

# Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

1 September 2015

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

Let us re-generate the bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the purpose of all mother sentient beings, in order to liberate them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practice well.

As mentioned many times previously, generating such an altruistic state of mind even for a second becomes a condition for one to accumulate extensive merit.

Also, when one generates such a noble intention and altruistic state of mind as a motivation, one is bound to ensure that one engages in an appropriate virtuous activity to go with that good motivation.

## **2.2.1.2.2.2.2.4. It is unsuitable to generate afflicted pride**

As opposed to generating the positive pride mentioned earlier, *it is unsuitable to generate an afflicted pride.*

This is subdivided into three:

- Disparaging afflicted pride
- The faults of pride
- It is suitable to abandon it

### *a. Disparaging afflicted pride*

The verse reads:

56. *Any migrator that is destroyed by pride  
Is afflicted, and does not possess pride.  
Those that possess pride are not controlled by  
the enemy,  
They are controlled by the enemy of pride.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains:

Any migrator that is destroyed and overcome by the pride that is a puffed up mind, is controlled by the afflictions and not a person possessing great pride. Those possessing pride are suitable not to fall under the control of the enemy. But the migrators with a puffed up mind fall under the control of the enemy of the affliction of pride.

*Any migrator*, referring to any ordinary being in samsara, *that is destroyed and overcome by the pride that is a puffed up mind* is thus controlled by the afflictions and not a person possessing great pride. Here, a puffed up mind refers to the pride of those who possess only minimal knowledge but who assume they have superior knowledge to others, and are more skilled and so forth. Such beings affected by inflated pride are controlled by the afflictions. As explained in other teachings, afflicted pride destroys oneself, one's virtues, morality and so forth.

The pride of beings who possess the great pride which serves as an antidote, is actually a self-confident and

courageous state of mind. This self-confident state of mind is an antidote for overcoming afflicted pride. Thus, such beings with an afflicted pride do not possess the pride of an antidote. The reason presented as to why they don't possess the great pride is *that those possessing great pride are suitable not to fall under the control of an enemy. But the migrators with a puffed up mind, or inflated pride, do fall under the control of the enemy of the afflictions.*

Those who possess the great pride have the pride which serves as an antidote. While called pride, it is actually the self-confident and courageous state of mind, whereby one resolves to combat the afflictions and not allow them to destroy oneself. Those who are affected with afflicted pride are actually controlled by the delusions, and thus their mind is under the control of the afflictions, rather than being in control of the afflictions and overcoming them. This is how it is presented here.

### *b. The faults of pride*

If one wonders 'What is the fault of being under the control of afflicted pride?' this is precisely what is being presented under this heading.

The commentary provides a way to really derive personal instructions from Shantideva's text. If we relate these passages to ourselves it will benefit our mind. But if we relate to it just as the general fault of pride that may concern others but doesn't really concern oneself, then we will not have benefited from this profound advice. While the presentation is very profound and very meaningful it will not really help one's own mind if we view it that way.

Some who confide in me say that they have a real problem with pride. They confess that they're having a problem with pride and want everything to go well and that they desire all the excellences, but this in fact brings more distress to their mind. These individuals are being very truthful in expressing these states of mind that affect them negatively.

If one does not acknowledge the afflictions in one's own mind there is no way to transform it. What one needs to understand is that the puffed up or inflated pride is where one feels one has great knowledge and understanding, when in fact it might be minimal. Along with that, one of the other elements of pride is that of looking down upon others. This is the pride we need to protect ourselves from. We need to reflect upon the faults of this pride as a way of avoiding its ill effects.

What is being presented here very clearly and succinctly are means to overcome afflictions in one's mind, such as pride. When we relate to the passages and then the instructions, we can clearly see that if one were to actually practise what is presented here, it can definitely help to subdue the mind.

We can see that if anyone were to actually put into practise the advice and instructions given here in *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, the consequence would be a naturally more subdued and calmer person. Therefore we need to take it as a personal instruction to relate to the faults of pride, as well as the other disadvantages which are mentioned in other teachings.

If someone is affected by strong pride:

- it will prevent them from gaining further knowledge;
- whatever knowledge they have will be tainted;
- one will not be able to relate to others well. As one perceives oneself to have a 'superior' mind, with a tendency to look down upon others, it is hard to have good rapport with others (the obvious fault of pride).

If we overcome pride it naturally brings about the opposite: it makes one much more at ease; allows one to gain more knowledge; one's knowledge and wisdom will increase; one will be naturally modest and humble, and so will be able to relate to others in a genuine way. All of these positive results will come about.

Thus we need to really relate to these teachings as a way to subdue our own mind. We do have faith in the Dharma, and we want to transform our mind, so if we have this approach then it's just a matter of actually putting it into practise. If we leave these instructions here as 'Yeah OK, something quite profound has been mentioned here' but don't actually relate it to changing one's own state of mind, then the actual positive effect will never come about. So this is how we need to relate to the teachings.

All of the faults presented here are clearly the faults that come from befriending afflicted pride. We need to be aware of that.

The verse reads:

57. *Being filled up with the affliction of pride  
One will be led by pride to the lower realms,  
It destroys the joys of being human;  
A slave eating others' leftovers*
- 58ab. *Dumb, ugly and weak  
One will be derided by all.*

The commentary reads:

The following faults will occur if one is filled with afflicted pride:

- One will be led by pride to the lower realms;
- Even if one is reborn a human, it destroys the joys of being human, such as mental happiness;
- One will live as a beggar without food;
- One will be a slave controlled by others and have to eat their others' leftovers;
- One will be mentally stupid; ugly and weak; and
- Even though one is not directly harming others, one will always be derided by all others verbally and physically.

Therefore one should abandon the pride of the puffed up mind.

The commentary explains that *the following faults will occur if one is filled with the afflicted pride*. This is the specific pride of the inflated or puffed up mind, where the effect is that one would be *led by pride to the lower realms*. What is being explained is that if one harbours pride and does not apply antidotes to overcome it, but rather fosters it in one's mind, then the consequence in future lives is that *one will be led by pride to the lower realms*, which is the ripening result of pride.

With respect to *Even if one is reborn a human*, one should note that this doesn't mean that pride is a cause to be reborn human, as that cause can only be virtuous karma one created in the past. What is being explained is that even if one were to be reborn as a human due to past virtues, the ill effects of being proud in previous lives would still be carried forth. Faults would occur whereby *it destroys the joys of being human, such as mental happiness*. So here the joys of being human refers to both good Dharma conditions as well as good material conditions. The joy of being human would also refer to having good relationships with others, and enjoying festivities and enjoying being honoured by others etc. So the joys of the natural good human conditions will be destroyed, and not be experienced.

The commentary explains that a further fault is that *one will live as a beggar without food*, which is something we obviously see. While having a human rebirth, there are many who have to live as beggars deprived of adequate food, clothing and shelter.

*One will be a slave controlled by others and have to eat their leftovers*, is, again, something which is quite prevalent. We can definitely see many in this situation.

*One will be mentally stupid*, indicates that even if born as a human with a usual human intelligence, some are born without the ability to utilise their human intelligence.

Even physically, *one will be ugly and weak* means that one's appearance may not be good and one's body is weak.

Furthermore, *even though one is not directly harming others*, which means even though one is not intentionally going out of one's way to hurt others, *one will be derided by all others verbally and physically*, ridiculed and so forth; so all these are the faults of holding on to pride.

As the commentary concludes, *therefore one should abandon the pride of the puffed up mind*. The instruction here is that by contemplating the ill effects of pride, one needs to resolve to abandon it. It is at this point that we need to take the instruction personally: 'this advice is referring to me, to my own mind'. So if one really were to pay attention to all of these ill effects, and clearly did not wish to experience them, then one would naturally strive to reduce creating their causes, which is holding on to pride.

What we can also reflect upon, is how those of us present here are free from these ill effects right now, and enjoy good conditions, which are the positive results one has created in the past. When we refer to each of these ill effects we can all safely assume that we are free from them, and that we are definitely enjoying the festivities of humans—materially and spiritually. In the Dharma we have the conditions to experience both the joy of being a human and utilising all these appropriate conditions. And we have a certain level of mental happiness and joy. It is quite clear that none of us has to live as a beggar without food. We are definitely not slaves controlled by others, having to eat their leftovers. Rather than having to eat others' leftovers we have an abundance of food, and might even find that we are wasting food. One definitely has a sound mind and our appearance is quite acceptable. Of course, if one did not practise contentment then one would want to look better and better. This is something we can all relate to.

When one contemplates how we possess the opposite of these faults and ill-effects right now, it encourages one to further engage in accumulating virtues. One can strongly rejoice in the good conditions one has now, which is definitely a result of having practised virtue previously. Then one resolves to put every effort into further engaging in the practice of accumulating virtues and overcoming negativities and afflictions such as pride.

In this way, when one makes strong resolve in one's mind, one can begin to utilise whatever activity one engages in as the means to accumulate virtue. Even drinking a cup of tea can become a means to accumulate virtue. In the case of my normal everyday activities, even when it comes to drinking just one cup of tea, I don't just gulp it down mindlessly. Rather, I spend significant time just rejoicing in the fact that I have the opportunity to have this cup of tea, and the great fortune or the great conditions I have. 'Having this cup of tea has come about through many good conditions from the past. May I use it as a way to further nourish my body so I

can continuously engage in the practice of Dharma, as the means to benefit many sentient beings’.

By using this motivation, even for showering or having a meal, again and again, it becomes possible to use normal activities as a way to accumulate virtue. Of course this might not have come easily in my youth, but at this stage I can confidently say that I definitely have the means to use my normal activities as a way to further create some merit and virtue. This is really something worthwhile to consider.

It is because I consider you all as my Dharma friends, and because we have an intimate relationship, that I share some of my daily practice with you. It is not about boasting, but rather to remind you of simple ways to create virtue. If one thinks about these points again and again, then, through familiarity one can definitely reach a point where one makes one’s life more meaningful and uses daily activities as a way to accumulate more virtues and merit. This is something which is definitely possible, so it would be good to reflect upon these points.

Previous lamas have instructed that we need to familiarise ourselves with bodhicitta to the point that whatever activity we engage in, we do it with a bodhicitta attitude: sitting with bodhicitta; standing with bodhicitta; walking with bodhicitta; sleeping with bodhicitta and so forth. Constantly remember this as you engage in any activity. That is the best way to lead one’s daily life.

At best, try to cultivate bodhicitta, but if we have not reached that point yet, then even in simple tasks, always try to bring to mind ‘May this become a benefit for other beings’. As I just mentioned, if, before drinking a cup of tea, one can remember to offer it, this is a way for you to try to remember how you can make your daily activities more meaningful. Some new students here might have not heard it, but I’ve mentioned it many times how you first offer the tea with a mantra (the simplest way to offer and bless the tea is by reciting the mantra OM AH HUNG three times), and then before consuming it, generate the thought ‘May I be nourished with this tea so that I can benefit all sentient beings’.

In sharing this with you, I have no other intention or ulterior motive than to benefit you in your everyday life. If you pay attention to the instructions, then you can get some benefit.

I mentioned a year or so ago that when preparing to listen to His Holiness teach *Vast as the Heavens, Deep as the Sea: Verses in Praise of Bodhicitta* by Khunu Lama Rinpoche, I read the text, and it really moved my mind. It gives so much practical advice about ways of making your every-day activities meaningful, as a way to create great amounts of merit. It was inspiring just to read that text. It is available in English, so you have access to it—many of you might already have it. When reading it one naturally becomes very inspired, which is the power of the author Khunu Lama Rinpoche himself. There is no doubt he was a great, great practitioner, particularly in cultivating bodhicitta. This is why his words have such moving power, and such great effect on our minds.

As we familiarise ourselves with these practices, it starts to become part of our daily routine to think in this way, then we can enjoy what we do in a meaningful way. If we try to enjoy ourselves by engaging in activities with a worldly mind that is influenced by the delusions, then, rather than bringing more happiness, it only becomes the means to further fuel the afflictions and destroy one’s happiness. When one’s mind is affected by the delusions it does not

help to bring success or external good conditions, it only creates the cause to destroy one’s own happiness from within. When the delusions are fuelled, the ultimate result is no true satisfaction, and no true contentment within oneself.

These are the points we need to reflect upon and understand: we need to minimise that which destroys our happiness, and cultivate and develop that which brings about a genuine sense of contentment and satisfaction.

Even when one has an opportunity to relax physically, one needs to understand that if one harbours afflictions and delusions in one’s mind, one is still disturbed internally. So be cautious and conscientious. (This is something that will be presented in the text further on; I’m just giving a prelude to how we need to refer to the profound advice given in this text).

*c. It is suitable to abandon it*

The verse reads:

*58cd. If even the ascetics<sup>1</sup> filled with pride  
Belong to the proud,  
Then what is there to say about the inferiors?*

The commentary reads:

If even the ascetics who overcome difficulties with a mind filled with and controlled by afflicted pride belong to the very proud, then what is there to say about the inferiors that are objects of compassion? Since they are controlled by the enemy, it is unsuitable to be proud.

The commentary clearly presents that, *if even the ascetics who overcome difficulties with a mind filled with and controlled by afflicted pride belong to the very proud*, meaning that if those who put in great effort are afflicted by pride, then they too are in the class of those who are proud. If that is the case then for those who are *inferiors who are objects of compassion*, there’s no need to mention that they have been affected by pride from the very beginning, and are classified as proud.

*Since they are controlled by the enemy, it is unsuitable to be proud* refers to afflicted pride, not the great pride that is an antidote to afflicted pride. Thus it is unsuitable to harbour such afflicted pride.

#### **2.2.1.2.2.2.2.5. The benefits of the pride that is the antidote**

Having earlier explained the faults of afflicted pride the text now explains the benefits of the pride that is an antidote—that which is also given the name pride but which is suitable to be developed.

The verse reads:

*59. Those who hold pride to conquer the enemy of pride,  
They possess pride. The victorious heroes themselves  
Definitely destroy the rampage of the enemy of pride  
And complete the result of a conqueror, as migrators wish.*

The commentary explains by posing a question and an answer:

If asked: Who is someone with pride?

Answer: Since those that hold the pride that is the antidote, in order to conquer the enemy of the

afflictions possess a strong counter-positive force, they are called proud.

They are also the very heroes who are victorious over the enemy. If asked why. That is because upon having definitely destroyed from the root the rampage of the enemy of pride, they complete the temporary and ultimate results of the conqueror, including the enlightened activities, in accordance with the wishes of migrators, and also those that are divine. That is why they are called victorious against the enemy.

As the commentary explains, *since those that hold a pride that is the antidote, in order to conquer the enemy of the afflictions possess a strong counter-positive force which is a strong antidote, they are then called proud.* What is called pride here is actually a strong antidote for overcoming afflicted pride, and refers to the true sense of pride.

The commentary continues, *they are also the very heroes who are victorious over the enemy where 'They' refer to those who cultivate the pride which serves as an antidote for overcoming afflicted pride. They are referred to here as victorious, very brave, like heroes who overcome the enemy.*

*If asked why, that is because upon having definitely destroyed from the root the rampage of the enemy of pride, they complete the temporary and ultimate result of a conqueror, including the enlightened activities, in accordance with the wishes of migrators, and also those that are divine (divine referring to the worldly gods). As clearly explained here, when the pride which serves as a great powerful antidote to overcome the afflicted pride is cultivated, that then becomes the only means to destroy the enemy of the afflictions. Therefore, that is why they are called the victorious against the enemy.*

In reflecting on the meaning that *they complete the temporary and ultimate result of a conqueror*, one needs to be able to relate to earlier explanations of what the temporary and ultimate results are. *Temporary* refers to the good conditions in the higher rebirths, such as a human or in one of the divine god realms. *Ultimate* refers to liberation and ultimately the enlightenment of the conqueror.

In examining, *including the enlightened activities*, it is good to note the difference between the qualities of the conquerors (or buddhas) and their enlightened activities. Qualities refer to the ability of an enlightened being to effortlessly and spontaneously benefit all sentient beings, whereas enlightened activities refers to actually applying that ability and engaging in benefitting sentient beings with the effects to be experienced by sentient beings. In relation to (and included within) the enlightened activities, the commentary also says, *in accordance with the wishes of migrators*, which means that when the ability to benefit sentient beings effortlessly and spontaneously is established in that enlightened mind, it is then imparted in accordance to the wishes of sentient beings to benefit them in infinite ways. The actual benefit sentient beings receive is due to enlightened activities.

Referring back to the *temporary and ultimate results of the conqueror*, one needs to understand that having good temporary benefits, such as a precious human rebirth, becomes the very basis for one to accomplish the ultimate aims of achieving enlightenment. Without relying on the high status of a precious human rebirth or other conditions in higher rebirths, even as a temporary goal, we cannot possibly achieve the ultimate goals. Therefore temporary results are the direct causes for the qualities of enlightenment and the enlightened activities.

I've mentioned this previously but it is good to reflect upon these meanings which helps to enhance the overview of the path to enlightenment.

### **2.2.1.2.2.2.3. Pride against the afflictions**

Here, the specifics about the great pride which serves as an antidote are presented.

Take note as to why the term pride is used. Normal pride has a sense of 'I can do it', 'I have the means', 'I'm better...' etc. This sort of puffed up feeling is an afflicted pride. But it is a similar state of mind to feeling confident, 'I will not succumb to the delusions or the afflictions', 'I will combat and overcome the afflictions'. So the sense of one having the ability to do something is still there, but in a positive way to combat the afflictions. It is because there is the similarity in the state of mind that feels 'I can do it', that the term 'pride' is used.

To consolidate this understanding: with an afflicted (normal) pride a worldly person feels 'I'm better than the other. I'm more skilled, I have more knowledge etc. so I'm not going to be undermined by that person, I'm not going to allow them to bully me, I'm not going to allow them to ridicule me because I'm better than them. I'm going to control them rather than allow them to control me'. This afflicted pride is based on feeling that one's (minimal) knowledge has made one superior to the other, and so one resolves not to allow the other to control them.

A bodhisattva does not harbour this kind of pride towards other sentient beings. In contrast, they use a similar state of mind to develop a sentiment that combats the afflictions resolving, 'I'm not going to be controlled by the afflictions', 'I'm not going to be undermined and influenced by the afflictions', 'I will combat and overcome the afflictions'. When this sentiment is developed, along with self-confidence, that is what is referred to as the pride which is an antidote. Because of the similarity in the resolve that one makes, or the sentiment that one develops within one's mind, the term 'pride' is used.

This is subdivided into three:

2.2.1.2.2.2.3.1. One should generate the force of the antidote against the afflictions

2.2.1.2.2.2.3.2. One should not fall under their control at all

2.2.1.2.2.2.3.3. One should generate the special thought to generate a stable antidote

#### **2.2.1.2.2.2.3.1. One should generate the force of the antidote against the afflictions**

What we need to understand from this and the following verse and explanation, is the extent to which the afflictions are strong in one's mind, and that one needs to try and develop an even stronger antidote. Rather than giving in and succumbing to the afflictions when they are strong, and saying, 'I can't manage, this is overwhelming me', rather than being submissive to the afflictions, one should develop an even stronger antidote in one's mind as a way of combating the afflictions so that they don't overpower oneself. This is the point being presented here.

It is explained in the verse which reads:

60. *When in the midst of affliction's types,  
I shall stand up to them in a thousand ways,  
And not let myself be touched by the host of  
afflictions,  
Like the lion and the foxes and such.*

The commentary explains:

When abiding in the midst of the various types of afflictions such as anger I shall stand up to them in a thousand ways through the power of the antidote. For example, like the foxes that do not touch the lion, one should act not to be touched by the host of afflictions.

When the commentary mentions, *when abiding in the midst of the various types of afflictions such as anger*, most of us can reflect on our own situation where we are abiding in the midst of various afflictions. As we are afflicted by anger, pride, desire, jealousy etc. it is really no wonder that we get so easily influenced, because if it is not one affliction, it's another one. We're constantly surrounded by the various types of afflictions that we foster in our mind.

*When one is abiding amidst various types of afflictions such as anger and so forth*, what one needs to resolve is that *I shall stand up to them in a thousand ways through the power of the antidote*. The mightier the antidote, the weaker the afflictions will become. If one does not apply powerful antidotes, then it is more likely that one will succumb to the afflictions because then they will overpower oneself. The example presented here is *like the foxes that do not touch the lion*. (The Tibetan word *wa* is translated as fox, but a fox smaller than a *wa*, which is a larger animal with more fur; maybe wolf is a closer example.)

A wolf is powerful amongst other animals, but when compared to a lion it is much weaker, so it would never approach a lion because the lion is more powerful. Applying this analogy to understand the verse, the antidote needs to be like the lion, whereas the afflictions are like the weaker fox and start to shy away when confronted by a lion. This is how we need to resolve to combat the afflictions in our mind.

In relating the advice, *one should act not to be touched by the host of afflictions*, to ourselves as a personal instruction, we must try as much as possible to apply it and put it into practise. We all have experience of anger and the shortcomings of anger; if we foster anger and allow it to prevail, then it only becomes mightier and stronger in our mind. When an affliction like anger arises, at best we need to apply an antidote immediately to completely conquer the anger. But if that is not possible right away then the next best is not to allow the anger to intensify, at least not to completely follow anger and be completely submissive to it. The next best thing is to at least prevent oneself from engaging in the actions of anger. As with any other afflictions, it is said that at beginners' level if one is unable to apply the antidote, unable to reduce the intensity in one's mind, then the next best thing is to remove yourself from the situation completely; try not to come into contact with the objects that cause you anger, desire and so forth.

As mentioned in *The Thirty Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*:

Giving up inhospitable places, mental afflictions gradually decrease.

With no distractions, virtuous activities naturally increase.

When the mind becomes clear, conviction in the Dharma is born.

Therefore, seeking solitude is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

As indicated in this verse, when you remove yourself from the conditions of the afflictions, then the afflictions will start to gradually subside. Thus, avoiding contact with disturbing objects is also a method. That is, if you are not able to apply the antidotes right away, then it is best to remove yourself to

a place where you are not likely to interact with objects of afflictions. At an initial stage this can help one's mind not to be affected too much.

This passage relates to the benefits of remaining in solitude. It is saying that by removing oneself from conditions of afflictions, and staying in solitude, is the practice of a bodhisattva.

When one removes oneself from immediate conditions where afflictions arise, and whilst in solitude, apply the practices of accumulating virtue, then the conditions become conducive for one's mind to be in a more virtuous state. As one increases the practice of accumulating virtue, the afflictions will naturally start to reduce. It is in this context that the benefits of going into solitude are explained.

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

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Edited Version  
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# Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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

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

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment in order to liberate them from all suffering and lead them to ultimate happiness.

That is my goal, and in order to achieve that, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. Therefore I will engage in listening to the Mahayana teaching and put it into practise well.

Put simply, imagine someone asking, "What is your goal?" With the bodhicitta motivation the response needs to be, "My goal is to liberate all beings from suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness. In order to do that, I need to first achieve that goal, which is buddhahood, myself. So my purpose is to achieve that goal".

It is good to periodically assess oneself by asking questions such as: What is it that I really want to do? What is my main purpose in life? What is it that I wish to achieve? If one can competently respond that one's purpose is to accumulate virtue and merit, then asking those questions will be a check on whether one is actually engaging in the ways and means to accumulate that virtue. If one is doing so, then one rejoices and further strengthens that activity. If one is inclined to engage in negativities, then asking these questions acts as a reminder to be cautious. Then one can think "OK, I need to stop or reduce this activity so as to minimise the accumulation of negativity". This is how we make progress, and then a transformation can slowly start to take place.

We customarily ask others what they are doing, and then we wait for their response. Here, we need to be asking ourselves, "What am I doing?", which puts the focus on our own activities and manners. When one's partner or companion does something that is a bit inappropriate, we immediately jump on them and say, "What are you doing?" , accusing them of being ridiculous or stupid. But if we apply that approach to ourselves, "How about me, what am I doing?", then that initiative of looking into our own conduct will help us to behave more appropriately.

To re-emphasise the point: we quite readily notice someone else's mistakes and are quick to pounce on them. Periodically taking the initiative to look at our own thoughts and activities, and asking this question of ourselves, is a way of assessing our own thoughts, manners and so forth. Then we can reprimand or encourage ourselves as need be.

The instruction being presented in the following verses is to prevent the accumulation of negativities by applying mindfulness and awareness the moment one is about to engage in some negative action.

## 2.2.1.2.2.2.3. Pride against the afflictions (cont.) 2.2.1.2.2.2.3.2. One should not fall under their control at all

This is in reference to the afflictions.

The relevant verse reads:

61. *Just as one protects one's eyes  
When great danger occurs,  
One should take care not to be controlled by the  
afflictions  
When danger occurs.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning as follows:

When great danger. i.e. the danger of afflictions, occurs, then, just as humans protect their eyes with great concern, similarly, when there is the danger of falling under the control of the afflictions, one should take care not to be controlled by the afflictions.

As clearly explained in the commentary, *humans naturally protect their eyes with great concern*, which is especially true when there is a great danger. Their most precious organ is their eyes, and in the event of some great danger they instinctively protect their eyes, in spite of losing their limbs. That is quite obvious, as losing one's eyesight is one of the greatest concerns of any human being. Just as humans have this natural inclination to value their eyes as being most precious and thus protect them, *similarly, when there is the danger of falling under the control of the afflictions, one should take care not to be controlled by the afflictions.*

As I have indicated in the past, when there is a danger that one is going to be influenced by strong afflictions, then that is the time to apply mindfulness and awareness so as to not be completely overpowered and controlled by those afflictions. This instruction is exactly what is being explained here. Protecting one's mind from the afflictions is even more important than protecting one's eyes, or any other body part. The real destruction occurs in one's life when one is completely overpowered and influenced by the afflictions. There are those who are ultimately destroyed when they are completely controlled by attachment. Their wealth starts to decline, and their friends and companions and so forth will all fade away. It's the same with anger. So the more one contemplates the ill-effects of the afflictions and the damage that they do, the more one will be aware of that, and the more one will be primed to be really cautious about being controlled by the afflictions. As mentioned here in the commentary, whenever there is the danger that one's mind is controlled by the afflictions, then that is the time one should apply the means not to be controlled by them.

Simply put, one should not allow one's mind to be controlled by the delusions. The real culprit that destroys our happiness, and causes us so much distress, comes down to the afflictions. When the mind is controlled by the afflictions, then it is we who ultimately suffer. We are the ones who need to be in control of our own mind, so we should apply every measure not to give in to the afflictions, and not to allow them to control our mind. If we are feeling unhappy and we really look into the main cause, we will see that it comes down to the afflictions. In particular, the main affliction that causes the most distress and unhappiness is that our desires are not being fulfilled. We are not deprived of adequate wealth, food, clothing or shelter and companions, but we seem to be obsessed with unfulfilled desires, and so we constantly feel unhappy. It is this attachment to unfulfilled desires that causes inner turmoil,

stress and unhappiness. This is the point that we really need to understand.

When we are in mental turmoil, or even just unhappy, we are not capable of fulfilling our own purpose, let alone trying to fulfil the purpose of others. If we are not capable of fulfilling our own needs and purpose, then how can we even consider fulfilling the needs of others, and striving for their purpose? If one falls victim to the afflictions, then one will be defeated by them, and one's own purpose will not be fulfilled, let alone fulfilling the purposes of others. Therefore, we really need to focus on the disadvantages and faults of the afflictions, scrutinise them, and understand that what is really harming us is the afflictions that are in our own mind. We are quick to accuse others of harming us, but in comparison to the harm rendered by our own afflictions, that harm is actually quite minor. While physical wounds caused by others throwing a stone, for example, can heal after some time, the harm caused by the afflictions is continuous.

We need to recognise the afflictions for what they are. If one can recognise them when they arise, they will subside and we will not be completely overcome by them. At our level it is a significant achievement to even recognise the afflictions as they arise. As I regularly remind you, don't always try to find fault outside, and blame external situations for your problems. Rather, look within, and recognise that the real problem lies there.

If we do this on a regular basis, we will slowly begin to notice that the real cause of the problem is our negative attitude, or state of mind. When we start to notice this, and begin to manage our own attitudes and ways of thinking, the afflictions will start to subside. Then, regardless of external situations, we will feel a little bit more at ease, a little more comfortable, and we will notice an inner transformation taking place. Settling one's mind in this way is a very significant achievement.

When there is a dispute over wealth and someone gets killed, then others will remark, "What destroyed him was desire for the wealth that was the cause of the dispute". Delusions mislead us, just like others can mislead us. If, for example a non-drinker goes out with friends, and becomes more and more influenced by them, and then begins drinking a bit with those friends, they can end up becoming quite a drinker themselves. Then others make comments like, "Oh, he used to be a good person when he didn't drink. He was misled and destroyed through the negative influence of his friends".

When liberation is presented we are inspired to achieve liberation—we don't have much hesitation in wanting that! But then when the faults of the afflictions are presented, we might be hesitant in chasing them down, and applying their antidotes.

The point here is to recognise afflictions such as anger and attachment for what they are. When we recognise their ill-effects and disadvantages, then it becomes easier to understand others. When others, influenced by afflictions such as strong attachment or anger, are unhappy, showing inappropriate gestures and so forth, then instead of becoming upset and angry with them, by remembering one's own state of mind when one was affected by strong delusions, one can empathise with them. That becomes a means to develop compassion for others, rather than feeling angry and upset.

First, we need to recognise and acknowledge the ill-effects of the afflictions within ourselves, then we can relate that knowledge to others. Rather than seeing the other person as being at fault, one realises that it's the fault of the afflictions which are causing them to say inappropriate things and so forth. Of course, I have mentioned this many, many times in the past because it is such a significant point. There are many who have commented on how beneficial they have found this approach; they find they can really relate to it and find it very helpful.

When one can understand and acknowledge the real trouble maker and destroyer of happiness as being the afflictions, then they become the target. When we begin to combat the afflictions, we start to take the upper hand because we have more control over our minds. Then we will naturally become happier and more settled.

When one is not affected by the afflictions, then one feels a genuine sense of relaxation and ease. It is a break from the turmoil that can be created by manifest afflictions. The arhats, or foe destroyers, are in a perpetual state of peace, with a calm and peaceful state of mind, because they have uprooted the afflictions. We may not have reached that state yet, but nevertheless we benefit when we are temporarily free from manifest afflictions. Then we can actually experience a state of feeling calm and quiet and be at peace. From that we can gain a sense of how wonderful it would be if the afflictions were completely uprooted from our mind. Meanwhile, making an attempt to temporarily not be affected by the afflictions is a significant achievement for oneself at this stage.

#### **2.2.1.2.2.2.3.3. One should generate the special thought to generate a stable antidote**

The advice here is for bodhisattvas to obtain a stable antidote to overcome the afflictions.

The lines relating to this are:

*62. It is easy for one to die by being burnt  
And even to be beheaded,  
But one should not at all bow to  
The enemy of the afflictions.  
Likewise, at all occasions,  
One should only act appropriately.*

Then the commentary presents the meaning as follows:

The measure of having a stable antidote: It is easy for one to die through being burnt by fire or having one's head chopped off, but one should not at all bow to the enemy of the afflictions.

Likewise, one should on all occasions destroy the objects of abandonment and make the antidote stable. Thus one should not act in any way other than appropriately.

Here *measure* means the mark or the gauge of having a stable antidote. *It is easy to die through being burnt by fire or having one's head chopped off, but one should not at all bow to the enemy of the afflictions*, means that, in comparison to the harm caused by the enemy of the afflictions, it is easier, or in other words, more suitable, to be burnt by fire or have one's head chopped off, because at worst it only destroys this life. Whereas if one were to *bow to the enemy*, meaning to be under the control and the influence of the afflictions, and not apply the antidotes to overcome them, then there will be perpetual harm throughout future lives. The harm that one endures over a long period of time will have come from the afflictions within ourselves.

As the harm one receives from the afflictions is so much greater and more destructive than the harm that one may receive in this life, one needs to apply the appropriate antidote. As the commentary states, *likewise, one should on all occasions destroy the objects of abandonment and make the antidote stable*. Making the antidote stable, refers ultimately to the antidote that serves as the means to overcome self-grasping. When that antidote is stabilised, then one can act appropriately on all occasions. Therefore the main focus is to stabilise that antidote.

*Thus one should not act in any way other than appropriately*. Having thoroughly reflected on the shortcomings of the afflictions, and their deeply rooted destructive nature, one needs to resolve to apply the antidote. Even in this life we can see the ill-effects of the afflictions, not to mention the ill-effects over many lifetimes. So we need to resolve to apply the antidote and make it stable.

#### **2.2.1.2.3. The power of joy<sup>1</sup>**

This is subdivided into three:

2.2.1.2.3.1. One should strive in virtue regardless of the ripening result

2.2.1.2.3.2. Accomplishing virtue by keeping the result in mind

2.2.1.2.3.3. The way of relating it to the power of joy

##### **2.2.1.2.3.1. One should strive in virtue regardless of the ripening result**

This heading indicates that one should strive in virtue, without any concern for the ripening positive result that one will experience.

The instruction here is that bodhisattvas should engage in virtuous activities with the sole intention of benefitting other beings. They should not think, "If I engage in this virtue, I will personally benefit from the good result". If one engages in virtue with that intention, then that action would be done out of self interest. While there might be some virtue in that, it will be a limited virtue, as the intention to engage in the virtue will be tainted by self interest.

Whereas if one engages in virtue with the sole intention that it will be a cause to benefit others, then, regardless of any thoughts about the ripening result for oneself, one will actually experience the positive result anyway. In other words, there is no need to focus on benefit for oneself, as one will benefit as a natural by-product of the original intention. There is the famous quote in Lama Tsong Khapa's lam rim which says that by benefitting others, one's own benefit will be naturally accomplished on the side. His Holiness the Dalai Lama also emphasises the same point.

In our ordinary mind we might feel, "If I dedicate everything to others, what is there left for me? How will that benefit me?" Here we are being told that one need not worry about benefits for oneself, because personal benefit is a natural by-product of working solely to benefit others. When you dedicate yourself fully to the benefit of other sentient beings, then you will naturally be benefited as well.

In contrast to that, if one focuses only on one's own interests, then one will not even fulfil one's own purpose fully, let alone being able to fulfil the purpose of others. This is the point that was made earlier: one's own purpose and the purpose of others will be basically destroyed by self interest.

The verse relating to this heading reads:

*63. Just like desiring the resultant happiness of play,  
Whatever the engaged activity is,  
Hold onto these actions,  
Like them without satisfaction.*

Then as the commentary explains:

Just as some children desire the resultant happiness of play so should bodhisattvas have joy and grasp at their actions for the purpose of others, such as listening, contemplating and meditating on bodhicitta. One should be so joyful that one desires the actions continually without being satisfied by them.

*Just as some children desire the resultant happiness of play* uses the example of children who want to keep on playing. When the parents try to call them back, or tell them to stop, they don't want to stop, because there is such joy in playing. They do not see it as a task, because they enjoy it so much. The advice here is that *bodhisattvas* should also *have joy and grasp at their actions*, meaning that they should hold onto their actions for the purpose of others with joy.

As presented here, engaging in deeds or actions of benefitting others, includes actions such as *listening* to the teachings and *contemplating* their meaning, and meditating, specifically *meditating on bodhicitta*. Of course, further practices of bodhisattvas include engaging in the three trainings of morality, concentration and wisdom, along with the practice of the six perfections of morality, generosity, patience, joyous effort, meditation and wisdom. Bodhisattvas engage in these activities with a sense of joy, and are never satisfied with engaging in them intermittently. Rather, they continuously engage in these actions for the purpose of others with joy.

*One should be so joyful that one desires the actions continuously, without being satisfied by them*, means not feeling satisfied in thinking "That's enough, I've done enough". Rather, one should continuously engage in these actions.

The main theme of the outline is that when bodhisattvas engage in these actions for the sole purpose of others, they have no ulterior motive of wanting to receive the benefit of the ripening results. There is no stain of self interest in their actions. Rather they feel joy in continuously engaging in actions for the sole purpose of benefitting others. Of course this advice is for bodhisattvas. However, we can take this explanation as a personal instruction to do as much as possible to develop an attitude of engaging in virtues in a continuous way, with a sense of joy. We should not be satisfied with engaging in one virtuous act now, thinking 'Oh, I've done my good deed for the day, so that's done!' Rather we should develop a mind of continuously engaging in virtuous actions, along with a sense of joy in doing so. With such a sense of joy, one will naturally be inspired to engage in these practices continuously. That is how we need to take this explicit advice to bodhisattvas as a personal instruction for ourselves.

##### **2.2.1.2.3.2. Accomplishing virtue by keeping the result in mind**

Lest one doubts that good results follow from virtuous actions, the advice here is that one needs to be mindful of the infallibility of karma;— one will definitely experience a positive result from positive actions, and when one engages in negative actions, a negative result will definitely occur.

<sup>1</sup> This heading was introduced on 14 July 2015.



Therefore one needs to accomplish virtue by keeping in mind the infallibility of karma.

The first verse under this heading reads:

64. *Although working for the purpose of happiness  
It is uncertain whether it will become happiness  
or not.  
The very action that becomes happiness  
How can one be happy not doing it?*

The commentary explaining this verse reads:

Though worldly beings engage in actions such as fieldwork in order to attain mental and physical happiness, it is uncertain whether the result will be happiness or not. Only the actions of bodhisattvas are certain to bring about temporary and ultimate happiness, and if one does not engage in these actions then how could one attain the resultant happiness?

As explained here in the commentary, *though worldly beings engage in actions such as fieldwork in order to attain mental and physical happiness, it is uncertain whether the result will be happiness or not*. This refers to uncertainty about immediate results. A farmer may toil in the fields but it is uncertain whether he will reap a good harvest. Even if he were to have a good harvest, then the next uncertainty is whether that success will bring about the desired result of physical and mental happiness. Likewise with those who trade with the intention of making a profit from their business ventures; it is uncertain whether they will actually make a profit, or if their business will prosper. But even if they were to make a profit, it is uncertain whether or not they would obtain the ultimate result of physical and mental happiness. That is the point being presented here.

As explained further in the commentary, *only the actions of bodhisattvas are certain to bring about temporary and ultimate happiness*. The actions of bodhisattvas, such as practising the perfection of morality, practising the perfection of generosity and so forth with the sole purpose of benefitting others, bring the certainty of physical and mental happiness.

Therefore, *if one does not engage in these actions then how could one attain the resultant happiness?* This indicates that if one does not engage in these causes, then of course one cannot experience the resultant mental and physical happiness. The main point emphasised here is that the action of benefitting others is what brings joy to a bodhisattva's mind. They find no joy in worldly activities; only actions that benefit others bring them great joy.

The next verse in this section is:

65. *If one is not satisfied by sense pleasures,  
Which are like honey on a razor's edge,  
Then how can one be satisfied by the merit  
Of the ripening result of peaceful happiness?*

Then the commentary explains:

Sensory happiness of forms, sounds and so forth are like honey on a razor's edge: when tasted with one's tongue then, although experiencing some taste, one experiences the suffering of being cut on the tongue. If one is not satisfied by cyclic existence, no matter how much one is engaging in it, then how can one be satisfied by the merit of generosity and so forth, which is the cause to attain the temporary happiness of higher rebirth of gods and humans and the ultimate happiness where all suffering has been pacified. One should meditate on them insatiably.

The analogy used here could not be more graphic! It presents a very vivid image of what samsaric pleasures are

like: the *sensory happiness of forms, sounds and so forth are like honey on a razor's edge*. Although the Tibetan word used here refers to a very sharp knife, the English translation uses *razor*. If you smear honey on a very sharp blade, and lick it off the blade then, although you experience some temporary pleasure from the sweet taste of the honey, you will immediately feel the suffering of having cut your tongue. Shantideva, being a great master, always finds the most vivid examples in his explanations.

When the commentary refers to the *sensory happiness of forms, sounds and so forth*, the words *so forth* includes the rest of the sense pleasures—taste, smell, tactile feelings and mental pleasures. There is no other way to experience sensory pleasures other than by contact between the sensory objects and our senses. When the commentary states *if one is not satisfied by these pleasures in cyclic existence then no matter how much one engages in it* the implication is that in this life we have experienced many sensory pleasures, not to mention the pleasures we have experienced in previous lives as well.

Yet the very moment after one experiences coming into contact with an object that brings pleasure to the senses, a sense of dissatisfaction because one is not satiated arises. There has been a fleeting experience of pleasure but in the next moment, it has turned into dissatisfaction. That in itself indicates that we are not experiencing true happiness—we have not been satisfied by any of the sensory pleasures that we have experienced so far.

For as long as we are controlled by the afflictions, and experience these sensory pleasures, there will be no satisfaction while we remain in cyclic existence. That being the case, *then how can one be satisfied by the merit of generosity and so forth*, indicates that if one is inclined to be dissatisfied even with momentary pleasures, then why would one be satisfied with engaging in causes for both the temporary as well as the ultimate results?

As mentioned previously, engaging in the practices of generosity, morality, patience and so forth is the cause to obtain the temporary happiness of a higher rebirth of gods and humans. Not only that, but they are also the cause to obtain ultimate happiness, where all suffering has been pacified i.e. liberation and ultimately, enlightenment. Understanding and recognising that, one should, as the commentary concludes, *resolve to meditate on them insatiably*, and thus not be satisfied with practising the six perfections once or twice. Rather one should engage in them continuously.

Understanding this section of the text is not difficult. However we need to read it, and contemplate the meaning, then we will experience the benefit of more stability in our minds.

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

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Edited Version  
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# Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

15 September 2015

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

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

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, in order to liberate them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practice well.

## 2.2.1.2.3.3. The way of relating it to the power of joy

The verse reads:

66. *Therefore, to complete one's actions,  
One should engage in the action  
Like an elephant tormented at noon  
That, when coming upon a lake, immerses itself  
in it.*

The commentary explains the meaning:

Because it is an action suitable to engage in, therefore, in order to complete the intended action one should engage in it like an elephant tormented at noon by heat and thirst that comes upon a lake and immerses itself joyfully in it.

This explanation follows the presentation of the previous verse in the commentary about the merit of generosity and so forth, which states:

the cause to attain the temporary happiness and higher rebirth of gods and humans, and the ultimate happiness where all suffering is pacified.

In relation to the practices of the six perfections - generosity and so forth - the commentary explains that a way to actually engage in such actions is by relating them to the power of joy. The commentary states, *because it is an action suitable to engage in*, and here *suitable* indicates that it brings about the practices of the six perfections, such as generosity, ethics and morality, patience etc., which in turn bring about a temporary and ultimate goal for oneself and other sentient beings. Thus these actions are suitable to engage in, and the way to engage in these practices is with a sense of joy, achieved by contemplating the positive results that they will bring. Doing this encourages one to engage in positive actions as a cause for positive results, willingly and joyfully.

If we were given the choice to experience positive results we would not hesitate to accept them. For example, the positive results of generosity and morality are abundant wealth and a good physique, so we'd willingly accept those. But if we honestly ask ourselves whether we are engaging in the causes to obtain these good results, we'd find that we are not. In short, we wish for positive results but we don't pay much attention to creating the causes

for them. While we'd rather not experience the negative consequences of practising the opposite of the six perfections, that is actually what we do, i.e. we practise the opposite of generosity by being miserly and so forth. We find ourselves engaging in negativities willingly and without hesitation.

We need to understand that for as long as we engage in this disparity between the cause and the effect, while we wish for positive results but don't create the causes, then we cannot possibly experience them.

In order to relate to this explanation we need to bring to mind the understanding of karma. When one has a strong belief in karma one is naturally willing to engage in positive deeds, and thus accumulates virtues. Whenever there is an opportunity to accumulate virtue it brings about a sense of great joy, where we feel very fortunate to have the opportunity to do so. Being happy about the opportunity to accumulate good deeds and virtues, rejoicing in accumulating them, and dedicating them to a positive end, is the means to secure and increase the positive merit of those virtues.

With a strong belief in karma one naturally hesitates to engage in negativities, and when one finds oneself engaged in them, one immediately develops strong regret about how unfortunate it is to have succumbed again to the delusions. Such regret enables one to confess the negativities, which is a means to purify them. While at our level now, we may not be able to completely avoid engaging in negativities, the benefit of a strong belief in karma means that one will not idly let one's negativities sit; one actually resolves to purify them with confession.

When one acquaints oneself with karma to the point where towards evening one takes the initiative to purify any negativities created during the day, one can go to sleep with a clear and virtuous mind. This is the way to conduct oneself in daily life to make it more meaningful. And if one has accumulated virtues, one can rejoice and go to sleep in a virtuous state of mind. If the sleep itself can also become virtuous then that is great, and the next morning one can rejoice in having a good sleep. If we find ourselves creating negativities with thought or action during the night, then in the morning we should again take the opportunity to purify them.

It is very difficult at our level to completely avoid engaging in negativities because of the strong delusions in our mind. Habituation with negativities finds us periodically engaging in them, but we have the great advantage of using our understanding of the Dharma to counteract them by developing regret, confessing them, and then purifying the negativities. So even though we might still engage in negativities, knowing the Dharma provides us with the means to practise and purify them.

Also, when we create virtues, understanding Dharma allows us to seize the opportunity to secure them through dedication, and further increase them through rejoicing. If we actually practise the Dharma then this is the great advantage we have. There are those who create negativities but do not know how to purify them, and there are those who create great amounts of virtue and may not be aware of it, as is the case with many non-religious people.

On this point, I want to relate an incident I saw recently on TV where there was a lady who was incredibly kind in making attempts to save an injured kangaroo that had been shot with an arrow. She was holding it as if it was her own child, and nurturing it and caring for the wound. I don't know what eventually happened to the kangaroo but the great extent to which this lady was caring for it really touched me. The perpetrators would have just mindlessly shot the arrow, maybe as a game, not really valuing the life of another living being. So while some exhibit cruelty and mean to destroy life, this lady took it upon herself to try to save the kangaroo's life, and put a lot of time and love into it. Seeing it actually brought tears to my eyes. It's unlikely that she is a religious person, but I thought the extent to which she showed such great concern for another living being was a very compassionate act.

If we consider ourselves 'religious' we might consider doing even better than that! Of course there are different ways and means of putting this into practice, particularly in relation to avoiding negativities, rejoicing in virtue, and increasing our virtues. This is something we have the understanding and the knowledge to do. If we don't use the tools we have then there's no advantage in us gaining this understanding from the Dharma. The main thing is to resolve to take every opportunity to accumulate virtue, and when one finds one is creating negativities, apply methods to purify them. When we think about it, it's not that complicated. Most of it is done through our mental attitude, and our way of thinking; acknowledging negativities for what they are and regretting and confessing them. Whenever we have the opportunity to accumulate virtue we should recognise it and willingly engage in it. When we take these measures it actually starts to become a habit. Acquainting ourselves with accumulating virtue and purifying negativities can definitely lead to a much lighter and more joyous mind.

For those who intentionally engage in negative deeds we can obviously see that their lives are not really happy, and that they are constantly living in fear and worry and complications. The consequences they experience are not farfetched. Temporarily it may seem they are in control and enjoying life, but actually they end up leading very unhappy lives. In contrast, we can definitely see that those who are engaged in kind and compassionate deeds have much more joyful and happy lives. Whether they are aware of it or not, they are actually experiencing the positive consequences of abiding by karma, committing virtues and shunning negativity. On these obvious levels it is good for us to consider the significances of these practices.

As explained in the commentary, having understood the practice as being actions which are suitable to engage in, *therefore in order to complete the intended action one should engage in it*, which indicates that for bodhisattvas engaged in the practices of generosity and so forth, once they engage in them, completing the action should be done with a sense of great joy.

The analogy presented here is that, *it is like an elephant tormented at noon by heat and thirst that comes upon a lake and immerses itself joyfully in it*. This is a vivid example. When an animal like an elephant comes upon a water

hole after walking for a long time on a very hot day, and becomes thirsty, it will rush towards the water and very joyfully drink it and immerse itself in the water. It will take great joy in that activity.

Like this analogy of an elephant taking great joy in coming upon a lake, when a bodhisattva engages in the practices of generosity and so forth, they need to engage in them with a similar great sense of joy because these are actions that benefit other sentient beings.

#### 2.2.1.2.4. The power of relinquishment

This is divided into two:

2.2.1.2.4.1. Temporary relinquishment

2.2.1.2.4.2. Certain relinquishment

##### 2.2.1.2.4.1. Temporary relinquishment

Temporary relinquishment relates to taking a break, or rest.

The two lines of verse read:

*67ab. If one is affected by weakening strength  
One should relinquish to start again.*

Gyaltshab Je's commentary explains the meaning:

If one is affected by one's weakening strength, physically and mentally exhausted by one's practice of virtue, then one should relinquish temporarily in order to start again when one is rested.

While the explanation is clear, it is good to take note of the main point which is very good advice for us at our level. When engaging in virtues, when one's *strength* is *weakened physically* with physical ailments like sickness, or *mentally exhausted* when one is a bit overwhelmed or stressed, then at that time one should relinquish the practice temporarily. This is not suggesting that we completely put the practice aside and don't do it anymore. Rather, it means taking a short rest so that one can feel rejuvenated to further engage in the practice of that virtue. So it is with the intention to continue afresh in the practice of virtue that one takes a rest, rather than having a complete break and not doing the practice at all.

##### 2.2.1.2.4.2. Certain relinquishment

The next two lines of the verse read:

*67cd. If it is well completed one relinquishes,  
Because one wishes to do it later again and again.*

The commentary explains:

If an action is completed well, then one relinquishes it because one wants to repeat that action again and again in the future.

Relinquishing an action that is completed well, needs to be understood as relinquishing the satisfaction of having done that action well, and to further develop it by striving to engage in the action again and again.

Having completed an action well, if one feels satisfied that it has already been done, then one will not feel the need to do it again. It is this satisfaction, and not seeing the need to do the action again and again that has to be relinquished. If one feels satisfied with the completion, it prevents one from engaging in it again and again. When engaging in the practice of virtue, one needs to make even more effort to increase the means of accumulating

virtue. It is in this way that one progresses from one practice to the next.

Using the example of studies at school, when one finishes the first grade, if one did not relinquish the thought of being satisfied just with that, one would not go on to the next grade, and the following grades after that. When completing first grade one has finished one part of one's schooling, but one needs to relinquish the thought, 'I'm done with my studies now', and continue on to the next grade and so forth.

### **2.2.2. Being earnest about practising the actions with mindfulness and introspection**

This is subdivided into five:

2.2.2.1. One should earnestly be conscientious

2.2.2.2. Being earnest about mindfulness and introspection

2.2.2.3. Not giving an opportunity for faults to arise with mindfulness and introspection

2.2.2.4. If a fault arises one needs to stop it immediately

2.2.2.5. One should strive in suitable actions

All the practices presented here have already been mentioned, but now they are presented in the context of putting them into practice.

#### **2.2.2.1. ONE SHOULD EARNESTLY BE CONSCIENTIOUS**

The verse reads:

*68. Like the seasoned warrior that is engaged  
In a fencing duel with the enemy  
One should avoid the weapon of the afflictions  
And look to attack the enemy of the afflictions.*

The commentary explains:

The seasoned warrior that is engaged in combat with an enemy and who is skilled in weapons and the art of war, will evade the enemy's weapons and attack the enemy. Similarly, upon evading the weapons that are one's own afflictions, one should stop them and not be destroyed by them. Instead one attacks the enemy of the affliction with the weapons of the antidotes and cuts them off at the root.

When the commentary explains, *when an experienced warrior that is engaged in combat with the enemy and who is skilled in the weapons and the art of war*, it means that they have all the necessary skills involved in engaging in combat. In combat they will conduct themselves with a twofold method to overcome the enemy: protecting themselves from harm by being able to evade the weapon targeted at them, and at the same time, find the ways and means to actually attack the enemy by using one's own weapons.

Just as this is done in physical combat with an enemy, when this analogy is applied to fighting afflictions, one first needs to protect oneself (make sure the afflictions don't harm oneself), while applying the means (using antidotes) to overcome them.

The significant point here is that if one is just focussed on overcoming the afflictions, there might be occasions where they actually harm oneself, and one is not aware of it. What is being highlighted here is that one needs to apply one's wisdom in both ways: while combating the afflictions in order to overcome them, at the same time ensuring that one is not harmed by them.

*Instead one attacks the enemy of the affliction with the weapons of the antidotes and cuts them off at the very root* means that in one's attempt to overcome the afflictions one is not satisfied with just overcoming one or two afflictions, or the manifest levels of the afflictions, but effectively attempts to abandon them from their very root. The main practice here is to abide with conscientiousness while applying enthusiasm in virtue to protect one's mind from afflictions. So we apply this twofold approach to conscientiousness: on one hand enthusiastically engaging in virtue, and on the other being constantly mindful of protecting one's mind from the harm of the afflictions.

#### **2.2.2.2. BEING EARNEST ABOUT MINDFULNESS AND INTROSPECTION**

The presentation of these practices makes us mindful of them being ways to protect our commitments, particularly one's vows. It is essential to have these tools to protect commitments.

The verse reads:

*69. If one's sword falls down in battle  
Then, out of fear, one will pick it up quickly.  
Similarly, if one loses the weapon of  
mindfulness  
Then, out of fear of the hell realms, one should  
quickly pick it up.*

The commentary explains:

If one's sword falls out of one's hand in the midst of battle, one quickly picks it up out of fear of being killed by the enemy. Similarly, if one loses the weapon of mindfulness, which does not forget the virtuous object, then out of fear of the hell realms, by remembering how one will be born there if one is destroyed by the afflictions, one quickly picks up the antidote of mindfulness and introspection.

Here Shantideva shows what an insightful master he is in presenting this clear and vivid analogy; *If one's sword falls out of one's hand in the midst of battle, one quickly picks it up out of fear of being killed by the enemy*. This shows an automatic response in battle, where, if the very weapon one is using to protect oneself - e.g. a sword - falls out of the hand, one immediately reacts and picks it up again, in order to protect oneself.

What the analogy explains is that, *similarly, if one loses the weapon of mindfulness, which does not forget the virtuous object*, where mindfulness is the weapon, the state of mind that constantly remembers the virtuous object. One remembers the virtuous object constantly through mindfulness, as encouraged here, *out of fear of the hell realms*. By remembering that if one loses that mindfulness then the afflictions will destroy one, with the consequence of experiencing the hell realms as a result, *one quickly picks up the antidote of mindfulness and introspection*. As just mentioned, this particular type of mindfulness is constantly remembering the virtuous object, while introspection investigates whether one's three doors of body, speech, and mind are in tune with keeping the virtuous object in mind.

When one forgets the virtuous object then that is when it is most likely for the actions of the three doors to engage in negativity. Therefore, having both mindfulness and introspection to constantly keep our mind in virtue is at the very core of our practice. This is why, when

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introducing meditation sessions, I constantly emphasise the point about keeping the virtuous object in mind and trying to remember it, and not allowing negativities to completely control oneself, so that one lapses from engaging in virtue.

There might be many virtuous objects, so to simplify one's practice into something one can do, focus on love and compassion as the main virtuous objects. Constantly try and bring to mind the value of love and compassion, the need to develop it, and try to tune one's mind into love and compassion. This protects one's mind from a lapse of love and compassion, and so one's life can become really meaningful.

### 2.2.2.3. NOT GIVING AN OPPORTUNITY FOR FAULTS TO ARISE WITH MINDFULNESS AND INTROSPECTION

The opportunity for faults to arise occurs during times when one lapses from mindfulness and introspection. So applying mindfulness and introspection prevents opportunities for faults to arise.

The verse reads:

70. *Just as poison will spread  
In dependence on the blood,  
So faults will pervade the mind  
If they find an opportunity.*

The commentary explains:

If one is hit by a poisoned arrow, then just as the poison will spread through one's body in dependence on the blood that is coursing through one's veins, so will the faults of anger and so forth pervade the mind, if they find an opportunity of lapsed mindfulness and such due to afflictions. Therefore one should stop even the smallest affliction.

When the commentary explains that, *if one is hit by a poisoned arrow*, take note that it's not just a normal arrow, but the tip of the arrow is dipped into poison so that when someone is hit by it and it pierces their skin, the poison starts to spread rapidly through the bloodstream. When this happens there's really not much chance for survival, because as the poison spreads it can take one's life.

Using this vivid analogy, *if the faults of anger and so forth pervade the mind, and find an opportunity of lapsed mindfulness and such due to afflictions*, i.e. if one lapses from mindfulness and introspection, then afflictions such as anger and so forth will permeate the mind, and thus destroy one's wellbeing. The commentary concludes, *therefore one should stop even the smallest affliction*.

The next verse is presented with a query:

Query: If asked, how should one be attentive?

We'll leave the following verse and explanation for our next session. Briefly, it presents another vivid analogy for applying mindfulness. It is of someone carrying a container, like a basket with different kinds of fruits, by balancing it on the head. As difficult as this is in itself, the threat here is that if one of those fruits falls out of the basket then someone will chop off your head with a sword. With that threat one would be very, very mindful.

The analogy, as presented, consists of a person carrying a container of fruit, or in this case mustard oil, and if one drop spills then their head would be chopped off. When the road itself is uneven, with a lot of slippery gravel, it's

difficult to walk on, so under such conditions we can imagine how difficult and fearsome it would be. The person would have to exert the most incredible attentiveness in order not to spill any of that oil. In the same way, mindfulness must be applied to protect one's mind from the afflictions.

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

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Edited Version  
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# Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

22 September 2015

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

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

For the sake of all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings, and put them into practice well. That will be a means to subdue my mind.

This would be a good way to generate the motivation for listening to the teachings.

## 2.2.2. Being sincere about practising actions with mindfulness and introspection

### 2.2.2.3. NOT GIVING AN OPPORTUNITY FOR FAULTS TO ARISE WITH MINDFULNESS AND INTROSPECTION (CONT.)

We covered the first verse under this heading last week. The next verse is preceded by this query:

If asked: How should one be attentive?

In response to this the verse reads:

71. *Just as a person that is carrying a jar filled with mustard oil  
In front of someone wielding a sword  
Will be careful not to spill anything out of fear of death,  
In the same way should an ascetic be attentive.*

Then the commentary explains the meaning of the verse.

Answer: A person that is carrying a jar filled with mustard oil along a slippery road in front of someone carrying a sword, under the threat of being killed if they spill even just one drop, will be very attentive. A practicing bodhisattva should be similarly attentive in holding the antidote of bodhicitta and so forth with mindfulness and introspection.

This is a vivid analogy. It relates to a person who is carrying a jar filled with mustard oil (which is produced from white mustard seed, as opposed to black mustard seed). We need to visualise the container as being more like a bowl with a wide top, rather than a jar with a narrow neck. If a bowl-like container is filled to the brim with oil then it would be extremely difficult to avoid spilling the oil. In the analogy, the person carrying this container has to walk on a rough, slippery road that could easily cause them to slip or trip. The threat in the analogy is that if this person so much as spills one drop of oil, he will be beheaded. With such a threat the person would be extremely careful not to spill even just one tiny drop of oil out of fear for his own life. Far from being careless and mindless, their level of attentiveness and mindfulness in such a situation would be extremely high.

Then the commentary explains the meaning of the analogy. A practicing bodhisattva should be similarly attentive in holding the antidote of bodhicitta and so forth with mindfulness and introspection. As explained here very precisely, a practicing bodhisattva who has bodhicitta vows, and possibly ordination

vows as well, needs to be similarly attentive in holding the antidote to breaching those vows. In particular, the bodhicitta vows need to be applied with great mindfulness and introspection.

While this advice is directed at practicing bodhisattvas, we can also take this advice as an instruction for ourselves with respect to the commitments we have taken. We should not take this analogy lightly thinking, 'Oh this is a very unlikely situation' or 'This analogy seems a bit far-fetched'. In fact, the analogy indicates that we should see that breaching one's vows and commitments would be as grave as losing our own life. So the degree of attentiveness, mindfulness and introspection that we need to adopt should reflect that gravity. We need to understand that this is the level of mindfulness that needs to be applied in protecting our vows.

We also need to relate this passage to other practices as well. When the commentary refers to holding the antidote of bodhicitta and so forth, it is implying that we need to apply mindfulness and introspection so that we do not engage in the opposite of bodhisattva practices like the six perfections. This means using mindfulness and introspection to protect our minds from miserliness as a way of not hindering our practice of generosity, practising patience in order to protect our mind from anger, and practising morality as a way of refraining from harming others.

In this way, practices with a bodhicitta motivation become the ultimate antidote to the self-cherishing mind. By protecting all levels of our practice of generosity, morality, patience, joyous effort and so forth, we ensure that our actions are not tainted with the self-interest of a self-cherishing mind, which is a means to actually benefit others. That is how bodhicitta serves as an antidote to the opposite of the practices of a bodhisattva. This is also related to the cause and effect sequence of karma. So in order to fully embrace it, we need to relate this analogy to a broader perspective.

I have previously emphasised how we need to protect our mind from negativities. As emphasised here, we need to protect our mind from negativities such as miserliness, harmfulness, a lack of joyous effort and so forth. This need for mindfulness and introspection also applies to combatting strong attachment and anger. We need to apply mindfulness and introspection constantly in order to be ready to apply the appropriate antidote whenever there is a chance that negativities might arise.

As I have also mentioned previously, we also need to be mindful of the virtuous object. The real implication of the practice of meditation is to always be mindful of the virtuous object, because remembering virtuous objects lessens the opportunity for negativities to arise. So being mindful of the virtuous object in general actually serves as an antidote that overcomes negativities. This is how we need to apply this practice at our level.

### 2.2.2.4. IF A FAULT ARISES ONE NEEDS TO STOP IT IMMEDIATELY

I have reflected on these points previously. The first verse under this heading reads:

72. *Therefore, just as one leaps up quickly  
If a snake comes into one's lap,  
If sleep and sloth come  
One should stop them quickly.*

Then the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Since one will go to the hell realms if one's virtue is destroyed by afflictions, one should, out of fear of the hell realms, quickly stop sleep and sloth, which cause one to withdraw involuntarily if they come, just as one would leap up quickly if a poisonous snake would come into one's lap.

*Since one will go to the hell realms if one's virtue is destroyed by the afflictions* refers to the root virtues. The virtue of non-attachment is destroyed by attachment, the virtue of non-anger is destroyed by the affliction of anger, and the root virtue of non-ignorance is destroyed by the mind of ignorance. Likewise, the root virtue of generosity is destroyed by miserliness, the root virtue of morality is destroyed by the lack of morality, and so forth. When one reflects on the explanation of karma, one sees that if one adopts miserliness, then there is no way that one can obtain good resources in future lives. We cannot hope to be reborn with good resources and good conditions in our next rebirth if we are affected by the negativity of miserliness now. Likewise with other non-virtues. If root virtues are destroyed by their opposing afflictions then that will destroy our prospects of enjoying good results in our future life.

As I have explained in previous sessions, if we find ourselves engaging in negativity during the day, then we should take the initiative to confess them and purify those negativities that night. We also need to purify whatever negativities we have created during the night the next morning, so that our root virtues are not completely destroyed by these negativities.

As explained in the commentary, *one should, out of fear of the hell realms, quickly stop sleep and sloth*. Sleep can be neutral or even virtuous, depending on one's state of mind. However the *sleep* that is initiated with an ignorant state of mind destroys a lot of opportunities for accumulating virtues. If sleep is established with a virtuous state of mind, then it is virtuous sleep, but if sleep is affected by *ignorance* it can become non-virtuous.

Although the act of sleeping seems harmless, it can rob us of a great opportunity for accumulating virtues. Sleep takes up a lot of our time. We can spend up to half of our lives sleeping, so if we do not use sleep in a virtuous way then we rob ourselves of a great opportunity for accumulating virtues.

*Sloth* is a state of worldly idleness when we are not engaged in accumulating virtues, and the consequence of being robbed of the opportunity for accumulating virtues is having to go to unfortunate rebirths such as the *hell realms*.

Here, *involuntarily withdrawn* refers to the state of our consciousness being withdrawn during sleep, and thus not able to focus on virtue.

The manner of how one should actually overcome such obstacles to accumulating virtue is explained with another vivid analogy, *just as one would leap up quickly if a poisonous snake dropped into one's lap*. If a poisonous snake were to drop onto our lap we would not just sit there doing nothing. Out of the fear that at any given moment the snake could bite us, and its venom kill us, we would immediately get rid of that poisonous snake from our lap. In the same way one needs to overcome obstacles, such as sleep and sloth, which destroy one's virtues.

The next verse under this heading is preceded by a query.

Query: How then should one stop them?

73. *With each fault that arises  
One should reprimand oneself  
And motivate strongly:  
'I shall act so that this never happens again'.*

Then the commentary explains:

Answer: With each fault that arises one should reprimand oneself, saying 'When I acted like this in the past, many unwished-for things happened, and I did not achieve what I wanted. Do I still want to act like this?' Then one confesses with the four powers and motivates for a long time: 'I shall make an effort so that this fault never arises again.'

The explanation is quite clear. Actually, Shantideva is supporting what I regularly emphasise. As the commentary states, *with each fault that arises one should reprimand oneself*. As presented here, one investigates one's actions, and for every fault that arises one should engage in an inner dialogue, and reprimand oneself.

If what one wishes for has not materialised, and one has experienced what one does not wish for—problems, difficulties, and various types of turmoil and suffering—then that is the result of engaging in negativities in the past. Recognising that, the measure one takes is that, as soon as some sort of negativity arises to immediately remember, 'Allowing my mind to be controlled by this negativity is the cause of all the problems that I experience now, that I have experienced in the past, and that I will continue to experience for as long as I don't take control of it'. *Do I still want to act like this* is a rhetorical question which implies, 'If I don't want to experience unwanted consequences of problems and difficulties then I can't remain idle and not do anything about the faults and negativities that are the cause of those unwanted consequences'.

As I have shared with you in the past, the way that I apply this to myself is that as soon as a negative or tainted mind starts to manifest, I take the initiative and say to myself, 'Geshe Doga be careful! I have to be cautious here, because a negative state of mind is about to arise, and if I am not careful I will fall victim to this negativity'. Many people have found this advice very useful in their day-to-day lives.

The way to overcome the faults and negativities one has created in the past is by applying the practice mentioned in the commentary. *One confesses with the four powers and motivates for a long time: 'I should make an effort that this fault never arises again'*. As I have emphasised previously, for every fault that arises one needs to immediately apply the purification practice. If we don't like the negative consequences that we are experiencing now, which are the results of previous faults, then as soon as we find ourselves engaging in faults it is in our own best interests to apply the purification practice. That will stop the negativity from increasing, and from being experienced as a negative consequence in the future.

We know how to engage in the purification practice. We have knowledge of the Dharma, so the advantage of knowing the Dharma comes from putting it into practise. If we don't apply the Dharma that we know - such as applying the purification practices - then our knowledge of the Dharma would not have served any purpose for ourselves. As mentioned here, the first part of purification is confessing the faults that one has created, then comes generating the mind of strong regret and taking whatever purification

measure is needed and, at the end, resolving not to engage in these negativities again.

As I have mentioned previously, the stronger the regret is, the stronger the resolve to not commit those negative actions again will be. This is the way to implement this advice into one's practice.

#### 2.2.2.5. ONE SHOULD STRIVE IN SUITABLE ACTIONS

The verse relating to this outline is:

74. *Say: Thus I shall meditate on mindfulness  
On these occasions.  
Through this cause, when meeting or otherwise,  
I shall desire suitable action.*

Then the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

'Thus, in order for faults not to arise, and to eliminate those already arisen, I shall meditate on mindfulness on these occasions that call for earnest conscientiousness and introspection.' By thinking in this way, through the cause of this motivation, when I meet with the Mahayana guru, or even if I do not meet a guru immediately, I shall desire to engage in suitable actions in accord with the teachings.

This is actually quite clear. As mentioned in the commentary, *for faults to not arise and to eliminate those already arisen I shall meditate on mindfulness on these occasions that call for earnest conscientiousness and introspection.* As I have presented previously, one combats the faults that have arisen now, and to eliminate those that have arisen in the past, one meditates on mindfulness, and then applies conscientiousness and introspection.

*By thinking in this way, through the causes of this motivation, i.e. with this motivation in one's mind, if one has met with a Mahayana guru, or even if one has temporarily not met with a guru, one resolves, I shall desire to engage in suitable actions that are according to the teachings, just as explained in the teachings.*

#### 2.2.3. Empowering oneself to achieve the actions

This is subdivided into two:

2.2.3.1. Being light in taking up virtue due to mental and physical pliancy

2.2.3.2. Relating the example to the meaning

##### 2.2.3.1. BEING LIGHT IN TAKING UP VIRTUE DUE TO MENTAL AND PHYSICAL PLIANCY

First one obtains physical pliancy which then induces mental pliancy. When one obtains both physical and mental pliancy that will remove the natural defects of body and mind that cause fatigue and tiredness. It then becomes very easy to engage in virtue very joyously. That is the great benefit of attaining this pliancy.

The verse under this heading is:

75. *In order to have strength for anything  
Before engaging in an action  
By remembering the advice regarding  
conscientiousness  
I shall arise lightly.*

The commentary reads:

In order to have the power of strong enthusiasm for any virtuous action beforehand, I shall remember the advice regarding conscientiousness and arise lightly in the virtuous action free from being hesitant about performing that action due to the defects.

*In order to have the power of strong enthusiasm for any virtuous action beforehand,* means that first of all one needs strong enthusiasm for any virtuous action. So the main driving force behind engaging in any virtue is enthusiasm, or joyful effort. Without this joyful effort, one's interest in engaging in virtue would be lacking.

*I shall remember the advice regarding conscientiousness and arise lightly in the virtuous action free from being hesitant about performing that action due to the defects,* means that one needs to always be conscientiousness about engaging in virtuous actions, free from hesitation due to physical and mental defects. *Arising lightly* can be understood from the analogy in the next verse. So this verse indicates how to engage in virtuous actions joyfully, and without any hesitation or resistance.

##### 2.2.3.2. RELATING THE EXAMPLE TO THE MEANING

76. *Just like the coming and going  
Of the wind controls the cotton,  
Letting oneself be controlled by joy,  
One will achieve.*

Query: How should one act then?

Answer: Just like the coming and going of the wind controls the cotton, letting one's actions of body and speech be controlled by joy in virtue one will achieve one's virtuous actions of the three doors quickly.

The analogy in the commentary, *just like the coming and going of the wind controls the cotton,* is another vivid analogy. A piece of cotton moves effortlessly when the wind blows back and forth from one direction to the other. So, moved by the wind without any effort, the cotton drifts back and forth.

This analogy is used to explain how, when *one's actions of body, speech and mind are controlled by the joy of virtue, one will achieve one's virtuous actions of the three doors quickly.* When there is a joy in applying effort to accumulate virtue through one's body, speech and mind, then one's speech and one's actions will naturally be followed by a virtuous and joyful state of mind. That is why, as emphasised here, joyous effort is essential if one is to engage in virtue.

Then the commentary continues with:

In short, as it says in the *Sutra of Close Placement by Mindfulness,*

The one basis for the afflictions  
Is laziness; who has it?  
Wherever one laziness exists  
There all dharmas become non-existent.

The commentary then explains the meaning of this verse:

One should strive in the enthusiasm that stops laziness.

As quoted in the earlier verse, no Dharma can exist for the lazy. Therefore one needs to overcome laziness with enthusiasm.

To this end one needs to make an effort to clear the opposing factors of enthusiasm and to generate the conducive conditions of the four powers, [which have been explained previously].

As a summary, the commentary is reiterating what has been previously explained. Having mentioned that one needs to make an effort to remove the opposing factors to enthusiasm, the commentary continues:

The opposing factors are that, though seeing that one is able to engage in a virtuous action one does not do so, or one thinks, 'How could I be able to do this?'



Not engaging in virtue when one is able to do so is one of the types of laziness explained previously. It takes two forms.

The first again has two: procrastinating by thinking, 'I still have time', and being overwhelmed by attachment to negative actions.

These are the two reasons for laziness.

1. The antidote to the first is:

The first one should abandon with the antidote of contemplating that one's body will soon disintegrate, that after death one will fall into the lower realms and that the freedoms and endowments are difficult to find.

2. The antidote to the second, which is being overwhelmed by attachment to negative actions, is:

... to reflect on how the holy Dharma is the cause for infinite joys in this and future lives, and that the distractions of meaningless talk and so forth harm the great purpose of this life, and are the source of many sufferings in the future.

As this is a summary of what has been extensively explained in the chapter, it is easy to relate to these explanations.

With respect to discouragement, the commentary states:

With regard to discouragement there are again three:

1. Thinking, 'I cannot attain the infinite qualities of a buddha';
2. Thinking, 'I cannot accomplish the infinite difficult actions such as offering arms, legs and so forth';
3. Thinking, 'I cannot bear the sufferings of the infinite births in cyclic existence that I would have to take.'

1. Having presented these three types of discouragement, the antidote to the first is explained.

The antidote against the first is to think, 'Also the buddhas had not completed the path from the start but in the beginning were just as myself. Then they evolved and became buddhas ...

As I have regularly explained, the resultant state of becoming a buddha is the result of having overcome each and every negativity, one at a time, along the path, and acquired each and every virtue along the path. Initially buddhas are ordinary beings just like ourselves. Having engaged in the practices of overcoming each and every fault, and acquiring each and every virtue, one at a time, they gradually, and step by step, overcome all adversities and negativities and acquire all the qualities, and attain the state of buddhahood. When it is presented in this way it gives us great hope: 'Yes, there is a real possibility that I can also become a buddha'.

Further:

... Since the Buddha taught that even beings much lower than me can attain enlightenment, then why should I not attain enlightenment as long as I do not stop practising?'

Again, these are points that were mentioned in the root text, explaining why beings from the lower realms, such as animals and insects, also have the potential to become a buddha because of their buddha nature. By reflecting on that fact, we understand that we too have that possibility.

2. The antidote to being daunted with the prospect of having to give up one's limbs and so forth is then explained.

The antidote against the second is to think, 'As long as it appears difficult for me to give up arms, legs and so forth, it is not the right time to do so.

When there is a hesitation about giving one's limbs, then that is an indication that that is not the right time. So one is advised to not engage in the practice of giving one's limbs and so forth at that time. The suitable time is then presented:

Only when I can give them up as easily as a vegetable, then it is the right time to do so.'

When bodhisattvas reach the higher grounds, they have perfected their practice of generosity to the point where they are able to give anything without hesitation.

3. As mentioned previously, there could be the thought that one could bear the suffering entailed in being born in cyclic existence again and again. This relates to the courage of the bodhisattva in coming back again and again to benefit sentient beings. If one feels daunted by that prospect, then:

The antidote against the third is to think, 'Bodhisattvas do not experience suffering because they have abandoned its cause, negativity ...

This was explained in detail previously as well.

... They also do not have mental suffering because they realise that the sufferings of cyclic existence are like an illusion, lacking inherent existence. Since one is strengthened by mental and physical happiness there is no reason to be tired despite remaining in cyclic existence'.

A bodhisattva at that level does not experience physical and mental unhappiness, so they are not affected by the sufferings of samsara, and are therefore not daunted by having to be reborn in cyclic existence again and again.

### Summarising verse

The author of the commentary, Gyaltsab Rinpoche, then presents a verse that summarises the chapter.

To sincerely achieve the aspiration for liberation  
Depends on the practice of enthusiasm to  
Complete what one initially started and is engaged in.  
Hence one should generate enthusiasm complete with  
the four powers.

This is an encouragement to actually develop enthusiasm or joyous effort with the aid of the four powers.

## II. THE NAME OF THE CHAPTER

*This is the seventh chapter from Introduction to the Actions of the Bodhisattvas, called Explaining Enthusiasm.*

Then commentary concludes:

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

This completes the seventh chapter. In our next session we will start the eighth chapter, which is on *Mental Stabilisation*.

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Based on the positive motivation we have generated we can now engage in meditation practice. Whenever one generates a positive motivation a positive action will follow. We need to keep in mind that actions are initiated by motivations. Of course, this implies that if we have a negative motivation then a negative action will follow. So just the necessity of developing the correct motivation is also a way to show us what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded—in itself a Dharma practice. We can now engage in our meditation practice. *[meditation]*

Generate a bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

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

## CHAPTER 8: THE WAY OF TRAINING IN MENTAL STABILISATIONS CONTAINED IN THE COMMON AND UNCOMMON TYPES OF CALM ABIDING

This chapter is on Mental Stabilisation. In relation to the Six Perfections, the first, second and third chapters were based on the perfection of generosity, the fourth and fifth chapter covers morality, followed by chapter six on patience. Chapter seven is on joyous effort and now chapter eight is on concentration or mental stabilisation. This chapter outlines the way to increase and strengthen bodhicitta, particularly with the method of giving and taking.

There are two main subdivisions of the chapter.

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

Obtaining mental stabilisation is contained in the common and uncommon means of developing calm abiding. What this implies is that calm abiding is a practice which is found both in the treatises of non-Buddhist traditions, as well as in Buddhist traditions. What makes calm abiding an uncommon Buddhist practice is when it is accompanied with refuge, bodhicitta, the realisation of emptiness and so forth.

### I. EXPLAINING THE TEXT OF THE CHAPTER

This section has three parts:

1. Advice to meditate on mental stabilisation
2. Abandoning the opposing factors to calm abiding
3. The way of meditating on calm abiding

As clearly presented in the outline itself, the chapter provides advice on meditating on mental stabilisation, i.e. how to develop concentration; how to identify and abandon factors opposing calm abiding, then the way to actually meditate on calm abiding.

### 1. ADVICE TO MEDITATE ON MENTAL STABILISATION

This has two subdivisions:

- 1.1. The reason for the need to achieve calm abiding
- 1.2. The advice to abandon the opposing factors to calm abiding.

We can see that the outline is very logically and systematically presented.

#### 1.1. The reason for the need to achieve calm abiding

Before listening to advice on the need to meditate on mental stabilisation, it is good to define exactly what is meant by mental stabilisation. **Mental stabilisation is a mental factor that focuses on its object from its own side.** Presenting the definition in this way shows exactly what mental stabilisation is. For example, when one engages in single-pointed focus on an object, the mind focuses single-pointedly but this mind is not mental stabilisation. There is also a mind which maintains the memory of the object held single-pointedly, but that is not mental stabilisation. There is however a separate mental factor with the specific function of holding the object single-pointedly, that is from its own side, not depending on anything else. *From its own side* means its own function is to focus on the object single-pointedly. This is mental stabilisation.

Prior to the need to achieve calm abiding, the text outlines the faults of the mind not being focused in this way. In seeing these faults one begins to see the reason why it is necessary to be focused on an object single-pointedly. The seventh chapter on joyous effort highlighted that, when one engages with a virtuous action or object, it should be with a joyous mind, but that in itself is not sufficient. This chapter explains that joyous effort needs to be accompanied with single-pointed focus on the virtuous object. This is the combination we need to achieve.

The first verse reads:

1. *Having thus generated enthusiasm,  
Place the mind in concentration;  
A person with a wandering mind  
Lives in a cave of the affliction's fangs.*
- 2ab. *Through physical and mental isolation  
Mental wandering does not arise.*

Commentary explains:

Having generated enthusiasm that delights in virtue as explained before, one should place the mind in concentration, because a person whose mind is distracted by mental sinking and excitement abides in a cave of the fangs of a malevolent animal, and will be quickly destroyed by them.

If it is asked, "How does one abandon mental wandering?" Through isolating body and mind from distraction and desirous thoughts, one will not develop mental wandering, the opposing factor to concentration.

Having generated enthusiasm (that delights in virtue) then one needs to put it into practice by placing the mind in concentration. Again this emphasises that it is not enough to engage in a virtuous object randomly, once in a while, even if it is accompanied with joyous effort. Rather one needs to continuously place one's mind on the virtuous object. The commentary explains that, *one should place the mind in concentration because a person whose mind is distracted with mental sinking and excitement abides in the cave of the fangs of a malevolent animal and will be quickly destroyed by them.*

An individual whose mind is completely distracted and engaged in worldly activities will not be able to develop single-pointed concentration for as long as they follow distractions. One may be able to sit rigidly for a while and assume the meditative posture, but, for as long as one does not lessen one's worldly desires, the mind will be distracted. We can see that Shantideva supports what I too regularly emphasise, which is that following our desires is one of the main forms of distraction. I feel that what I have been teaching is well supported here. Even after one applies one's mind on virtue and maintains a few moments of stability, immediately we find the mind wanders off. We are not able to maintain a continuous focus on the virtuous object, so developing concentration is indispensable.

The two main obstacles to concentration are sinking (or laxity) and excitement. Initially in developing one's meditation laxity is more subtle and is not recognised right away. Excitement is one of the most prominent obstacles and occurs immediately, hindering our ability to focus on the object.

The analogy suggests that someone distracted by mental sinking (or laxity) and excitement is like someone held in the fangs of a malevolent animal, like in a crocodile's jaws, with the danger that they can snap shut any minute. This is similar to how our mind can be distracted at any time with sinking and excitement, which throws us back under the influence of the afflictions.

Without being able to precisely identify mental sinking (or laxity) and excitement, there is no way one can develop calm abiding. At a subtle level laxity and excitement are hard to identify, and if one fails to identify them it hinders one's ability to develop calm abiding. The main causes for excitement are worldly desires, therefore the faults of desire or attachment are explained extensively in the following passages.

In stating that mental wandering is a fault, the commentary poses the question:

If it is asked "How does one abandon mental wandering?"

The answer follows:

Through isolating body and mind from distraction and desirous thoughts, one will not develop mental wandering, the opposing factor to concentration.

On a physical level, the commentary emphasises one should isolate oneself from the negative influences of companions who distract one by causing excitement and encouraging worldly activities. Good companions who support our practice are fine, but misleading or distracting companions are one of the faults.

If one can distance oneself from distracting companions, the next main class of obstacle to avoid is mental distractions in the form of desire and discursive thoughts etc. This is most essential because while we might have successfully isolated ourselves from the cause of external distractions, and be in an isolated and quiet place like a meditation cave, the mind can still be distracted and wandering about in town. This occurs when one has not applied measures to protect the mind from distraction. The desirous mind is still attached to pleasant forms and sounds etc. so when it is not protected from engaging in these objects of desire, the mind of desire becomes the main obstacle which impedes concentration. On the other hand, when one has developed stable concentration, then even if one were in a busy, worldly environment, one will not be swayed by distractions. The

two main points here are that in order to develop concentration and protect one's mind from mental wandering, initially one needs to apply physical isolation as well as mental isolation. When you relate these explanations to your own experience of how easily you can be influenced by internal distractions in the form of discursive thoughts, then it makes more sense and you can see how this is, in fact, is very true.

Take the simple example of trying to fall asleep when your mind is still racing with discursive thoughts. When we go to bed we are on our own with no immediate external distractions, we turn off the light so it is dark, and we have no external stimuli. However a hyperactive mind can prevent us from falling asleep when it is still very busy with a lot of discursive thoughts. When the mind is hyperactive in this way, one cannot fall asleep even though there are no external causes of distractions. Internal conceptualisations and discursive thoughts are affecting our ability to sleep. Take this as an example of the truth that the main obstacle for maintaining a virtuous, clear and focused mind is really the various forms of internal distractions - mainly desirous thoughts.

Using the sleep example again, the mind being hyperactive means one has not been able to withdraw from the gross mind, so there is no way for one to actually go to sleep. This is also the case with meditation, so it is good to actually recognise within ourselves the main obstacles, and to acknowledge them. Back to the example, if eluding sleep was our only problem, there would be just one problem to deal with, but often one cannot fall asleep because the mind is disturbed with an uncomfortable state of anxiety. Some have confided in me that sometimes when they are alone they cannot go to sleep as memories of the past creep into their mind and cause angst to the point of bringing tears. People have confided in me that their pillow gets wet with tears. Thus from the very onset, if we can apply these practices and focus our mind in virtue, that will definitely help to reduce the angst and pain in the mind. So we need to apply practical means that will help us maintain some level of sanity or calmness on a regular basis. This is how we can derive practical benefits from the practice of mind training.

The reason I remind you that meditation and mind training are useful and something we need to maintain, is because some older students might now feel like this is true, but not really pay much attention to it. I feel they may have initially had good experiences from meditation but since then may have started to lapse in their enthusiasm for meditation.

I'll give a recent account of how an explanation of meditation was experienced as something incredibly valuable. When I recently taught at Drol Kar Centre, Geshe Sonam informed me after the teaching session that there were three ladies who had come there for their first time. They had actually thought of coming to the centre for the last three years, but had never actually made it. But that day when they actually came, happened to coincide with my teaching on explaining the benefits of meditation. Later they commented how the session really helped to solve a lot of problems. Apparently they were really moved and their minds were affected in a very positive way. These are people who are completely fresh and new to Buddhism, but they felt a strong, positive impact from the presentation on meditation.

I presented the meditation technique years and years ago, and you would have seen the benefit at that time. But I have a feeling that since then it has, perhaps, lapsed a bit and has

not really been taken much further, and that some have sort of lost interest or become lazy. Of course, if one does not maintain the practice of meditation, then one will not experience the long-lasting effect.

I have many such stories of people who have been affected in a positive way. There is also another lady with three children who comes to Drol Kor. Apparently after a session she said, "Now I have no more questions left, everything has been answered. I have found the means for my development". I have many other stories to tell about people who have been affected positively. I am not saying that my advice is profound, but that by giving my teachings with the utmost best motivation, some positive effects have definitely occurred. I honestly don't have any ulterior and selfish motives when I present the Dharma and my advice to you. It's solely with the intention that it may be of some benefit to you.

This might be a prompt for you to also be mindful of generating a positive motivation before presenting teachings or advice to others. If one is not mindful of a positive motivation, it could create lot of difficulties for yourself later on. For example, after presenting you might feel that it was not appreciated, or when someone challenges you it can throw you off course. In that way it could actually affect your mind negatively. Rather than being joyful with your service and benefit to others, it might actually cause unnecessary problems for oneself.

That reminds me of another incident where someone from Adelaide had called the office, and said they wanted to come and see me. My initial response was that they don't need to come from so far away to see me just to ask some questions, as there are also geshe in Adelaide. But that person was apparently quite insistent, so I said, 'Fine'. They apparently came with the intention of spending one night here and arrived on a Wednesday night when there was a teaching. Next morning I got a message that they didn't need to see me any longer, as all their questions were answered in the teaching. These kind of astonishing things do occur.

The reason I share this with you is not to claim that I am doing any great service, but to point out again that where there is good motivation, it certainly seems to bring about benefit for others. It seems to help release the pain and agony in the listeners' minds. Again, the reason I share this with you is so that whenever an occasion arises that you also share the Dharma knowledge with others or help in any way, when done with a good motivation it can definitely benefit them. The purpose of the Dharma is to benefit others as much as it is to subdue one's own mind. When that is done truthfully and honestly and with good intention to share with others, then that encompasses the whole practice of abiding by the law of karma as well. Basically it comes down to being honest and truthful, with a mind of wishing to benefit others.

I have another positive story to share from a Monday evening presenter. One Monday evening when Ven. Kaye Miner was conducting the session, a person had apparently asked a lot questions in a very challenging and hostile way. But her response was very calm, and with a gentle demeanour she responded to all the questions. Another person who happened to be in that session later confided to me that they were really moved by that, and from then on began to really appreciate Buddhism. They felt that when challenged with hostility, to remain calm and quiet and not overreact was a really good sign of what Buddhism has to offer. This is how adopting a good nature and setting a good

example can really inspire others. This is the whole point when we talk about inspiring others; it is not only with words but most importantly with one's gentle mannerisms as well. So if we are concerned in wanting to give Buddhism a good reputation, then the best way is by conducting ourselves properly, in a gentle manner.

## 1.2. The advice to abandon the opposing factors to calm abiding

The next two lines of the verse read:

*2cd. Through this, one should abandon the  
transitory world  
And perfectly destroy the conceptualising  
mind.*

The point I was making earlier is actually presented right here. The commentary explains:

Hence, through the method of physical isolation one abandons distractions such as meeting with worldly friends, relatives and so forth. Through the method of isolating the mind, one perfectly destroys thoughts for desire objects.

As I have already explained the main points of this earlier, we don't need to go over it again. The commentary then quotes from a sutra, which reads:

From a sutra:

If it is rare for a distracted mind to even attain a worldly mental stabilisation, then what need is there to mention complete enlightenment. Therefore, one should not let one's mind be distracted until the attainment of complete enlightenment.

The quote from the sutra highlights the Buddha's profound advice about the need to develop mental stabilisation, indicating that it is unlikely that a *distracted mind* can even *attain worldly mental stabilisation*, like mundane attainments. So if that is the case, *what need is there to mention complete enlightenment*. It further explains, *Therefore one should not let one's mind be distracted until the attainment of complete enlightenment*, which is the extent of the commitment one needs to make to develop mental stabilisation.

## 2. ABANDONING THE OPPOSING FACTORS TO CALM ABIDING

This is subdivided into two:

- 2.1. Abandoning distractions
- 2.2. Abandoning incorrect conceptualisation

### 2.1. Abandoning distractions

This is further subdivided into two:

- 2.1.1. Identifying the cause for attachment to the world
- 2.1.2. The way of abandoning it

#### 2.1.1. Identifying the cause for attachment to the world

The first two lines of the verse read:

*3ab. Due to attachment and craving for gain  
And the like, one does not give up the fleeting  
world.*

The commentary explains:

In dependence on the grasping for 'I' and mine, one is attached to the inner object of sentient beings. Due to that, and due to craving for the outer objects of gain, praise, compliments and so forth, one does not give up the grasping for the fleeting world. Hence, one should abandon the causes for these attachments.

While these explanations have been presented many times previously, the point here is that, *in dependence on the grasping for 'I' and mine, one is attached to the inner object of sentient beings*. Firstly, as presented, *inner object* refers to sentient beings, i.e. oneself. So all our cravings begin with the grasping at one's own 'I', followed by grasping at what is regarded as 'mine'.

It first starts with the grasping at the 'I', followed by 'mine'. Without attachment to an individual 'me' the attachment to 'mine' cannot follow. So in the sequence it is definitely the attachment to the 'I' or to the individual 'me' that comes first, then comes grasping at what is 'mine' and all the distracting five sense objects of the external world. *One is attached to the inner object of sentient beings* refers to oneself as the inner being, and then, *due to that and due to craving for the outer objects of gain, compliments ... and so forth, one does not give up the grasping for the fleeting world*. It is through this combination of grasping at the individual 'I' and 'mine' that one craves the sense objects that create the craving for the fleeting or transient world. The commentary concludes with, *Hence one should abandon the causes for the attachments*, meaning that in order to overcome attachment to the fleeting world and so forth, one must abandon the very causes of these attachments. Having presented that one should abandon the causes for these, naturally what would follow is the question 'How should one abandon causes of these attachments?' So the text then presents the way to abandon them.

### 2.1.2. The way of abandoning it

Here there are four subdivisions:

- 2.1.2.1. Identifying the antidote
- 2.1.2.2. The method for generating the antidote
- 2.1.2.3. The faults of distractions
- 2.1.2.4. The benefits of relying on isolation

Just by relating to the sequence of the outline, we can see that it is very logically and systematically presented. Firstly, identifying the antidote refers to how to abandon the causes of attachment. One must first identify the antidote; without doing this there is no way to apply it. Then, having identified the antidote, one would naturally wonder how one can cultivate it. So next the text presents the method for generating the antidote, followed by the faults of the distraction and the benefits of relying on isolation. These are all presented in such a methodical way that one is able to adopt them.

#### 2.1.2.1. IDENTIFYING THE ANTIDOTE

This is subdivided into two:

- 2.1.2.1.1. Advice to abandon attachment
- 2.1.2.1.2. Identifying the antidote that abandons attachment

##### 2.1.2.1.1. Advice to abandon attachment

The first two lines of the verse read:

*3cd. Therefore, to abandon these perfectly,  
The skilful will act thus.*

The commentary explains:

Therefore, to abandon these cravings for outer and inner objects, they who are skilled should investigate and contemplate as it is explained below.

The advice to abandon attachment relates to the faults of craving and so forth. *To abandon these cravings to outer and inner objects* refers, as mentioned previously, to the craving or grasping which begins with the inner being, oneself, followed by the grasping at the external objects. In order to

abandon both of these *those who are skilled*, referring to those who are intelligent and who wish to apply these methods, *should investigate and contemplate as it is explained below*. This is like a prelude, saying in simple terms that those who are interested and who have intelligence, must investigate and contemplate the methods presented.

#### 2.1.2.1.2. Identifying the antidote that abandons attachment.

The verse reads:

*4. Having understood that superior insight  
endowed  
With calm abiding destroys the afflictions,  
One should strive first in calm abiding, which  
in turn  
Is attained joyfully by lacking attachment for  
the world.*

We'll cover this verse now which is actually quite important, but the rest we'll do in our next session.

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

Superior insight into emptiness endowed with the horse of calm abiding that induces the bliss of physical and mental pliancy, which is free from mental sinking and excitement by having meditated single-pointedly on any virtuous object, destroys the afflictions of the three realms including the seeds. Understanding this, one should work towards superior insight, which can induce pliancy by investigating the meaning of the mode of abiding. Therefore one strives initially in calm abiding, as it is impossible to generate superior insight without firstly achieving calm abiding.

Calm abiding is achieved joyfully through a lack of attachment to outer and inner worldly objects such as the body, enjoyments and so forth. If one is attached to them, one will fall under the control of sinking and mental excitement.

What frees one from mental sinking and excitement is having meditated single-pointedly on any virtuous object. What is being explained here is that, having first focused on any chosen virtuous object, the outcome is to be able to single-pointedly focus on it, by removing the faults of mental sinking or laxity and excitement.

A simple way to understand what is being presented here is this analogy: if an individual wants to cut down a large tree, they first need to have a strong body and be in good physical shape; furthermore they need to have a steady hand with a good aim; along with that they need to have a good and sharp axe. This analogy illustrates the need for morality, concentration and wisdom to overcome the afflictions, and obtain one's ultimate goal of enlightenment.

This analogy demonstrates the manner of overcoming the afflictions. Whoever wishes to overcome the afflictions needs first of all to have the basis of sound morality. On the basis of observing faultless morality, which is like having a strong body, one needs to have very good concentration, which is like having a steady hand. If a person who wishes to fell a tree does not have a steady hand, they would constantly miss the mark, and would never be able to cut down the tree. This is like a mind which is constantly distracted, and thus never able to actually combat and overcome the afflictions.

Having a good and sharp axe is analogous to having the wisdom realising emptiness. This passage, *superior insight into emptiness endowed with the horse of calm abiding that*

*induces the bliss of physical and mental pliancy*, is specifically explaining that the wisdom to be developed is special insight, and the concentration to be developed is calm abiding. One develops calm abiding induced by mental and physical pliancy, by developing one's concentration gradually through the nine stages.

Having applied one's mind on a virtuous object and single-pointedly focused on that, ensuring that it is free from mental sinking and excitement, then through that familiarity one develops a strong, and very sound concentration. When the mind obtains the serviceability of focusing single-pointedly on the virtuous object that then induces mental pliancy.

Due to obtaining mental pliancy the body becomes serviceable, which induces physical pliancy. The combination of mental and physical pliancy causes the wind energy to flow well throughout the body. As the wind pervades throughout the body it induces physical bliss, which in turn induces mental bliss.

So, the sequence is this: one first obtains mental pliancy which induces physical pliancy. Then due to the winds flowing well in the body one experiences physical bliss which in turn induces mental bliss.

When one obtains both physical and mental bliss, and one is able to focus on the chosen object without any distractions or wandering, then the more one focuses on the object, the greater the level of mental and physical bliss that is experienced. When one obtains the combination of single-pointed focus combined with perpetual physical and mental bliss, then at that point one has obtained calm abiding.

The definition of **calm abiding is a concentration accompanied with the bliss of pliancy, that is obtained through the method of adopting the nine stages of concentration, and which enables one's mind to focus single-pointedly on its object for as long one wishes.**

**Special insight**, described later on, refers to using the base of single-pointed focus to analyse the object, and thus experience the physical and mental bliss which is induced by physical and mental pliancy. At this point one has obtained special insight.

Special insight is the wisdom that analyses the object, based on having developed single-pointed concentration. The individual who experiences that physical and mental bliss induced by physical and mental pliancy, and is able to investigate the object while maintaining a single-pointed focus, has obtained what is called 'special insight'. The difference here is that calm abiding is obtained through unwavering and single-pointed focus on the object so that one obtains the mental and physical pliancy which induces the physical and mental bliss. Whereas special insight is based on the single-pointed focus achieved through calm abiding, wherein one is able to analyse the object through one's analytical wisdom, whereby one experiences the physical and mental bliss induced by the physical and mental pliancy.

The commentary is explaining that what destroys the afflictions of the three realms, including the seeds, is superior insight into emptiness. The commentary explains that *superior insight into emptiness is endowed with the horse of calm abiding that induces the bliss of physical and mental pliancy, which is free from mental sinking and excitement by having meditated single-pointedly on any virtuous object.* The first part of the sequence is to develop a single-pointed focus on a virtuous object, free from mental sinking and excitement,

which then induces the calm abiding, and then based on that one develops superior insight. It is the superior insight into emptiness that destroys the afflictions of the three realms, including the seeds. *Understanding this, one should work towards superior insight, which can induce pliancy by investigating the meaning of mode of abiding*, defines special insight as a superior insight which induces pliancy, by investigating the meaning of ultimate reality or emptiness. So by investigating the actual object which is emptiness, that which induces bliss caused by mental and physical pliancy, is special insight. If one strives, then with that understanding one would actually destroy the seed of afflictions. Therefore one strives initially to obtain calm abiding, as it is impossible to generate superior insight without first achieving calm abiding. This is a very crucial point. In the sequence, first one needs to develop calm abiding, which is then followed by developing special insight.

Calm abiding is achieved joyfully through a lack of attachment to outer and inner worldly objects such as the body, enjoyments and so forth. If one is attached to them, one will fall under the control of sinking and mental excitement.

So, in order to develop calm abiding, one needs to be free from obstacles such as attachment to one's outer and inner attachments.

To again summarise the order: first one develops calm abiding, followed by developing special insight which is the main antidote for overcoming the afflictions. The very seeds of the afflictions are removed by the union of calm abiding and special insight. So that is the main point here. In the next session we'll cover the method for actually developing the antidote.

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

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