
Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

20 August 2013

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

For next week's class I would like to ask Tara Garward to lead the prayers before the meditation. It is important that the younger generation start to take a more active role by training in how to lead prayers and so forth. Tara Institute definitely needs to continue to exist, regardless of how long I am around. So my intention is to provide the means for that continuity to be maintained. I am constantly thinking about what will benefit the centre; when things are working well for the centre it brings me great joy! Of course if it's beyond my ability to help then I can't do much, but I do think about what is best for the centre. I am not intending to boast but I have personally done over a thousand Tara pujas for the success of the centre. Mentioning this now might sound as if I am seeking compensation for buying offerings and so forth, but this is definitely not the case. Normally I am not the type who announces what I do for the centre; rather the main thing is if it is beneficial for Tara Institute.

When I first started teaching at Tara Institute, Wayne and Jeremy were the younger generation—I think Jeremy might have been the youngest. Wayne used to have a good voice then. When we were up at Atisha centre Geshe Dawa used to say, pointing at Wayne, 'Oh, that young lad there has a good voice. If we ask him to lead the pujas, it would be good!' Of course now we can hear that his voice has changed a fair bit; in the recent guru puja his voice was quite hoarse. *[loud laughter]* Wayne himself may not think that he's much older, but the fact remains that he has aged! In any case, the main point is that it would be good for the younger students to start taking initiative in leading pujas and so forth.

In the past I have commented that there always needs to be an assistant for every role. For example a director needs to have an assistant, so that if the director is unavailable then the assistant can temporarily fill that position. The Spiritual Program Co-ordinator also needs an assistant who can step into that role if need be, and in relation to even myself, the teachings will continue to be presented regardless of whether I am around or not.

I remember being in Adelaide once when Jampa Gendun was anticipating going to Italy. I was asked, 'What will we do if he leaves?' I said 'Khensur Rinpoche is here, so why don't you check with him. Why do you need to ask me when Khensur Rinpoche is still here?' Apparently there was no other western teacher who was trained well enough to be able to teach if Jampa had to leave. So they asked, 'What do we do now? How would we find someone to replace him?'

However it's not really our business to think about what is happening in other centres!

Nevertheless, I am always happy when I see a flourishing, well-run Buddhist Dharma centre because it serves a great purpose in helping others. Beyond Dharma centres, even when I see a Christian church for example, running well with a good community, that brings me great joy too, for it fulfils the purpose of the congregation. Thinking in this way and maintaining such positive attitudes will definitely lessen mental pain and agony, and contribute to one's own mental happiness. So, this is a very important point that I am passing on to you.

4. CONFESSING WITH THE FOUR COMPLETE POWERS

Here confession refers to the practices that purify negativities. This need to purify negativities is based on an acceptance of karma. If someone doesn't believe in karma then they would not see the need or relevance for engaging in any purification practices.

The need to purify negativities comes about because one does not wish to experience the consequences of negativities, which are not limited to the suffering of pain. In fact any kind of unwanted or unpleasant experience is the consequence of having amassed negativities in the past. Likewise, if we wish to experience pleasant circumstances we need to take an interest in accumulating virtue, as any happiness that we experience is a result of virtue. So, we need to know how to accumulate virtue and how to discard and purify negativities.

A keen interest in wanting to purify negativities arises from an understanding of the cause and effect sequence of the law of karma. One might wonder about the purpose of engaging in purification practices. The simple answer, as presented in the lam rim teachings, is because one wishes for happiness and does not wish to experience any suffering. As will be explained, purification is achieved when the four opponent powers such as regret and so forth are intact. These four opponent powers are also explained extensively in the lam rim teachings on karma.

When one understands that the causes of suffering are negativities, and one does not wish to experience suffering, then one understands the need to purify those negativities. Likewise if one wishes to experience happiness, one needs to create the cause of happiness, which is virtue.

This understanding of karma, even at this very basic level, can be related to our everyday experiences in this very lifetime. When we relate the various unpleasant experiences we have in our everyday life, as well as the sense of fulfilment and joy when things go well to the explanations of karma, then our understanding of karma deepens and is firmly established. We have all experienced the ill-effects of anger. Because it is such an unpleasant experience, no-one willingly chooses to feel angry, so in order to overcome the unpleasant experience of anger one will attempt to practise patience. As one develops more patience, one will notice that the mind of anger becomes weaker. It is through one's own experience that one will see the positive effect of

practising the virtue of patience. Thus, acquiring virtuous states of mind, such as developing patience to oppose the non-virtuous state of mind of anger, will help to overcome disturbing and unpleasant states of mind.

We would all consider ourselves Dharma practitioners who engage in some form of practice. So if we are really inclined to practise the Dharma, then we need to ensure our practice is one that is essentially based on the actions of discarding and adopting, which means discarding negativity and adopting virtue. If our practice does not comply with this practical aspect, then we won't really have much of a basis for real practice. We need to understand that this is how we need to engage in practice.

There are two subdivisions to this section of the text:

4.1. General presentation

4.2. The individual meaning

4.1. General presentation

Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins his explanation with:

One should strive to not have any negativity from the very start. However should one, although striving in this way, receive faults through the power of carelessness and the many afflictions, then it is unsuitable to just leave them thoughtlessly.

As the commentary explains, it is best to strive from the *very start* to not engage in *negativity*. However, due to the faults of *carelessness*, or lack of conscientiousness, and the *many afflictions* we continue to accumulate negativities. This is actually indicating one of the four ways that compel us to engage in negativity. As explained in the teachings, the four conditions for creating negativity are:

1. Lack of conscientiousness
2. Having many delusions
3. Lack of faith
4. Because of not knowing

So when one does incur negativity it is *unsuitable to just leave them thoughtlessly* or carelessly. Rather, as the commentary further explains:

One should strive in the method for confession as laid out by the Compassionate Teacher.¹

The confession of downfalls should be done as explained in the higher and lower vows. The confession of negativity should be done with the four powers.

Higher and lower vows relate to the particular set of vows. For transgressions of the tantric vows there is a particular confession method explained in the tantric teachings. Likewise, if one has committed a downfall of a bodhisattva vow, the way to confess that is explained in accordance with the bodhisattva vows. It is the same with the self-liberation vows, with particular methods of confession for fully ordained monks and so forth.

Having mentioned that *confession of negativity should be done with the four powers*, the four powers are thus introduced.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

From the *Sutra of the Four Dharmas*:

Jampa, if bodhisattva mahasattvas possess the four dharmas then, although they create and accumulate negativity, it will be cleared away.

This refers to one of the four ways of amassing the karma that is both created and accumulated; also referred to as the karma where the result is definitely to be experienced.

To continue with the quotation from the sutra:

If the four are stated they are: thorough application of strong repudiation, thorough application of the antidote, the power of reversing from the fault and the power of the basis. These are as it is explained.

If the created and accumulated karmas are karmas definitely to be experienced, then what need is there to talk about those that are not definite.

It is important to not only be able to identify what the four opponent powers are, but to recall them when engaging in purification practices.

The power of regret

Then Gyaltsab Je goes on to explain the four opponent powers individually:

The first power: This is generating many regrets for the non-virtuous karma created. To generate this, one needs to meditate well on the way the three results are generated from non-virtuous karma.

To explain this point we can use the example of the negative karma of killing. In order to develop regret about the negative karma of killing, one needs to contemplate the three types of results that will be experienced as a consequence, which are:

1. The ripened result
2. The result similar to the cause
3. The environmental result.

As explained extensively in the lam rim teachings, there are specific consequences that accompany each of the types of results. So when one thinks about the prospect of having to experience one of these results, then strong regret about having engaged in the negative act of killing will develop. As explained in the teachings, the intensity of the regret should be to the same degree as regret about having consumed poison, where there is a profound wish to expel the poison from your system. Another example is a poisonous snake suddenly dropping on your lap; you immediately want to get rid of it!

With the example of consuming poison, three individuals consume the same type and quantity of poison at different times. The first person is already dead and the second person dangerously ill and facing death. The third person, having seen that the first person has perished and that the second person is very ill, becomes very anxious when he realises that he has consumed the same substance. With one dead and the other dangerously ill and facing death, the prospect of having to face the same consequences is quite apparent!

While that third person may not have experienced the effects of the poison right away, seeing the fate of the other two he would develop very strong regret and would definitely want to get rid of that poison from his

¹ Here *Compassionate Teacher* refers to the Buddha.
Chapter 2

system. This analogy is presented as a way of indicating the extent of regret about having engaged in negativity.

As the teachings explain, if someone develops strong regret about having engaged in some negativity, then half of the negative karma can be purified just by developing that regret. Furthermore, when strong regret is developed then that will automatically encourage the individual to refrain from engaging in negativity again, thus the power of reversing from the fault will be applied. Then the means to purify negativity, with thorough application of the antidote and the power of the basis, will also naturally arise in the mind. So we can see that the application of the later three opponent powers is related to having developed a strong regret first.

To return to that illustration of the three individuals who have consumed poison, the first person is analogous to the person who has created negativity in the past and, as a result, has been reborn in the lower realms. The second person is analogous to one who is about to be reborn in the lower realms. The third person, seeing the fate of the first and second persons, realises that the negativity that they have created is the very same cause that will lead them to the same consequence experienced by the first and second persons, which is to be reborn in the lower realms. So by contemplating the suffering of the lower realms and realising that one has created the causes to be reborn there oneself, the urgency to purify those negative karmas will naturally develop. In this way a keen wish to purify negative karma will naturally be developed. This is how the understanding of the cause and effect sequence of karma is definitely related to the intensity of our determination to purify our negative karma.

The analogy of the three individuals who have consumed poison, in particular the third individual who is facing the prospect of the same fate of the first two, is a very powerful one. The third person still has a chance to rid themselves of the poison so that they won't have to experience the same fate as the first two. If the poison is identified quickly, there are ways of neutralising or eradicating it. When someone is bitten by a snake, for example, there are anti-venom injections to counteract that poison.

But if measures to eradicate the poison are not taken, it is quite certain that the third individual will have to experience the same consequences as the first and second individuals. So it is up to the third individual to do something about it and to take urgent measures to get rid of the poison. It is good for us to identify ourselves as the third person, who has created negativity but who still has a chance to purify negative karma. When we think about the prospect of having to experience the consequences, we will develop an urgent need to purify negative karma.

It is appropriate to relate ourselves to the third individual. It gives us some sense of hope, in the sense that we are not in the position of the first and second individuals. As an example of the third person, we still have good prospects as we have the chance to purify our negative karmas. So this is a very relevant example to use to encourage ourselves.

Earlier we mentioned the four conditions that compel us to engage in creating negativity. We have just dealt with

the first, lack of conscientiousness. The second is having many delusions, the third is lack of faith and the fourth is the lack of knowledge. These are really important points to consider.

How true it is that we lack conscientiousness?

When the delusions are very prevalent, then they are a doorway to engage in negativity.

Third is the lack of faith, which can be directly related to the lack of faith in karma. If we don't have faith that negativity will result in unpleasant suffering, and that virtue will result in happiness, then there will be nothing to prevent us from engaging in negativity. One will also not take any interest in accumulating virtue.

The fourth condition is quite obvious—if we lack knowledge we won't know how to avoid creating negativity. Lack of knowledge is overcome by gaining knowledge. Once we gain the knowledge of how to engage in virtue and abandon negativity, we will develop the necessary measures for the desired outcome. The whole purpose of our study is to remedy the lack of knowledge. The lam rim teachings tell us that if we lack the knowledge of how to apply the antidotes, then when we come out of meditation there will be nothing to prevent us from engaging in negativity again. The lam rim teachings, which I have covered in the past, explain these points thoroughly.

The power of remedy

Having described the first power the commentary then presents the second power, known as the power of the remedy or, more literally, the application of the antidote. One should not take a limited view of these remedies. Some teachers explain that all virtues can be the application of the antidote. Others explain that all virtues done with the intention of a purification practice will become the application of the antidote. However the fact remains that all virtues serve as a means to become an antidote to negativity. This is a good point to keep in mind.

Gyaltsab Je's presentation in his commentary reads:

The second power: There are, as explained in the *Compendium of Trainings* ...

Shantideva's text *Compendium of Trainings* presents six remedies:

1) ... relying on profound sutras, ...

Here *relying* means to actually recite profound sutras.

2)... meditating on emptiness, ...

This is one of the most profound remedies.

3)... relying on recitation ...

Recitation specifically relates to the recitation of mantras of particular deities, which are powerful for purification.

4)... relying on the holy form, ...

This implies constructing holy images such as statues, and stupas and so forth.

5)... relying on offerings ...

This refers to making offerings.

6)... relying on the names ...

Here *names* means reciting the names of holy beings such as buddhas and bodhisattvas.

The power of resolve

The third power: Refraining perfectly henceforth from creating negativity.

This implies developing a strong commitment that 'Henceforth, I will not create negativity'. One of the points in *refraining perfectly henceforth from creating negativity*, is that in order for it to be a sincere and honest resolve, one needs to develop the strong intention, 'I will not engage in that negativity again'. At that moment one develops a strong intention to refrain from negativity. If, however, later on, due to the earlier mentioned conditions, one finds oneself creating negative karma again, it will not incur the extra negativity of lying, because of the fact that one was sincere and honest at the time the resolution was made.

There are also explanations about how one can make a promise to refrain from negativity for a specific period of time, such as a few hours, one day, two days and so forth.

The power of reliance

The fourth power: Meditating on bodhicitta and so forth.

Although not mentioned explicitly here, this also refers to generating refuge as well as meditating on bodhicitta. This is as explained in other teachings.

Some may think that the power of reliance, or the power of basis, only refers to the three objects of refuge. However, as indicated here, generating bodhicitta is also the power of reliance. One needs to understand this point.

As explained in the teachings, any negative karma we create is in relation to either the objects of refuge or ordinary sentient beings. The negative karma that one creates in relation to the objects of refuge is purified by taking refuge in the objects of refuge. The object we rely upon is the very object with which we created the negative karma! The negative karma we create in relation to sentient beings is remedied by generating bodhicitta for sentient beings. That is why refuge and bodhicitta are specifically listed as being the powerful basis.

Gyalsab Je then explains in the commentary:

Here the first power is explained elaborately.

Here indicates the first power being explained elaborately in this chapter.

Furthermore:

Regarding this one needs to remember the time of the negativity, the cause, the doorway, the action, the object and how often one did it.

This is a very meticulous presentation of how to purify negative karmas. In relation to the *time* we engaged in *the negativity*, it might be hard to recall all of the details of the negativities one has created in the past, such as when we were quite young. But we can definitely recall on a day-to-day basis the kind of negativities we engage in now. *The doorway* indicates the three doorways of body, speech and mind. *Action* refers to the kind of action the negativity involved. *The object*, refers to the object of the negativity *and how often one did that*. As mentioned earlier, although we might not recall specific details from our

past, we can definitely relate to instances of the negativity that we create now.

This can also be related to the might of the omniscient mind. The mind of the Buddha is an omniscient mind, thus it is the only mind that is said to know karma in its entirety; i.e. which knows the most subtle and detailed aspects of karma. Only an omniscient mind is able to know the details about past lives. As ordinary beings we cannot recall any instances of our past lives—we don't have that memory. However when an omniscient being looks at our continuum, they are able to see each and every instance of our past lives and details of how and when we created negative karmas. *The time, the specific negativity, the cause* and so forth, all of these details would be known in great detail. That is why the subtleties of karma are said to be extremely obscure phenomena, which only an omniscient mind can know in full detail.

4.2. The individual meaning

This is subdivided into four categories:

This section explains the meaning of each opponent power again, which are:

4.2.1. The power of thorough repudiation

4.2.2. The power of the basis

4.2.3. The power of the thorough application of the antidote

4.2.4. The power of reversing from faults

4.2.1. The power of thorough repudiation

This is also subdivided into four:

4.2.1.1. Generating regret by analysing the way one created negativity

4.2.1.2. Meditating on regret by fearing dying with negativity and going for refuge

4.2.1.3. Meditating on regret by considering elaborately the way one meaninglessly generated negativity

4.2.1.4. Considering the way negativity is frightful

4.2.1.1. GENERATING REGRET BY ANALYSING THE WAY ONE CREATED NEGATIVITY

Again this is also subdivided into four:

4.2.1.1.1. Making requests to the object of confession

This involves declaring one's negativities and making requests to the object of one's confession.

4.2.1.1.2. General confession from the point of view of time, cause, aspect and so forth

4.2.1.1.3. Confessing heavy negativity created with regard to special objects

4.2.1.1.4. Confessing with regret generated by contemplating the undesired results of non-virtue

4.2.1.1.1. Making requests to the object of confession

The verse relating to this reads:

27. *The complete buddhas residing
In all directions, and the bodhisattvas,
Those possessing great compassion,
I request with folded hands.*

In his commentary Gyalsab Je explains the meaning of this verse thus:

With hands folded I request the fully enlightened buddhas [such as Buddha Shakyamuni] and the bodhisattvas abiding in all the directions, those

endowed with great compassion, to listen to my regretful confessions of negativities.

At this point one visualises the enlightened beings, the buddhas, in the space in front of oneself surrounded by the bodhisattvas. Thus the *buddhas and bodhisattvas* are the objects of reliance to whom one is confessing one's negativities. Even reading this verse itself can be a very meaningful way to build up that visualisation, and to remind oneself of the object of focus for one's confession.

One is pleading with the *buddhas and the bodhisattvas abiding in all the ten directions* to 'Please listen to my regretful confessions'. Here *regretful* has the implication of very strong regret about having engaged in such negativities, to an extent similar to the analogy of having consumed poison and wanting to immediately get rid of that poison. Thus in the presence of these enlightened and holy beings, buddhas and bodhisattvas, who have great compassion and the means to help us to purify our negativities, we declare our negativities and plead with them to please listen to us.

Earlier I explained the analogy of the three beings who consumed poison. When one really thinks about that in relation to the negativities, then one's regret will not just be fleeting. Rather we will definitely develop a very strong and deep sense of regret, and the wish to purify the negativities will naturally be quite strong as well.

It is really important that we reflect upon the consequences of the three types of results of negativity in order to develop that strong determination to purify our negativity. The three types of results are extensively explained in teachings such as the lam rim and it would be good for you to refer to that, to familiarise yourself with those types of results and so forth.

We need to understand the real significance of engaging in preliminary practices such as purification, which is a prerequisite to further developing our meditation practices. The reason we find that it is very hard to focus on the meditation object now, and that our mind is very dull and unclear, is because of negativity, specifically the strong negative imprints that we have on our mind. So, negativity is what hinders our further development.

Another important point to note is that there is a difference between negativity and a negative mind. For example, attachment in the desire realm would be a negative mind and the imprint of attachment left on the mind is the negativity. This is to be understood as follows: whenever one creates any negative action, in the very next moment that particular action will have ceased, however an imprint is left upon the mind in the form of a potential to produce negative results. That imprint left upon the mind is the negativity. Therefore a distinction needs to be made between a negative mind and negativity, and likewise, between virtue and a virtuous mind. While a virtuous mind and non-virtuous or negative minds are consciousness, virtue and negativity are not consciousness. I have explained these distinctions previously as well, and it is important to keep them in mind.

Generally we would say that there are no redeeming qualities in negativity. However the lamas have a common saying, 'Negativity does have one good quality,

which is that it can be purified'. This is also an important point to acknowledge. I have also explained previously that the purification of negativity actually takes place when one engages in a practice that will prevent one from experiencing the negative results of a previously created negative action. So, when a purification practice is done properly, one will not have to experience the negative result of that negativity. There is also a word in Tibetan, *jang* which, when used in relation to negativity, means to purify negativity. But when this particular Tibetan term is used in relation to virtue it implies *increasing* virtue.

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

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

27 August 2013

Based on the refuge and bodhicitta motivation that we have just generated, let us now engage in the meditation practice. (*Pause for meditation*)

You can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, to free them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

4. CONFESSING OF NEGATIVITY WITH THE FOUR COMPLETE POWERS

4.2. The individual meaning

4.2.1. The power of thorough repudiation

4.2.1.1. GENERATING REGRET BY ANALYSING THE WAY ONE CREATED NEGATIVITY

4.2.1.1.1. Making requests to the object of confession (cont.)

In our last session we spoke quite extensively about the purpose and need for purification practices. Then we covered verse twenty-seven. As presented in this verse and explained in the commentary, one first visualises the enlightened beings and the objects of refuge in the space before oneself. One then makes the request to these enlightened beings; in particular to the Omniscient and Compassionate One, Buddha Shakyamuni, to accept one's confession. One then engages in the purification practices. In fact, it is really very good to recall the Buddha's presence in all our activities, both mundane as well as spiritual. That is a really good way to be mindful about ensuring that one maintains a virtuous frame of mind.

In our normal activities such as drinking or eating, it is good to recall the Buddha and make offerings of the food and drink to the Three Jewels. When that becomes a habit, then whenever we consume food and drink, even if it is just a cup of tea, we will remember to offer it. If we were to forget to offer it in a rushed moment, soon afterwards we would start to feel a bit uneasy and feel regret, 'Oh, I didn't get the opportunity to offer my tea'.

When we start to feel uncomfortable in the event that we forget to make an offering, then that is one sign that we have actually incorporated the practice into our daily life. Likewise, it is good to remember the enlightened beings during other activities such as travelling and so forth. Also before we go to bed it would be really good to visualise the Buddha right above our pillow. Recalling the enlightened beings just before we go to sleep would indeed be a very good practice.

We can notice for ourselves that when we are not able to engage in a familiar activity we start to feel

uncomfortable. This is particularly true with mundane activities, such as when we have formed the habit of going to a movie once a week or watching an episode of a TV serial every week. When we don't get a chance to do that activity then we feel uncomfortable and regret what we might have missed.

It is because of our familiarity that there is a sense of unease and regret when we break that habit. Just as that is true for insignificant mundane activities, so too as we start to develop more and more familiarity with engaging in virtue, that same sort of regret will arise when we miss an opportunity to engage in virtue.

We need to make it part of our practice to periodically recall the enlightened beings such as the Buddha, so that we feel the presence of the Buddha at all times. Every time that we contemplate the qualities of the enlightened beings, we obtain immeasurable benefit. The more we become familiar in recalling the unsurpassable qualities of the enlightened beings, such as their great love and compassion, the more it benefits our own mind. Thus, any kind of mental disturbance that we may feel will subside the moment that we recall the qualities of the Buddha. Our mind will definitely feel at ease and we will feel a real sense of fulfilment. This is a very practical benefit.

By recalling the Buddha on a day-to-day basis we familiarise our mind with the qualities of the enlightened beings, which will naturally carry through all the way to the end of our life. Then, when we are facing death, due to our earlier familiarity we will naturally be able to remember the Buddha. Focusing on the Buddha at the time of death will definitely protect us from being reborn in the unfortunate realms in the very next life; that is because one's mind will be completely immersed in virtue. As explained in the teachings, when the last thought in our mind is a virtuous one, it will ensure that we will have a higher rebirth. This is how the Buddha, the enlightened beings, and the objects of refuge protect us, by enabling our mind to be in a virtuous state.

The following verse was presented last week:

27. *The complete buddhas residing
In all directions, and the bodhisattvas,
Those possessing great compassion,
I request with folded hands*

These lines exhort us to recall the enlightened and noble beings, buddhas and bodhisattvas, all of whom possess great compassion. The essence of the qualities of the enlightened beings and bodhisattvas is great compassion, and just recalling this will ensure that our mind is in tune with great compassion. This is an incredible method to generate a virtuous and positive frame of mind, as well as a way to amass great merit. As mentioned previously, through the familiarity with this state of mind in our daily life, we will automatically be able to anchor our thoughts and focus on the objects of refuge at the time of death. Our mind will be clear and calm and focused on the essence of the practice, which is going for refuge.

If we don't pay enough attention to this fundamental aspect of practice and constantly seek some higher form of practice, then the danger is that at the crucial moment of death we will be confused as to what to focus on. If we

have never developed real familiarity with any one practice, then at the critical moment when we face death we may wonder what practice to do and what object to focus on. A confused mind is not a conducive state of mind to be in at the time of death. So we really need to acknowledge the essence of the practice and try to familiarise ourselves with it. At our level we may not yet be able to engage in grand or high level practices, however we can definitely manage to focus on the objects of refuge.

4.2.1.1.2. *General confession from the point of view of time, cause, aspect etc.*

This is another meticulous presentation. Here we go into detail about the time, cause and aspect of the negativities that one has engaged in. Recalling these details and confessing them makes our purification practice a complete form of practice.

The following verses are quite easy to comprehend, so we can go through them quickly.

28. *From beginningless cyclic existence,
In this life and in others,
The negativity that I have done by myself
Or induced others to do,*
29. *Which I hid due to being confused by ignorance,
That I rejoiced in,
Seeing these faults
I confess them to the protector from the depth
of my heart.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Since beginningless time I have circled in cyclic existence. I confess all negativities in this and other lives due to being confused with regard to the ripening result of karma.

Time

The first part refers to the duration. In terms of duration we have circled in samsaric existence since beginningless lifetimes. It is said in the teachings that we cannot pinpoint our first life, thus there is no beginning to samsara; the continuity goes back endlessly. We could hypothesise about our beginning, but it is in fact impossible to determine the first human race on earth. Likewise with going back through our past lives; it is impossible to determine that there was a beginning. Thus, as indicated here, we have been circling in samsara over beginningless lifetimes.

Cause

One confesses all the negativities one has done in this life, as well as all other previous lifetimes. The cause of those negativities is being confused or, more literally, not knowing the ripening result of karma. So confusion or ignorance particularly refers to ignorance of karma, i.e. not knowing the cause and effect sequence of karma, such as that engaging in non-virtuous actions will bring about unpleasant consequences, and engaging in virtuous actions will bring about happy results. So here ignorance specifically means not knowing the cause and effect sequence of karma. In particular, as explained here, the ripening results of negative karma are suffering; particularly to be reborn in lower realms. That covers causes.

Aspect

Because of confusion or ignorance one does not know that by engaging in virtuous actions one will experience happy results, and by engaging in non-virtuous actions one will experience suffering. Without knowing this, how would one possibly avoid creating negative karma and adopt virtue? Without that knowledge there is no encouragement to practise in that way.

This understanding of the cause and effect sequence of karma helps to prevent one from creating negative karma, while at the same time adopting virtue. Most importantly, it will help one to generate great compassion for others who are engaging in non-virtuous activities. Normally when we see someone engaging in grave negative deeds, we might scorn them or feel hostile, thinking that they are really bad and evil. But with this understanding we will feel great compassion for them, knowing that they are engaging in deeds that will bring about the grave consequences of great suffering. Then our attitude towards them will be naturally one of great compassion, because we understand that they are creating these negative deeds out of ignorance. Overpowered and controlled by ignorance, they are compelled to engage in those negative deeds. This is the reason why we should feel great compassion for them.

We can relate to this with our own experiences. Whenever we have engaged in negative deeds it was because we felt that we were compelled to do so; we either didn't know the consequences or because we were controlled by strong delusions.

The way to really contemplate how beings who are voluntarily engaging in great misdeeds have no control over their actions, and indeed are compelled to engage in these negative deeds, is to relate it to ourselves. We are supposed to have an understanding of karma, knowing that engaging in non-virtue will bring about suffering and engaging in virtue will bring about happiness. Yet we still find ourselves engaging in negative deeds under the influence of strong delusion. If that is case for us who have some understanding about karma, then how much more so will it be true for those who don't have any understanding about karma?

When we bring that understanding to mind, then instead of feeling hostile and generating anger towards those who are creating misdeeds, we can develop a sense of great compassion for them. Understanding karma becomes a means for one to develop compassion and also develop a sense of patience with them. These are really important points for us to consider. Whenever we relate to passages in the teachings such as those presented here, it is always good to try to reflect upon the main points. How does it become personal instruction? How does it encourage us to engage in the practice of developing essential points about the path? How does it help us to develop a sense of renunciation? How does it help us to gain higher levels of understanding? How does it encourage us? To relate the teachings to one's own understanding of the essential points of practice is most important.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary then further explains:

I confess the negativities that I have done myself and those that I have induced others to do, as well as the faults of having rejoiced in the negativities of others, due to being oppressed by the confusion of ignorance regarding the law of cause and effect.

As the commentary explains, we are confessing *the negativities that I have done myself*. Thus we are confessing negativities we have engaged in ourselves, as well as those that we *have induced others to do*. The negativities that we have engaged in include non-virtuous actions such as killing, stealing and so forth. Inducing others means influencing others to engage in negative actions. Here it is important to note that in order to incur a negativity of killing or stealing and so forth, one does not need to perform the action oneself. If one influences or orders someone else to perform an action on behalf of oneself, or for the purpose of both, then when they complete that action, one incurs the negativity of that misdeed oneself. It is essential to understand this.

Furthermore there is the fault of *having rejoiced in the negativities of others*. This refers to feeling glad when others are engaging in negativity, rather than acknowledging their actions as being a fault or a misdeed. One incurs negativity when one is happy to see others engaging in negativity.

One commits these negativities *due to being oppressed by the confusion of ignorance*. As explained previously, one engages in these negativities as a result of being completely confused or ignorant about the law of cause and effect.

Thus there are three main types of negativity: those performed by oneself; those that one has induced others to do; and rejoicing in the negativities that others perform.

In his commentary, Gyaltshab Je further explains how to develop regret and make a confession.

Generating an understanding of these faults of mine I regret them, and accordingly confess them from the depth of my mind to the protectors, not hiding or concealing them.

As explained here, *generating an understanding of these faults of mine*, indicates that one actually recognises the negative actions that one has created and acknowledges them as faults. There is a part in the confession ceremony for monks and nuns where the abbot asks, 'Do you see the faults as faults?', to which the response is, 'Yes, I do'. That response indicates that one is acknowledging the faults as being faults and taking personal responsibility for them. Following that, the next question is, 'Henceforth will you apply restraint well?', and the response is 'Yes, I will'.

Confessing faults *from the depth of my mind* indicates acknowledging one's negative actions as being misdeeds, and from the depth of one's heart generates a determination to confess and purify them. As mentioned here, one confesses these negativities *to the protectors*, which means the enlightened beings and bodhisattvas. So the enlightened beings are the object of one's confession, and one does not hide or conceal negativities in their presence. This indicates that one completely declares all the negativities one has accumulated since beginningless time.

Following that confession with a strong regret that is generated from the depth of one's heart, one then develops a strong commitment not to engage in negativity again. That is the third power, the power of resolve or refraining henceforth from creating negativity. So we can see in these two verses a summary of the four opponent powers.

As the past masters have indicated, if one develops very strong regret for any negativity that one has engaged in, then half of one's negative karma is purified. This shows how important it is to develop a strong regret. When one applies the third opponent power of resolve or refraining from creating negativity, then one has secured an intact practice of purification; it is in this way that negative karmas are definitely purified.

One also needs to take note that regret can be either virtuous or non-virtuous. As the great master Vasubandhu indicated, when one develops regret about non-virtuous actions, then that is a virtue. Whereas, if one regrets doing good deeds, that is a negativity.

When one recalls the misdeeds and negativities that one has engaged in in the past and develops strong regret about that, then that becomes a major part of the purification practice. Later, after having engaged in other forms of practice to accumulate virtue, if one rejoices in the virtue that one has accumulated, then that becomes the means to further expand and increase one's virtue.

So it is good to know that developing regret about misdeeds is a way to purify them, while rejoicing in good deeds will be a means to accumulate virtue. Otherwise we could fall into the danger of actually regretting having engaged in good deeds, which would be a complete waste of positive energy.

On a practical level it is good for us to take this as a personal instruction. As ordinary beings it is quite impossible for us to completely avoid engaging in negativity, because we are still oppressed by the confusion of ignorance. But we do have these methods for purifying that negativity. So it is good for us to develop a sense of regret whenever we find ourselves engaging in any kind of negativity. If we can remind ourselves to immediately regret any negative action, then slowly we can improve to transform ourselves. Of course, this will be explained in more detail later.

As mentioned in last week's session, past teachers have indicated that one quality that negativity has is that it can be purified. This means that we don't have the excuse, 'I can't do anything about it'. We definitely can purify negativity if we engage in purification practice. However, one needs to be mindful not to become complacent thinking, 'Oh well, if negativity can be purified I might just as well engage in negativity'. That would be a lame excuse for creating more negativity.

4.2.1.1.3. Confessing heavy negativity created with regard to special objects

These special objects are presented in Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*, the last text we studied. The special objects are those objects that are endowed with unsurpassable qualities, such as the objects of refuge; the Three Jewels; those who have been personally kind and benefitted us, such as our parents; and objects that are the

source of whatever understanding that we have gained, who are our abbots and teachers, our spiritual friends. Spiritual friends can be the source of kindness as well as a source of knowledge and qualities.

Any negativities with respect to these objects are very heavy negativities, and need to be purified.

The root text reads as follows:

30. *Whatever harm I have inflicted
To the Three Jewels,
Father, mother and other teachers
With body, speech and mind, due to afflictions.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

I confess all negativities that I, this confused person, created with regard to the Three Jewels, my father, mother and other fields of merit like teachers and others, due to the cause of the three poisons, with the three doors of my body, speech and mind.

The particular negativities that one confesses are the negativities relating to oneself as *a confused person* who is oppressed by ignorance. Due to this confusion, one has created negativities *with regard to the Three Jewels*, which are the objects endowed with great qualities, and *my father and mother*, who are objects of kindness and benefit to oneself. *Fields of merit like teachers* indicates one's own teachers, and *others* refers to those like the abbot, who have bestowed vows and so forth upon oneself. It can also refer to teachers with whom one may not have direct connection, or other beings who are special objects; so *others* can be quite expansive.

The *cause* for creating negativities in relation to the special objects is *the three poisons*, and the manner or doorway through which one creates those negativities refers to *the three doors of one's body, speech and mind*.

There is a possibility that, as a result of strong delusions, one might **physically** harm special objects such as one's parents or teachers.

Or we may have harmed them **verbally**, criticising what they are saying, or saying it is not true, or reversing their points against them.

Creating negativity through the doorway of one's **mind** would be generating wrong views in relation to the Three Jewels, one's teachers or one's parents, or having harmful intentions towards them.

Whenever one engages in any negativity, it is always through these three doors; there is no other way to engage in negativity other than through our physical actions, our speech and negative states of mind. Of these three, the most important to protect at all times is one's state of mind. That is because physical misdeeds and negative speech come about as a consequence of having negative intentions in one's mind.

As indicated in the Vinaya sutras, the main emphasis has to be on protecting and disciplining one's mind. Then, as one disciplines one's mind, one's physical and verbal actions will naturally be disciplined as well. So, that is where we need to really focus our attention.

On a practical level, we might in this lifetime have not found occasions where we might directly criticise the Three Jewels or create heavy negative karma in relation to the Three Jewels; we might not have been in close

proximity to teachers for long, thus have not accumulated heavy negativity with respect to them.

However, one arena where we have probably created heavy negative karma is in relation to our parents. We might have found many occasions where we have engaged in physical, verbal or mental negativities. So this is something that we need to really acknowledge and take ownership of. Then we will see that there is a definite need to engage in purification practice.

The confession and purification practice with regard to the special objects is to confess the negativities and engage in purifying them, by applying the antidote. Then resolve, 'Henceforth I will not create such negativities in relation to the special objects'. This is how we engage in the purification practice.

With respect to these special objects, the way to purify one's negative karma is by developing a strong sense of regret from the depth of one's heart, confess one's negativities, and then making the commitment, 'Henceforth I will not engage in these negativities'.

4.2.1.1.4. *Confessing with regret generated by contemplating the undesired results of non-virtue*

This is another significant point. Here one contemplates the undesirable results of non-virtue, where one thinks about the ripened result of each specific non-virtue, as well as other types of result of each of the negative karmas we have created. When one contemplates the prospect of having to experience those results, then a strong sense of regret and wishing to confess those negativities will arise quite spontaneously.

The relevant verse is:

31. *I, this sinner, afflicted with various faults
Of different negativities, whatever frightful
Negativities I created,
I confess to those that guide all.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

I, this sinner, who is afflicted with the many faults of attachment and the like, the causes that produce the results of the hell realms and so forth, have created many heavy negative karmas of killing and so forth. Whatever frightful negativity I created I confess to the ones that guide all.

The commentary indicates that the one who has created the negative karma is oneself, a *sinner afflicted with many faults*. The extent of the negativities we have amassed is such that we are the very embodiment of faults of attachment and the other two poisons. The *many negative karmas, such as killing and so forth* that we have created are *the causes that produce the results of hell realms and so forth*. So the faults within oneself act as the causes that produce the resulting suffering states, such as the hell realms. With a sense of a strong regret, one confesses all this frightful negativity to the omniscient buddhas, who are the guides to all sentient beings. Thus, by contemplating the undesirable result of non-virtue one will generate a strong sense of regret, and following that, actually engage in an action of confession and purification; then a sense of restraint will naturally follow.

4.2.1.2. MEDITATING ON REGRET BY FEARING DEATH WITH NEGATIVITY AND GOING FOR REFUGE

We can leave this for the next session.

*Transcribed by Su Lan Foo
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Edited Version*

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In relation to the points that have been covered this evening, it is good to really bring to mind and acknowledge any negativities one has created, with the understanding and knowledge that they can be purified. Then one develops a strong sense of regret, and in the presence of omniscient and compassionate beings, such as the buddhas and the bodhisattvas, one makes a confession. When we take the initiative in this way we will definitely reap the benefits of the confession.

The following verses in the chapter are an elaborate presentation of the ways one has engaged in negativities. Lest one is tempted to think, 'Maybe I am free from negativity', or 'I might not have engaged in much negativity', the following verses present very clearly the ways in which one has created negativities. They also explain the consequences of not confessing and purifying those negativities. Both the gravity of the situation and the urgency of having to purify those negativities are explained very clearly. So reading the following verses and contemplating them is a really meaningful personal practice.

We are quite familiar with the seven limb practice, which can be presented in a few lines. However, each of those seven limb practices can be practised very elaborately. Earlier in these teachings we covered the limb of offering, and then the limb of prostration was presented. Now we are in the limb of confession. Each of the seven limbs are actually presented very elaborately in this text in great detail. So when we recite the *Seven Limb Prayer* and do some sort of practice in relation to the seven limbs, all the material presented here will enhance our practice, because of our deeper understanding.

The *Seven Limb Prayer* that we recite regularly prior to engaging in teachings and other practices begins with:

I prostrate with my three doors.

This indicates the doors of body, speech and mind. So what does the prostration of the three doors imply? This was elaborately presented earlier.

I make actual offerings and mentally created offerings.

What those actual offerings are and what mentally created offerings are was also presented very elaborately. Do you remember?

I confess all negativities that I have created since beginningless time.

All of this has been explained in great detail tonight.

These verses might consist of just a few lines, but when one has a deeper understanding of what each practice entails, it will, as mentioned previously, really enhance one's practice.

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

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

3 September 2013

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

In order to ensure that our tong len practice is intact, we first need to familiarise our mind with meditating on compassion for all sentient beings. That entails bringing to mind the various sufferings that are experienced by sentient beings, and generating a strong wish that they be free from that suffering. Here we can think about the different types of sufferings that are experienced. We first contemplate on the suffering of suffering, which are the obvious physical and mental suffering that sentient beings experience. Then we focus on the suffering of change that sentient beings experience. Finally we focus on the all-pervasive suffering of sentient beings. As we contemplate the various forms of suffering that they experience, we generate the strong wish, 'May all sentient beings be free from every type of suffering'. So in this way, by bringing to mind the sufferings of sentient beings and wishing them to be free from that, we generate compassion.

To ensure our love and compassion for sentient beings is free from bias, we need to develop a state of mind that sees all sentient beings as being equal. We already have a spontaneous feeling of love and compassion for those closest to us. When we see them being deprived of happiness, it is natural for us to wish them to be happy. When we see them suffering, it is also natural for us to wish them to be free from that suffering.

When we go beyond those who are close to us, in particular, those who we don't get along with, or those we consider as enemies, we might actually feel glad when they are deprived of happiness and experiencing suffering. We often hear comments such as, 'Oh they deserve to suffer!' made by others when they see people they don't get along with experiencing suffering and hardships. They may even wish that their enemy experience even more difficulties and hardships. That attitude is the complete antithesis of the love and compassion that is to be developed here, which is an unbiased love and compassion towards all beings.

We need to change our attitude and our way of thinking, particularly in relation to those we normally don't get along with; those who irritate us and so forth. When they are suffering and deprived of happiness, if we can start to feel how wonderful it would be if they were to be happy and free from their suffering, then that is a sign of the transformation that is taking place in our mind—the benchmark of a true sense of love and compassion. So we need to familiarise our mind with developing an unbiased sense of love and compassion towards all.

When we feel love and compassion for those we feel close to, while feeling hostile towards enemies, wishing them even more suffering and deprived of happiness, then that is a biased form of love and compassion. We need to train our mind so that we can extend our love and compassion towards all beings, particularly to those who are difficult to

get along with. We begin to establish the real basis of unbiased bodhicitta when we genuinely wish them happiness, and that they not experience any kind of suffering.

While we may have not yet developed actual bodhicitta, we can definitely establish the basis of bodhicitta in our mental continuum. That in itself would be an incredible achievement in this lifetime. We would have then secured an incredible personal benefit for our own physical and mental well-being. When we start feeling a genuine sense of concern for others, wishing them to be happy and wishing them not to experience any suffering, then naturally we won't feel any hostility or ill-will towards them.

Furthermore, because it's an unbiased love and compassion, we will not be particularly attached to some and distant to others. That in turn enables a lot of disturbing thoughts based on attachment and hostility to subside. Then, quite naturally, our mind will become much more tranquil, happy and joyful. So, there is an immediate personal benefit. As mentioned earlier, if we can establish a firm basis of bodhicitta in our mental continuum, we can feel quite satisfied with this significant achievement in this life.

Familiarity with unbiased love and compassion towards all beings will naturally induce the intention to benefit others, which is also unbiased and without discrimination. That establishes the proper basis to benefit other sentient beings. Thus, whatever help one extends to others will be really pure, because it is not mixed with the self-cherishing attitude.

Even though we may not have developed spontaneous, uncontrived bodhicitta yet, we can definitely acquaint ourselves with a genuinely unbiased and indiscriminating wish to benefit others that is based on unbiased love and compassion. Through contemplation, we come to realise that if we are to benefit others by freeing them from all suffering and leading them to ultimate happiness, we need to achieve enlightenment ourselves. Even though that attitude may not be uncontrived bodhicitta yet, it is a very similar attitude; at our ordinary level, that is the closest we can get to actual bodhicitta. As it is similar to actual bodhicitta, it is a really worthwhile achievement. In fact, the unbiased wish to benefit others without discrimination, which is based on unbiased love and compassion for others, is essential.

Lama Tsong Khapa had a very significant purpose in mind when he emphasised the importance of first developing immeasurable equanimity as the first of the seven-point cause and effect technique for developing bodhicitta. In fact this presentation of developing equanimity first is said to be a unique presentation of Lama Tsong Khapa, as it is not found in the works of the other Kadampa masters. When the four immeasurable thoughts are presented, immeasurable love and compassion usually comes first and immeasurable equanimity comes later, but in the six-session practice immeasurable equanimity is presented first. So this is in line with Lama Tsong Khapa's presentation, which comes from his own experience of his practice of developing bodhicitta. I have explained this point many times previously which is really important for you to keep in mind.

Also in order to develop unbiased love and compassion, we need to first develop renunciation. Without developing renunciation there is no way that we can develop love and compassion in our hearts. Thus, the order in which these states of mind are developed is presented meticulously in the teachings. If we wish to develop this incredible state of

mind of bodhicitta, we need to establish the sequence by cultivating earlier states of mind.

If we are to subdue our unruly mind it is essential that we try to incorporate the understanding we gain from the teachings into our practice. Otherwise there's not much purpose in listening to and studying the Dharma. Although it will definitely leave a good imprint on the mind, there will not be much more benefit than that. We need to make an effort to really integrate the practice into our life so that our mind starts to be transformed from an unruly one to a more subdued, gentler and kinder mind. Otherwise our practice has not really served much purpose. However this transformation doesn't come about immediately. Rather, it requires investigating our state of mind on a daily basis, and analysing what kind of thoughts or attitudes are influencing our mind. A daily analysis of our thoughts and state of mind is crucial for our practice.

If we stubbornly remain just as we are, then the Dharma will not have much effect upon us. We can check whether any transformation has taken place so far by looking back at our lives. Before we heard and made any attempt to practise the Dharma, when someone out of attachment showed us nice gestures and so forth, we would have also responded out of attachment with nice gestures and the like. Likewise, when someone related to us with anger and hostility, we would have also immediately responded with anger and hostility. That's how our mind was prior to integrating the Dharma in our life. So have we changed or not? Has any true transformation taken place or not? This is something we need to gauge now. Do we react in the same way as we did previously? If we do, then we have remained stubborn, and a true transformation has not taken place. But if we find that our reactions have changed significantly, then a transformation has taken place.

Are we practising Dharma if we respond with attachment to someone who relates to us out of attachment? How could it be Dharma? If we really look into our situation we will see that it is because we react to attachment with attachment that so many complications and problems arise in our life. Alternatively, if we start to relate to others with a genuine sense of concern and a kind mind, then that is the gauge of a true transformation. When we start to become much more relaxed, joyful and happier in this life, that leads onto even more benefit in our future lives. So by developing a kinder mind, we experience both the long-term benefit in our future lives, as well as the short-term benefit in this very lifetime.

In summary, for any transformation to take place we need to integrate the Dharma into our life. Then we won't stubbornly hold onto our same old attitudes and same old behaviours. The way to make that transformation is to really analyse our mind, constantly being aware of our attitudes and our state of mind, and then making an attempt to overcome and change that, rather than holding onto the same states of mind and attitudes. By applying the Dharma in that way, we make that transformation come about. If we remain as we are with no change at all, then the Dharma is not having any effect.

These are points that are presented in the text we are studying, which is why I am highlighting them to you here. The next few verses indicate that we need to be mindful of how we have the perfect conditions right now for practising the Dharma and integrating it into our lives. We are human beings free of all adverse conditions and we have come into contact with the perfect Mahayana teachings, and the perfect Mahayana teachers who present those teachings. We also

have all the other conditions that give us leisure to practise the Dharma. So we have to make some attempt to utilise these incredible and fortunate conditions to transform our mind, and practise according to the basic principles of the teachings. Right now we have the good fortune of having sufficient food, shelter, clothing and all the rest of the good conditions associated with being human. But if we are not mindful to secure and protect our future wellbeing, then in twenty years or so we might find ourselves living amongst animals and surrounded by the conditions of the animal realm. We will then be deprived of all the good conditions that we enjoy now. This is not fantasy but a real probability.

So in order to protect ourselves from having to experience that fate, we need to really integrate the essential points of the practice of the Dharma into our everyday lives. That is what I personally feel. I feel liberation and enlightenment might be quite beyond my reach right now, but I can, at the very least, protect myself from unfortunate rebirths. If I cannot do some practice and integrate the Dharma to a certain degree, then having met the perfect Mahayana teachings and perfect Mahayana teachers would have been completely wasted.

If we cannot even protect ourselves from being reborn in the unfortunate realms, then what benefit would there have been in meeting with these perfect conditions now? We might aspire to the highest goals, but on a more practical level we need to ensure that, at the very least, we protect ourselves from being reborn in the unfortunate realms in the near future.

Before she passed away, a former study group member, Caryn Clarke said, 'I'm not really afraid of death itself. I don't feel too anxious about the actual experience of death, but what I do really feel anxious about is not being able to meet with similar opportunities again in the future'. Then she went on to say that studying with me for about seven years was an incredibly fortunate time, and that her only anxiety was, 'Will I be able to obtain such conditions in the future again?' In fact Caryn was giving us a really significant message. The conditions that Caryn was not sure she would get again are the very conditions that we enjoy now! So we have to utilise them as a way to gain something meaningful.

Caryn also confided in me that she felt much more relaxed and calmer at the hospice. Whenever she went back home, there were relatives and family and a lot of disturbances and distractions, whereas at the hospice she had more time to herself. So despite the pain and agony in her body, she was still considering what was best for her practice. She said, 'In the hospice environment I get the opportunity to do more Tara mantras and recite some prayers, and I feel much calmer, and my mind is much more settled'.

4.2.1. The power of thorough repudiation (cont.)

4.2.1.2. MEDITATING ON REGRET BY FEARING DEATH WITH NEGATIVITY AND GOING FOR REFUGE

Again, the outline just by itself presents a really significant point. It concerns how to develop a sense of regret about the prospects of having to die without purifying one's negativities. Having contemplated that, one takes the initiative of going for refuge.

We'll get to the explanation in the commentary shortly, but first we need to get a sense of the context of this heading. Fear of having to die with negativity refers to the fear of having to experience the ripened result of negativity. As mentioned in our last session, the ripened result of negativity is to be reborn in the unfortunate realms, which

are realms of intense suffering. The way to prevent that unfortunate outcome is to rely on an object that can protect one from having to experience them. Here the objects of reliance are the Three Jewels. Thus, *and going for refuge* indicates the fourth of the four opponent powers, the power of the basis or reliance. Here, relying on the Three Jewels means wholeheartedly taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha; this serves as an antidote for overcoming the consequences of negativity, which would otherwise have to be experienced as a ripened result in the lower realms.

When one generates that strong fear of having to experience the consequence of the suffering of the lower realms, a strong sense of regret arises. The greater the extent of the fear in our mind, the greater the sense of regret about having engaged in that negativity will be. Then one contemplates, 'Can I overcome this negativity?' 'What can I rely upon that will overcome my negativities?' If it is possible to rely upon something that will protect us, then obviously we will want to rely on it wholeheartedly.

It is at this point that one develops a strong sense of refuge in the Three Jewels. So the first part of the cause for developing refuge is the fear of experiencing the sufferings of the lower realms, and the second part is wholehearted reliance on the objects of refuge.

By relying on the Buddha we are able to rely on the unmistakable method and the teachings that the Buddha presented. The Sangha helps us to access the teachings and practise them. While the Buddha presents the unmistakable method, which is the teachings, and the Sangha are the helpers, the actual protector is the Dharma itself. When the Dharma is actualised in one's own mind, then it becomes our actual protector. So we need to understand that the Dharma is the real protector. This systematic presentation is helpful in understanding how the objects of refuge protect us.

The relevant verse of the root text is:

32. *Without having purified my negativity,
I will die before by having been killed.
Please rescue me from this with the method
That liberates quickly.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

If I do not confess my negativities immediately, then I will be killed prematurely by the lord of death while possessing unpurified negativity, and go to the lower realms.

Therefore I petition you to rescue me with all means, to quickly free me from the negativity.

We are now at the point where we have recognised and identified what the negativities are. Thus the need to confess and purify them naturally follows. Confessing one's negativities as a way to purify them means that one will not have to experience the ripened results of those negativities. That is the real meaning of purification. Negativity is purified when one applies a method that prevents one from having to experience the ripened results of negativity.

If I do not confess my negativities immediately conveys a sense of urgency. That is because the time of death is uncertain. Because of the uncertainty of when death will occur, there is a very strong probability that one could die before one gets around to confessing and purifying one's negativities. So if one confesses and applies a purification practice immediately, one can be comfortable about not having to experience the result in the next life, regardless of how soon one dies.

This presentation is related to the three main reasons why the time of death is uncertain, which are presented in the lam rim: death itself is certain; however the time of death is uncertain; and at the time of death nothing but the Dharma can be of benefit. The point being made by this verse is that the time of death is uncertain.

When the commentary says *then I will be killed prematurely by the lord of death* we need to understand that *the lord of death* is not some sort of mythological demon of death. We need to relate *lord of death* to the conditions of death and understand that we could meet with the conditions of death at any time. If we experience death while possessing unpurified negativity then we will be reborn in the lower realms. *Therefore, as mentioned here, I petition you, which refers to the three objects of refuge, to rescue me with all means, to quickly free me from the negativity.* So refuge is presented here as the ultimate protector, serving as the unmistakable objects of reliance to purify one's negativity.

Then Gyaltsab Je poses a query to introduce the next verse.

Query: Why should it be necessary to be rescued quickly, as one will not die before one has finished purifying one's karma?

The answer to that is presented in the following verse:

33. *This capricious lord of death
Does not rely upon whether it is accomplished
or not.
Hence everybody, the sick and healthy,
Cannot trust their adventitious life.*

In his commentary, Gyaltsab Je explains how the verse serves as an answer to that earlier query. As it reads:

Answer: This lord of death cannot be relied upon for even one moment. He will come, regardless of whether one has accomplished purifying one's negativities or not, regardless of whether one has finished one's projects or not, and so forth.

Hence, everybody, whether sick or not, whether the life force is finished or not, dies adventitiously, and it is uncertain even if one will die today or not. Therefore one should purify it quickly.

Again we need to remember that what is personified as *the lord of death* refers to the conditions of death, which *cannot be relied upon*. In other words death can happen at any moment. We all know of so many instances where one moment a person is around and the next moment they are not. They can be sitting on a chair, or standing up, and by the time they sit down on the chair their life has ceased. We might assume we will live to be 80, or maybe 70 or 75 if we are less ambitious! But there is no guarantee that we will live to such a ripe old age. When we look around there are so many who die prematurely; so death can occur at any moment.

Death does not wait until one has completed purifying one's negativities. So the answer to the opening query, 'What is the rush in trying to purify my negativities? I'll only die after I have purified my negativities' is that the time of death is uncertain. If we don't know when it will occur, how can we possibly guarantee that we will have purified all our negativities before we die? The fact is that death could easily befall us before we get around to purifying our negativities. Death does not wait around for us to finish whatever project we may have; it's not as if death says, 'I will let you finish what you're doing first and then I will come'. Death can come at any time. Furthermore it's not as if death only follows those who are sick and spares those who are healthy. Whether one is sick or healthy, death can occur at any time.

This gives us the impetus to immediately purify our negative karmas through confession. The simplest way to do this is by firstly developing a strong regret for the negativities one has engaged in, and then going for refuge. This is one very simple method that we can do at any time. Developing strong regret and based on that, taking wholehearted refuge in the Three Jewels, is a really simple practice that we can easily do.

In relation to the point that death does not wait around for us to finish our projects, previous masters have told this story about how a teacher promised to take a young monk on a picnic. So, the young monk would periodically remind the teacher, 'teacher, when are we going to go on a picnic? The teacher's usual response was, 'We will go, we will go, once I finish all my work'. On one occasion the teacher noticed something in the distance and asked the young student, 'What is that over there?' to which the student replied, 'Oh that is someone who is going on a picnic after having finished all their work!' What they were seeing, in fact, was the body of a dead person being carried to the cremation site.

The main point of the story is that death can happen at any time, so we cannot wait around thinking that we will have time to finish our tasks sometime in the future. This implies that we need to apply the antidotes for overcoming our negativities immediately, because death can happen at any time.

Another point we need to derive is that we need to put our mind to accomplishing whatever we have decided to do. If we just leave it as something to be done later, then we may end up never being able to accomplish it. Overzealousness can also be a problem. There is another story about an individual who neglected the practical aspects and was too ambitious about what he wanted to try to practice. He came to me and said, 'I am very, very determined to do a long retreat'. So I tried to give some practical advice, saying 'Perhaps focus on earning some money to secure your livelihood first'. But he was determined and he said, 'Well, you know, I could die before I am able to do a retreat, so I would rather do the retreat right away'. I said, 'Well, that's true. That sort of thinking is good, so OK, do what you wish'. As it turned out he ended up doing neither the retreat nor securing his livelihood, because he lost his job as well!

We need to put an effort into accomplishing Dharma practice, and put aside any thoughts of procrastination. There's no sense in saying, 'You know, maybe I won't do that now; I would rather not do it'. We need to try to accomplish our Dharma practice as a matter of urgency.

With respect to the point about the lord of death not waiting, regardless of whether someone is *sick or not*, I can share another story on this point. In Dhargye Monastery, which was near my home town in Tibet, there were two brothers, one of whom was quite ill, who was nursed by his healthy brother. However, the healthier brother suddenly died, while the sick one was still alive. When the other monks were consoling him he made this comment, 'It seems that the lord of death has brought the wrong message. Why did he take my brother who was healthy, when it should have been me?'

When the commentary states *whether the life force is finished or not*, it is referring to age. The lord of death, or more specifically the conditions for death, can occur at any time regardless of one's age. We have all seen many examples of someone dying, regardless of their age or physical condition. Just recently on the news there was a report of a house

collapsing during a wedding ceremony, which caused the death a number of people, and of course there are earthquakes and so forth where this happens. Not so long ago there was a story about a well-known person who went for a walk in the park and did not return, because he had suddenly died.

The emphasis here is on really contemplating the impermanent nature of our life, and the many examples of unexpected death, and use that understanding as a reminder of how our life is very transient and death can occur at any time. The reason for contemplating this is so that it can serve as an impetus to practise the Dharma, and integrate it into our everyday lives.

We need to regret our negativities and apply the measure of confession to purify them. If we look around we can see that while there are many who are completely distracted by frivolous and mundane worldly activities, there are very few who are seriously practising Dharma. Some people die before they even have a chance to understand Dharma, let alone being able to practise it. These are bare facts. So death is a reality that we need to keep in mind as an impetus for our own practice.

These points are really significant personal instructions, which should serve to encourage us to take our practice a bit more seriously, and put a bit more time and energy into it.

Now we will recite the Tara Praises, which we can dedicate to Lyn Coleman who is about to have surgery either today or tomorrow. As she hasn't had her surgery yet, there's time for us to do prayers for the surgery to go well and be successful, and that she may recover quickly, and be able to join us again in study group.

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

Transcribed by Bernii Wright

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

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Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

10 September 2013

Based on the refuge and bodhicitta motivation that we have just generated, we can now engage in the meditation practice. [*meditation*]

4.2.1. The power of thorough repudiation (cont.)

4.2.1.3. MEDITATING ON REGRET BY CONSIDERING ELABORATELY THE WAY ONE MEANINGLESSLY GENERATED NEGATIVITY

This is subdivided into four categories:

4.2.1.3.1. Regret for having created negativity for friends, relatives, body and possessions, not knowing that they are unreliable

4.2.1.3.2. An example of how it becomes a mere object of memory at the time of death

4.2.1.3.3. Regretting having generated negativity for them by directly seeing their unreliability now

4.2.1.3.4. Regretting having generated negativity, by not realising the uncertainty of the time of one's death.

From the headings alone we can see the meticulous presentation of the material of the text. We need to see this presentation as a personal instruction that will serve as a means to generate virtue and merit, and abandon or purify negativity. These are the two main aspects of practice that we need to develop.

4.2.1.3.1. Regret for having created negativity for friends, relatives, body and possessions, not knowing that they are unreliable

From this presentation one can derive an understanding of how negativities are created because of not knowing that friends, relatives, body and possessions are unreliable. This implies that once we gain an understanding of the Dharma and the points mentioned here, we will know all the reasons for engaging in the practice of avoiding creating negativity.

The verse that relates to this outline reads:

34. *Leaving all behind I have to depart.
Not understanding this
I create manifold negativities
For the purpose of friends and non-friends.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

Leaving everything behind, such as friends, possessions and even the flesh and bones I was born with, I have to depart alone to the other side.

Not understanding this, I generated many negativities because of protecting friends and destroying enemies. This I regret.

This is quite easy to understand. As explained in the commentary *leaving everything behind* indicates that eventually one has to leave everything behind, such as friends and possessions. Friends can turn into enemies, and those we once considered as enemies can turn into

friends. So to that extent they are also unreliable. However the main point is that we will eventually have to leave behind friends as well as possessions, which include all the things that are essential to sustain ourselves, such as food, dwellings, clothing and so forth.

Even the flesh and bones I was born with refers to our most intimate possession, our own body, which we have possessed from the moment we were born. So when we die we have to leave behind even our most intimate possession. In order to go forward to the next life we have to leave behind everything that we possess now. Inevitably we have to face departing from this life alone. We also experience the transition to the next life completely alone. However most of us fail to understand or accept this reality.

The important point to derive from this explanation is that we are unable to take anything with us onto the next life. Thus, friends, possessions and even our own body cannot help us at the crucial moment of death. This understanding can be of practical benefit in our life now because it can help to lessen our strong cravings and attachments to these things. Normally we have strong attachment to those we feel close to, such as our relatives and friends, and aversion to those who are distant, and because of that we create a lot of negativity. So a lot of negativity is incurred as a result of maintaining such attitudes.

As the commentary states, *not understanding this, I generated many negativities because of protecting friends and destroying enemies. This I regret.* As mentioned previously, we have created a lot of negativities under the influence of strong attachment to those we consider close. We have also created a lot of negativity when we have been under the influence of anger and hatred for our enemies. By bringing to mind all the negativities that we have created, and specifically thinking about the unpleasant consequences, i.e. the ripened results of these negativities, we develop strong regret about having created these actions. Developing strong regret has deep significance because, as the masters have explained in the past, strong regret in itself will purify at least half of the negativity that one has incurred.

In order to explain the meaning of the next verse, Gyaltsab Je begins his commentary with:

It is unsuitable to create negativity for their purpose ...

The verse comes at this point:

35. *Non-friends become non-existent,
Also friends become non-existent.
As I also become non-existent
Everybody becomes non-existent.*

Then Gyaltsab Je goes on to explain the meaning of this verse:

... as non-friends, friends and oneself all become non-existent immediately afterwards.

Similarly, relatives, possessions and the like become non-existent. They are completely unreliable, and any negativity done for their sake, out of attachment or anger, is regrettable.

Here *non-friends* refers to enemies, who *become non-existent*. Even if one is not able to vanquish one's enemies, they will naturally become non-existent when they die. Not only will our fierce enemies become non-existent when they die, but our close *friends* and dear relatives will also die, and also become non-existent. So there is no purpose in exerting ourselves in creating negativities to try to nourish and protect them.

The next point is that we also become non-existent. Not only will external friends and enemies become non-existent when they perish, but the very individual who discriminates between friends and enemies will also become non-existent. This is indicating that inevitably we all have to face the same fate of death. It is not just a matter of looking outwards and seeing what fate others will have to undergo, but we too will have to undergo the same fate. So, the main point is that we need to relate the reality of this situation to ourselves.

Having mentioned that one creates a lot of negativity in relation to one's friends and enemies, there might be some thought that although enemies and friends will perish, one will not have to experience that same fate oneself and therefore will not experience the results of those negativities in the future. However, that is not the case. The creator of that negativity will definitely perish and have to experience the consequences of the negativity they have created. That is the crucial point that one really needs to reflect upon.

4.2.1.3.2. Example of how they become a mere object of memory at the time of death

All worldly things become mere objects of memory at the time of death, so they cannot help us in any way at that crucial time. The only thing that will be of benefit at that time is the Dharma. That is the implication of this heading.

The verse relating to this heading reads:

36. *Like the experiences during a dream,
Each and every phenomenon we engage
Becomes also an object of memory.
All that is past becomes unobservable.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je states:

For example, the minimal happiness experienced during a dream is only an object of memory after we wake up. Similarly, the objects that we fantasised to be happiness at first, and which we engaged in, are, at the time of death, but a mere memory.

As explained here, when we dream we have all sorts of experiences; sometimes happy experiences and sometimes, when we have nightmares, very fearsome ones. However, whether it was a pleasant or unpleasant experience, when we wake up those experiences are not there anymore, and we realise that it was all but a mere dream. As the commentary explains, the happiness experienced in a dream is merely an object of memory after we wake up. Of course, we have all had that experience. We sometimes have dreams where everything seems to be so pleasant; the area we are in, and our friends are pleasant and everything is so very comfortable. But at other times there may be great fears and so forth. Of course, when we wake up, there's

nothing left but a memory, as dreams don't leave any physical residue behind.

Using that as an example, the commentary explains that *similarly, the objects that we fantasised to be happiness at first, and which we engaged in, are, at the time of death, but a mere memory*. What is referred to as *fantasised to be happiness* refers to all of the worldly or contaminated samsaric pleasures, which are just fleeting and momentary and not true objects of pleasure. At the time of death nothing but memories remain.

Then Gyaltsab Je goes on to explain:

- Therefore one should make repeatedly the decision to only practise the Dharma right now.

This is the main point: at the time of death, nothing is of benefit except the Dharma. What we normally consider as being of benefit, such as relatives, friends and possessions and so forth, cannot benefit us at the time of death. Likewise, what we normally consider as being harmful, such as enemies, cannot harm us at the time of death. The real harm comes from the negativity that we have accumulated, and the only benefit we can receive at the time of death comes from the Dharma.

To emphasise the main point again, it is not friends or relatives and the like who can benefit us when we die, but only the Dharma. Likewise, at the time of death enemies cannot harm us. Nothing can harm us but our own negativity. At the last stages of our life only our own negativities can harm us. Contemplating that prospect, we need to make the decision *to only practise Dharma*. That is the only concern we should have in mind. This decision to practise the Dharma comes as result of repeatedly thinking about these points, and then reaching the firm conclusion that one needs *to only practise the Dharma, beginning right now*.

4.2.1.3.3. Regretting having generated negativity for them by directly seeing their unreliability now

From this outline we can derive the understanding that we don't have to resort to memories of our past lives to see how friends, possessions and so forth and enemies are unreliable. From our own experience in this very life, we know the unreliability of friends, relatives and the like, and thus regret having generated negativity in order to benefit them.

The verse relating to this reads:

37. *Even during the short time we are alive
Many friends and non-friends have passed.
The negativity created for their purpose
Is so unbearable and remains before us.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

Further, even during the short time we are alive, we know from experience that many friends and non-friends have passed. Since the frightening fruitional result of the negativity that we created for their sake still remains in front of us, it is as explained, 'If it cannot be shared by others what use are obstructing friends?'

As the commentary explains, even during the short time you are alive you have experienced the passing of many friends and non-friends. This is particularly true for those in their late 70s, and 80s. Just looking around, we can

remember so many acquaintances and good friends who are gone, and even those with whom we clashed are also gone. Even the younger generation may have had the experience of someone you have known who has passed on and who are no longer around. We know from our own experience that so many friends, relatives and the like, as well as enemies, have passed on.

The next point in relation to this explanation is that *the frightening fruitional result of the negativity that we created for their sake still remains before us*. As so many relatives, friends and acquaintances, as well as enemies or those we didn't get along with have passed on, we might think that the negativity that we created in relation to them has passed on with them, and so everything is fine. However that is not the case. Although the individual beings have passed on, our negativity in relation to them still remains to be experienced as results in the future life. As the commentary states, *the frightening fruitional result of the negativity still remains in front of us*.

The main point we need to reflect upon is that the fruitional results of the negativity that we have created will have to be experienced in the next life. If not confessed, the negativity will not dissipate by itself, thus it will have to be experienced.

As a way to emphasise the earlier point, Gyaltsab Je gives this quotation:

If it cannot be shared by others, then what use are obstructing friends?

Even though friends and enemies may have passed on, the negativity one has created in relation to them remains. We might think it would be fair enough if we could share that negativity with the friends and enemies who were the object of that negativity. However, as this quotation explains, that is not the case. Rather, one will have to experience the consequences of that negativity solely by oneself. Thus, *what use are obstructing friends?* implies that as it is due to attachment to friends that one has created so much negativity, friends are of no real use or benefit to one. In fact, obstructing friends are actually detrimental to one's own well-being and happiness.

As I have indicated in the past, we cannot share either our happiness or our suffering with others. We might be able to share our possessions and wealth with others to some extent, but we can't really divide our own happiness and share it with others. Likewise, others cannot share their happiness with us. Nor can we divide and share unpleasant experiences and suffering. We have to experience that unpleasantness solely by ourselves. This is an important point we need to reflect upon. While we create the negativity in relation to others, the consequences of the negativity are experienced solely by ourselves. As a positive consequence of contemplating these points again and again, we will be motivated to reduce our attachment and aversion to others.

Then Gyaltsab Je concludes his commentary on this verse with the resolution one needs to make:

One should contemplate this again and again, according to the way it is taught, and generate regret for the negativity done for their sake.

This is a summary of the main point. We need to develop strong regret for the negativity that we have created. You

might think that if you have ten friends who were willing to share the burden of your negativity, your share would definitely be lighter, and you would not need to experience the consequences alone. However, that is not the case, as negativity cannot be divided.

It would indeed be quite consoling if we could share our sufferings and even happiness with others. There might be some friends or family who would quite willingly share and remove some of our suffering. But the fact remains that no matter how much concern they have for us (or how much we have for them), we cannot share our suffering.

It would be wonderful if we could actually share our happiness with others but we can't do that either. If that was possible, I can quite confidently say that I have quite a bit of happiness that I am willing to share with others. Unfortunately, I cannot do that. When I see others in a distressed state deprived of any sense of joy and happiness, I would definitely share my happiness and give it to them if I could. When we see the immense suffering of others we might feel compelled to help them, even to the point of taking on their suffering; but while that can be done in the form of a practice, it can't be done in reality.

4.2.1.3.4. *Regretting having generated negativity, by not realising the uncertainty of the time of one's death.*

This, in fact, is one of the main obstructions to practising the Dharma seriously. Even someone with a terminal disease still hopes that they will live for a while longer. In our everyday life, we engage in so many frivolous worldly activities, completely oblivious to the fact that we may die at any moment. The time of death is uncertain, and death can happen at any moment, but because we don't understand this, we continue to engage in amassing negativities.

The verse in relation to this outline reads:

**38. *In this way I am said to be adventitious.
Because I do not realise this,
I generate a multitude of negativities
Out of ignorance, attachment and anger,***

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

In this way it is explained that I am adventitious, with a mere, brief life where the time of death is uncertain. Not realising this, I have created a multitude of negativities out of ignorance, attachment and anger.

Because negativity causes downfall into the hells, one should meditate on regret many times for having created negativity, by contemplating the certainty of death, the uncertainty of the time of death, and that at the time of death only the Dharma is of benefit, as well as the faults of the lower realms.

This is a clear explanation here, however to emphasise a few of these points further, *I am adventitious*, means that one's life is adventitious, neither being reliable or steady. *With a mere brief life where the time of death is uncertain* refers to the reason why one's life is adventitious or unreliable, because the time of death is uncertain. By not understanding this point or ignoring it, one creates *a multitude of negativities out of this ignorance*.

Here *ignorance* relates specifically to the ignorance of grasping at an individual 'I' or self. It is due to this strong grasping at the 'I' that the sense of self-importance arises. With this sense of 'I am the most important', everything that one does becomes a means to gratify 'me, me, me'! Due to this ignorance of grasping at the self, which induces a strong grasping at the 'I', one develops attachment to one's relatives and those close to oneself who help 'me', and anger or aversion to those one considers being an enemy who might harm 'me'. So out of that strong grasping at the self one creates a lot of negativities.

If those negativities didn't hinder a fortunate rebirth in the next life, then we could rest assured that there would be nothing wrong with creating them. But these negativities lead to rebirth in the unfortunate realms. By contemplating this fact, one regrets many times over the negativity one has created.

The points to really consider again and again are that *the time of death is uncertain*, and that *at the time of death only the Dharma can help us, as well as the faults of the lower realms*.

Contemplating the faults of the lower realms means contemplating the various types of suffering that are experienced there. As mentioned previously, the prospect of having to be reborn as an animal, where one lacks all of the present conditions that we have now should instil a very strong sense of remorse about having created the negativity that leads to such an unfortunate rebirth. We need to think, 'I cannot let my negativity remain unpurified. I definitely have to confess and purify it'. Contemplating the consequences that one will have to experience leads to strong remorse and regret about having created the negativity.

4.2.1.4. CONSIDERING THE WAY NEGATIVITY IS FRIGHTFUL

This has four subdivisions:

4.2.1.4.1. Since nothing can be added to life and it runs out continuously one will definitely die, and if one were to die with negativity, it is fearful

4.2.1.4.2. If one does not purify negativity, then one must experience suffering even in this life

4.2.1.4.3. The reason why it is so very fearful

4.2.1.4.4. The way one will be overwhelmed by suffering later

4.2.1.4.1. Since nothing can be added to life and it runs out continuously one will die, and if one were to die with negativity, it is fearful

If we were destined to live to 100, and that span of a hundred years were to remain constant, then we may not be too worried about it. But from the moment we are born the number of moments, days, and years we still have becomes fewer and fewer. That is the fact that is being presented here.

The relevant verse is:

39. *As day and night have no abiding
This life is continually becoming less;
If there is no adding to the weakening,
Why would someone like me not die?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Regardless of whether one is walking, sitting or lying down, without day and night remaining for even one moment, this life is constantly running out and it is impossible to add anything to the lessening life. Why would that not become a reason for someone like me to certainly die? It does.

Regardless of whether one is walking, sitting or lying down indicates that whatever activity in which one may be engaged, without day and night remaining for even one moment, this life is constantly running out. Our life is running out with every moment that passes. Just as we look at a clock, for example, we can see how every hour decreases moment by moment. The second hand does not stop for even a moment. That is exactly how our life is—every second that passes is a second less of whatever lifespan we may have. Even if we have a long lifespan, it is decreasing moment by moment. Furthermore, as the commentary explains, *it is impossible to add anything to the lessening life.* While life is naturally decreasing moment by moment, there is no extra life that can be added on. So the conclusion is, *why would that not become a reason for someone like me to certainly die?* This is a rhetorical question that implies that we will, of course, have to die sooner rather than later.

The conclusion that we need to contemplate is:

Since one will definitely die, and the time of death is uncertain, one should exert oneself in purifying negativity.

The negativity remains with us as we approach death, moment by moment, unless it is purified. Because death *is uncertain* and can happen at any time, *one should exert oneself in purifying negativity* with the same intensity that was mentioned earlier i.e. by developing strong remorse and regret in one's mind.

Once one comes to accept and understand that one has amassed great negativity and develops a strong wish to purify that negativity, the next step then is to know how to purify the negativity with the four opponent powers. Being able to identify the four opponent powers and knowing how to apply them is essential if one is to purify negativities.

Next week will be the discussion week. As usual it would be really good to do the discussion in a good way. The week following that is the exam, and again, it is good for you to prepare well for that.

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

*Transcribed by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
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Discussion Block 5 Week 5 (17.09.2013)

Week: 1 (20 Aug 2013)

- 1.a Explain the role of karma in our wanting to purify negativities?
- 1.b How can we relate this understanding of karma to our every day experiences?
- 2.a What are the four conditions for creating negativity?
3. How is the application of the later three opponent powers related to having developed a strong regret first.

Week: 2 (27 Aug 2013)

4. What are the benefits of recalling the Buddha on a day-to-day basis?
5. What are the 3 main types of negativities?
6. What are the special objects referred to under the topic ‘Confessing heavy negativity created with regard to special objects?’

Week: 3 (3 Sep 2013)

7. What is the difference between a true sense of love and compassion and a biased form of love and compassion?
- 8.a What are the two parts of the cause for developing refuge?
- 8.b What do we gain from relying on the three jewels?
- 9.a. What are the reasons for a sense of urgency to ‘... confess my negativities immediately...’?
- 9.b. What is the ultimate protector?

Week: 4 (10 Sep 2013)

10. explain the meaning of these lines from verse 34 (on page 1 of the transcript)
... not understanding this, I generated many negativities because of protecting friends and destroying enemies. This I regret.

*34. Leaving all behind I have to depart.
Not understanding this
I create manifold negativities
For the purpose of friends and non-friends.*

11. Elaborate on the following conclusion that we need to contemplate (page 4 of the transcript)

The conclusion that we need to contemplate is:

Since one will definitely die, and the time of death is uncertain, one should exert oneself in purifying negativity.

Exam

Name:

Block 5

Week 6: (24 Sep 2013)

1.a Explain the role of karma in our wanting to purify negativities?

1.b How can we relate this understanding of karma to our every day experiences?

2. What are the four conditions for creating negativity?

3.a The confession of negativity should be done with the four opponent powers. List the 4 opponent powers.

3.b How is the application of the later three opponent powers related to having developed a strong regret first.

4. What are the benefits of recalling the Buddha on a day-to-day basis?

5. What are the 3 main types of negativities?

6. What are the special objects referred to under the topic 'Confessing heavy negativity created with regard to special objects'?

7. What is the difference between a true sense of love and compassion and a biased form of love and compassion?

8.a What are the two parts of the cause for developing refuge?

8.b What do we gain from relying on the three jewels?

9.a. What are the reasons for a sense of urgency to '... confess my negativities immediately...'?

9.b. What is the ultimate protector?

10. Explain the meaning of these lines from verse 34 (on page 1 of the transcript)

... not understanding this, I generated many negativities because of protecting friends and destroying enemies. This I regret.

*34. Leaving all behind I have to depart.
Not understanding this
I create manifold negativities
For the purpose of friends and non-friends.*

11. Elaborate on the following conclusion that we need to contemplate.

The conclusion that we need to contemplate is:

Since one will definitely die, and the time of death is uncertain, one should exert oneself in purifying negativity.