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## *Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་པོ་འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷོ་ལ་ལ་འཇམ་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

10 March 2015

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

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along the usual lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

It is indeed important for us to familiarise ourselves with this positive motivation. It is through familiarity that we can readily draw on this positive motivation during our practice, which will make the practice truly meaningful. Even when we are not engaged in formal practice and are just going about in our everyday lives, we can periodically recall this motivation. In this way we consistently familiarise our minds with this motivation.

The optimum benefit from familiarising ourselves with this positive motivation is that once it becomes spontaneous, we will not need to spend much time generating a positive motivation when we sit down to practice, as it is already there. Thus we can go straight into the practice. If a positive motivation is not present, then one actually needs to take the time to cultivate it. It is similar to meditating on love and compassion. If we are already familiar with love and compassion then love and compassion will be present in whatever practice or activity we engage in.

### **2.3. It is unsuitable to be angry at obstacles to things like gain (cont.)**

#### **2.3.4. The reason why craving for gain is unsuitable**

What is being presented here is something which we need to be really mindful of: craving for gain is unsuitable. The text however doesn't say that 'gain is unsuitable', but rather that it is the craving for gain that is unsuitable. This is an important point that needs to be understood. Otherwise one could easily think, 'As a Buddhist I shouldn't be thinking about any gains'. There are many who think in this way! As it clearly states here, it is craving or attachment to gain that is the problem.

One can relate this explanation to other teachings e.g. the *Letter to a King*, where Nagarjuna explains that the purpose of wealth is to be content. What prevents one from being satisfied with wealth is attachment, and in turn, as attachment does not allow a sense of contentment, the more you have, the more you want. If one had a satisfied mind through practising contentment, and sufficient means to sustain oneself, then wealth has served its purpose and one can feel very, very satisfied, content and happy.

What is being explained here is how gain through craving will only become a cause for misery, because later on, when we become old and frail, when we go on from this life, then everything has to be left behind. At that time a lot of suffering occurs; whatever has been gained through craving causes great agony and suffering, rather than being a means of bringing a sense of joy and happiness.

The important point here is to recognise craving as a cause for real suffering. Most ordinary people feel that attachment gives them a sense of satisfaction and pleasure, however that is of course an illusion. They can't be blamed as they don't know any better. When one really thinks about the situation, there is no satisfaction in craving. In fact, the more attachment one has, the more it becomes a cause for misery.

Someone who has strong attachment is someone who is really not settled; they experience great pain when their expectations are not met. This is true particularly in relation to friends, relationships, material wealth, gain, status etc. All of these cause suffering when expectations are not met, or when one has to be parted from them.

As previously stated, the most vulnerable time in life is old age, when one is frail and will soon pass on. At that time one can develop very strong attachments. For a practitioner it is said that one of the greatest obstacles for a good death is attachment and craving for one's possessions, friends and relatives. The significant point being presented here, is that if we work on craving now, then slowly, slowly we will become more attuned to its finer points, and be able to give up strong craving.

The great master Asvaghosa said: 'if someone lacks contentment due to very strong craving, there is no greater sickness than this state of mind'. This reinforces the point that craving causes a lack of contentment, which causes great mental agony; it is like a great sickness festering in one's mind. Some people say that when they didn't have much in the early part of their life they seemed to have a happier, more joyful state of mind. But as they became more successful and gained more wealth, the sense of joy and happiness started to fade away and they actually started to become more agitated and restless.

In brief, the main point here is that while we need possessions to sustain ourselves, we should not go to the extent of becoming so attached to them that they cause mental pain.

The relevant verse reads:

59. *Though I may attain much gain  
And live for a long time happily,  
Like being robbed by a thief  
I will go naked and empty-handed.*

The commentary further explains the meaning:

Though I may attain much gain and live happily for a long time, at the time of death, like having been robbed by a thief, I will have to go naked without clothing and empty-handed without wealth.

While the explanation here is quite clear, I will reiterate some of the main points. The gain in *I may attain much gain and live for a long time happily* relates to gaining things that we perceive as giving us some sense of joy or pleasure. This refers to gaining pleasure from the five

sense objects, such as: nice forms, i.e. acquiring material possessions and relations; pleasant sounds, i.e. acquiring the means to listen to pleasant sounds; nice fragrances, i.e. acquiring the means to enjoy pleasant scents; nice taste, i.e. acquiring the means to obtain delicious foods; pleasant touch, i.e. acquiring the means to have pleasant touch or sensations. So we perceive these objects of the five senses as pleasurable.

As ordinary beings we believe that a happy life is one which is filled with the most experiences of the pleasures of the five senses. Nevertheless, no matter how long one lives, and no matter how much one has acquired through craving, at the inevitable time of death, one is stripped of everything and one has to leave everything behind. The analogy used here is *like having been robbed by a thief, I will have to go naked*. So the time of death involves being *naked and empty-handed*, and leaving behind all the pleasures of the five senses.

If one has strong craving for one's possessions, then at the time of death one would have an unbearable sensation of being robbed, and completely stripped of all that one has cherished all of one's life. Then one will experience the suffering of having to part unwillingly, and being involuntarily separated from everything. What prevents this situation from arising is overcoming attachment and strong craving for one's possessions, i.e. the objects of the five senses. If one does not have strong craving and has practised virtue, then, at the time of death, a virtuous mind with no attachment to one's possessions arises. Then one will not have the empty feeling of being stripped of everything, but rather one would be sustained with a great sense of joy in one's mind, knowing that one is not leaving anything of real value behind. Rather, one takes the most valuable asset within one's own mind, which is one's virtue and merit.

Most worldly people, because of their way of thinking, and lack of training in the disadvantages of attachment and craving, will naturally apply great effort to accumulating wealth. They believe that wealth can provide a good house, a good car and also attract good friends or a companion who looks nice and beautiful. 'With money I can achieve all that.'

[Geshe-la says in English: I have said many times before that one needs to be really careful when choosing a friend or companion, one must not look just on the outside but look for qualities inside – a good heart! Some of us have so many things, piles and piles of clothes, many sets of shoes etc. but still want more and more. What use is all that? One needs to think carefully!]

The real point to consider here is this: does having possessions and wealth really make one happy? While some pleasure may be gained through sense experiences now, one may not experience any pleasure from those same objects later on in life. So the sense objects themselves are not a real source of satisfaction and happiness, as there are definitely many cases of people who are quite poor yet who are really quite contented and happy.

While possessions, particularly those relating to the five sense objects, may give some sort of fleeting pleasures, at the most crucial time of our existence, in the last days

prior to death, then rather than giving a sense of joy and happiness, they become a cause for great suffering and misery. What purpose has the accumulation of gain served, when, rather than helping us at a time when we most need comfort and something to soothe our mind, our craving harms us? It has not served any purpose.

If we don't practise giving up possessions now, there will be a time when the possessions will abandon us. So even if you don't abandon possessions, they will finally abandon you anyway. There will be a time when we will have to go, without being able to take anything with us; all the things we worked so hard to acquire will finally abandon us. So, if one practises overcoming craving for possessions, then due to the virtuous mind of non-attachment, one will definitely experience a real sense of ease and a painless death.

Think about our existence right now. If we were stripped of all our belongings, even our clothing, and sent somewhere without anything, how unbearable would that be? Can we even imagine going somewhere without anything, not even our clothing? It would be a very pitiful and embarrassing situation to be in.

This is not a prospect that we would like to face at all, but that is what will occur at the time of death—we will be stripped of everything. It would be unbearable if it were to occur now, but it will actually occur later, and will be an unbearable cause of suffering and agony. However if we train our mind with non-attachment and non-craving now, so that our mind becomes familiar with non-craving and non-attachment, then, at the time of death there will be no sense of going naked and empty-handed. Rather, there will be fulfilment, and a sense of real joy with a virtuous Dharma mind. That is the point being emphasised here.

### **2.3.5. Refuting that it is suitable to establish gain**

The point here, which is explained in the commentary but not mentioned in the heading, is that it is not suitable to establish gain through either anger or wrong livelihood. The heading could also read Refuting That It Is Suitable to Establish Gain Through Wrong Livelihood and Anger.

The first two lines of the verse are presented first

*60ab. If I live through gain,  
I can purify negativity and shall be meritorious*

The hypothetical doubt or qualm raised here is:

Argument: If I live for a long time due to gain, then it is befitting that I achieve gain, in order to purify negativity with the four powers, and increase merits.

It is quite likely that even practitioners could have this doubt, thinking there would be nothing wrong in acquiring gain because this could sustain one for a long time and give more opportunity to make offerings to the Three Jewels, give to others and even purify negative karmas. They might conclude that having gains is a good thing. However this verse highlights it is not OK to have gains if they are acquired through wrong livelihood or through anger. As a response to this qualm the remaining lines of verse are presented:

*60cd. If one gets angry for the purpose of gain  
Merits exhaust and doesn't it become  
negativity?*

*61. The life that I have lived for a purpose*

*Should it degenerate,  
What use was that life  
Where I only created negativity?*

The explanation of the meaning of the lines in the verse is explained in Gyaltsab Je's commentary:

Answer: If one gets angry for the purpose of gain it will exhaust the merits accumulated over a thousand eons. Does one then not achieve negativity? If so, then what purpose did one's life serve, since it only becomes the condition for one's degeneration? The life where one only creates negativity, what shall one do with it as it is useless?

The commentary explains very clearly that, *if one gets angry for the purpose of gain, it will exhaust the merits accumulated over a thousand eons*. This relates to an earlier explanation in the text stating that one moment of anger can destroy the merit accumulated over hundreds of eons. So if the anger that has been generated over many lifetimes is exhausted, there is no question that anger will exhaust the merit accumulated over a thousand eons.

If anger is used as a means to acquire gains, then rather than benefitting from those gains, they will only become a means to harm oneself by exhausting one's merits. So if one were to continuously engage in the means to achieve gains using anger, then *does one not achieve negativity?* This rhetorical question implies that one will be only achieving more negativity and harm. So if that is the case, what purpose does one's life serve, since it only becomes the condition for one's degeneration? If one is engaging mostly in creating negativity then it only contributes to degeneration, rather than achieving one's purpose of happiness. The life that only creates negativity is useless, as it does not serve to achieve one's ultimate purposes.

#### **2.4 It is unsuitable to be angry with others who lack faith in oneself**

The teachings presented so far have been meticulous in relation to a doubt that may occur in one's mind: if someone accepts that gains are not conducive to their wellbeing, then they wouldn't get too upset if someone obstructs their gains. However this next heading is in relation to someone thinking that it is suitable to be angry with someone who lacks respect and faith in oneself. This outline explains that it is unsuitable to be angry with others who lack faith in oneself. It is subdivided into two:

2.4.1. If it is suitable to get angry when there is a loss of faith due to unpleasant words to oneself, then it is also suitable to be angry if there is a loss of faith due to unpleasant words to others

2.4.2. If one can be patient with a lack of faith for others then it is also suitable to be patient with a lack of faith in oneself due to the condition of afflictions

##### **2.4.1. If it is suitable to get angry when there is a loss of faith due to unpleasant words to oneself, then it is also suitable to be angry if there is a loss of faith due to unpleasant words to others**

What is being presented here is the absurdity of becoming angry with others if their unpleasant words cause others to lose faith in oneself. It would then follow that it would be reasonable to get angry when others use unpleasant words towards others, because it causes others to lose faith in them too.

The first two lines of the verse reads:

*62ab. If: Because it degenerates sentient beings  
I shall be angry at the one saying unpleasant words.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary presents the doubt:

Argument: Though it is unsuitable to become angry at the obstacles to gain, I shall be angry at those who speak unpleasantly to me as it degenerates the faith of my faithful.

The next two lines of the verse answer that argument:

*62cd. Why do you not also get angry  
When unpleasant words are said to others?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Answer: If you are angry because of a degeneration of merit, then why do you not get angry when unpleasant words are said to another person? Here also, the virtue of faith for others degenerates.

As the explanations presented in the commentary are quite clear, they don't need to be further explained.

#### **2.4.2 If one can be patient with a lack of faith for others, then it is also suitable to be patient with a lack of faith in oneself due to the condition of afflictions**

If one can reason that one can be patient when someone causes a lack of faith for others, because one sees there is a cause for others to do this, then with that reasoning it would also be suitable to be patient if someone causes lack of faith in oneself. That is because it is the afflictions that cause the lack of faith in oneself. It is not of their own doing, but caused by the condition of the afflictions.

The word 'faith' can also be used as a term to denote a lack respect. So when others use critical words and badmouth us, then that can cause others to lose respect, etc. for us. So lack of faith also means lack of respect.

To be clear with the reasoning here: If someone makes critical remarks toward oneself, one could say 'there is cause for me to be angry'. But if one says, 'I can be patient when someone makes critical remarks that cause a loss of faith in someone else, because they deserve to be insulted. They have given cause to be criticised'. If one uses that reasoning, then in the same way, you should be patient with the person who criticises and insults you, because it is the afflictions within them that is causing them to insult you.

The verse relating to this reads:

*63. If you can be patient with non-faith,  
Because non-faith depends on others,  
Then why are you not patient with unpleasant words  
That depend on the generation of afflictions?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary gives a more literal translation:

If you can be patient and without anger with the loss of faith in another due to unpleasant words to them because the object depends on another person, then why mind, are you not patient with the unpleasant words said to me? It follows you should be because they depend on the generation of the other's afflictions.

To use an example to clarify this: let's say that if Wayne criticises me, I have a reason to get angry. But if Wayne criticises Ross, I don't get angry about that, because Ross has caused Wayne to insult him.

Following the same line of reasoning, one could argue: I can be patient when Wayne using insulting words to me because it is not actually Wayne himself, but the afflictions within him, that cause him to insult me.

These are very fine points of reasoning which indicate that there is really no point in becoming angry. In other words, there is no valid reason or excuse to get angry.

#### **2.1.4.1.2. Stopping anger at that which faults relatives**

This is subdivided into two

2.1.4.1.2.1. Stopping it with the patience of definitely relying on the Dharma

2.1.4.1.2.2. Stopping it with the patience that does not think anything of harm. (Other translations use: The Patience Of Not Retaliating Against Someone Who Harms You)

##### **2.1.4.1.2.1. Stopping it with the patience of definitely relying on the Dharma**

This moves on from the earlier point about finding reason to be angry at others criticising oneself, or preventing gain for oneself. This verse relates to stopping anger that finds fault with one's relatives and close ones.

It is also subdivided into two:

2.1.4.1.2.1.1. The reason why it is unsuitable if the holy bodies and so forth are harmed

2.1.4.1.2.1.2. It is likewise suitable to be patient with harm to friends and so forth

*2.1.4.1.2.1.1. The reason why it is unsuitable if the holy bodies and so forth are harmed*

The first subdivision is preceded by this hypothetical doubt:

Argument: Though it is unsuitable to be angry when oneself is harmed, it is suitable to be angry when the Triple Gem is harmed.

This is a very significant point because there are many who feel righteous about getting angry at those who harm for religious reasons. They say 'I can get angry with someone who harms my faith or religion.' Here it is clearly explained that even religion cannot be an excuse for anger.

The verse reads:

*64. Though the bodies, stupas and the holy Dharma  
Are derided and destroyed  
My hatred is unsuitable,  
Because the buddhas and so forth do not have  
harm.*

The commentary presents the answer:

Answer: If the bodies of the buddhas and the stupas of great enlightenment and so forth and the holy Dharma are the object of idle talk or criticism, and even if the bodies are destroyed, it is unsuitable to be angry. The buddhas and so forth, the Triple Gem, do not possess harm, and the attacker is the object of compassion, and it is suitable to be affectionate towards them.

The meaning is that the Triple Gem does not generate mental unhappiness due to mental pain.

One of the main points the commentary explains is that when others criticise or even destroy holy bodies, then there is no actual harm to the holy beings. As the buddhas have abandoned the causes to be harmed, they cannot be harmed.

The Triple Gem does not generate mental unhappiness due to mental pain. This is a significant point to understand: the parts of the Triple Gem are beyond experiencing any kind of unhappiness and mental pain because they have abandoned every cause for that kind of suffering to be experienced. They will not reoccur. While some, due to their ignorance, think they are causing harm, they do not understand that they cannot harm holy beings.

Having understood that, one should not find reason to be upset and angry with someone who causes harm to the Triple Gem. Rather, we should consider them as great objects of compassion, because they create so much negativity due to their own ignorance.

Often when His Holiness talks about the perpetrators of harms in Tibet he refers to them as objects of great compassion. He often says 'Oh! Have great pity for those who engage in such negative deeds'. In recent times His Holiness has told Tibetans who are visiting India that when they go back to Tibet (of course he is also sending messages to people who are in Tibet), 'If there is an occasion where you are forced to criticise or ridicule me, don't hesitate to do so. There is no reason for you to be unnecessarily tortured or given a hard time just because you don't want to criticise me. In fact, the whole world knows about me anyway, so there is no harm in you ridiculing or criticising me. It won't harm me in any way'. Nowadays, the world knows what the Dalai Lama stands for, and who he really is. So the more the Chinese continuously criticise him and make ridiculous remarks about him, they more they ridicule themselves. People laugh about it when the Chinese continue to do that.

However, the present Premier of China seems to have more understanding, and has actually stopped a lot of criticism of His Holiness, probably for political reasons. Apparently he is scrutinising the internal affairs of the Communist party for corruption, unjust torture, unjust trials and unjust imprisonment.

What has been presented thus far is something from which to take personal instructions. It relates to practising patience and, rather than finding reasons to justify one's anger, to actually practise patience for personal benefit. In relation to gain, it explains that one finds reason to get angry when others obstruct gains, but one should consider how there is no real benefit in craving gain; it doesn't serve any purpose, as one will have to part from it, and that can cause more suffering for oneself.

It is also unreasonable to be upset with others who criticise oneself. If one gets upset it just causes more hurt for oneself. There is no benefit, so it is far better to practice patience when others insult you or your relatives etc. You have been given the tools that will assist you when you are most in need, when you are impoverished, or in times of strife when others may not be able to help you. These tools will help you at that time.

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

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Edited Version  
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# Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྤོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

17 March 2015

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

As usual we can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

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

## 2.1.4.1.2. Stopping anger at that which faults relatives<sup>1</sup>

### 2.1.4.1.2.1. Stopping it with the patience of definitely relying on the Dharma

#### 2.1.4.1.2.1.1. Why it is unsuitable to be angry if holy bodies etc. are harmed (cont.)

Here, *holy bodies* refers to the actual holy bodies of buddhas, gurus and bodhisattvas, as well as holy objects such as stupas and so forth. In the past, stupas in Varanasi and other parts of India were destroyed by followers of other faiths, who acted out of evil intent or extreme ignorance. What is being explained here is that even in extreme cases where the buddhas are harmed and holy objects and so forth are destroyed, one should not find reason to become angry. Rather one should practise patience.

Instead of retaliating with anger, one needs to develop compassion for such people. This is a very significant point. When one really thinks about it, these people, who cause such destruction to holy objects, are an object of great compassion because of the heavy negativities they have created. In fact, the compassion developed for such beings of evil intent is said to be very subtle and profound.

#### 2.1.4.1.2.1.2. It is likewise suitable to be patient with harm to relatives and so forth

It is explained here that one should also practise patience when harm is inflicted upon our teachers, close relatives and friends.

The verse relating to this is:

65. *Even if one's teacher and relatives  
And friends are harmed,  
Stop anger by seeing that it came about  
Through the earlier way of conditions.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning of the verse as follows:

It is likewise unsuitable to get angry when one's teachers, contemporaries, relatives or friends and so

forth are being harmed or one sees them being harmed. One should stop anger by seeing that the friends and so forth are being harmed due to the karma accumulated through unsuitable actions in the past, that the harm had arisen through the earlier explained way of conditions.

Here, *contemporaries* refers to immediate relatives such as one's parents or siblings, while *relatives* refers to one's spouse and in-laws, as well as one's extended family. When they are being harmed, or when one sees them about to be harmed, *one should stop anger, by seeing that the friends and so forth are being harmed due to karma accumulated through unsuitable actions in the past.*

At this point, one needs to use the earlier explanation that harms to oneself cannot come about if one hasn't created the karma to experience that harm. Similarly, if others haven't created the karma to be harmed, they won't experience any harm. The harm they experience is a consequence of their own negative karma, rather than being entirely caused by the perpetrator. So by using the reasons that were previously explained in relation to oneself, one finds reason to practise patience when relatives and friends are harmed, rather than becoming angry.

As also explained previously, we benefit when others harm us, as that harm enables us to exhaust negative karma. Furthermore, they are giving us an opportunity to practise patience. So, rather than harming us, they are actually benefitting us. In addition, they will experience the negative consequences of their action. So they are in fact an object of compassion rather than anger. The same line of reasoning also applies when one's close relatives and friends and the like are harmed.

When we think about it carefully, these are very logical reasons. But we can't leave it at that. We need to remind ourselves to put this advice into practice. We might know about the significance of the practice, but if we don't attempt to practise it, then that knowledge won't be of much help in preventing us from becoming angry. Through training our mind, going over these explanations and meditating on them, we will not become angry even when the conditions for anger are present. That is proof that we are practising patience.

If we just skim over these explanations and think 'Oh yeah, this makes sense' and don't make any attempt to practise it, then, when the conditions arise, we will find ourselves becoming upset and angry. After we get angry we might then recall the practice and make an attempt to practise patience, but by then it's a bit too late. You've already become upset and angry, and if you had acted upon it then the damage would have already been done.

The real beneficiary of one's practice of patience is oneself. The mark of patience is that in the event of physical or verbal harm, one's mind is not disturbed and one does not become agitated. That is when one actually reaps the benefit of patience, which is maintaining a mind that is free from agitation.

Furthermore, as was mentioned previously, practising patience in the event of harm is also an optimum means to accumulate great merit, and purify negative karma. Thus it is one of the greatest virtues. As explained earlier, the austerity of patience is the supreme austerity of a

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<sup>1</sup> Here the heading numbering in the transcript reverts (temporarily) back to the structure of the chapter, rather than the abbreviated version used in the previous section. See the teaching of 14 October for the introduction of this heading.

bodhisattva's practice. In contrast, if we allow our mind to become upset and angry, then, as explained previously, even a moment of anger can destroy the virtues of many eons, and become a cause to be born in the lower realms.

These are essential points to keep in mind, to remind ourselves of the great advantage of practising patience, and the disadvantages of not practising it.

#### 2.1.4.1.2.2. Stopping it with the patience that does not think anything of harm

Another way to translate the heading would be:

#### 2.1.4.1.2.2. The patience of not retaliating against someone who harms you

This has four subdivisions:

2.1.4.1.2.2.1. Being angry only at that which has a mind is unsuitable

2.1.4.1.2.2.2. The reason why it is unsuitable to be angry

2.1.4.1.2.2.3. Contemplating one's fault

2.1.4.1.2.2.4. Contemplating the benefits of patience

*2.1.4.1.2.2.1. Being angry only at that which has a mind is unsuitable*

Harm can be inflicted by both animate and inanimate objects. The outline, by itself, indicates that it is not reasonable to be upset by focussing solely on animate objects.

The verse relating to this reads:

66. *Embodied beings are harmed by both  
Those with mind and those without mind.  
Why single out and take exception to those  
with mind?  
Therefore be patient with harm.*

In his commentary, Gyalsab Je states:

The embodied beings that are our relatives and so forth are harmed both by the enemy that has mind, and the weapons and so forth that do not have mind. So why do I single out those with mind, and become angry and aggressive towards them? This is unsuitable and thus I should be patient with harm to relatives.

The commentary asks why, when *embodied beings*, such as relatives and so forth are *harmed by an enemy that has a mind, and by weapons and so forth that have no mind*, does one *single out* only the harm caused by the one who has a mind, and become *aggressive towards them*? It concludes by saying that it *is unsuitable and thus one should be patient with harm to relatives*.

The reasoning presented here is similar to what was explained earlier, which is that if someone harms you with the blow of a stick, for example, the one causing the direct harm is the stick. But of course one doesn't normally become angry with the stick, because one reasons that the stick is held by a person, and that if they hadn't wielded the stick, we wouldn't have experienced any pain.

With that same logical reasoning the text went on to explain that, as you don't get angry at the stick because it is controlled by the person, so too the person is controlled by delusions such as anger. Therefore one should not find reason to be upset with that person.

Although not elaborated as such, this section of the text is a similar explanation of why we should not be upset with people who harm us. However, if we don't relate this explanation to the earlier one, then we might ask, 'Why isn't it reasonable to be upset with the person who has a mind, when they have caused me harm?' If one didn't have an understanding of the previous explanation, then one might get stuck here and start thinking, 'Well, it should be reasonable to get angry at someone if they have harmed me?'

So it is important to be able to relate this verse to the logical reasons presented in the earlier explanation.

*2.1.4.1.2.2.2. The reason why it is unsuitable to be angry*

The verse relating to this heading is a very profound summary of the main points:

67. *Some commit faults due to ignorance,  
Some become angry due to ignorance.  
Who is without fault?  
Who is with fault?*

Gyalsab Je's commentary begins his explanation with:

Some beings commit harms such as killing and so forth due to being ignorant of the law of cause and effect, and some become angry because of being ignorant of the faults of anger.

This is really a presentation of the fact that great harms are created due to being ignorant of the law of cause and effect or karma; and being ignorant of the faults of anger and so forth.

- Being ignorant of the law of cause and effect or karma, is the main cause for one to be reborn in the lower realms; and
- Being ignorant of the faults of anger and so forth, i.e. being ignorant of the fundamental truth of reality, is the cause to be reborn in higher realms within cyclic existence

That's how karma is created - through ignorance.

As specifically explained here, *some beings commit harms such as killing and so forth*, which includes some of the five heinous crimes of killing one's mother; killing one's father; killing an arhat and so forth.

Other heavy negative karmas implied by *and so forth* include stealing, which can be of varying degrees of severity. There is also sexual misconduct, as well as the heavy negative karma of holding on to wrong views. These are causes that create great misdeeds and negativity.

These heavy negative karmas are created due to being ignorant of the law of cause and effect. In other words, the immediate condition for creating these heavy negative karmas is the ignorance of the law of cause and effect. Although we have some understanding of karma, we continually find ourselves committing negativities and misdeeds, so we cannot blame those who, having no understanding of the law of cause and effect, create negative karmas out of sheer ignorance.

When the commentary states *and some become angry because of being ignorant of the faults of anger*, it is specifically explaining that when there's ignorance of the faults of anger, then, because one does not consider anger as a fault, one will find every reason to become angry. In

other words, if one doesn't see the faults of anger then when the conditions for anger arise and are present, it will further escalate, and there will be no hesitation in expressing and acting out of anger.

On the other hand, if one has contemplated the faults of anger, then even if anger were to momentarily arise due to certain conditions, one will prevent it from escalating by immediately recalling the faults of anger. One of the younger students, who used to come to Wednesday evening classes, once mentioned that contemplating and thinking about the faults of anger does definitely help to reduce the intensity of that negativity. Recognising the faults of anger is, in fact, one of the primary methods for preventing the escalation of anger. The more one familiarises one's mind with its faults, the more it helps to reduce that mind of anger.

Gyaltsab Je concludes his commentary on the verse with:

Out of those two, how can one say who is without fault and who is with fault? Since both are equally with fault, it is unsuitable to return harm with anger.

Here he is presenting further reasons as to why *it is unsuitable to return harm with anger*. A perpetrator of harm is either ignorant of the law of cause and effect or ignorant of the faults of anger, and so they engage in negative deeds, and create so much negativity. When one really thinks about this, they are in a very pitiful situation. Through their creation of so much negativity, they are creating the causes for their own misery and suffering. If we don't contemplate these points it would be very easy to become angry with those who are guilty of such heinous crimes as murder, saying, 'How inappropriate that is! How dare they do something like that? How is it possible for them to do such evil things?'

But if we really think about these points to gain a deeper understanding, we will understand how people engage in these negative acts out of sheer ignorance. Then, instead of annoyance and anger, one will really start to feel a deep sense of compassion for them. So these are really profound methods to develop a much stronger compassion.

One needs to relate this passage to the earlier explanations of how to prevent anger when one is harmed, and practise patience instead. Just as that elaborate presentation showed us the necessity of engaging in the practice of applying the patience of not retaliating when someone harms you, this section of the text is related specifically to the harm inflicted on holy beings and one's relatives, friends, and so forth. Just as one trains one's mind in not retaliating when others harm oneself, one uses the same thread of reasoning to practise patience, and not retaliate when one's relatives and friends and so forth are harmed.

#### 2.1.4.1.2.2.3. *Contemplating one's fault*

This relates to contemplating the faults of the person who is being harmed.

The first of two verses under this heading is:

68. *Why did I create previously  
The karma to be harmed?  
If all depends on karma  
Then why do I take exception with them?*

Here Gyaltsab Je explains:

In the past, why did I create the karma due to which others harm me? If all the meaningless harms that I receive depends on my bad karma, then why do I become angry with the other person?

As the commentary explains clearly, *the harm that I receive now is due to the karma that I've created in the past*. If that is the case, then whatever harm I receive from another is none other than the results of karma that I've created in the past. Therefore one should not find reason to be angry with the other. The verse backing this up is:

69. *I shall make an effort to act meritoriously  
So that all, upon seeing this,  
Develop the mind of love  
For each other.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Having seen that all harms and sufferings arise from karma one thinks, 'When will it come to be that all living beings have a loving mind towards each other? I will make this happen'. So in this way I must strive for the merits of compassion and so forth.

This is a really wonderful explanation of how to put this teaching into practice. As explained here, *all harms and suffering are the results of previously created karma*. Having understood that, *one thinks, 'When will it come to be that all living beings have a loving mind towards each other?'* Here, all living beings refers to close and dear ones, enemies, and strangers to whom one normally would feel indifference. For as long as that distinction between friends, enemies and strangers is present, harms and so forth will be inflicted upon each other.

How wonderful it would be if all beings could replace that mind of discrimination with a genuine sense of care, and a loving attitude towards each other. Having contemplated the value of that wonderful state, one thinks *I will make this happen. I must strive for the merits of compassion and so forth*. Generating this mind of great love and compassion is also the means to accumulate great merit.

So there is no reason to be upset and angry with others. Whatever harm that's experienced is only due to the results of previous karma. Wouldn't it be wonderful if, through seeing this, everyone was free from being upset and angry with each other, and instead generated love and compassion for each other?

#### 2.1.4.1.2.2.4. *Contemplating the benefits of patience*

This is subdivided into three:

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.1. Striving not to allow one's virtue to degenerate

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.2. Purifying the causes for hell by tolerating small sufferings

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.3. It is suitable to like the austerity for the great purpose

#### 2.1.4.1.2.2.4.1. *Striving not to allow one's virtue to degenerate*

Far from letting virtue degenerate, we should strive to further increase those virtues.

There are two verses under this heading, the first of which is:

70. *For example, when a house is on fire,*

*And the fire has started to spread to other houses,  
The hay and so forth to which it has spread  
Is suitable to be given up.*

The explanation in the commentary reads:

For example, if a house is on fire and the fire has moved to another house where it spreads to the grass and wood, then it is suitable that one sacrifices the hay and wood in order to save the wealth of the house. It would be unsuitable to have attachment to them.

The *example* that is used is *that if another house is on fire, and the courtyard in one's house contains hay and wood, then to protect one's house and valuables one would be prepared to sacrifice or remove that hay and wood to remove the danger of sparks igniting it. If one were attached to the hay and wood in one's courtyard it could destroy one's own house and possessions.*

The second verse extends this example:

71. *Likewise, when, through being attached to something,  
The fire of hatred spreads,  
And there is doubt that one's merits will burn,  
Then of course one has to give it up.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Similarly, if the fire of hatred is spreading due to the condition of attachment to friends and so forth and there is the danger that the wealth of merits and so forth will burn, then the basis of one's attachment is suitable to be given up; thus it is unsuitable to be attached.

How often do we find ourselves engaging in negativities due to strong *attachment to friends, relatives and so forth*? For example, when they are harmed one finds reason to become really upset and angry, which will destroy *one's own merit* and roots of virtues. Therefore, one *should give up attachment* to one's friends and relatives as a means of protecting the great wealth of one's merit and virtues.

#### **2.1.4.1.2.2.4.2. Purifying the causes for hell by tolerating small sufferings**

This has two subdivisions:

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.2.1. Example

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.2.2. Meaning

##### **2.1.4.1.2.2.4.2.1. Example**

First of all Gyaltsab Je presents an argument:

Argument: If one is separated from friends and relatives one will suffer.

Here one is finding reason not to be patient when one's relatives and so forth are harmed, based on the point that *if one is separated from friends and relatives one will suffer*. So seeing them harmed or suffering is a reason to be upset and angry.

The answer is presented in this verse:

72. *How can it not be good if a person to be killed  
Is released upon having his hand cut off?  
How can it not be good if one is freed from hell  
Through the human sufferings?*

The commentary explains the answer:

Answer: If a person condemned to death is freed upon having his hand cut off then how is that not good? It is good. Likewise, if one is freed from the

suffering of hell merely by experiencing the human sufferings of hunger and thirst, then how is that not good? It is appropriate to tolerate small sufferings to reverse larger sufferings.

The explanation begins with the rhetorical question, *if a person who is condemned to death is freed upon having his hand cut off, then how is that not good?* This implies that an individual who is condemned to death would find the lesser suffering of losing one's hand to be more acceptable. In comparison with the unbearable suffering of being killed, the suffering of losing one's hand would be more bearable. The main point of this analogy is that it is appropriate to bear a small suffering as a means of relieving a greater suffering. In comparison to being killed, the suffering of having one's hand cut off is relatively minor.

Having presented this example the commentary further explains that *likewise, if one is freed from the suffering of hell merely by experiencing the human sufferings of hunger and thirst, then how is that not good? It is appropriate to tolerate small sufferings to reverse larger sufferings.*

As presented here, in comparison to the unbearable and intense sufferings of the hell realms, the suffering experienced in the human realm, such as intense hunger and thirst, is relatively minor. A very good example is the Nyung Nye practice. During the Nyung Nye one experiences extreme thirst and great pangs of hunger. However, that kind of suffering has a great purpose in that it is a way of purifying one's negative karma. When this practice is done appropriately it becomes a cause to relieve the sufferings of the hell realms. So it is worthwhile to bear small sufferings, if doing so becomes a cause to relieve a greater suffering. I've done many Nyung Nyes, and there is definitely great suffering. However even though it's not comfortable physically, when one sees its purpose, one does not allow that physical suffering to overwhelm one's mind, and so one continues with the practice. This is a good example to use in conjunction with what is being explained here.

These are examples of hardships that one goes through when practising Dharma. When one sees the value of the practice, then one will not be deterred by small sufferings and think, 'Oh it's too difficult. I can't bear this. It's not worthwhile doing it'. That would be losing the opportunity to accumulate great merit and purify great negative karma.

The main point here is that engaging in Dharma practices requires some effort, hardship and difficulties. But that is worthwhile when it becomes a cause to relieve greater suffering. This is what one needs to keep in mind. One can extend that understanding to practising patience beginning with small sufferings. As we become familiar with being patient with small sufferings we will develop patience with greater suffering. That is another way of looking at what is presented here.

As literally explained in the commentary, it is worthwhile being patient with smaller suffering as that becomes a cause to relieve greater sufferings. This also implies that if one cannot be patient with small sufferings, then there is no way that one will be able practise patience with greater sufferings. So it is definitely worthwhile to begin with being patient with small sufferings.



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#### 2.1.4.1.2.2.4.2.2. Meaning

The hypothetical argument used to introduce the verse is:

Argument: I cannot bear even these sufferings.

*I cannot bear even these sufferings* relates to the sufferings of the human realm. These include hunger and thirst, as well as other suffering such as being criticised, being beaten or bound, experiencing sickness and so forth. These are all sufferings experienced on the human realm.

The verse states:

73. *If I cannot bear  
Even the present sufferings,  
Then why do I not reverse anger  
The cause of the sufferings of hell?*

Then the commentary explains that:

Answer: If I cannot bear even the small present sufferings of hunger, thirst and being cut with weapons, then why do I not make an effort to reverse anger which is the cause for the sufferings of hell? I should strive to reverse it.

As explained very clearly, we become angry because we *cannot bear the small sufferings* that we experience in this human existence, such as *hunger and thirst, being cut* and beaten and so forth. The reason why we become angry is because we're not able to bear that suffering. So if it's so hard and difficult to bear the suffering of the human existence, then why would one *not make the effort to reverse the anger which is a cause for the great sufferings in the hell realms?* The conclusion here is one should make every effort to reverse the cause of one's great sufferings in the hell realms, which is anger. So it is incredibly worthwhile to practise patience with the small sufferings of our current existence, as a means to prevent the creation of the causes to experience much greater suffering in the hell realms.

We need to keep this very significant point in mind and put it into practice. If we find it so hard to bear even the small suffering that we are experiencing now, then, with the prospect of having to experience great suffering in the future, why would we not strive to actually overcome the cause of that great suffering, which is anger. Why would one intentionally not want to practise patience? It would be really ridiculous and pointless to intentionally create the causes for much greater suffering. So the personal instruction here is that it is incredibly valuable to actually engage in the practice of patience.

It is reasonable to conclude that if one cannot bear small sufferings then one should, by every means, avoid creating causes for much greater suffering. However we often find the reverse, where someone, who cannot bear to experience some small suffering, takes the drastic measure of jumping off a cliff or a bridge to end their life, and ends up with much greater suffering through ending their life.

That's really quite ironic—they were intending to escape from the small suffering they were experiencing, and ended up having to experience much greater suffering. If we look at it from this point of view, then we can see that it is really very foolish to try to purposely create more suffering, especially as a means of trying to remove smaller sufferings. In fact, the opposite should be

practised, which is avoiding the causes for greater suffering through experiencing lesser suffering now.

The text is showing us, with very logical reasons, that if we don't want to experience small sufferings, we should then use every means to avoid the causes for much greater suffering. There are many, many instances of people taking drastic measures in an attempt to rid themselves of some comparatively minor suffering, but end up in experiencing even greater suffering.

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

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Edited Version  
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# Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

24 March 2015

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

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

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

2.1.4.1.2.2.4. Contemplating the benefits of patience (cont.)

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.3. It is suitable to like the austerities for the great purpose

This has two subdivisions:

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.3.1. Having regret due to not having achieved the purpose of self or others, despite all the bodies that have already been wasted

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.3.2. It is suitable to be happy because of achieving the purpose of all sentient beings by being patient with the present austerities

2.1.4.1.2.2.4.3.1. Having regret due to not having achieved the purpose of self or others, despite all the bodies that have already been wasted

74. For the purpose of desire, I experienced  
The sufferings of being burned and so forth in  
thousands of hells,  
But I have not achieved the purpose  
Of self or others.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning clearly:

Because before I was engaged in negative actions due to desire for the mistaken object of my craving, I have experienced for thousands of eons the sufferings of being cut and so forth in hell. Despite this, I have not achieved the slightest purpose of self or others.

Previously one has engaged in actions due to desire for the mistaken object of my craving. The mistaken objects of craving, as explained in other teachings in more detail, are the objects of attachment and anger. The engagement with these objects becomes mistaken, due to the mistaken perceptions through which we interact with them. That is why the objects of craving are referred to here as mistaken objects.

Neuroscientists also support this view, stating that when one sees a fault in an object (such as an object of anger), the perceived fault is only about ten percent coming from the object's side. Ninety percent of the perceived faults are actually a projection from one's own mind. This is a very significant scientific discovery, which of course has already been explained profoundly in the Buddha's teachings.

Likewise, the mind of attachment sees the object of attachment as having only appealing features of beauty. Whereas according to the earlier explanation, the appealing features of beauty in the object may be only about ten percent. The rest would be an overrated projected state of beauty in one's mind, due to the strong attachment to that object.

The commentary explains that *due to desire for the mistaken object of my craving*, one has created a lot of negative actions in the past, so due to that one has *experienced for thousands of eons the sufferings of being cut and so forth in hell*.

The first point explains how one has created many negativities in the past, for which one has already experienced the consequences over great lengths of time in the lower realms. Once reborn in the lower realms, such as the hell realm, it is very difficult to create any virtue.

Bringing this concept into one's present life, we can see how we engage in negativities due to our desires for mistaken objects of craving and so forth. In contemplating these very profound points about karma, one can see how one engages in negative actions due to mistaken perceptions in one's own mind.

Once in the human realm, if we do not use our suffering to purify our negative karma, then as explained: *I have not achieved the slightest purpose for self and others*. If one's suffering has not served the purpose of achieving either goals for a better rebirth in future lives, or for definite goodness, which is to achieve liberation and enlightenment, then we have not achieved the slightest purpose for self and others.

To take this as a personal instruction: one needs to develop regret for not having achieved the purpose of self and others. Contemplating how, despite the numerous bodies that one has already wasted, if one has not utilised one's life to counteract attachment and anger towards mistaken objects, then one has constantly created negativity. As the outline explains, we have wasted so many bodies and experienced various types of suffering, but we have not achieved any purpose. The reason we have wasted so many lives is because they have not served to fulfil the purpose of either oneself or others. You must understand that the outline serves as a great guide in extracting the meaning of the verse.

For example this outline, *Having regret due to not having achieved the purpose of self or others, despite all the bodies that have already been wasted*, directly relates to, and introduces the meaning of the next verse, which comes under the following heading: *It is suitable to be happy because of achieving the purpose of all sentient beings by being patient with the present austerities*.

This is how I understand the meaning of these outlines and I am confident that it is correct, as I am quite familiar with their content. We can see how the outline serves the purpose of showing the sequence and logic of the verses presented in the text. One should not underestimate the value of any text's outline. For example, if one wishes to meditate on the Lam Rim, it is on the basis of a thorough grasp of the outline itself that one is able to meditate on the various topics.

There was a time in the past when I spent many months meditating on the Lam Rim, which I did on the basis of having first memorised the outline. Memorising the outline is very useful, because it makes it possible to recall the topics precisely and get an overview of the entire Lam Rim. To give an analogy, it is like sitting on top of a high mountain and seeing everything below very clearly.

Similarly, when one has learned the outline of a text such as the Lam Rim, then the meditation practice becomes very meaningful, as one has an overview of the entire Lam Rim text. The reason why I regularly emphasise the importance of the outlines is because they present a sequential and logical manner for extracting the meaning of the text.

**2.1.4.1.2.2.4.3.2. It is suitable to be happy because of achieving the purpose of all sentient beings by being patient with the present austerities**

The verse reads:

75. *This does not harm me like that  
And it also achieves great purpose  
It is suitable to be only happy about  
The sufferings that clear the harm of sentient beings.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains further:

This austerity at the time of achieving the purpose of others does not harm me that much, but in dependence on it, I achieve great purpose. Therefore, it is suitable to be only happy and accept the sufferings of the austerities that clear away all the harm of migrators.

The commentary explains that the austerity one could endure for the purpose of others would include practices of forsaking food or clothing and enduring hardships in the practices one engages in. These difficulties, while they may be hard, do not actually harm oneself to any great extent. In fact, whatever level of suffering we experience in our practice is a suffering within the human realm, so it is nothing compared to suffering in the lower realms. And rather than harming, austerities actually serve to help achieve the great meaning of serving the purpose of oneself and others: *in dependence upon it I achieve great purpose.*

We can relate to the great purpose of all the hardships one bears in one's practices as being a means for becoming the cause of either achieving high status in the future life, or definite goodness i.e. liberation, and ultimately enlightenment. So that is the great purpose one will be able to achieve by enduring the hardships of Dharma practice. Therefore, as the commentary explains: *it is suitable to be only happy and accept the sufferings of the austerities.* This relates specifically to the practice of the patience of willingly enduring sufferings. This is the type of patience that serves as the means *that clears away all the harm of migrators.*

When one achieves one's great purpose, such as attaining enlightenment, that then becomes the means to clear away the harms of all migrators. This is the extent of the great virtue, or great purpose, that one can achieve.

#### **2.1.4.1.3. Stopping anger at those who benefit one's enemies**

This point is very relevant and practical in our everyday life. It follows the earlier advice on how to not get angry and practise patience. It began with how to practise patience and not retaliate with anger in relation to harms inflicted on oneself personally. This was followed with advice on how to practise patience and not be angry when one's close ones, such as relatives and friends are harmed. This leads up to advice given now on how to practise patience when one's enemies are benefitted.

We can see how this is very much related to our everyday life situation. We see how we create so much negativity toward those who harm our close ones, and find reasons to get very agitated and angry. Then again, with those who help or benefit our enemies, we become really agitated and angry. This is how we seem to constantly create the situation for own mental turmoil and agony.

Everyday situations present so many occasions to get upset and angry, and create a great amount of negativity. So the sequential advice on how to practise patience is very relevant. It is not as if we are being asked to practise something which is totally unrelated to us, and beyond our reach. So we definitely need to embrace this advice and put it into practice.

This part of the outline is subdivided into three parts:

2.1.4.1.3.1. Abandoning intolerance to achieving praise and renown of enemies

2.1.4.1.3.2. Abandoning intolerance to achieving their happiness

2.1.4.1.3.3. Abandoning intolerance to achieving their gain

So from these outlines we can see great advice being presented.

In relation to the first subdivision, *Abandoning intolerance to the achievement of praise and renown by enemies* we can see how we don't favour an enemy being praised and receiving good comments, and because it makes us feel uncomfortable we find reason to get angry. Here we are being advised to abandon intolerance to this response.

The second subdivision, *Abandoning intolerance to achieving their happiness*, highlights how we are not happy when our enemies are happy. Getting angry when enemies achieve the means for happiness can cause one great pain, so this intolerance must be abandoned.

There are many who suffer precisely because they are unable to tolerate things like praise being given to one's enemies, or enemies achieving happiness. It causes many people sleepless nights, and a lot of anxiety in their mind. Many mental problems are created by none other than these ways of thinking that cause turmoil in one's mind.

Based on what is presented here we can see how people can be tormented with many reasons to become upset and angry. Elaborating on this from our own experience we can see that it is very true. We start out by not being able to tolerate good things happening to our enemies. Then, when someone helps them and benefits them, we find further reason to become more upset and aggravated. This can go further, when others help those who are helping our enemies, we find even more reason

to get upset. In this way our mind becomes more and more agitated with so much anger.

When we look at reasons for the mind to become agitated and upset, so many factors and conditions can cause one to be in mental turmoil. This seems to be in fact the reason why so many people end up becoming depressed.

Some have related to me symptoms where they reach a state of mind where everything appears to be negative and everyone is against them. These are created by none other than the mind which is going round in a vicious circle, thinking about different scenarios, adding on more and more reasons to become angry. All of that then causes the mind to have so many disturbing thoughts, causing it to become tight and very vulnerable to being easily depressed. A feeling of hostility can arise in one's mind with everything appearing negative. That is what some have confided in me. We need to understand that these feelings are created by the mind getting out of control.

The mind escalates a small problem into a big one. To use the earlier example, we first get angry with our enemy, then with those who help our enemies, then with those who help those who help our enemies, and so on and so forth. All this is the cause for one's mind to be in turmoil and become depressed. This can all be stopped when one stops anger towards one's enemy, which is the main cause for all the other reasons to become angry. Thus, when one develops a genuine sense of love and compassion towards one's enemy, all the other reasons to be angry will also naturally subside.

This is how we can see the great value and power of love and compassion. It has the power to transform our mind in a positive way. This is why I regularly emphasise love and compassion as being really important, indeed most valuable in one's life. So we need to constantly familiarise our mind with it again and again. The mind of love and compassion is one of the greatest states of mind for establishing genuine peace and wellbeing within oneself.

Based on the teachings, we can see how the Buddha has presented such profound methods and means in the techniques of cultivating love and compassion in relation to not only one's close ones, but also to strangers and enemies. When one extends one's love and compassion on all three levels—friends, strangers and enemies—then it naturally becomes unbiased love and compassion, not discriminating between some who are close, others who are distant, and some as enemies.

When one overcomes that attitude, all beings will appear as very close and dear to oneself. This is an indisputable and profound teaching by the Buddha which is unequalled by any presentation in other traditions. It is quite unique. So when we refer to the Buddha's teachings we can then start to develop a genuine sense of admiration for the qualities of the Buddha himself, and the value of his teachings.

Encompassing all beings and not having antagonistic views towards others, comes from familiarity with love and compassion. With the attitude of love and compassion we can also develop genuine respect for other traditions, by maintaining an unbiased attitude towards other faiths.

#### 2.1.4.1.3.1. Abandoning intolerance to the achievement of praise and renown by enemies

This is subdivided into two.

2.1.4.1.3.1.1. Since it is the cause for one's happiness it is suitable to want it

2.1.4.1.3.1.2. Since it is the cause for the happiness of others it is unsuitable to not want it

Again, the outlines alone are a meticulous presentation. The meaning of the following verses are presented in relation to abandoning intolerance to one's enemies achieving praise and renown. Abandoning this becomes a cause for one's own happiness, so it is suitable to want to abandon intolerance. Secondly, it becomes the cause for others' happiness; so not wanting to abandon it is unsuitable.

The teaching is really training our minds to change our negative attitude. This is why I emphasise again and again in my regular teachings, how a lot of the problems we create are just ways of thinking (or attitudes) that we have developed in our mind over time. It is necessary to recognise this and make attempts to change our way of thinking, change our attitude. What we call happiness or unhappiness is very much related to one's way of thinking.

2.1.4.1.3.1.1. *Since it is the cause for one's happiness it is suitable to want it*

The verse under that reads:

76. *By praising others who have qualities  
One attains the happiness of joy  
Thus mind, if they are praised  
Why are you not happy?*

The second verse under that reads:

77. *That this happiness of joy of yours  
Is an unflawed source of happiness  
Was taught by those endowed with qualities.  
It is also the best for gathering others.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of this verse:

If others praise an enemy of mine saying, "He has qualities", then the person praising also gains happiness. In that case, why mind do you also not make the other person happy by praising the enemy? If you do, then the happiness of the joy of liking others' qualities will become the unflawed source of future happiness. This was taught by those with qualities, the conquerors and their children, and praised by them as such. It is also the best for attracting disciples.

*If others praise an enemy of mine saying 'he has qualities' then the person praising also gains happiness. What is being explained in essence is that the very act of praising someone else's qualities brings joy and happiness to one's own mind. One wouldn't genuinely praise someone if one didn't like them. The very act of praising someone means that one has a sense of admiration for them, therefore one happily offers them praise.*

So it is with a sense of admiration for the other that one offers praise. Normally one would criticise someone who one does not admire, instead of praising them. So when anyone praises anyone else it is done in light of genuine

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admiration and respect. Thus, praising others brings joy and happiness to one's mind.

Thus, *why mind do you also not make others happy by praising the enemy?* What is being explained is that just as the other person gains joy and happiness in their mind when offering praise to the enemy, if you were to follow the same example and offer praise to the enemy, it would also bring joy to the other's mind and consequently to yourself as well.

Thus, as explained in the commentary *If you do, then the happiness of the joy of liking others' qualities will become the unflawed source of future happiness.* In relation to oneself, by praising the qualities of the enemy, one gets the immediate benefit of gaining a more joyous and happy mind now, as well as becoming a cause of happiness for future lifetimes.

*This was taught by those with qualities, the conquerors and their children, and praised by them as such.* What is being explained here, in relation to praise, is that seeing qualities in others and praising them, especially an enemy, becomes the supreme means for gaining happiness for oneself in this life and future lifetimes. Furthermore, it is also the best means to gather disciples. As you would recall from earlier teachings there are four means of gathering disciples, such as using pleasant words that are in accordance with their minds, helping them in according to their needs and so forth.

So here, when one praises the qualities of someone, they would naturally appreciate that. And when others appreciate you for offering words of encouragement and praise, they are naturally drawn to you. They will not feel distant to you, rather they are drawn to you. So, for someone with a bodhisattva attitude of wishing to benefit others, this is one of the supreme means of gathering disciples, as a way to further benefit them.

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

*Transcribed by Judy Mayne  
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Edited Version  
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# Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་པའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

31 March 2015

Based on the motivation generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our meditation practice.

[meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

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

## 2.1.4.1.2. Stopping anger at wrongdoing which faults relatives

### 2.1.4.1.3.1. Abandoning intolerance to achieving praise and renown of enemies

2.1.4.1.3.1.1. *Since it is the cause for one's happiness it is suitable to want it (cont.)*

As explained last week when someone else praises an enemy, both the enemy and the person who gives the praise have a happy mind. Likewise, if one praises an enemy one will also experience a joyful mind. Praising an enemy will not only make the enemy happy, but one will also experience happiness. Thus it is appropriate to praise an enemy.

2.1.4.1.3.1.2. *It being the cause for the happiness of others, not wanting it is unsuitable<sup>1</sup>*

This heading has two subdivisions:

2.1.4.1.3.1.2.1. If one does not wish others to have happiness, then one's happiness degenerates

2.1.4.1.3.1.2.2. Hence it is appropriate to wish others happiness

2.1.4.1.3.1.2.1. *If one does not wish others to have happiness, then one's happiness degenerates*

From the outline itself we can derive the understanding that not wishing others to have happiness causes one's own happiness to decline. This is explained in the following verse:

78. *Further, it is said: 'like this, happiness arises'.  
If you do not wish for this happiness,  
Through giving up offering wages,  
The observed and unobserved degenerates.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains the meaning thus:

Further, by praising, the object of the praise becomes happy. If you do not wish for this happiness of praising others then, since the wages one pays one's servants makes them happy too, one should stop offering wages and so forth. By stopping this and other things, then in this life the servants will not work, and in a later life one will not have happiness. In such a way one's happiness degenerates in this observed life and in the unobserved future life.

As the commentary explains very clearly, *the object of praise becomes happy* when you praise them. The text then presents an example to illustrate the negative consequences of *not wishing* others to be happy. As presented, if you do not wish for others to be happy, then, since *paying wages to one's servants or workers makes them happy*, you might as well *stop* paying their *wages*. This phrase *if you do not wish for others to be happy* includes any means of making others happy, such as repaying the kindness of others with good deeds and so forth. If you really don't wish for others to be happy, then you will not take the initiative to repay the kindness of others with good deeds and gestures, or benefiting others in any way.

Following that, the commentary explains that *by stopping this*, i.e. not paying wages to workers, returning the kindness of others and so forth, *then in this life your servants and employees will not want to work* for you, or they will be very slack about their work. If they stop working for you altogether, then you will have harmed yourself, as no work at all will be done. Likewise if one does not return the kindness of others, people will start to shy away. Through losing one's workers, colleagues and friends and relatives, one will start to feel very lonely, and thus be deprived of happiness in this very life. Thus the *observed* or obvious *happiness* of this *life* will *degenerate*.

Furthermore, if one has not engaged in generosity in this life then one will not reap the positive benefits of generosity in one's *future life*. So by not engaging in acts of generosity such as paying wages, returning kindness, benefiting others and so forth, one will not reap the positive results of generosity in one's future life. Thus one's happiness in the *unobserved*, or less obvious *future life* will also degenerate.

In summary, if one dislikes others being happy, then the consequence is that one's own happiness in this life will degenerate. Furthermore, if one does not engage in generous acts, or acts that make others happy in this life, then one will experience the consequences in one's future life as well. So not wanting others to be happy is a cause for one's own happiness in both the present and in future lives to decline and degenerate.

Conversely, if one likes making others happy, one will act to benefit them and engage in acts of generosity. Then, as a consequence of making others happy, one will reap positive results in this life and in future lives. We need to take this as a personal instruction, and engage in acts that make others happy. We also need to ensure that we intentionally avoid things that will cause unhappiness. Sometimes it is very easy to make others unhappy with the simplest inappropriate gestures and remarks, so we need to try to avoid those things, no matter how trivial they may seem. We need to incorporate this way of thinking and acting into our daily life.

This dislike of enemies being happy, and wishing them unhappiness, is one of the main causes of mental agony. When we hear our enemies being praised, or see them being helped in some way, we can experience so much pain and agony. But if we actually begin to change that attitude to one of intentionally praising our enemies, speaking well of them and being happy when they experience good things and so forth, then that can really help to avoid that pain and agony. This is important to keep in mind.

We can also relate this to the practice of developing the equanimity that is part of the seven-point cause and effect practice of generating bodhicitta. When we lack that equanimity we will feel pain when our enemies experience

<sup>1</sup>Introduced last week as *Since it is the cause for the happiness of others it is unsuitable to not want it*.

benefit, and glad when they are harmed. Conversely, we will feel joy when our friends experience benefit and anger when they are harmed. When we develop our mind so that we experience joy when we see the both our friends and our enemies benefitting, then that will release one from the agony and pain of the earlier state of mind. This is very profound mind-training that changes one's mindset.

As I have explained many times, the equanimity that is to be generated within the seven-point cause and effect sequence relates to one's own equanimity towards friends, enemies and strangers. Whereas when you generate the four immeasurable forms of equanimity, you are generating the mind of wishing others to have that state of equanimity towards friends, strangers and enemies. One generates the mind of, 'How wonderful it would be if others were to be free from being close to some out of attachment, and distant to others due to aversion', because that is the cause for sentient beings to experience the shortcomings of samsara by endlessly circling in samsara. As well as developing the very genuine and strong wish for others to have that equanimity, one can also relate it to oneself.

The conclusion is that if one actually generates the mind of wishing others to be happy, then that will be of great personal benefit, whereas holding onto a mind of disliking others being happy will be a great loss. Therefore it is in one's own best interest if one practises transforming one's habitual biased attitude into a positive one. While these points are quite easy to understand, they are actually very profound. It comes down to the very core of our wrong ways of thinking, and why we need to transform those wrong attitudes and ways of thinking.

#### **2.1.4.1.3.1.2.2. Hence it is appropriate to wish others happiness**

We can take note again of how this heading follows on directly from the earlier one, by stating that it is appropriate to wish others happiness. The verse relating to this reads:

*79. When my qualities are expressed  
I wish also others to have happiness  
When the qualities of others are expressed  
I do not wish happiness for myself.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

When someone else expresses my qualities, that person wishes to have happiness, thus to say that when I express the qualities of others, I do not wish to have happiness myself is unsuitable and contradictory. Just as others wish to be happy in praising you, you should also be happy in praising others.

*When someone else expresses my qualities then that person wishes to have happiness* means that when someone we regard as an enemy expresses our qualities, they generally do so out of a wish to be happy themselves. And of course, it makes oneself happy to hear one's qualities being expressed.

Therefore *to say that when I express the qualities of others I do not wish to have happiness myself is unsuitable and contradictory.* In other words, it is contradictory to say, 'I feel happy when an enemy expresses my qualities', and then say, 'Oh, I'm not happy to express the qualities of my enemies'. If it makes oneself happy to hear nice words about oneself, then it is contradictory to say that one would not feel happy about expressing the qualities of the other. That point is further emphasised with, *just as the others would wish to be happy in praising you, you should also be happy in praising others*, which emphasises that one should take the initiative of praising others, and thus making one's own mind happy.

Here again, we can see the profound logic that is used to show why one should find reason to express the qualities of one's enemies and others in general.

#### **2.1.4.1.3.2. Abandoning intolerance to them achieving their happiness**

*80. Since one wishes all sentient beings to have happiness,  
Then, having generated the mind of enlightenment,  
When sentient beings find their own happiness  
Why do you get angry at them?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

One has generated the mind of enlightenment out of the wish to place all sentient beings in the highest happiness of enlightenment, and has accepted subsequently to practice the trainings. Hence, when sentient beings find a little of their own happiness and achieve their wish, then why are you now angry? It is suitable to be happy.

As the commentary clearly explains, someone who has taken the bodhisattva vows and dedicated themselves to the welfare of sentient beings has *generated the mind of enlightenment, out of a wish to place all sentient beings in the highest happiness of enlightenment.* In addition to this pledge, one has further promised *to practise the trainings.* So when sentient beings, from their own side, find happiness without having had to generate the cause for their happiness, *why are you now angry?* One should, in fact, be very pleased and happy that the very being one wishes to benefit is now experiencing some level of happiness. Even if it is a slight degree of happiness, it is still good for their wellbeing. So the reasoning presented in the text is that *it is suitable to be happy* rather than being angry. The actual point is that when sentient beings experience any level of happiness, then rather than becoming upset about that through jealousy and so forth, one should actually train one's mind to feel great joy.

Many of us have already taken these bodhisattva vows and made pledges. Even though we may not have actually generated bodhicitta yet, we have certainly generated a similitude of it, in addition to taking particular vows. So the advice given here applies to us because we have made those promises. It is good to consider these points as part of our personal practice.

#### **2.1.4.1.3.3. Abandoning intolerance to them achieving their gain**

This has two sub-divisions

2.1.4.1.3.3.1. Contemplating that it achieves one's wishes

2.1.4.1.3.3.2. Contemplating that there is nothing for one to not wish for

*2.1.4.1.3.3.1. Contemplating that it achieves one's wishes*

Here there are three further sub-divisions:

2.1.4.1.3.3.1.1. It is suitable to be happy if sentient beings achieve their gain

2.1.4.1.3.3.1.2. Example

2.1.4.1.3.3.1.3. If one does not wish for that, the mind of enlightenment degenerates

2.1.4.1.3.3.1.1. It is suitable to be happy if sentient beings achieve gains

This is similar to the previous explanation. The relevant verse is:

81. *One says 'May all sentient beings  
Attain enlightenment honoured by the three  
worlds'.  
Seeing that they receive some minimal gain and  
esteem  
Why does that make one miserable?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

One has accepted the promise to place all sentient beings in the state of complete enlightenment that is honoured by the three worlds. Since one wishes this, when one sees that sentient beings attain some minimal gain and esteem then why does one's mind become miserable? One's wishes have been attained in part.

As the commentary explains, *one has accepted the promise to place all sentient beings in the state of complete enlightenment that is honoured by the three worlds*. The three worlds are the nether world, the world on our plane, and the world above, which basically encompasses the six realms. *Since one wishes this*, refers to the fact that one has made the promise to place all sentient beings into a state of complete enlightenment. Therefore *when one sees sentient beings attain some minimal benefit, why does one become miserable?* In fact, *one's wishes have been partly attained*.

This is similar to the previous point. One has promised to benefit all sentient beings and fulfil their wishes, so when from their own side sentient beings experience some benefit, then it is as if one's wish for all sentient beings to be happy and to attain all their wishes has been partly fulfilled.

2.1.4.1.3.3.1.2. Example

The previous point is clarified with the following example:

82. *If someone in need of nurturing who is nurtured  
by you,  
And is solely dependent on your generosity,  
When this relative finds the means for their  
livelihood,  
Are you not happy and instead get angry?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

If a relative who is in need of nurturing and who is nurtured by you, and is solely dependent on your generosity, such as a child and so forth, finds the means for their own livelihood, and it becomes unnecessary for you to give anymore. How is it that one is not happy and instead becomes angry? It is suitable to be happy.

When one has responsibility for *nurturing a relative*, e.g. a child, and that relative takes the initiative to look after their own wellbeing, then why wouldn't one be happy about that? It would be very appropriate to be happy. This is definitely true; in a family situation, for example where the father is responsible for finding the means to provide for his children. When the children grow up and start to take initiative to earn their own living and provide for themselves, that would make the father very happy. Far from being unhappy, the father would be very pleased indeed. There is no reason at all for the father to feel jealous of their children making money and so forth.

One needs to think very carefully in relation to situations where others are caring for one's close ones, otherwise that can be a cause for distress. I have heard of people making

comments such as, 'Why are they interfering and providing for my child, when it is my responsibility! I will take care of them myself!' The same applies to jobs people have, such as here at Tara Institute. There have been cases where someone says, 'Oh, this is my responsibility' and refuses any help from others. Sometimes they are not able to do the job alone, but because they refuse help from others, the job doesn't get done well. When we reflect on that situation we can see that, at times, it can be appropriate to accept help.

2.1.4.1.3.3.1.3. If one does not wish for that, the mind of enlightenment degenerates

The verse relating to this is

83. *If one does not wish this for migrators  
How does one wish them to be enlightened?  
How can he who is angry at the wealth of  
others  
Possess the mind of enlightenment?*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

If someone begrudges migrators even small gains of food, clothing and so forth, then how can this person be someone wishing sentient beings to attain enlightenment? Once someone gets angry at the slightest wealth gained by others, then how can that person possess the mind of enlightenment that wishes to place all migrators in the state of enlightenment? Since the mind of enlightenment degenerates, one should strive to abandon jealousy toward the gain of others.

This advice seems to be targeted more for ordinary beings like ourselves, rather than bodhisattvas who have already generated bodhicitta—it seems unlikely that bodhisattvas would have such narrow-minded attitudes. *If someone begrudges migrators even small gains of food, clothing and so forth* refers to the situation of being unhappy with migrators who acquire even small gains or food and so forth. How could anyone who wishes for all beings to attain enlightenment, which is the highest happiness, be unhappy about the small gains and small happiness of others? The commentary makes this quite clear when it states: *Once someone gets angry at the wealth of others then how can that person possess the mind of enlightenment that wishes to place all migrators in the state of enlightenment?* This is quite clear. Then Gyaltsab Je advises: *Since the mind of enlightenment degenerates one should strive to abandon jealousy toward the gain of others*. So the main point is the need to abandon jealousy, which seems to be one of the main culprits for causing unhappiness about the gains of others.

2.1.4.1.3.3.2. Contemplating that there is nothing for one to not wish for

Again, there are three subdivisions.

2.1.4.1.3.3.2.1. It is unsuitable to be jealous of the gain of others

2.1.4.1.3.3.2.2. It is unsuitable to destroy one's qualities

2.1.4.1.3.3.2.3. It is suitable to grieve over one's negativities, but it is unsuitable to be jealous of the virtue of others

2.1.4.1.3.3.2.1. It is unsuitable to be jealous of the gain of others.

84. *Regardless of whether it is received from them  
Or whether it remains in the house of the  
benefactor,  
In any case, you will not have it.  
So whether it is given or not, what use is it?*



The commentary reads:

Regardless of whether the enemy receives food, clothing and so forth from the benefactor, or whether it is food, clothing and so forth remaining in the benefactor's home, in either case it is the same that one will not get it. So regardless of whether it is given to the enemy or not, what use is jealousy? It is not suitable.

This example can be related to a monastic context where benefactors make offerings to the monks and so forth. *Regardless of whether the enemy receives food, clothing and so forth from the benefactor, or whether the food, clothing, and so forth remains in the benefactor's home, one will not receive anything.* If one has no direct relationship with a benefactor, it makes no difference whether the benefactor gives away food and clothing and so forth, or whether they keep it.

It is not as if one would receive it if the benefactor didn't give it to one's enemy. If that was the case, then one might find some reason to be upset when it is given to the enemy. But one would not receive it anyway, *so regardless of whether it is given to the enemy or not, what use is jealousy?* This indicates that there is no point in becoming jealous and unhappy when a benefactor gives something to the enemy, because it doesn't affect one either way. Thus, *it is not suitable* to be jealous. So again, the point being emphasised is the need to overcome jealousy.

#### 2.1.4.1.3.3.2.2. It is unsuitable to destroy one's qualities

The root verse reads as follows:

85. *Whether it is merit or faith,  
Why destroy one's qualities?  
One does not find gain,  
Say, 'why do you not get angry?'*

The commentary reads:

If one is angry at the gain of others and wishes gain for oneself, then why destroy with anger the causes for gain such as merits, the behaviour that causes faith in the lay person's mind, one's qualities of morality, listening and so forth. Without holding the causes for gain, which one destroys, 'Why do I not get angry at myself?'

The focus here is on those who are ordained. The verse is emphasising the danger of being *angry at the gain of others*, and *wishing to receive the gain for oneself*. As explained here, *the causes for gain from lay benefactors and so forth*, are one's *merits*, as well as *the behaviour that causes faith in the lay benefactor's mind*, such as *one's qualities of morality, listening and so forth*, i.e. the three higher trainings. Those who receive offerings from lay benefactors and so forth, do so because of the merit that they have accumulated, and their good conduct, which generates faith in the minds of lay people. Benefactors very willingly honour with gifts those who have these natural and genuine qualities. They never have to be asked to do that. This is an indication that the beneficiary has created the causes by previously engaging in virtue.

The point is that if one is lacking these causes for gain, then the fault lies with oneself. So becoming angry with the beneficiary is absurd if one hasn't actually created the causes for gain oneself. Rather than being angry at the other, if it were to be reasonable to get angry at all, then one should be angry with oneself for not creating those causes.

Furthermore, anger towards others actually destroys whatever merit one has accumulated from one's practices of morality, listening and so forth, which is the cause of gains. So if one becomes angry when others receive gain and

esteem, then it would be appropriate to contemplate, *Why am I not angry with myself?*

To re-emphasise the first point, becoming upset and angry when others receive gain and esteem is inappropriate. If there were any good reason for one to get upset and angry, then the anger should be targeted at oneself. If one is not receiving any gain or esteem from others, that is because one has not created the causes such as accumulating merit and engaging in good conduct that earns respect. Furthermore not receiving gain and esteem now is a result of not having engaged in the trainings such as listening, meditating and so forth in the past, and not developing genuine humility with love and compassion. If one has not engaged in acquiring these qualities, which are a cause for beneficence, then the fault lies with oneself. Thus, rather than becoming upset with others, one should be upset with oneself. If one wishes to be respected and honoured, then the causes are clearly to be created by oneself. We need to take this as a personal instruction.

#### 2.1.4.1.3.3.2.3. It is suitable to grieve over one's negativities, but it is unsuitable to be jealous of the virtue of others

It is totally inappropriate if one does not regret one's own past negativities, and becomes jealous of the virtue of others. That is the reason why one does not receive gain and esteem. The verse presented under this heading is:

86. *Not only do you not grieve,  
The negativity you created,  
You also compete with the merits  
Created by others.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je states:

Not only do you not grieve over the causes for not receiving any gain, which are the negativities that you created earlier, you also compete with the merits previously created by others and are jealous because you cannot bear them. Is this not unsuitable?

*One does not grieve about the causes for not receiving any gain, which are the negativities*, refers to not regretting the negativities one has created in the past, which implies one has not confessed and purified those negativities. Then on top of that one actually *competes with the merits previously created by others*, and *are jealous because you cannot bear them*.

So on the one hand, one is creating the conditions for not receiving any gains by not confessing and purifying with remorse or regret the negativities one has created in the past, while on the other hand one actually *competes with the merits previously created by others*.

It is totally *unsuitable* to be jealous when others are merely reaping the result of their previously created merit. Rather than acknowledging and rejoicing in their good fortune, if we instead become jealous, then that is really inappropriate. In fact by being jealous we are creating further causes to lack gain and esteem for ourselves. Thus, unable to bear the gains of others is totally unsuitable.

At this point in the Tibetan text it states that the second *bumpo*<sup>2</sup> is completed. The term *bumpo* doesn't refer to chapters, but to a larger section of the text.

<sup>2</sup> See the teaching of 19 February 2013 for a fuller explanation of the term.

### 2.1.4.3. STOPPING ANGER AT OBSTRUCTIONS TO ONE'S WISHES<sup>3</sup>

This is presented in two sub-divisions.

2.1.4.3.1. Impatience with obstacles to the harm of one's enemies is unsuitable

2.1.4.3.2. It is unsuitable to be impatient with obstacles to one's own benefit, and obstacles to the benefit of those belonging to one's side

#### 2.1.4.3.1. *Impatience with obstacles to the harm of one's enemies is unsuitable*

This is subdivided into three:

2.1.4.3.1.1. It does not benefit one if the enemy dislikes it

2.1.4.3.1.2. Generating harmful intent for the enemy does not harm the enemy

2.1.4.3.1.3. It harms oneself

##### 2.1.4.3.1.1. **It does not benefit one if the enemy dislikes it**

The commentary introduces the next two lines of the verse with this argument:

Argument: If you say I am happy when the enemy receives harm and I get angry at what obstructs this harm.

This is further emphasising the earlier presentation about being glad when an enemy is harmed, and unhappy when, as a result of some obstruction, they don't receive the harm one thinks is due to them.

The next two lines of verse serve as an answer to the opening argument:

*87ab. Even though the enemy does not like it  
What is there for you to like?*

Gyaltsab Je explains it in this way:

Answer: Even though one's enemy generates dislike and is unhappy, what is there for you to be happy about? It does not benefit you, but harms you.

The lines *Even though one's enemy generates dislike and is unhappy, what is there for you to be happy about*, are asking: What benefit do you receive when the enemy experiences some harm? What happiness can it bring to you? How can it cause you happiness when there is no benefit for you? As the commentary states, *it does not benefit you*. In fact, it actually harms you to be glad about the harm or unhappiness experienced by others.

##### 2.1.4.3.1.2. **Generating harmful intent for the enemy does not harm the enemy**

Again, this heading follows on directly from the previous one. It states that just wishing harm on the enemy will not actually harm them.

The next two lines of verse read:

*87cd. Just your mental wish alone  
Does not cause harm to them.*

The commentary explains:

Just your mental wish alone that thinks 'may the enemy receive harm' does not cause harm to the enemy. Therefore, since your purpose is not achieved in the slightest, abandon anger.

As clearly presented here, just having the *mental wish* 'may the enemy receive harm' does not cause harm to the enemy. There are many occasions where people hold a grudge with a mind of hostility, thinking, and sometimes even saying out loud, 'Oh, I hope something terrible happens to them'. Thinking and even saying such things, will not, in themselves, be a cause for the enemy to experience any mishap or harm in any way. In fact, the enemy might very well be enjoying life and having very good time, and sleeping soundly every night! Whereas holding that grudge and thinking about it again and again causes mental distress, and one will actually lose sleep oneself. We can see how, rather than harming the enemy, a hostile mind actually harms oneself, and therefore has no benefit whatsoever.

We can relate this to the categories of anger presented in the mental factors, such as vengeance. First one becomes angry with an enemy, and when that anger escalates, it can turn into a mind of vengeance, where one really wants to harm them oneself, or wishes some mishap to befall them. It is when these thoughts of anger go round and round in our mind that we experience the ill-effects of a disturbed and troubled mind.

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

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Edited Version*

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<sup>3</sup> The way this section relates to the structure of the text is:

1. Meditating on patience earnestly, eliminating obstacles to its establishment and abiding

2. Applying to the mind the methods to establish patience

2.1. Eliminating the cause for anger

2.1.4. Striving in abandoning anger after having analysed the cause for anger in detail

2.1.4.1. Showing the general division of objects for generating anger

2.1.4.2. Stopping anger at undesired actions

2.1.4.1.1. Stopping anger at wrongdoings directed at oneself

2.1.4.1.2. Stopping anger at wrongdoing directed at one's friends

2.1.4.1.3. Stopping anger at those who benefit one's enemies

2.1.4.3. Stopping anger at obstructions to one's wishes

# Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་ཀྱི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

7 April 2015

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

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along the usual lines:

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

**2.1.4.3.1. It is unsuitable not to be patient with obstacles to the harm of one's enemy (cont.)**

**2.1.4.3.1.3. It harms oneself**

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.4.3.1.3.1. It is unsuitable to be happy over the suffering of the enemy

2.1.4.3.1.3.2. If one holds onto this happiness, it then becomes the cause for great harm for oneself

*2.1.4.3.1.3.1. It is unsuitable to be happy over the suffering of the enemy*

As the heading itself presents, *it is unsuitable to be happy over the suffering of the enemy*. The significant point being that if this wasn't unsuitable then one would actually be happy when the enemy suffers. This heading also implies that if one were to be happy over the suffering of the enemy, then the reverse would also be true i.e. one would be unhappy when the enemy experiences happiness.

It is important to bear these significant points in mind, and put them into practice—that would be really meaningful.

The relevant lines of verse read:

*88ab. Even if the suffering you wish for  
Were established, what would be there for you  
to be happy?*

Gyaltsab's commentary explains:

Even if the wish "may the enemy receive something unsuitable" were fulfilled and the other person would receive suffering, what would there be for you to be happy about? It does not benefit in the slightest.

Merely wishing unwanted things to befall the enemy, such as encountering various hardships and sufferings, will not make those unwanted things occur. Rather, it will definitely lead to more agony and suffering in one's own mind. Even if sufferings were to befall the enemy, why should one be happy about it, there is not the slightest benefit for oneself. Thus it is unsuitable.

*2.1.4.3.1.3.2. If one holds onto this happiness, it then becomes the cause for great harm for oneself*

The previous section highlighted that there is no benefit and that such thoughts become a cause for one's own suffering, so the next six lines of verse state:

*88cd. If it is said: "I will be satisfied,"  
What would be sadder than that?*

*89. This fishhook cast by the fisher  
Of the afflictions is very frightening.  
Once hooked by it one will be cooked  
In the cauldrons of sentient beings' hell by the  
hell guardians.*

The commentary's explanation begins with this hypothetical argument:

Argument: If the enemy receives harm, I will receive satisfaction because my wish will have been fulfilled.

As an answer to that the commentary explains:

Answer: What other method is there for destruction apart from generating strong harmful intent, since one will go to the lower realms? For example, as the fisherman cooks the fish upon catching them with his hook. Similarly, having been caught by the terrifying hook of the negative karma of strong harmful intent that was cast by the fisherman of the affliction of anger, one will definitely be cooked by the hell guardians in the cauldrons of sentient beings' hell.

The argument states that when the *enemy receives harm, I will receive satisfaction because my wish will have been fulfilled*. Thus the reason for me to be happy when my enemy is harmed, is because it fulfils my wish, and thus I feel a sense of satisfaction. As an answer the commentary presents this rhetorical question, *what other method is there for destruction apart from generating strong harmful intent, since one will go to the lower realms?*

This presentation highlights that holding on to such harmful intention and feeling satisfaction becomes the supreme method for one's own destruction, as it generates such a strong harmful intent. The negativity one creates from such harmful intentions becomes the means to destroy one's own current good condition as a human being. It is as if one is exchanging one's own good current human rebirth for an unfortunate lower rebirth in the next lifetime. For example, if a rich person intentionally destroyed his wealth just to become poor and impoverished, this would be a very foolish act.

To take this as a personal instruction, one can incorporate it in one's practice by reflecting upon the fact that even while one may still have enemies, there is no benefit, and only harm if one has malicious intent towards one's enemy. As logically presented here, holding onto such harmful thoughts does not have any harmful effect on the enemy and, in fact, it only becomes a cause to experience harm oneself. Thus, in one's own interest, and as a way to protect oneself, it is far better not to hold any harmful intentions and malicious thoughts against the enemy.

The incomparably kind Buddha has given so many reasons in his teachings on how one should actually extend good intentions based on love and compassion to the enemy. When one starts to develop love and compassion for one's enemy, then that is the highest form of practice that benefits oneself.

We need to consider this advice as a means for taking precautions in our own everyday life. Whilst there may still be people that we disagree with, or who do not like us, to protect our own calm state of mind, it is best not to hold onto malicious and harmful intentions. This is the main point here.

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The example is quite clear, so there is no need to elaborate on that further. The main point to take from this as a personal instruction is that, in relation to our so-called enemies it is best that we don't hold onto any harmful intention. In fact we are incredibly fortunate in that we don't have any real enemy with an intention to destroy us.

In reality, when we have disagreements with others it is usually in relation to very minor issues. So to whatever degree we may consider the other to be an 'enemy', we need to remind ourselves that there is no point, and no purpose at all in having harmful intentions, as they are not going to be of any benefit to anyone.

If we allow our mind to harbour thoughts of anger, then the nature of anger is such that if you feed it with more reasons to feel angry, then it will just increase in intensity. If anger increases, it can reach such an intense state where one would, if one had any weapons to hand, be ready to use them and harm the other. Anger can reach such levels when it increases.

If, from the very beginning, one actually trains one's mind not to hold onto harmful intent etc. then anger towards enemies, and others in general, will actually start to lessen. Then even when the enemy annoys or criticises us, we will be able to protect our mind from becoming disturbed and angry. In that instance we are actually practising patience.

When we don't allow the enemies to hurt or disturb our mind, then we will gain the great virtue of practising patience. This is how we need to try and put it into practice in our lives.

#### ***2.1.4.3.2. It is unsuitable to be impatient with obstacles to one's own benefit and obstacles to the benefit of those belonging to one's side***

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.4.3.2.1. Anger at obstructions to worldly dharmas is unsuitable

2.1.4.3.2.2. Anger at obstacles to the generation of merit is unsuitable

##### **2.1.4.3.2.1. Anger at obstructions to worldly dharmas is unsuitable**

This heading implies that one should be patient when there are obstacles either to oneself or to those who are close to oneself, e.g. one's friends and relatives and so forth. What it presents in the explanations of the next verses is the means to overcome the four pairs of worldly dharmas, such as being glad when you have gain or profits and unhappy when there is loss, or you don't gain, being happy when one is praised and unhappy when one is criticised, and so forth.

These are called worldly dharmas as they relate to worldly perceptions, e.g. what would make one happy is receiving gain and profits, but when one does not receive gain this makes one feel unhappy.

In relation to praise and criticism one needs to understand that it is not the praise and criticism themselves that are considered as worldly dharmas, rather it is the effect these have upon oneself. When a worldly person is praised it makes them feel elated and happy. It is that feeling of happiness that is actually the

worldly dharma. Conversely, when one is criticised and feels unhappy, that feeling of unhappiness is the worldly dharma rather than actual criticism itself. That needs to be understood.

For worldly beings, this is what makes them either happy or sad. It is called a worldly dharma because the happiness is related to very trivial causes. Otherwise, if any sense of happiness was considered to be a worldly dharma then that would imply that bodhisattvas would have many worldly dharmas, because they have many reasons to feel joyful and happy.

The teachings explain that to apply the methods and practices to overcome the eight worldly dharmas, one needs to exchange and equalise these thoughts. In relation to praise and criticism, this means that whilst previously one would have experienced happiness when praised, and unhappiness when criticised, having trained one's mind, the reverse takes place whereby one actually starts to feel joy when one is criticised and unhappy when one is praised. That is how one exchanges and equalises these thoughts, so that it doesn't disturb one's mind. It is the same with other worldly dharmas, such as being glad when unwanted things, such as hardships, happen.

Equalising and exchanging the worldly dharmas becomes the real basis for mind training and for one to engage in the giving and taking practice of *tong-len*. Having trained one's mind in this way, one would be able to joyfully and happily take the sufferings of other sentient beings, and joyfully and happily give one's happiness to others. This is the result of having trained one's mind not to be too attached to one's circumstances.

The actual *tong-len* practice is an essential practice which serves as the very foundation of a bodhisattva's attitudes, deeds and practices. Even though we may not yet be capable of really practising it in its entirety, just training our mind in thought and contemplation is a very meaningful practice. So we need to take this on board as an essential practice.

While I have explained this many times previously, it is good to present it again as a way for you to really try and grasp the main points of equalising and exchanging the worldly dharmas.

If we do not exchange our mindset, and just maintain a worldly view, we will become habituated to feeling glad when good things happen and feeling extremely sad when bad things occur. Then because of the gladness, one develops attachment towards the things which makes one feel happy. If one is unhappy rather than glad when one experiences suffering, then when suffering occurs it will cause anger to arise in one's mind. It is in this way that maintaining a worldly view becomes the basis for one to repeatedly experience attachment and anger in relation to one's circumstances and experiences. Thus, equalising and exchanging our worldly concerns becomes a supreme means to overcome strong attachment and anger.

Another way to consider why it is inappropriate to feel joyful when one experiences happiness, and sorrow when one experiences suffering, is to see that happy experiences in any form actually use up one's virtue,

because the cause for happiness is virtue. So if we strive to experience happiness and indulge in that experience, this uses up your good karma and virtues.

Using up one's virtue for trivial things is not good, as there be won't enough virtue left to acquire the more essential things for our wellbeing. So there is no reason for one to feel joyful about experiencing happiness if one is using up one's virtues. In contrast, when one experiences suffering one normally feels sorrowful and unhappy. However if one considers that in experiencing suffering the negative karma is actually being used up, then one can feel joyful about that. So actually there's no reason not to feel happy.

This section of the text has two subdivisions.

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

2.1.4.3.2.1.2. Thinking in a beneficial way

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

This is subdivided into four:

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.1. There is no need for mere praise and reputation

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.2. Mere mental happiness is unsuitable as an objective

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.3. It is distorted to make merely this one's objective

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.4. The reason for it being distorted

**2.1.4.3.2.1.1.1. There is no need for mere praise and reputation**

The verse presents a hypothetical argument:

Argument: I do not like it when praise or reputation is obstructed.

This becomes the justification for one to be upset and angry, because *I do not like it when praise or reputation is obstructed*.

With worldly concerns, when there are obstructions to one's praise and reputation one feels unhappy, and because one is unhappy, one finds reason to be angry. We need to understand that anger is generated out of an unhappy mind, and that if one is not happy about something then it causes anger to arise.

The verse and a half relating to this reads:

*90. The tribute of praise and reputation  
Does not become merit or life,  
One does not become strong or without  
sickness,  
And happiness of the body is also not attained.*

*91ab. If one understands what is beneficial for self  
Then what benefit for self lies therein?*

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse to answer to the argument:

Answer: Out of the five benefits that are explained for sentient beings, which does the tribute of direct praise and indirect reputation accomplish? It does not become merit and it does not become life. It also does not become the cause for increasing one's strength, and it does not provide physical happiness.

Therefore, if one analyses and understands the benefit for self, what benefit for self lies within praise and reputation? Not the least.

In explaining the verse, Gyaltsab Je asks one to analyse and reason whether praise and reputation bring real benefit to oneself or not. It states that *out of the five benefits that are explained for sentient beings, which does the tribute of direct praise and indirect reputation accomplish?* This is to imply that it really does not accomplish anything.

The benefits are then presented<sup>1</sup>: 1) *It does not become merit*—praise and reputation do not transform oneself nor become a means to gain more merit; 2) *It does not become life*—it is not as if reputation and praise can help to prolong our life; 3) *It also does not become the cause for increasing one's strength*—again praise and reputation cannot in any way help us to gain more physical strength; and 4) nor does it produce any kind of physical happiness for oneself. *Therefore, if one analyses and understands the benefit for self, what benefit for self lies within praise and reputation? Not the least.*

In conclusion, since praise and reputation do not serve any purpose of bringing about true benefit for oneself, there should be no reason to be upset and angry when it is obstructed.

Training one's mind not to be upset when not receiving praise and good reputation, also means that when one does receive them one would not feel proud and elated.

**2.1.4.3.2.1.1.2. Mere mental happiness is unsuitable as an objective**

The next two lines of the verse read:

*91cd. If one wishes for mere mental happiness  
Then one should also rely on gambling, alcohol  
and so forth.*

The commentary explains,

If one's sole objective is mere mental happiness, or merely feeling happy mentally, then one would also rely on gambling, singing and dancing, taking someone else's woman and drinking alcohol.

This point really hits the mark for many who have this very ordinary motivation. The point here is that if all one is seeking is some sort of temporary mental happiness, then that is a very childish attitude. And as the commentary says, if that is all you are seeking you might as well *rely on gambling, singing and dancing, taking someone else's partner and drinking alcohol* because these give temporary mental happiness.

The precautions to take against this are that one should not resort to obtaining mere temporary mental happiness. Those without Dharma understanding can't be blamed for adopting these activities, as they consider them a real source of happiness. But for us as Dharma practitioners there are numerous means for gaining true mental happiness. So one needs to seek those that are produced through the practise of Dharma, which is genuine happiness. This is a very important instruction to keep in mind.

So whilst there are numerous ways to create happiness by immersing oneself in distractions and sensual pleasures, this would be the wrong approach, as these are fleeting and temporary. In contrast, in seeking happiness through

<sup>1</sup> Only four of the five are presented in the commentary.

the Dharma, one gains the bliss of the Dharma, which is sustained and maintained in one's mind.

**2.1.4.3.2.1.1.3. It is distorted to make merely this one's objective**

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.3.1. Mere praise and reputation are needless

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.3.2. Disliking their degeneration means one is like a child

These are significant points as many complain they don't receive due praise. So considering that praise etc. does not actually serve a real purpose, then *disliking their degeneration means one is being like a child* or very childish.

**2.1.4.3.2.1.1.3.1. Mere praise and reputation are needless**

The verse reads:

92. *Wealth is spent for the sake of reputation  
And if one is even killed  
Then what use are the words?  
When I am dead whom will they make happy?*

The commentary explains the meaning:

Not only are they meaningless, but in order to have renown as a generous person one gives away wealth, and to be known as courageous, one goes to war. If one then even loses one's life, what will one do with the words of praise and reputation? Consider well to whom praise and reputation will give happiness after one has died.

The commentary states that *they*, i.e. praise and reputation are *meaningless*, and makes the point that they are also needless. *In order to have renown as a generous person one gives away wealth* refers to people with a significant amount of wealth who engage in acts of charity just for personal renown or fame. This is, in fact, wasting one's wealth for no personal benefit.

Similarly, a courageous person may set out to go to war merely to be known as a courageous person. Instead of gaining something significant from the experience, they might even lose their life for the sake of reputation. In that case, what would one do with words of praise and reputation? The point here is to consider to whom praise and reputation will give happiness after one has died. This last point indicates that if seeking praise and reputation serves no purpose in this life, then it will also not serve any purpose for our future lives. If this is the case why be so concerned about it?

**2.1.4.3.2.1.1.3.2. Disliking their degeneration means one is like a child**

Disliking the degeneration of praise and reputation *means one is like a child*, or childish.

The verse reads:

93. *Children cry desperately when  
Their house of sand collapses.  
Similarly, my mind is like a child  
When praise and reputation wane.*

The commentary explains:

Children cry when their house of sand collapses. Similarly, my mind becomes like a child out of dislike when praise and reputation wane.

This is clear and the illustration is quite significant. We see that when children make sand castles. If they are destroyed, they can cry as if something terrible has

happened, when in fact, it was just a sculpture made out of sand. Like that *my mind becomes like a child out of dislike when praise and reputation wane*. This implies that if one actually dislikes obstructions to one's praise and reputation, then when it starts to decline, it would be childish to become disturbed and unhappy.

**2.1.4.3.2.1.1.4 The reason for it being distorted**

This fourth subdivision of the earlier category is subdivided into two:

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.4.1. Attachment to the praising of oneself is unsuitable

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.4.2 If it is desired due to being joy, then it is suitable to bring joy to all beings

**2.1.4.3.2.1.1.4.1. Attachment to the praising of oneself is unsuitable**

The outline makes it quite clear that being attached to praise about oneself is unsuitable.

The next two verses read:

94. *For instance, since sound does not have a mind  
It is impossible that sound intends to praise me.  
It is known that others like one,  
This is stated as the cause for the joy.*
95. *It could be others or oneself  
What benefit is the joy of others for oneself?  
That joy and happiness is only theirs,  
One does not attain a part of it.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning:

If one is happy because of being praised, it is, for instance, unsuitable to like the praising sound, because it does not have a mind and can therefore not have the thought thinking "I shall benefit that person". Therefore it is unsuitable to like it.

It is known that the person praising one generates joy at the time of praising. If this joy of the person praising is stated as the reason for one's happiness: What use is the joy of the person praising, regardless of whether others or oneself is praised? Since the joy in another's continuum is only their consciousness, one does not even attain a part of it.

The commentary explains that if one is happy because of being praised, using the reasoning 'Yes. I am happy when I'm praised', and in an instant likes the praising sound, then this implies that 'I'm happy being praised because I like the sound of praise'. That is why it says, *for instance*, it is *unsuitable to like the praising sound*. If you are happy being praised, just because you like the sound of praise, then that is unsuitable, because sound itself does not have a mind, and therefore cannot have the thought thinking 'I shall benefit that person'. *Therefore it is unsuitable to like it.*

This point demonstrates yet another reason for being happy when praised. If *it is known that the person praising one generates joy at the time of praising*, and this is stated as the reason for one's happiness, then our mind is finding another excuse for being happy about being praised. To counteract such a thought Shantideva asks *what use is the joy of the person praising?* This means that *regardless of whether others or oneself is praised, the joy in another's continuum is only their consciousness, and one does not even attain a part of it.*

If one states the reason for being happy when praised is because it makes the other happy, then the text reasons,

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how can this make your own mind happy since their happiness is something which is within their continuum, and you don't have any part of that? So why would that be a reason for you to be happy?

*2.1.4.3.2.1.1.4.2. If it is desired due to being joy then it is suitable to bring joy to all beings*

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.4.2.1. Actual

2.1.4.3.2.1.1.4.2.2. Liking being praised brings out the childish behaviour

### **Actual**

The verse reads:

*96. If I am happy due to their happiness  
Then one needs to treat all equally.  
Then why, when they become happy through  
The joy of others, one is not happy?*

The commentary explains:

If the happiness of the person praising is the happiness of others and makes me happy, then I should also be happy if all other sentient beings are happy in this way. Why then, when others become happy due to the happiness of the person praising an enemy, does one become unhappy? One should be happy.

*If the happiness of the person praising is the happiness of others and makes me happy, then, following the earlier reasons, the happiness of the person doing the praising is the happiness of others. If one says 'being praised makes me happy', then with that same reasoning, one should find reason to be happy for all sentient beings. One should wish for all other sentient beings to be happy in the same way, because that is the happiness of others.*

Here we need to understand the logic: if you receive praise from someone and find reason to be happy about it because it makes the other person happy, then praise offered to all sentient beings should also make you happy for the same reason. Because it makes their minds happy, one should find reason to be happy for them too. With that reasoning, the commentary says, *why then, when others become happy due to the happiness of the person praising an enemy, does one become unhappy?* If that is the case, then when an enemy is praised, why do you not feel happy and instead have a jealous mind? *One should similarly be happy when an enemy is praised.* This refers back to the earlier points about inappropriateness of feeling unhappy when the enemy is praised.

However, when it is one's relatives and friends being praised, that makes one happy, because of one's attachment to them. This shows that one needs to overcome such inappropriate ways of thinking.

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

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