel turning king.

The author of the commentary Gyalsab Rinpoche, concludes with:

In short, having recognised opposing factors such as having intense anger, intimidation from virtuous dharmas, a lack of aspiration for virtuous dharmas and so forth, one then relies on their antidotes, which are the patience that does not think anything from harm, the mind that is not harmed by suffering and abides in its natural state, and the patience strongly abiding on the wish for the Dharma due to discriminating awareness.

Thus by meditating on patience one strives to use the basis of having the freedoms and endowments.

SUMMARISING VERSE

Next, Gyalsab Rinpoche presents the summarising verse, which reads:

*Although one meditates on the virtue of
generosity and the like for eons,
They are destroyed by the fire tongue of anger.
Therefore one needs to generate the force of
patience again and again
And not give anger any chance.*

Here, Gyalsab Rinpoche very succinctly presents the need to practise patience, not just once or twice, but again and again. Only by applying the practice again and again will it become the means to actually overcome anger, and not give anger any chance to arise. Otherwise the practice of virtue and so forth will be destroyed by anger. Therefore one needs to protect oneself from that.

2. THE NAME OF THE CHAPTER

This is the sixth chapter called 'Explaining Patience' from the Introduction to the Actions of the Bodhisattvas.

The commentary concludes:

This is the commentary on the sixth chapter called 'Explaining Patience' from the commentary on the *Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas*, called *The Entrance for the Children of the Conquerors*.

As mentioned last week, we will continue our sessions until His Holiness' teachings. There are three more weeks until the end of this month, so there will be one teaching followed by the discussion week, and the exam. An important thing to remember is to come to the recitation of Shantideva's text on May 24.

If you forget me it is no big deal, but forgetting Shantideva and the buddhas means forgetting the profound advice they have presented. The chapter on patience that we have just completed is such profound advice and instruction that we need to keep it in mind, and not forget it.

Indeed when we relate to the Buddha's teachings, we can see for ourselves that of all the various teachers that have come into the world, this is a unique presentation. It presents the teachings in a very unbiased way in order to benefit all beings equally. The profound instructions on how to do that, and how to practise, are very clearly explained in the Buddha's teachings. All the explanations are there, and all the ways and methods are presented clearly, so it is up to us as to whether we put it into practice or not.

Others, who are not Buddhists, have commented that the Buddha's teachings are not exclusive; rather, they are teachings that can be related to and applied by all.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

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Edited Version*

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Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

༄༅། །བྱུང་རྒྱུ་མེམས་དཔའི་སྤོང་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བརྟུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

12 May 2015

While maintaining the motivation we generated during the prayers, we can engage in our meditation practice. [meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings as usual:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the Mahayana teachings, and put them into practice well.

As mentioned previously the way the chapters unfold can be related to this verse:

May the precious bodhi mind
Not yet born arise and grow.
May that born have no decline,
But increase forever more.

The ten chapters of the text can be divided along the meaning of this verse in the following manner: Chapters 1-3 are to generate the bodhicitta which is not yet born or developed. Chapters 4-6 explain how to maintain the bodhicitta so it doesn't degenerate, and chapters 7-9 explain how to increase the bodhicitta which has already been developed. The tenth chapter is dedication.

To explain how the next three chapters (7-9) serve to further increase bodhicitta, the seventh chapter commences with enthusiasm or joyous effort, which is the means one actually applies to develop bodhicitta.

Bodhicitta has two main divisions: conventional bodhicitta and ultimate bodhicitta. The way to generate conventional bodhicitta is explained in chapter eight, and then chapter nine specifically explains how to generate ultimate bodhicitta. That is the chapter on wisdom.

Once both conventional and ultimate bodhicitta have been developed, the way to secure the merit from these is presented in the tenth chapter on dedication.

CHAPTER 7 THE WAY OF TRAINING AND ENTHUSIASM

There are two parts to the chapter

- I. Explaining the text of the chapter
- II. The name of the chapter

I. EXPLAINING THE TEXT OF THE CHAPTER

This is subdivided into two:

1. Exhortation in the need to strive in enthusiasm
2. The way of striving in enthusiasm

1. EXHORTATION IN THE NEED TO STRIVE IN ENTHUSIASM

This is further divided into two:

- 1.1. Actual
- 1.2. Identifying enthusiasm

1.1. Actual

The first verse reads:

1. *Being thus patient commence with enthusiasm. Enlightenment abides in those striving in this way. Just as there is no movement without wind, Merit will not arise without enthusiasm.*

The commentary explains the meaning:

If one wishes to attain enlightenment quickly by being patient with austerities and harm by others, as explained before, then one needs to commence the practice of enthusiasm. Enlightenment abides in those striving in this way in the actions of the perfections. Just as without wind there is no movement of the flame of the candle and so forth, the accumulations of merit and transcendental wisdom will not arise without enthusiasm. Since the highest enlightenment depends on enthusiasm one should make an effort.

The line *If one wishes to attain enlightenment quickly by being patient with austerities and harm by others*, identifies the three specific types of patience explained extensively in the sixth chapter. Firstly, how to be patient with hardships when engaging in austere practices; secondly how to be patient when others harm one, and not retaliate; and thirdly, the patience of definitely thinking of the Dharma. Having explained the three types of patience, those who wish to achieve enlightenment quickly need an aid to practise patience, and this is the practice of enthusiasm.

This chapter presents how enthusiasm is practised, and why one needs to implement it in one's practice.

The commentary continues that *enlightenment abides in those striving in this way in the actions of the perfections*. This means that for someone who seeks enlightenment, it is brought forward only for those striving in the actions of the perfections.

The analogy presented next says that *just as without wind the flame of the candle does not move*, which highlights that it is wind that makes a candle flame waver. Without wind the flame would remain still without any movement at all. The meaning of the analogy is brought out as the sentence continues with *the accumulations of merit and transcendental wisdom will not arise without enthusiasm*. Enthusiasm is like the wind. Without it one cannot possibly accumulate the necessary amount of merit and transcendental wisdom, which are the actual causes for enlightenment.

The commentary concludes the paragraph saying that *since the highest enlightenment depends on enthusiasm one should make an effort*. The resultant state of enlightenment is obtained only through the accumulation of merit and wisdom, and without applying enthusiasm there is no way one will be able to accumulate the level of merit and wisdom needed. This is the reason to apply enthusiasm.

The commentary then quotes from the *Introduction to the Middle Way* to support this view:

All qualities follow enthusiasm, the cause of
Both accumulations of merit and wisdom.

The quotation states that all qualities are obtained only through enthusiasm, which is also the cause for the accumulations of both merit and wisdom.

1.2. Identifying enthusiasm

Having explained the need for enthusiasm, the first line of the next verse identifies it:

2a What is enthusiasm? It is joy in virtue.

The commentary starts with the following:

Joy for the afflictions is laziness, thus if asked what is enthusiasm? It is the joy for virtuous objects.

It first presents the opposite, which is that *joy for afflictions is laziness*. Having defined what laziness is, it asks 'what is enthusiasm?' which, as presented, is the opposite—the *joy for virtuous objects*.

Enthusiasm is explained here in terms of its object and aspect. Its object is virtuous objects, and its aspect is joy. Hence the combination of joy focussing on virtuous objects is defined as enthusiasm or joyous effort. As joy for the afflictions is laziness, this would of course be non-virtuous. Focus on neutral objects would be a neutral state of mind, and not joyous effort.

Relating this to ourselves we would probably find we are inclined mostly toward having joy in the afflictions followed by having joy in neutral states. Of these, we might notice that joy in virtue is the weakest.

So the definition of enthusiasm also meticulously excludes what it is not. It is definitely not joy for the afflictions, and not joy for neutral objects. Thus, enthusiasm is defined purely as joy for virtuous objects.

When reflecting upon ourselves, we need to understand that if one has an inclination to readily feel joy in the afflictions, one must recognise this as a form of laziness, and non-virtuous. If we are serious about practice then we need to clearly identify the distinction between laziness and joyous effort.

The more one associates with the objects of the afflictions the more likely one is to engage in them further. This is how we create more and more negativity and get further away from developing ourselves on the Dharma path.

What one needs to strive for is developing joy in virtue. The more one applies oneself in virtue, the more one sees reason to apply oneself and actually adopt virtue. We slowly increase our virtues as we increase our engagement in virtuous objects, and apply our mind to abide in virtue. Acquainting our minds in this way enriches our Dharma practice by leaving very strong positive imprints, and virtue will gradually increase more and more.

The commentary categorises the types of enthusiasm:

It has the divisions of:

- Armour-like enthusiasm
- Enthusiasm of application
- Enthusiasm of non-disheartenment and non-disturbance
- Enthusiasm of non-satisfaction

Different texts have slightly different presentations of the divisions of enthusiasm. The extensive Lam Rim presents three divisions as: armour-like enthusiasm, the enthusiasm of gathering virtuous Dharma and the enthusiasm of acting for the welfare of living beings. The *Abhidharma* presents a division of five, however they all come to the same point.

Armour-like enthusiasm is described as an enthusiasm which is needed as a prerequisite to engaging in virtue. Having already contemplated the advantages and great benefits of applying virtue, this type of enthusiasm is required to make a strong commitment in one's mind not to give up on virtue no matter how long it takes, and no matter what difficulties may befall oneself. In the *Guru Puja* it says 'even if I were to remain in the fiery hells of Avici for eons, may I never give up applying bodhicitta'. So keeping the value of virtue in one's mind, and making a strong commitment not to give it up at any cost, is applying armour-like enthusiasm. Just as armour is used to protect a physical body, here the word is used as an analogy to protect the mind in being strong and firm when applying virtue.

To understand the analogy further, in the past, before going into combat, a prerequisite would be for the soldiers to put on armour to protect themselves. That is done before actually setting out to the battle in order to protect themselves from weapons (arrows, swords) in the battle. These days, we still have the equivalent of applying protective measures before engaging in combat. The analogy illustrates that prior to engaging in practices, one needs to develop a firm determination and joy in one's mind to engage in those practices and virtues. This then becomes armour-like protection for one's mind.

Enthusiasm of application refers to the time of actually engaging in the practice, and then maintaining that sense of joy in one's mind.

Next is *the enthusiasm of non-disheartenment and non-disturbance*. This particularly relates to maintaining a sense of joy while overcoming the sense of inadequacy which may think 'I'm not able to do this' or 'I'm not able to do that practice'. As a way for the mind to remain firm and protect itself from the disheartenment of feeling inadequate, a sense of joy is developed to create the enthusiasm of *non-disheartenment and non-disturbance*.

The *enthusiasm of non-satisfaction* may seem ambiguous but it refers to the enthusiasm of not being satisfied with only acquiring a few virtues. This is an important aspect of one's practice in order to further develop oneself. If one feels satisfied with just accumulating a few virtues or practices, that would obstruct one from gaining an understanding of the entire path. Developing satisfaction with just part of the path then becomes a form of laziness, which will obstruct further understanding of the entire path, particularly the higher levels of path. Therefore, enthusiasm means developing a joy that is not satisfied by merely acquiring moderate virtues, or understandings of the path, but rather to have joy in acquiring higher levels of virtues, and developing oneself toward gaining an understanding of the entire path. This will then leave very strong imprints on one's mind.

2. THE WAY OF STRIVING IN ENTHUSIASM

By following the sequence of the outline you can see that the first heading explains the need to develop enthusiasm, the next identifies it, and this part explains the way to actually practise enthusiasm.

It is subdivided into two:

2.1. Abandoning the conditions that obstruct enthusiasm

2.2. Increasing the antidote, the power of enthusiasm

2.1. Abandoning the conditions that obstruct enthusiasm

This explains that without having an understanding of what obstructs enthusiasm, and abandoning it, one cannot possibly develop enthusiasm.

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.1. Identifying the obstructing conditions

2.1.2. The way of abandoning them

2.1.1. Identifying the obstructing conditions

It is good to take notice of how the commentary presents the material sequentially and logically, which is also a means to remove doubts that may arise about why enthusiasm is explained following patience. Having identified enthusiasm, one needs to abandon what obstructs it, and then actually develop enthusiasm. The commentary presents this in a sequential manner.

The next three lines of the verse read:

*2bcd. I shall explain its antithesis:
Laziness, grasping at the negative,
And discouragement putting oneself down.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

I shall explain the antithesis of enthusiasm. There is:

- The laziness that grasps at the pleasure of lazing around, where body and mind are non-pliant.
- The laziness that grasps at the negative activities.
- The laziness that puts oneself down, thinking 'I cannot do this', after having become discouraged from practising virtue.

I shall explain the antithesis of enthusiasm shows that the antithesis or opposite of enthusiasm is laziness, which is presented as three types.

The first is *the laziness that grasps at the pleasure of lazing around, where body and mind are non-pliant*. This refers to the feeling of ease we feel when we're not engaging in practice, when we feel like just laying back and being relaxed and comfortable. At this time when our mind is not engaged in practice we think it is relaxing, but just laying around and grasping at pleasure is the first form of laziness.

The next is *the laziness that grasps at the negative activities*. This is the laziness that actually consumes most of our time. Examples are activities where we try to protect what is favourable to oneself, try to overcome what is not favourable. This is why we try to acquire as many favourable conditions as possible for oneself (such as friends etc.), and try to overcome those opposing us, such as enemies and anything which obstructs our pleasures.

According to the worldly view, if you are really busy, completely involved in working just for the sake of wealth, then this would not be considered laziness. It would likely be considered as working very hard. But according to the Dharma it would be a form of laziness because one is engaged in activities that not inclined toward virtue.

The third type of laziness is putting *oneself down, thinking 'I cannot do this' after having become discouraged*, where one

feels despondent purely because one feels something is difficult. Having this sort of thought is the laziness of feeling despondent, which is putting oneself down.

2.1.2. The way of abandoning them

Next is the way of abandoning the three forms of laziness which is sub-divided into three:

2.1.2.1. Abandoning the laziness that has a taste for lazing around

2.1.2.2. Abandoning the laziness that grasps at negative actions

2.1.2.3. Abandoning the laziness of discouragement

Having already studied the mind and mental factors, it is good to note that laziness is one of the twenty-one secondary mental afflictions.

2.1.2.1. ABANDONING THE LAZINESS THAT HAS A TASTE FOR LAZING AROUND

This is divided into two:

2.1.2.1.1. Abandoning laziness upon investigating its cause

2.1.2.1.2. The way of abandoning

In presenting how to abandon the laziness that has a taste for lazing around, the outline starts with *abandoning laziness upon investigating its cause*. This means that in order to overcome laziness one must first identify its cause. Then, like any other cause and effect sequence, overcoming the cause allows you to stop the consequence or effect. Having identified the cause of laziness, it becomes more likely that one will be able to overcome it.

2.1.2.1.1. Abandoning laziness upon investigating its cause

The verse is preceded by the statement:

If asked what the causes for laziness are:

The text then presents the verse:

3. *Experiencing the taste of lazing around
And through craving based on sleep
One does not tire of the sufferings of cyclic
existence
And generates an affinity for laziness.*

Gyaltsab's commentary expands upon the meaning:

If one views lazing around without engaging in virtue to be happiness, one develops a taste for this pleasure and grasps at it. This, and the craving based on sleep generates laziness, which causes one to be not the least afraid of cyclic existence and to not become disheartened with its sufferings. Through this in turn one develops an affinity for laziness.

Therefore strive in abandoning laziness upon having identified its causes!

The commentary says *if one views lazing around without engaging in virtue to be happiness, one develops a taste for this pleasure and grasps at it*. Viewing just lazing around e.g. kicking back on a comfortable couch, as pleasure, one gets a taste of this as pleasure and becomes attached to it. This then becomes a cause for actual laziness, because of the grasping at that pleasure of lazing around.

The next line in the verse says *and the craving based on sleep generates laziness* which is one of the main forms of laziness. If one has a very comfortable bed and looks forward to that bed thinking, 'hmm, I have a comfortable

bed and I'm really looking forward to sleeping in it', then that becomes a cause for one to engage in excessive sleeping. If one indulges in this thought over and over, then that form of indulgence—the pleasure and attachment to the comfortable bed, and not having to do anything, but just go to sleep—becomes another cause for being lazy.

The commentary states this *causes one to be not the least afraid of cyclic existence, and to not become disheartened with its sufferings*. Not being afraid of cyclic existence because of one's attachment to it, not being afraid to enjoy its pleasures, not tiring of the suffering, and not even doubting oneself about the sufferings, are amongst the worst causes of laziness. This presentation states that everything that binds us to cyclic existence is considered a form of laziness. Therefore afflictions such as anger, attachment etc. can also be forms of laziness because they bind us to cyclic existence.

The commentary explains *through this in turn*, i.e. through the cause of the three types of laziness *one develops an affinity for laziness*. The commentary then concludes that one should *strive in abandoning laziness upon having identified its causes!*

2.1.2.1.2. The way of abandoning

This is divided into two:

2.1.2.1.2.1. Abandoning laziness by contemplating the disadvantages of this life

2.1.2.1.2.2. Abandoning laziness by contemplating the sufferings of the next life

2.1.2.1.2.1. Abandoning laziness by contemplating the disadvantages of this life

This is divided into three:

2.1.2.1.2.1.1. Explaining with example how death quickly destroys one

2.1.2.1.2.1.2. Since one is under the control of death, acting leisurely is unsuitable

2.1.2.1.2.1.3. If one does not strive in virtue, one shall be overwhelmed by suffering

2.1.2.1.2.1.1. Explaining with example how death quickly destroys one

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.2.1.2.1.1.1. One sees directly how one is destroyed by death

2.1.2.1.2.1.1.2. Explaining this with an example

The following verses explain the ways of abandoning laziness. One of the most supreme ways of abandoning laziness is to recollect death and impermanence. As explained in the teachings, when we don't recollect the fragility of our lives, death and impermanence, this causes us not to even think about practising the Dharma. Even if we did, if one does not recall death and impermanence periodically and strongly in one's mind, one will not actually practise it well.

These faults of either not thinking about practicing Dharma at all, or thinking about it but not actually practising it, or not practising it well, all come as a result of the fault of not recollecting death and impermanence periodically.

2.1.2.1.2.1.1.1. One sees directly how one is destroyed by death

The way to abandon laziness is presented as recollecting death and impermanence. The heading says *one sees directly how one is destroyed by death*, which implies that there is no way one could laze around and not engage in virtue and practise Dharma if one recognised how death quickly destroys one. Therefore it is presented under this heading.

The verse which relates to this reads:

4. *Having fallen into the trap of the afflictions
One is snared by the trap of birth
And finds oneself in the mouth of the lord of death.
How can you still not know this?*

The commentary explains:

Similar to animals that cannot escape death because they are ensnared in a trap, one has fallen into the trap laid by the hunter that is the affliction of laziness and so forth. Being thus controlled one is snared by the trap of birth that connects one with the next life, and hence one finds oneself in the mouth of the lord of death. As many beings have already gone and still many will go, how can you still not know this? Strive in virtue!

The illustration used here is a trap *laid* down by hunters to capture and kill an animal, so *similar to animals that cannot escape death because they are ensnared in a trap, one has fallen into the trap laid by the hunter that is the affliction of laziness*.

With this analogy of a hunter setting down a trap for an animal, once the animal is caught in the trap it cannot be spared from death. Death is imminent once the animal has fallen into the trap. Applying the analogy, oneself is like the animal being held in a trap, and the hunter is like the afflictions of laziness, attachment, jealousy etc. As such, one is caught in the trap and cannot escape the consequence of death.

As further explained *being thus controlled one is snared by the trap of birth that connects one with the next life, and hence one finds oneself in the mouth of the lord of death*. Being controlled by the afflictions is what connects this life to the next one, and so one is not spared from the mouth of the lord of death. This refers to the actual death itself. So that which connects one from this life to the next is having to experience death.

Using the analogy of the animal trapped in a cage, the hunter will not spare the animal. Likewise with the afflictions in one's mind, one will not be spared as these are the connecting factors between this life and the next life. Furthermore, *as many beings have already gone and still many will go* into the mouth of the lord of death, *how can you still not know this?* This implies that when we look back we can recall so many who have already died and many about to face death. So with this so obvious to oneself, how can one then sit idly and not engage in virtue. The clear message is that one needs to strive in virtue.

If we apply this explanation in relation to the presentation of the Lam Rim, it says that death is certain, and it is just the time of death that is uncertain. Also at

the time of death, nothing but the Dharma will help, specifically having engaged in virtue or the Dharma practice.

What is being presented here as a personal instruction is that in the past you have seen many die already, and you may see some actually facing death. And having seen this, isn't it an obvious conclusion that one has to experience this fate as well? Therefore don't engage only in frivolous worldly activities which will not benefit you at the time of death. Rather, take time to apply yourself in virtue which will be your sole saviour and protector at the time of death.

An example of what has just been presented follows:

2.1.2.1.2.1.1.2. Explaining this with example

The verse reads:

5. *He is killing our kind gradually,
Do you not see it?
Those relying on sleep
Are like the butcher and the buffalo.*

The commentary explains this:

Do you not see directly that the lord of death is killing the old, young and middle-aged of your kind? Even while you see it, yet you develop craving based on sleep. This is unsuitable, for example, like the buffalo that is seeing directly that the butcher is killing sequentially the other buffalos, and yet he is unworried and abides leisurely.

The commentary elaborates with *do you not see directly the lord of death is killing the old, young and middle-aged of your kind?* 'Your kind' relates to one's peers, those you associate with, e.g. in a monastery it would be the other monks; in a lay community others within the community; within a family your family members etc. Amongst those you associate with regularly, there will be the old, the young and the middle-aged; all will have to experience death.

A rhetorical question is asked, *Do you not see it?* This implies that even when you do see it *you still develop* the various types of cravings based on sleep. That is what you do, and *this is unsuitable*.

The example presented earlier in the verse says, *for example, it is like the buffalo that is seeing directly that the butcher is killing sequentially the other buffalos, and yet he is unworried and abides leisurely*. In the east, when animals are butchered, the other animals are nearby. So a buffalo may well see the other buffalos being butchered, but it seems to be undaunted by that and continues to eat grass and drink water, until it is time for their turn to come.

This example illustrates that if one sees others of one's kind being taken by the lord of death—regardless of being old, young or middle aged—and one just sits around idly, and does not develop any initiative to engage in Dharma and accumulate virtues, then this is like a buffalo who is about to be slaughtered, but is lazing around as if it was unaware of what was happening.

On a personal level what we need to understand from this explanation is that we will all know someone who has passed away, and we might even have seen occasions where people have passed away. So when one sees or hears about death, this needs to become an impetus to remind us that one also has the same fate. There is no

exception, one will also have to face that consequence of having to experience death. So, before that time comes, now is the time to prepare by accumulating virtues and engaging in Dharma practices.

If seeing others who face death does not stir up any kind of feeling in you, and remind you of your own fragility of life and impending death, then it would have not served much purpose. Seeing others face the fate of experiencing death should become impetus to remind one of one's own impending death, and serve as a way to encourage oneself to practise Dharma. This is precisely presented under the next heading.

2.1.2.1.2.1.2. Since one is under the control of death, acting leisurely is unsuitable

This relates to the point mentioned earlier that when one sees how those older than oneself have died, but think that death only relates to those who are older than oneself, then one may still feel quite relaxed and think one still has more time.

The fact is that even those of the same age or younger than oneself have also perished. This is an indication that there's no certainty about when death will approach. The examples we see need to become the impetus for one to reflect on the uncertainty of one's own death, and the fragility of one's own life.

This heading is subdivided into four:

2.1.2.1.2.1.2.1. One should not be lazy as one is under the control of the lord of death (which is the same point)

2.1.2.1.2.1.2.2. Strive in virtue since you will die soon

2.1.2.1.2.1.2.3. The time of death is the wrong time to abandon laziness.

What is implied here is that the time to abandon laziness is now, not at the time of death. The actual time death occurs is the wrong time because it won't have served the purpose of abandoning laziness at the right time. Rather one should abandon laziness now.

2.1.2.1.2.1.2.4. One should not be lazy since one can die suddenly, without finishing one's work

We have now just gone over the subheadings under *since one is under the control of death, acting leisurely is unsuitable*, so we can continue with the explanations in our next teaching session.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

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Edited Version*

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Block 1 Week 14 (19.05.2015)

Week: 1 (17 Feb 2015)

1. Geshe Chengawa summarizes the entire dharma in two lines. What are they? Give their meaning.

Week: 2 (24 Feb 2015)

2. Explain how conviction in karma enables us to interpret our experience of suffering, together with how we might regard those whom inflict suffering upon us differently.

Week: 3 (3 March 2015)

3. Why is it unsuitable to crave for gain?

Week: 4 (10 March 2015)

4. As ordinary people, what do we believe is the source of a happy life? And, for such non-practitioners, *when* is it especially revealed that this belief was fraudulent?

Week: 5 (17 March 2015)

5. How can one purify the causes for hell by tolerating small sufferings? Answer using a bodily analogy.

Week 6 (24 March 2015)

6. Why does Geshe-la regularly emphasise the importance of the outline in Tibetan Buddhist texts? Elaborate on your answer by giving an analogy.

Week 7 (31 March 2015)

7. What are the three subdivisions for "*Impatience with obstacles to the harm of one's enemies is unsuitable*"?

Week 8 (7 April 2015)

8. What are the methods and practices for overcoming the eight worldly dharmas? Give an example of what this means in relation to praise and criticism.

Week 9 (14 April 2015)

9. The line *praise, reputation and gain distract one from the virtuous object*, presents an extremely significant point about meditation practice. Explain this point.

Week 10 (21 April 2015)

10. The root text gives the analogy that a beggar is not an obstruction to generosity. Explain the meaning of this analogy, and then describe how it relates to an *enemy* and *patience*.

Week: 11 (28 April 2015)

2. a) Why is it suitable to meditate on faith in both enlightened beings and sentient beings?

b) Give an example of how we can take a personal instruction from this.

Week: 12 (5 May 2015)

1.'Thus, when one harms any living being, then that definitely displeases the Buddhas.' Why?

Week 13 (12 May 2015)

13. 'Having defined what laziness is, it (the commentary) asks 'what is enthusiasm?''

a) Define laziness.

b) Define and explain what enthusiasm is.

5. How can one purify the causes for hell by tolerating small sufferings? Answer using a bodily analogy.

6. Why does Geshe-la regularly emphasise the importance of the outline in Tibetan Buddhist texts? Elaborate on your answer by giving an analogy.

7. What are the three subdivisions for *"Impatience with obstacles to the harm of one's enemies is unsuitable"*?

8. What are the methods and practices for overcoming the eight worldly dharmas? Give an example of what this means in relation to praise and criticism.

9. The line *praise, reputation and gain distract one from the virtuous object*, presents an extremely significant point about meditation practice. Explain this point.

10. The root text gives the analogy that a beggar is not an obstruction to generosity. Explain the meaning of this analogy, and then describe how it relates to an *enemy* and *patience*.

11. a) Why is it suitable to meditate on faith in both enlightened beings and sentient beings?

b) Give an example of how we can take a personal instruction from this.

12. 'Thus, when one harms any living being, then that definitely displeases the Buddhas.' Why?

13. 'Having defined what laziness is, it (the commentary) asks 'what is enthusiasm?'

a) Define laziness.

b) Define and explain what enthusiasm is.