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# *Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

6 May 2014

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Based on the motivation that we generated during our recitation of the refuge and bodhicitta prayer, we can now engage in the meditation practice. If we ensure our mind is focused on the object of refuge with strong faith, and then generate bodhicitta in relation to all sentient beings, then these two elements will ensure that our practice, even if it is for only a few minutes, will be really meaningful. We need to keep that in mind while engaging in the practice.

*[meditation]*

As a motivation for receiving the teaching, we can strengthen the earlier bodhicitta motivation by generating this thought:

In order to benefit all sentient beings, 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 listen to the teaching, and put it into practice well.

## *2.2.3.1.2. How it is unsuitable to meditate on patience for the afflictions*

### **2.2.3.1.2.1. Contemplating how they harm the mind (cont.)**

In the text we are up to the section that explains the faults of afflictions and so forth. Rather than treating it as some intellectual understanding, we need to really pay careful attention to these explanations and relate them to our own mental continuum. In this way we will ensure that what we understand from these teachings serves its purpose, which is to reduce the afflictions in one's own mind. Conversely, if our study of the teachings serves to increase afflictions, then it completely defeats the purpose of our study.

We need to pay careful attention to our state of mind, so that our study does not increase the afflictions in our mind, specifically the delusion of pride. If, having understood some points in the teachings, we start to feel pompous, thinking, 'Oh, now I have much better understanding and knowledge of the Dharma than others' and develop a puffed-up superior attitude, then our study has increased the delusion of pride.

Initially when we didn't have much understanding of the Dharma we might not have had much pride in relation to the teaching. But when we gain some understanding then a newly formed pride may arise. It is not that there was no pride to begin with, as the basis of pride is always there. Here we are referring to the pride in thinking, 'Now I have some understanding of the Dharma, I know it better than others'. That is a newly formed pride which comes about as a result of having studied the Dharma.

Likewise, one may not initially have much jealousy in relation to others who are studying the Dharma. In the beginning one didn't have much knowledge of the Dharma, but as one begins to study and gain some knowledge, then that is when a sense of jealousy may arise in relation to others who are also studying and trying to practise the Dharma. Likewise, a sense of competition may arise. This is the classic example of where the Dharma has been completely misused and turned into a poison. Now, of course that doesn't mean that the Dharma itself turns into poison, because the essence of Dharma can never turn into poison. But if the Dharma is completely misused, then it actually becomes a cause for afflictions to increase. In this case, rather than serving as medicine to subdue the mind the Dharma becomes a means to further escalate the poisons in the mind.

These are really important points we need to take into consideration so that whatever study, understanding and practice one has in the Dharma does not become a further means to strengthen the afflictions. That would defeat the whole purpose of studying and practising the Dharma, which would be a disgrace. In sharing this point with you I am not implying that I'm skilled in Dharma practice myself, however I really do feel that these are important points that we need to keep in mind. I share this with you out of a genuine concern for you and your Dharma practice, so that your attempts to study and understand the Dharma do not go astray, and that the Dharma actually fulfils its intended purpose.

It is when the Dharma nourishes the afflictions in the mind rather than benefiting the mind that followers of a tradition will start to squabble and come into conflict. That is a mark of real degeneration. It is not the fault of the Dharma or the religion, but it is the fault of those who follow the religion or the Dharma having not utilised the teachings to really subdue their minds. When that happens amongst the followers of any particular religion or tradition it becomes a disgrace to the religion itself.

It is really important that we relate the faults of the delusions to our own mind and not use them as a means to judge others. The faults of the delusions that are described in the teachings should relate to one's own state of mind. If one is not careful, situations such as those that have occurred in our very own study group can arise. Several times in the past people have brought to my attention that some students who were quite new to the study group had a sense that they were being looked down upon by those who had a little more understanding, and they felt that they were being put down. This problem has now subsided, but there may be occasions where it can happen again. So we need to be really mindful and careful that this doesn't occur.

The faults of the delusions are described in the teachings very meticulously, and the best way to validate this is by relating the teachings to the delusions that we find within ourselves. Seeing the faults of our own delusions is the best reference point to test the truth of the Dharma.

The great master Shantideva mentioned that we need to really protect ourselves against the attitude of jealousy towards those who are higher than oneself, against pride and contempt towards those who are lower than oneself,

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and competitiveness with those who are on the same level as oneself. When we think about it, these three attitudes are the cause of a lot of distress and turmoil in any society. As Shantideva mentioned, it is very hard to please worldly beings who are completely engrossed with these types of attitudes, for as long as they maintain these attitudes in their mind they will not be able to relate to the truth of the Dharma.

It is not sufficient to merely recognise the faults of the delusions, but rather, having recognised the faults, we need to apply the antidotes to overcome the delusions. That is what we really need to take on board. The process of identifying the delusions and seeing the faults of the delusions is something we need to do on a regular basis in our everyday life. Although we don't have the ability to recollect the faults of delusions that we have committed in previous lifetimes, we can, in our everyday life, do a thorough analysis of the delusions that are affecting us now on a daily basis. If our day begins with feeling unsettled and a particular delusion becomes manifest and prevalent, then we can notice how it affects the rest of the day. We might feel unsettled throughout the day and become prone to even more delusions manifesting in our mind. That is what occurs when we have not really paid attention to the delusions that lie within, and made genuine attempts to apply the antidotes. Whereas if we check our state of mind every morning, and ensure that it is not affected by any strong delusions, and if it is, then make genuine attempts to apply an antidote, then we will find the rest of the day will be quite fine, that there will be no big drama or upheaval taking place. Towards evening we can feel quite content and happy that we've had a good day, a day where we have not been completely overpowered and consumed by negative states of mind. That is how we can feel content and happy that we have had a worthwhile day. We can then rejoice and dedicate our good virtues and merits of the day.

As explained earlier, we need to combat the delusions by applying an antidote, making sure that we don't allow them to overpower us. We need to follow the examples of Kadampa masters such as Geshe Bayen Gun-gyal, who used to have dialogues with the delusions saying, 'If you become relaxed then I will be relaxed too, but if you start becoming powerful then I am going to use force to overcome you'. You will find these quotes in the Lam Rim teachings, and it would be good for you to refer to them. This is the sort of measures that earlier practitioners used as a way of combatting the delusions in their mind; applying the antidote the moment the delusions arise.

If we don't take the initiative to recognise the delusions and apply an antidote, then it is most likely that we will become completely overwhelmed and overpowered by the delusions as they arise. As beginners, even just recognising a delusion for what it is when it manifests will reduce its intensity and strong hold on our mind. It is to that extent that we gain the benefit of recognising the delusions within oneself. That is the measure of how we need to apply our practice on a daily basis. It will take some time before we actually get to the point of being able to apply an antidote to overcome the delusions

completely. However we need to begin the process by gradually taking these steps in our everyday life.

The Lam Rim teachings, and indeed all the Buddha's teachings, explain that the purpose of overcoming the delusions and afflictions is to subdue our mind. So we need to ensure that we are taking that onboard, and that we are applying the teachings at a level within our capability. That is where we begin. If we leave that aside and start thinking that there are grander practices that we should be doing, then that is again missing the point. We need to begin with the basis and develop a strong foundation. I am sharing this as a way of reminding you of the essential point of the whole study and practice of the Dharma, so that it benefits you and that you don't miss the point.

There is no way to become a real practitioner without paying attention to death and impermanence. Through logic you will be able to find that this is true, because the focus of all the activities of a person who does not recollect death and impermanence will be merely on the benefits and affairs of this life. Thus they cannot become a true practitioner. Without recollecting death and impermanence, our activities will be those that are focused on staying in this world rather than moving on to the next. We need to be prepared for our inevitable onward journey, rather than thinking that we will remain here for ever.

The last line of verse 34 asks:

*How can cyclic existence be fearless and joyful?*

There are different interpretations of the meaning of this line. Gyaltsab Je's explanation implies that if one does not combat the afflictions in one's mind, then how could remaining in cyclic existence be fearless and joyful? Other commentaries explain that if one does not have a fear of cyclic existence then one may regard cyclic existence as being joyful. However, regarding cyclic existence as being joyful is completely contrary to how we need to regard cyclic existence. That joy arises because one lacks any fear of cyclic existence. That is a slightly more profound explanation.

#### 2.2.3.1.2.2. Contemplating how they harm the body

The relevant verse is:

35. *If this guardian of the prison of cyclic existence,  
Who becomes the executioner and torturer in  
hell,  
Abides within the net of attachment in my  
mind,  
Then how can I have happiness?*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

These afflictions do not grant freedom from cyclic existence. Rather they become the guardians of the prison of cyclic existence and the hell realms. They also become the executioners killing in the upper and lower realms.

If these afflictions abide within the net of the mistaken conception, within the net of attachment in my mind, then how can one have a chance for happiness?

There is no chance for mental or physical happiness

*These afflictions do not grant freedom from cyclic existence,* this identifies the specific cause that imprisons us in cyclic existence, which is none other than the afflictions

themselves. It is afflictions that prevent one from being free from cyclic existence. Further, the afflictions *become the guardians of the prison of cyclic existence*. That which guards us in cyclic existence and keeps us there is none other than the afflictions. Also the torturers in the hell realms that inflict the harms in the hell realms are none other than manifestations of one's own afflictions.

Furthermore *they also become the executioners killing in the upper and lower realms*. In hell realms, as you would have heard, after the body has been torn apart in every direction the body regenerates itself and has to experience the sufferings all over again, and if one faints one is revived and has to experience the sufferings again. The cause of that is none other the afflictions. Even in the upper realms such as the human realm, as we all know, there are many who take their own life, which is caused none other than the afflictions. As Shantideva mentions in another text, the afflictions in the mind, such as anger, can cause someone to take their own life. With this understanding we can understand the point about the afflictions being like executioners.

The main cause for all the sufferings that will be experienced, regardless of whether one is of higher status or lower status, is none other than the afflictions. What is being implied here in simple terms is that for as long as the afflictions are not abandoned no one is spared by them. *The net of mistaken conceptions* can apply, on a broader sense, to any kind of delusion that manifests itself in the mind, but more specifically it is applied to self-grasping. So the root of the delusions, grasping at a truly existent self, is the primary root of all our mistaken conceptions. Thus, held within the net of mistaken conceptions we are trapped in samsara. Here *net* is analogous to the net of a bird cage that prevents the bird from escaping.

*How can one have a chance of happiness*, implies that for as long as the afflictions abide in one's mind *there is no chance at all for mental or physical happiness*.

Mistaken conceptions also relates to the inappropriate attention that we place on objects when we perceive them. As I have already explained this in detail previously, we need not elaborate on it again here.

### 2.2.3.1.3. Generating courage to destroy them

Merely acknowledging the afflictions as being harmful, and seeing their faults is not sufficient. Just thinking about these faults could be overwhelming unless one also thinks about the possibility of overcoming them. Therefore this heading is saying that we need to develop the courage to destroy the delusions.

The verse relating to this outline reads:

36. *Thus, as long as I do not destroy this enemy directly  
For that long I shall not give up striving here.  
The very proud ones that become angry even due to small harm,  
Sleep will elude them until they have destroyed it.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Since everything unwished for is generated by the afflictions, for as long as I have not definitely destroyed this terrifying enemy directly, it is

appropriate that I shall not give up even for one moment striving in the antidote to the afflictions while I am here in this migration.

If the very proud worldly people get angry at even small harms such as harsh words, they will be very vengeful, sleep will elude them and they will not rest until they have destroyed their enemy.

Therefore it is appropriate to strive in destroying the enemy of the afflictions.

The commentary begins with *since everything unwished for is generated by the afflictions*, so we need to apply that understanding to any unwanted or unpleasant experience. These experiences don't occur randomly without any reason or without any causes. Rather, as stated here, every unwanted experience is caused by delusions.

*For as long as I have not definitely destroyed this terrifying enemy directly* implies that having understood that the cause of unwanted or unwished for experiences is generated by the afflictions will not be sufficient to overcome the manifest level of delusions. Rather, one needs to strive to overcome them from their very root. Here, *directly* has the connotation of *from its very root*. Thus what is being explained here is that until and unless one overcomes the afflictions from their very root, *it is appropriate that I should not give up for one moment striving in the antidote to the afflictions while I am in this migration*. What is being implied here is that one will not experience any real happiness until the afflictions have been completely uprooted.

The intent to *not give up even for one moment striving in the antidote* explains that having generated the antidote, one should not give up applying that antidote.

When the commentary mentions *if the very proud worldly people get angry*, it is referring more specifically to the mental factor of spite. Very proud worldly people can become very spiteful. As explained previously, spite is a specific state of anger that escalates to the point where you do not give up on the intention of harming the person who harms you. As stated here, even with *small harms, such as harsh words, sleep will elude them and they will not rest until they have destroyed their enemy*. Some individuals cannot rest until they have taken revenge on someone who has harmed them, either with actual words or by harbouring ill-will and thinking, 'I have to get back at them'. As mentioned here, they may not even be able to go to sleep until they have been able to take revenge. Some individuals are affected by such strong pride that they are not able to endure even small harms.

This example of very proud individuals who constantly think about how to get back at those who have inflicted even trivial harms is used to indicate how it is far more appropriate to strive to destroy the enemy of the afflictions, who harm us on a constant basis. For as long as we harbour the afflictions in our mind, they constantly harm us and affect us in a negative way. It is far more appropriate and worthwhile to apply the antidote for overcoming the delusions at all times, rather than wasting time trying to take revenge on external enemies. Therefore, day and night, we should be concerned with applying the antidotes to overcome the afflictions.

### 2.2.3.2. HOW IT IS UNSUITABLE TO TIRE OF THE DIFFICULTY OF ABANDONING THE AFFLICTIONS

Having recognised the afflictions and seen the need to abandon them, one might become discouraged and give up striving to overcome them. This section is explaining why one should not tire in this endeavour.

What is implied here is that abandoning the afflictions is not going to be an easy task. The delusions are powerful and they are very persistent in harming us. When we apply some antidote and reach a point where we may have some control over the delusions, they very sneakily arise in another guise. So the delusions find so many different ways to harm us. We are not dealing with an easy enemy here, so abandoning the afflictions will require farsighted endurance from our side. But we should not tire of the difficulty. As outlined in the heading this is exactly what the following verses encourage us to do.

This heading has three sub-divisions:

2.2.3.2.1. Donning the armour that will enable one to destroy the afflictions, it is unsuitable to tire of the difficulties

2.2.3.2.2. The benefits of striving to destroy the afflictions

2.2.3.2.3. It is appropriate to strive in the trainings that destroy the afflictions

*2.2.3.2.1. Donning the armour that will enable one to destroy the afflictions, it is unsuitable to tire of the difficulties*

There are two verses under this heading.

37 *The afflicted ones, who suffer anyway due to dying naturally,  
At the height of battle, deeply wishing to destroy,  
They disregard sufferings inflicted by weaponry, arrows and spears,  
And will not retreat until their purpose is achieved.*

38 *What need is there to mention that they who strive  
In destroying the natural enemy, which is the continual  
Cause for all suffering, strive without despondence or laziness,  
Despite hundredfold sufferings.*

Gyaltsab Je's explanation explains the meaning of the verse:

The afflicted ones, whose nature it is anyway to transform into the suffering of death, even without being killed, are the object of compassion.

When they are doing battle with the strong will to fight and to overcome the enemy, they will disregard the suffering inflicted by weapons such as arrows, spears and so forth, and will not retreat until their aim is achieved.

What need is there to mention that it is appropriate for me, who has taken up austerity, wishing to destroy the enemy of the afflictions, who has treated me as an enemy from the day of my birth, to not give up striving to destroy this enemy, and to not give in to despondency and laziness despite hundredfold sufferings such as cold, hunger and thirst.

As the commentary explains, *the afflicted ones* refers to the worldly enemies, who are afflicted by the delusions.

Because they are afflicted by the delusions they will naturally experience the consequences of their afflictions in the form of suffering, in particular the suffering of death. In other words, these external enemies, who are afflicted by the delusions, will naturally be vanquished by death, even without someone taking measures to destroy them. So, because they are afflicted by the delusions and will consequently experience the suffering of being completely destroyed by death, they *are* in fact *an object of compassion*.

When these afflicted worldly beings try to destroy others, they go into *battle with a strong will to fight and to overcome the enemy*. With the intention of overcoming their enemy, who will naturally be consumed by death anyway, they will have to experience *the suffering inflicted by the enemy's weapons such as arrows, spears and so forth*. Yet despite all of the harms inflicted on them by their sworn enemy, they are intent on fighting until the end, and *will not retreat until their aim is achieved*.

As the commentary explains, those intent on destroying external enemies generate great willpower and thus endure the harms inflicted on them. Despite all the harm inflicted on them, they still face the enemy with the intent of destroying them. That is the measure that worldly beings take. That being the case, the main point being emphasised here is, *what need is there to mention that it is appropriate for me, who has taken up austerity, (i.e. one has willingly taken up austerity practices) wishing to destroy the enemy of the afflictions who has treated me as an enemy from the day of my birth*. It is not as if the delusions became our enemy later in life, because from the very moment we were born the delusions were there to harm us. That being the case, we should *not give up striving to destroy this enemy, and not give in to despondency and laziness despite hundredfold sufferings such as cold, hunger and thirst*.

As explained here, based on having seen the faults of the delusions, and understanding how they have harmed us since we were born into this life, we need to develop the courage to not give up striving to destroy this enemy and not give in to despondency. This implies that there are some who, having made few attempts to overcome afflictions, resort to thinking, 'Oh, this is hopeless! I can't overcome the delusions'. Once one makes that decision one falls into despondency and laziness, and will no longer strive to apply the antidote. Lest one falls into despondency, we are urged that despite the sufferings of cold, hunger and thirst that will naturally accompany one's practices of austerity, one should not give up the intent to destroy the enemy of the afflictions.

As the outline presents, we need to don the armour of joyous effort to maintain our enthusiasm. Just as those who go into battle put on armour so that they are not harmed by their enemies' weapons, one needs to put on the armour of joyous effort in order to engage in austerity practices, and overcome the delusions. The *Guru Yoga Puja* also refers to donning the armour of joyous effort.

So the main point being emphasised here is that we need to apply joyous effort as a way of combatting the delusions.

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### 2.2.3.2.2. *The benefits of striving to destroy the afflictions*

This is subdivided into three

2.2.3.2.2.1. Being the cause for one's welfare austerities are suitable to bear

2.2.3.2.2.2. Being the cause for other's welfare, austerities are suitable to bear

2.2.3.2.2.3. Why one needs to complete the earlier given promise

#### 2.2.3.2.2.1. **Being the cause for one's welfare austerities are suitable to bear**

The verse from the root text reads:

39. *They sustain scars from the enemy for no purpose  
And wear them on their body like ornaments.  
If I strive stridently to achieve the great purpose  
Why should sufferings be something that harms me?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

Worldly beings sustain scars for no purpose at all and wear them like ornaments, saying: 'this scar I got at such and such a time'.

As the commentary explains, *worldly beings sustain scars for no purpose at all and wear them like ornaments*. The scars received in a fight become something to show off to others as a mark of bravery. They take great pride in those scars, saying, 'I got these scars in my fight'. That is how some worldly beings view their scars.

That being the case:

Why would one then be harmed by the sufferings endured while striving stridently in the austerities? They are to achieve the great purpose of complete enlightenment!

Since they are only of benefit one should rely on them.

What is being implied here is that it is worthwhile to endure the hardships of austerity practices to overcome the afflictions, since these practices are a cause to achieve the great purpose of complete enlightenment. *Since they are of only benefit* for oneself and they cause no harm, *one should* definitely *rely* on these practices.

The main point being emphasised here is that when ordinary, worldly people take great pride in their scars and so forth for even small meaningless purposes, one, who has committed to overcome the afflictions, which serves the great purpose of achieving enlightenment, need not be overwhelmed by the difficulties and hardships that one may incur. That is because the hardships serve as the means to achieve a great purpose.

The main point is that it is definitely worthwhile to bear those austerities as a way to obtain one's ultimate welfare. The ultimate result is to achieve the excellence of one's own purpose, which is enlightenment. When one achieves enlightenment, then that fulfils the purpose of obtaining the excellence of one's own welfare.

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

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# Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

13 May 2014

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Based on the motivation we have generated during the recitation of our *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer*, we can now engage in the meditation practice. [meditation]

You have just meditated on the Giving and Taking practice, and I am sure you have done it to the best of your ability. With the 'taking' you imagine taking in three types of phenomena from all sentient beings: all their sufferings; the causes of their sufferings, which are the afflictions and karma; and the imprints or latencies of those afflictions. In the 'giving' part of the practice, in return you imagine giving three of your most valuable objects: your body, your possessions and all your virtues of the three times. It is important to recollect these main points when you engage in the meditation practice and apply them to the best of your ability. That will make the practice really worthwhile.

## 2.2.3.2.2. The benefits of striving to destroy the afflictions

We have covered the first subdivision Being the Cause for One's Welfare Austerities Are Suitable to Bear. Now comes the second subdivision.

### 2.2.3.2.2.2. Being the cause for other's welfare, austerities are suitable to bear

The verse reads as below and is accompanied by examples in the root text:

40. *Fishers, butchers, farmers and the like  
Are bearing cold, heat and such  
Solely with thoughts for their livelihood.  
Why can one not bear this for the happiness of  
migrators?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Fishers, butchers, farmers and the like kill fish, do lowly work, work on the fields and so forth, and are bearing difficulties like cold or heat and such, all this solely with the thought of their livelihood.

If that is so, then why can one not bear similar sufferings to accomplish the happiness of all migrators? It would be appropriate to bear them.

The message from the commentary and the verse is quite easy to understand: if one is able to bear hardships to achieve trivial purposes in life, then why shouldn't one strive to bear some hardships to achieve the highest purpose for oneself?

Beings who exert a lot of effort and bear hardships for trivial purposes, like *fishers* and *butchers* who take the life of other beings merely to sustain themselves in this life, or *farmers* who toil year round in the *cold*, *the rain*, and in the *heat of the sun*, do this *lowly work* and bear difficulties solely to sustain themselves for this life. These examples show how some people have to put in so much time and effort, and endure so many hardships just to sustain their basic needs. When we see examples of this around us, we should be inspired not to complain about our lives and ready to bear some difficulties ourselves for our own welfare.

Individuals who expend effort and bear hardship to achieve their goals, even if they may be temporary ones, do achieve significant results. Of course, whenever one endeavours to achieve something, one should understand that there are always some necessary conditions that are required, as well as some obstructions that need to be overcome. As such, the method for achieving one's goals should encompass strategies for establishing the conducive conditions and eradicating any obstructions. This requires a significant amount of time and effort, and bearing hardships. So we can learn from others who expend energy and bear hardships to achieve their goals. In order to achieve the great purpose, one needs to make this resolve, *if that is so, then why can one not bear similar sufferings to accomplish the happiness of all migrators? It would be appropriate to bear them. To accomplish the happiness of all migrators one needs to achieve the ultimate goal of enlightenment. That is the highest aspiration and goal for anyone who has taken bodhisattva vows. Since many of you have taken the bodhisattva vows and promised to work for the welfare of all sentient beings until achieving enlightenment, it is important for you to continue your practices and willingly bear whatever difficulties and hardships that may occur. The phrase it would be appropriate to bear them has the connotation in Tibetan of being patient with them; that means to be patient when facing hardships. So, in order to achieve the great purpose one needs to apply the patience of willingly enduring hardships. This is the resolve we need to make when engaging in Dharma practice.*

Of course the advice here is mainly directed at the practices of a bodhisattva. While we aspire to do these practices, in reality we may not be able to apply our practices at a bodhisattva's level right now. However, the personal instruction here is to generate a strong aspiration to be able to practise *like a bodhisattva*. Bodhisattvas bear hardships with farsightedness, engaging in the practices over long periods of time, withstanding many adversities, and continue to practice whilst not giving up their bodhisattva vows or bodhicitta. This should inspire us to generate a strong veneration and genuine respect for them, along with an aspiration that we may also practise in a similar way.

The point here is that it is most fitting to bear sufferings by applying the patience of willingly enduring hardships. The definition of patience is not to allow one's mind to become disturbed in the face of adversities such as harm and sufferings. We should apply this understanding of *willingly bearing hardships*, because if one is not able to bear hardships and difficulties, it will affect one's mind negatively, and one will become distraught and overwhelmed. When there is agony in one's mind because of hardships, those feelings will then cause anger to arise. Anger is always preceded by a feeling of discomfort or agony, which one is not able to bear. The best way for our mind not to feel overwhelmed is by willingly accepting and bearing hardships, and to regard them as being worthwhile.

The ultimate result of having born hardships and difficulties on the path is to become an enlightened being. An enlightened being, such as Buddha Shakyamuni, is an individual being who has willingly born many hardships as a practitioner, and having completely traversed the path, finally achieved the state of enlightenment. If we aspire to become like Buddha Shakyamuni, how can we expect to succeed if we easily become distraught and willing give up our practices when faced with the slightest difficulty or hardship? We may not be able to practise on a bodhisattva's level right now, however we can definitely generate the

aspiration to practise like a bodhisattva. Admiring the bodhisattva's deeds leaves very positive imprints on our mind, which helps to develop our capacity to practise just like a bodhisattva in the future. So, these are significant points to keep in mind.

### 2.2.3.2.3. Why one needs to complete the earlier given promise

The verse is preceded by a doubt:

Doubt: One has made the promise to destroy the afflictions in the continuum of others and it is unsuitable to strive in destroying the afflictions in one's own continuum, because one would fall into the extreme of peace.

To explain the hypothetical doubt: having *made the promise to destroy the afflictions in the continuum of others*, the doubt is that it would be *unsuitable to strive in destroying the afflictions in one's own continuum because one would fall into the extreme of peace* i.e. the peace of self-liberation or nirvana. The doubt is that if one works towards *destroying the afflictions* or the delusions *in one's own mental continuum* then once destroyed this would imply that one would reach the state of self-liberation, with the risk of abiding in a state of personal peace. This reminds me of a similar doubt raised some time ago by Vanessa. She said that as Mahayana practitioners "if we are striving to overcome our personal sufferings, wouldn't that contradict the Mahayana attitude that we should be developing?" These are significant doubts.

When you really think deeply about the meaning of the teachings, doubts will arise. This is significant because they arise as a result of contemplation and investigation of the topic. In relation to the earlier doubt, for someone merely seeking self-liberation the main object of abandonment is the afflictions, and the main purpose for abandoning them is to attain personal liberation. So when the afflictions have been abandoned they reach the state of self-liberation, a state where one abides in perpetual bliss. An arhat or foe destroyer is an individual who has abandoned the afflictions and has reached that blissful state and remains in a blissful state of meditative equipoise. That is what is being referred to here as *the extreme of peace*.

The corresponding verse and a half read:

41 *When one made the promise to liberate  
Migrators equalling the expanse of space  
From the afflictions,  
Oneself was not free from afflictions.*

42ab *As one did not know one's abilities  
How was it not crazy talk?*

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains the meaning:

Answer: At an earlier time when one generated the mind and made the promise to liberate all migrators equalling the expanse of space from their afflictions, if oneself is not free from afflictions, then not to mention the welfare of others, one cannot achieve even one's own welfare. Being under the control of the afflictions one does not know one's own measure. How is it not crazy to say that one will liberate others from their afflictions?

If one is bound by cyclic existence, one cannot complete the welfare of others and therefore one should strive to abandon the afflictions in one's continuum.

What is being explained is that since one has earlier *generated the mind of bodhicitta and made the promise to liberate migrators equalling the expanse of space from their afflictions, then*

in order to fulfil this promise one must abandon one's own afflictions. Otherwise one cannot achieve the welfare of others.

The verse explains that *being under the control of the afflictions one does not know one's own measure*, or state of mind, so how can one *liberate others from the afflictions*. What is being presented here is that to claim that one would free all beings from their afflictions while doing nothing about abandoning one's own afflictions would be similar to a *crazy person's* approach. The commentary goes further: *if one is bound by cyclic existence, one cannot complete the welfare of others and therefore one should strive to abandon the afflictions in one's continuum*. The conclusion is that one definitely needs to strive to abandon afflictions.

This relates to the meaning of the outline Why One Needs to Complete the Earlier Given Promise, which is that in order to complete an earlier promise to work for the welfare of all sentient beings and ultimately free them from all afflictions and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, one needs to abandon the afflictions within one's own mental continuum. That is why the conclusion here states: *one should strive to abandon the afflictions in one's continuum*. This is similar to an analogy presented in the Lam Rim teachings of the father of a starving family who finds a piece of meat. He reasons that if he were to share the piece of meat with his family there will be little benefit for each of them. So he decides to eat it all himself in order to gain enough strength and energy to find sufficient food to feed the whole family.

The analogy illustrates the importance of first freeing oneself from the afflictions; otherwise there is no possibility to help free others from the afflictions. This is why one needs to achieve enlightenment and become a buddha oneself before one can lead others to buddhahood. When one practises developing bodhicitta, one first practises developing the aspiration to benefit others, and then based on that, one generates the aspiration to achieve enlightenment oneself in order to achieve that purpose.

This is how one trains one's mind and how the path is traversed; another key point to keep in mind.

### 2.2.3.2.3. It is appropriate to strive in the trainings that destroy the afflictions

An earlier verse explained that it is appropriate to abandon the delusions or afflictions. The verses below explain the appropriateness of striving in the trainings which destroy the afflictions.

This is subdivided into two:

2.2.3.2.3.1. Strive in the antidote to the afflictions

2.2.3.2.3.2. Strive to never let the mind fall under the control of the afflictions

These are really significant points to apply to our own practices. **Striving in the antidote to the afflictions** means to work towards developing the antidotes in one's mind to overcome the afflictions. The next point, **striving to never fall under the control of the mental afflictions**, means working towards control over one's mind, so that one does not fall under the dominance of the afflictions.

In our daily practice bring to mind the importance of applying the antidotes. Whatever antidotes one has not yet developed, one should strive to develop as a means to overcome the afflictions within oneself. And whatever antidotes one has already developed, one should ensure that one further strengthens them. Likewise with the afflictions: whatever afflictions one has not yet abandoned, strive to

abandon them. And whatever afflictions one has successfully controlled or has reduced, ensure that one applies continual measures and diligence to keep those delusions at bay so that they don't arise strongly again.

It is similar with virtue: whatever virtues one has not yet developed, strive to develop them, and whatever virtues one has already generated, strengthen and further develop them. Try to bring these to mind as an aspiration: "May I be able to overcome the afflictions which I have not yet overcome and apply the measures to overcome them; and may I be able to develop the virtues that I have not yet developed and maintain the virtues I have already developed".

This becomes a really significant aspiration. When one applies this, the aspiration itself can bring solace and ease to the mind. It is good for us to relate to these seemingly simple practices which we may easily neglect, thinking we should be doing some grander practices. I feel that often our shortcoming is that we neglect practices within our own reach and try to aim for something higher or grander; we need to pay attention to this.

A key point from the outlines is that when an affliction arises in our mind, rather than just leaving it and doing nothing about it, we need to recognise that this only creates a condition for the affliction to increase in intensity. What we are being encouraged to do here is that as soon as an affliction arises, we need to immediately remember to apply an antidote to overcome it. Next, since the afflictions arise at any given moment, when they do arise, we should not allow ourselves to fall under their dominance or control. These are both things that we are able to do. We can take measures to apply antidotes and ensure that we are not under the complete control of the afflictions. These are reasonable practices that we can apply in our daily lives.

#### 2.2.3.2.3.1. Strive in the antidote to the afflictions

The parts of the verse which relate to this are the second two lines of the earlier verse and the first two lines of the next verse.

*42cd Therefore I shall never reverse  
From destroying the afflictions.*

*43ab One should hold onto it  
And meet them in war with a vengeance.*

The last two lines of verse 43 will be explained later on.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Since they are suitable to be abandoned one should never reverse from the thought and action of abandoning them. One should hold onto the antidote and destroy the afflictions by meeting them in battle with a vengeance.

The commentary highlights that *since they are suitable to be abandoned* (having given reasons earlier) *one should never reverse from the thought and action of abandoning them*. One needs to be committed to never reversing from the thought and action of abandoning the afflictions. Having seen their faults and disadvantages, one needs to develop the determination never to reverse, never to waiver from the thought of abandoning the afflictions. The next line explains the extent to which one makes that commitment: *one should hold onto the antidote and destroy the afflictions by meeting them in battle with a vengeance*. 'Battle' here is used as an example to illustrate the forceful extent to which one needs to engage in the application of an antidote.

A second doubt is raised here:

Doubt: That which is to be abandoned and the antidote are attachment and anger, and revenge for that to be abandoned is an affliction, and therefore to be abandoned too.

The hypothetical doubt raised here is: isn't being attached to the antidote, generating anger and a vengeful attitude towards what has to be abandoned, i.e. the delusions, an affliction in itself? Doesn't that have to be abandoned too? In other words, attachment to the antidote and anger towards that which is to be abandoned would be an affliction in itself, so wouldn't that have to be abandoned as well?

The next two lines of the verse relate to this:

*43cd Afflictions with such an appearance  
Are the destroyer of afflictions, nothing else.*

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

Grasping on to the antidote and the vengeance to that which is to be abandoned, appear like afflictions but they actually belong to the side of the antidote that destroys the afflictions. Thus they are not contained in that to be abandoned.

What is being explained here is that grasping at an antidote and generating vengeance towards that which is to be abandoned may appear to be like afflictions, but actually they help to destroy the afflictions. Generating a vengeful attitude towards the afflictions (which are to be abandoned) is having thoughts such as, "I have recognised you, afflictions, to be the one that constantly harms me; I will definitely overcome you now. I will not rest until I have destroyed you". So when one targets the mind at overcoming the afflictions in such a way, that is the type of vengeance needed. As mentioned here, *it belongs to the side of the antidote*.

#### 2.2.3.2.3.2. Strive to never let the mind fall under the control of the afflictions

The next verse is preceded by this query:

Query: Is it not better to follow the afflictions since to abandon the afflictions brings hundreds of sufferings with it?

These are exactly the kinds of doubts we have when being wary of applying the antidotes to the afflictions. We find that "it is so difficult to overcome these afflictions, so maybe it is better to just follow them". It is this kind of attitude which has kept us in samsara for so long, and which prevents us from making any genuine attempts to overcome the afflictions. A very significant doubt has been raised here.

The verse which relates to this reads as follows:

*44 Dying due to being burned,  
Or even being decapitated is easy.  
But one should never submit  
To the enemy of the afflictions.*

The point to examine here is which is better: the difficulties and hardships in overcoming the afflictions, or waiting for the afflictions to completely control our mind so that we must experience their more serious consequences at a later time? This is the choice we need to make.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of the verse as follows:

Regardless of whether one dies by being burnt or whether one is decapitated, it is still easy, because at that time one is only separated from this life's body.

But one should never submit to the enemy of the afflictions that causes us to take birth in the great sufferings of the hell realms, and is an obstacle to



attaining our wishes. We should never fall under their control.

The explanation: *regardless of whether one dies by being burnt or whether one is decapitated, 'it is easy', implies that being burnt or consumed by fire or experiencing death from decapitation is merely a suffering one experiences from being separated from this life's body, and this will not in itself lead one to the lower realms e.g. the hell realms. These are regarded as easy in comparison to the great sufferings one would have to experience being under the influence of the afflictions. The commentary continues: but one should never submit to the afflictions that cause us to take birth in the great sufferings of the hell realms and is an obstacle to attaining our wishes. If one were to give power to the enemy (the afflictions), this is what causes one to take birth in the great sufferings of the hell realms and so forth, as well as being an obstacle to attaining our ultimate goal of enlightenment. The conclusion here is that one should never fall under the control of the afflictions.*

### **2.2.3.3. MEDITATING ON JOY KNOWING THAT IF ONE MAKES AN EFFORT IT IS POSSIBLE TO ABANDON THE AFFLICTIONS**

This heading presents the meaning of the next few verses, which is that one should generate joy in one's mind; one should not feel daunted by the difficulty of overcoming the afflictions but rather generate joy; and that if one makes an effort, it is definitely possible to abandon the afflictions which should cause some joy. This heading is subdivided into three:

2.2.3.3.1. Once the afflictions are expelled from one's continuum they have no other basis in which to abide

2.2.3.3.2. If one makes an effort they can be abandoned because they arise from a mistaken cause

2.2.3.3.3. If they are abandoned from the root, there is no other basis on which they can abide so they are suitable to abandon!

#### **2.2.3.3.1. Once the afflictions are expelled from one's continuum they have no other basis on which to abide**

This verse is preceded by another query:

Query: Afflictions are like worldly enemies in that, after having been expelled from one's place, they find again strength and harm again. So it is appropriate to follow them likewise.

The doubt here is that one may feel daunted in overcoming the afflictions if one perceives them as external enemies, because with external enemies, even if you overpower them for the time being and expel them from your area, they might congregate in another area, regain power and strength and again come back and cause you more harm. So if one uses an external enemy as an example for one's afflictions, one may have that doubt that "even if I were to overcome the afflictions now, they might reoccur later and affect me and harm me, so what is the point in trying to overcome them; I might as well just follow them".

The verse relating to this reads:

45 *When the ordinary enemy gets expelled from one place  
They conquer another place and remain there.  
Having regained strength they return.  
The way of the enemy of the afflictions is not like that.*

The commentary provides an answer to the query:

Answer: It is not the same. When the ordinary enemy gets expelled from one place they conquer another place, regain their strength there and then return to

take their revenge. The way of the enemy of the afflictions is not like that. Once they have been expelled from the root they cannot remain in another place and they cannot return.

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains, external worldly enemies and the afflictions do not have the same meaning. When an ordinary enemy gets expelled from one place, they conquer or reside in another place and regain their strength and return to take their revenge. That is what an external enemy is capable of doing. As explained further: *the way of the enemy of the afflictions is not like that because once they have been expelled from the very root they cannot remain in another place and they cannot return to harm oneself.*

If one makes an effort, afflictions can be abandoned because they arise from a mistaken cause. If the causes were based on a valid basis then one would not be able to abandon them because they would have a substantial base. But because the very causes of the afflictions are mistaken there is no sound basis for them and therefore one is able to abandon them. Understanding this gives one further encouragement to apply the antidotes to overcome the afflictions.

With the cause, we can again reflect upon the explanations in the *Abhidharma* which outlines three main conditions for afflictions to arise: When the afflictions have not been abandoned; when one is in close proximity to objects; and when concepts based on inappropriate attention is applied then all the conditions for the delusions to arise in one's mind are present. Inappropriate attention is in itself a mistaken consciousness which is one of the causes for afflictions to arise. It is precisely because inappropriate attention arises based on a mistaken consciousness that it can be eradicated, because a mistaken consciousness is not based on a valid basis.

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

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Edited Version  
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# Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བལྟས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

20 May 2014

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The *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer* that we have just recited will suffice as our motivation for engaging in our meditation practice. [meditation]

As mentioned many times in the past, prior to engaging in the Giving and Taking meditation practice one needs to first spend some time trying to cultivate a sense of love and compassion towards all beings who we visualise in front of ourselves. As a result of contemplating how beings lack true happiness, one develops a strong wish that they abide in happiness which is how one generates love for all beings. Then, by contemplating the various sufferings sentient beings are experiencing one generates the very strong wish that they be free from all those sufferings. That is where one generates the sense of compassion for all beings.

When one ensures that one has generated the mind of love and compassion for all beings, then to whatever degree one has developed these positive states of mind, to that extent the practice itself becomes really meaningful and fruitful. As a result of having spent some time focusing on these positive attitudes when we come out of the meditation practice we will be able to detect real transformation taking place in our minds. We will notice that the earlier chaotic and negative state of mind has been now replaced with a kinder and gentler state of mind which is a direct benefit of the practice. Generating love and compassion for other beings definitely has a positive effect on our mind, for when love and compassion is prevalent there is no room for any harmful intentions to arise. So, our mind will naturally be calmer and more peaceful because of the lack of harmful intent. It is important that we check whether our meditation practice is contributing to a positive change in our mind or not. It is not sufficient to merely focus on an object single-pointedly if it doesn't contribute to a positive change to one's mind.

As Lama Tsong Khapa said, one must abandon mere calm abiding and strive towards developing the union of calm abiding and special insight. This is a very significant point to bear in mind.

The main point here is that while we may have studied and have accumulated a great deal of knowledge, if we don't put that knowledge into practice it will not help to transform our mind. This point is emphasised at the end of this chapter.

## 2.2.3.3.2. If one makes an effort, they can be abandoned because they arise from a mistaken cause

The verse relating to this reads:

46. *The deluded afflictions are abandoned by the eye of wisdom  
When cleared from the mind where will they go?  
Where will they abide to gain strength and return?  
The weak mind does not let me strive.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

Once the afflictions have been abandoned from their root they have no other base. Since the afflictions arise

from a faulty or mistaken root, one should strive to abandon them with the eye of wisdom that realises emptiness.

Once they are cleared, or what is called abandoned, from the mind, where will they go and find new strength to return and retaliate? It is impossible. Although it is like this, the weak mind does not let me strive to uproot them once and for all.

What is being explained here is that once the afflictions have been abandoned from the very root they will not return. When the manifest afflictions are overcome that does not mean that they will not return. So, the emphasis here is on *abandoning* the afflictions from their very *root* so that there is no other base on which they can abide. This also relates to the doubt raised earlier in the text, which says that once afflictions have been overcome wouldn't it be possible for them to return just like an enemy? If you vanquish an enemy temporarily they can regroup and return to harm one again in the future. So, this verse further clarifies the response to the earlier doubt.

When the commentary states, *since the afflictions arise from a faulty or mistaken root*, the *root* refers to the self-grasping ignorance that is a faulty state of mind. Some teachings relate this to the misconceptions that arise from inappropriate attention, as presented in the *Abhidharma*. However, the main root is the grasping at a truly existent self which is the basis for all misconceptions to arise. As explained in other texts as well, it is because of grasping at a truly existent self that all the afflictions manifest themselves.

With this understanding one can see how attachment actually arises from grasping at a truly existent self. It is because of this faulty state of mind which superimposes and causes objects to appear as being truly existent, and further grasps at them as being truly existent, that afflictions such as attachment manifest themselves. Even though self and other phenomena do not exist inherently, it is the misconception that perceives them as being truly existent and inherently existent that makes them appear in that way. So, it is this faulty and mistaken mind that has to be eliminated from its very root.

As mentioned in the commentary, *one should start to abandon them with the eye of wisdom that realises emptiness*. Having identified the root of the afflictions, the way to strive to abandon them is, as mentioned here, with the *eye of wisdom realising emptiness*. Just as eyes see things directly, it is the wisdom that realises emptiness directly that overcomes or abandons the afflictions. The implication here is that just as one sees objects nakedly with one's eye, one uses the wisdom that realises emptiness directly as an antidote to abandon the afflictions.

With respect to *once that has been cleared or what is called, abandoned from the mind*, the Tibetan word *sal* translated here as *cleared* has the connotation of separating them from one's mind. So, once they have been cleared or separated from one's mind, the rhetorical question is: *where will they go and find new strength and return and retaliate?* implies that once abandoned, the afflictions do not and cannot return. What is specifically being explained here is that it is the wisdom realising emptiness directly that serves as the antidote to abandon afflictions from their very root. This wisdom severs the continuum of the afflictions. Thus, because the very continuum of the afflictions has been completely severed, a similar affliction cannot arise in the next moment. Once the afflictions have been completely severed there is no continuity, i.e. they cannot produce the next moment of

afflictions. The very meaning of being uprooted means that it cannot produce any more results. Thus, once the afflictions have been completely uprooted there is no way for them to return, and there is no other place for them to *abide*. To give a contemporary analogy, it is like the Tasmanian tiger which is extinct. It is because there is no continuity of the Tasmanian tiger that it can never return.

However this is not the case with an external enemy. As mentioned previously, when an external enemy is expelled from a place it can regroup and return. When the Communist Chinese took over Tibet many Tibetans left Tibet and relocated in India, and from there into many other countries. At this point Tibetans cannot stand up and fight back because there is no might. However, the fact is that if there was enough might and power then some Tibetans might want to retaliate and try to fight the Communist Chinese and return to Tibet. And it is possible for Tibetans to return to Tibet because even though they have been expelled the continuum of Tibetans has not been severed.

Unlike this example, when the afflictions have been overcome by the wisdom realising emptiness (which is the ultimate method to completely uproot the afflictions) then where would they go and find new strength to return and retaliate? This rhetorical question implies that it is impossible for them to return. Like the earlier analogy with the Tasmanian tiger, they can never return. The wisdom realising emptiness serves as an optimum antidote for overcoming the afflictions at their very root. This point has been explained many times in the past and you have to relate it to those earlier explanations as well. The reason I explain this again and again is so that you can derive the real meaning and gain an unmistakable and clear understanding of emptiness. Though the teachings explain this in many different ways, it all comes down to the same essential point.

When we take this explanation at a personal level then we really need to acknowledge that we have been able to identify the afflictions, i.e. we have a good understanding of what afflictions are. We also have quite a good understanding of what the antidote, the wisdom realising emptiness, implies. So with this understanding we need to try to overcome the afflictions within ourselves to the best of our ability. We have gained some really precious and valuable understandings and it is now up to us to actually apply this by taking measures to overcome the afflictions, in particular the root affliction of grasping at a truly existent self. To the extent that we can recognise and apply some antidote to overcome the grasping at a truly existent self, the strength of the afflictions, such as attachment and anger and so forth, will also be naturally reduced. Conversely, the stronger our grasping at a truly existent self and the more rigidly we hold onto this misconception, the greater the strength of the afflictions will be. So, to the best of our ability we need to apply the antidote for overcoming that grasping at a truly existent self.

When the commentary states although *it is like this*, it is referring to the fact that it is impossible for the delusions to return once they have been uprooted. However, the *weak mind* (a mind that lacks wisdom), *does not allow one to strive to uproot the afflictions once and for all*. Unless and until one has completely uprooted the delusions, they will reoccur. So if we find that we are affected by the continuity of afflictions, it is none other than because we have not applied the antidote—we have not applied a sufficient amount of wisdom to actually uproot the delusions. If we had done that

previously, then we would not be affected by afflictions now.

An arhat or foe destroyer is no longer affected by the delusions because of the fact that they have uprooted the delusions through the wisdom realising emptiness. Furthermore, as explained in the teachings, those on the Great Vehicle path of seeing have reached the state where they have the direct realisation of emptiness. The power of that realisation will not allow the grasping at a self to strengthen and to become a means to create a newly formed throwing karma which would propel them into rebirth in cyclic existence once again. As explained in the teachings, what prevents beings on the path of seeing from creating a newly formed karma to be reborn again in cyclic existence is the wisdom realising emptiness directly. Of course, even though they do not create any new throwing karma due to the strength of their wisdom directly realising emptiness, that doesn't mean they are completely free from being reborn in cyclic existence.

When a being realises emptiness directly then, even though the grasping at a truly existent self has not been completely uprooted yet, it is nevertheless overpowered by the wisdom realising emptiness. Thus they do not create any new throwing karma. Likewise, even though we still have afflictions, they will be weakened with whatever wisdom we accumulate. So the more we increase our understanding of emptiness through study and practice, the more we will reduce grasping at a truly existent self. Conversely, the stronger our grasping at the self, the more likely it is that we will continuously create throwing karmas, which perpetuates our cycle in samsara. The stronger our grasping at a truly and inherently existent self, the stronger the notion of 'I' or 'me' will be. And the stronger that sense of 'I', the more likely it is that one will reject anything that opposes the 'I', and be attached to whatever pleases that 'I'. That is how we continuously create karma through aversion and attachment, and this is what we need to understand.

**2.2.3.3.3. *If they are abandoned from the root, there are no other bases to abide. Thus they are suitable to abandon***

The explanation of the meaning of the next two lines of verse is preceded by this doubt:

If you say, the afflictions are also generated from one's own continuum and exist inherently and thus they cannot be abandoned.

In answer to that doubt the next two lines of verse are presented:

**47ab. *Afflictions do not abide in the object, not in the faculties nor in-between.***  
***Since they are also nowhere else, where do they go to harm all sentient beings?***

In his commentary Gyaltshab Je begins his explanation of the meaning of these lines thus:

Answer: The afflictions do not abide in objects such as form, otherwise arhats would also generate afflictions when they see forms and so forth.

The answer to the doubt is that the afflictions do not abide inherently. If they were to abide in an object such as form, then an arhat (who has in fact abandoned the afflictions) *would generate afflictions when they see forms*, because they still perceive forms. This implies that the arhats, as a consequence of having interacted with forms, would also generate afflictions. But that is not the case. Furthermore:

They also do not abide in the collections of the sense powers of the eyes and so forth, because when one

contemplates the actual mode of existence, the eyes exist, but the afflictions do not.

A being on the non-interrupted path of seeing who has the direct realisation of emptiness still has the sense powers of the eyes and so forth, but because they have the direct realisation of emptiness the afflictions are not manifest. If they were to *abide in the collections of the sense powers of the eyes and so forth*, then that would imply that afflictions are still manifest in the being on the uninterrupted path of seeing. The commentary further explains:

They also do not exist in-between or somewhere else.

Since it is like this, once abandoned where can the afflictions that were uprooted in this way, and which exist from their own side, go to inflict harm? They do not abide anywhere.

Then the next two lines of verse are presented.

*47cd. Since they are like illusions, abandon fear in the heart and rely on striving for wisdom. Why harm myself meaninglessly with the hells and so forth?*

The commentary explains the meaning of these two lines as follows:

These afflictions are like illusions. They are empty of inherent existence and yet appear as if they exist from their own side. Therefore, abandon the fear in your heart that they cannot be abandoned because of existing inherently.

Having generated the wisdom that realises emptiness it is suitable to strive in abandoning the mental afflictions. Since one has this ability, why would one create meaninglessly the harm of the lower realms of the hells and so forth? This is unsuitable.

This explanation is quite clear. It follows the earlier explanation that used this analogy of the afflictions being like illusions.

## Summary

*48. Strive to achieve the trainings, That were thus explained and contemplated. There is no medicine that can cure If one does not listen to the advice of the physician*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Contemplate in the above way repeatedly. Make an effort to strive with conscientiousness in how the Buddha earlier explained bodhicitta, and to protect the trainings. There are no sicknesses that can be cured only by medicine without listening to the instructions of the physician that contain many truths. Strive in abandoning the afflictions according to the instructions of the great physician.

*Contemplate in the above way repeatedly* refers to all the instructions that were given earlier as well as the advice given by the Buddha in his teachings. So the emphasis here is to *make an effort to strive with conscientiousness* to protect the trainings which serve as the basis for developing bodhicitta. This is really an exhortation to put into practice the instructions that were given earlier. The analogy which is used here is that *there are no sicknesses that can be cured only by medicine without listening to instructions of the physician*. The analogy is that when a sick patient goes to see a physician, a skilled physician would give the medicine along with specific instructions on how to take the medicine with possible dietary restrictions. If the patient doesn't take the medicine then they cannot be cured, but if they take it

without following the physician's specific instructions then again that will affect the chances of being cured. In this analogy Buddha Shakyamuni is like the skilled doctor, and the holy Dharma, which consists of the practices of hearing, thinking and meditating, is like the medicine. One is like the patient, and the afflictions in one's mind are analogous to sickness.

As mentioned earlier, the Dharma was presented by the Buddha on the basis of the three trainings—training in moral ethics, training in meditation and training in wisdom—and the various different teachings which have been precisely presented along with the unmistakable instruction, is the medicine itself. If we don't put these instructions into practice then there is no way that we can be cured of the sickness of the afflictions. More specifically, without putting these instructions into practice there is no way that we will be able to overcome the root affliction of grasping at the self.

Gyaltsab Je is exhorting us to *strive in abandoning the afflictions according to the instructions of the great physician*, the Buddha. So the emphasis here is to make every effort to apply conscientiousness to our training.

Then Gyaltsab Je concludes his commentary on this chapter with this verse:

Freedom from the quagmire of faults within one's own continuum,  
Increasing virtues without degeneration,  
These depend with certainty on meditation on conscientiousness.  
Therefore those proficient should always rely on conscientiousness.

So with this verse Gyaltsab Je points out that being free from *the quagmire of faults and increasing virtues without degeneration, depends on meditating or maintaining conscientiousness*. Therefore, he exhorts the wise need to always depend on conscientiousness. As mentioned here, in order to increase virtue within ourselves and prevent it from degenerating we need to apply conscientiousness. As presented earlier, the definition of conscientiousness includes being constantly mindful of that which needs to be adopted.

Conscientiousness was explained at the very beginning of this chapter so one needs to relate it to that explanation, otherwise we would have to explain it each time it is mentioned again. I don't blame some geshees who seem to be a bit exasperated. Some have said that they put quite bit of effort into explaining things clearly, and at the time it seems that the students have understood it, but after a while they seem to have completely forgotten the points, and it has to be explained all over again.

The importance of remembering the instructions actually leads us into the next chapter, which covers mindfulness and introspection.

## II. THE NAME OF THE CHAPTER

*This is the fourth chapter of Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas called Applying Conscientiousness*

The commentary reads:

This is the commentary on *the fourth chapter of the Introduction to the Actions of Bodhisattvas*, called *Applying Conscientiousness*, from *The Entrance for the Children of the Conquerors*.

Now we come to the fifth chapter, Introspection.

To explain the context of this chapter we need to return to the subdivisions introduced in chapter 1.<sup>1</sup>

## **2. THE ACTUAL EXPLANATION OF THE STAGES OF THE PATH**

### **2.2. The method for taking the essence**

#### **2.2.2. Explaining the individual meanings<sup>2</sup>**

##### **2.2.2.2. THE WAY OF TRAINING IN THE PRACTICES OF GENERATING THE TWO MINDS**

###### **2.2.2.2.2. The Way of Training in the Actions, the Perfections**

2.2.2.2.2.1. The way of meditating on conscientiousness, the limb preventing the degeneration of the training in the mind of enlightenment<sup>3</sup>

2.2.2.2.2.2. Explaining the way of training in morality, by relating it to introspection and mindfulness, the methods for keeping virtuous dharmas pure<sup>4</sup>

## **CHAPTER 5: EXPLAINING THE WAY OF TRAINING IN MORALITY BY RELATING IT TO INTROSPECTION AND MINDFULNESS, THE METHODS FOR KEEPING ALL VIRTUOUS DHARMAS PURE**

The point here, as in other teachings, is that morality through pure conduct is the very basis for one to keep virtuous Dharma pure.

The importance of mindfulness and introspection is encapsulated in this verse which will come later in the text.

*Those who wish to guard their mind  
Definitely need to adopt mindfulness and  
Introspection and keep that,  
I implore you to please keep the heart.*

So Shantideva, putting his palms at his heart, respectfully says, 'I implore you to adopt this'. He is pleading with us to guard and protect our mind with the optimum methods of mindfulness and introspection. So he is showing us the great importance of applying these methods in our practice.

The chapter is in two sections:

1. General Presentation
2. Individual presentation

### **GENERAL PRESENTATION**

This has three parts:

1. Having generated the mind, why it is necessary to cultivate the trainings
2. Training in method and wisdom separately will not lead to enlightenment
3. The sequence of cultivating the trainings

#### **1. HAVING GENERATED THE MIND, WHY IT IS NECESSARY TO CULTIVATE THE TRAININGS.**

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Merely generating the wishing or aspiring mind has, of course, great benefits, but it is impossible to attain enlightenment without making the perfections the essence of one's practice.

*Generating the wishing or aspiring mind to achieve enlightenment definitely has great benefits, and one gains an incredible amount of merit from just generating that aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all*

sentient beings. However that aspiring mind in itself will not be sufficient to become a cause to achieve enlightenment unless it is accompanied by the commitment to engage in the practice of perfections.

Hence one should engage in the practice of the perfections.

Then Gyaltsab Je provides some quotes:

From the *King of Concentration Sutra* :

Youth, therefore, make practice the essence. I shall explain why: For someone that makes practice the essence, the attainment of highest enlightenment is not difficult.

Furthermore the *Initial or First Stage of Meditation* states:

Thus, bodhisattvas that have generated bodhicitta, after having understood the subdued and the unsubdued, need to strongly engage into the trainings of practicing generosity and so forth. Without practice they will not attain enlightenment.

Practice here refers solely to the training concerning the vows, after one has taken them.

This is a reference to the bodhisattva vows.

### **2. TRAINING IN METHOD AND WISDOM SEPARATELY WILL NOT LEAD TO ENLIGHTENMENT**

Under this heading Gyaltsab Je states:

The method for attaining enlightenment that one engages in must be an unmistakable method. A mistaken method will not bring about the desired result although one engages in effort.

This very meticulous explanation is quite clear. *A mistaken method will not bring about the desired result although one engages in effort* is emphasising that one needs to adopt an unmistakable method from the very beginning.

Then the commentary continues:

One's effort will also not bring about a result if the engaged method is incomplete, even though it is unmistakable. Therefore one needs to train in a complete, unmistakable method.

This is a prelude to what will be presented as the unmistakable and complete method for training.

Next, Gyaltsab Je quotes from the text, *Purification of Vairochana*,

The transcendental wisdom that knows all, the keeper of the secret, arose from the root of compassion, arose from the cause of bodhicitta, is the culmination of method.

Gyaltsab Je then explains the meaning of that quote:

As quoted, one goes beyond through great compassion, conventional and ultimate bodhicitta, and the method of generosity and the other perfections.

In order to go completely beyond to the state of enlightenment, one first needs develop great compassion. Then one realises conventional bodhicitta, followed by the realisation of ultimate bodhicitta, which is the wisdom realising emptiness. So basically method and wisdom are presented here with conventional bodhicitta and ultimate bodhicitta, and the following methods or trainings of generosity and the other perfections.

### **3. THE SEQUENCE OF CULTIVATING THE TRAININGS**

Having explained the trainings in brief, how does one engage in those trainings sequentially?

<sup>1</sup> See the teaching of 26 March 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Introduced in the teaching of 2 July 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Covered in chapter 4.

<sup>4</sup> Covered in chapter 5.

Gyaltsab Je explains that:

Upon taking the wishing bodhicitta, one trains in the aspiration to engage into the trainings. Following this, one takes the bodhisattva vows, and then practises the trainings accordingly.

One first develops a *wishing* or aspiring *bodhicitta*, and with that one develops the commitment *to engage in the trainings*. Following this, one takes the *bodhisattva* vows and practises the *trainings* accordingly. So having first generated aspirational bodhicitta, one develops the wish to engage in the trainings. That is followed by the development of engaging bodhicitta, where one actually makes a commitment and takes the vows to train in the practices of perfections. That is how the sequence is presented.

Then Gyaltsab Je explains:

If the different types of trainings are summed up in accordance with the *Ornament of Mahayana Sutras*, then they are the six perfections.

The various practices and the many trainings a bodhisattva engages in can be subsumed into the six perfections. As explained here, this is *in accordance with the Ornament of Mahayana Sutra*. There is also an extensive explanation of this in the *Extensive Lam Rim*. It would be good for you to refer to that because having quoted the *Ornament of Mahayana Sutra* the commentary gives only a general presentation of why the practices of bodhisattvas are subsumed into the six perfections.

Gyaltsab Je begins this brief explanation with:

Six perfections are the definite number from the point of view of:

- Higher status.
- The two purposes
- The complete achievement of the welfare of others
- Containing all the Mahayana
- Complete path or method
- The three higher trainings

So the practice of the six perfections suffices for obtaining higher status, the two purposes and so forth. I have presented this in detail many times in the past.

The commentary presents this classification but does not go into much detail. So it would be good to refer to the explanations in the *Extensive Lam Rim* which will help to develop a better understanding of these points. If we can relate these classifications to the explanation in the *Extensive Lam Rim* then they will be quite clear. Otherwise it would take a lot of time to explain them. So it would be beneficial to refer to a more extensive explanation to gain a better understanding of what is being presented here. Those of you who have the *Extensive Lam Rim* can bring your book to class next week.

Indeed, if the *Bodhisattva's Way of Life* were to be explained in conjunction with the explanations in the Lam Rim teachings, the Madhyamika text, the tenets (which will be explained in the ninth chapter) and the Prajnaparamita text we could spend our entire life studying it. The *Bodhisattva's Way of Life* really subsumes all of the other texts, and what is referred to here in passing is explained in greater detail in these other texts. Because it covers all the meaning of all of the other texts, one could spend a very long time going through this text in detail.

It is really good to read and develop a familiarity with the *Extensive Lam Rim*, which many of you have. It was composed with the intent of subduing the mind, and there is

no more supreme text for subduing the mind. If we read it and become familiar with its explanations it will definitely help to settle down and subdue our mind, and we will notice that any sort of upheaval in the mind will naturally subside.

Dr Tony Hammond, who used to come to study group, used to mention that without engaging in studying in this way we might be similar to a long life god. Do you recall why the long life gods are considered to be in a state without leisure? It is because they spend their entire existence absorbed in a worldly meditative concentration and don't have the time to practise Dharma. That is why they are an example of someone who does not have the leisure to practise Dharma.

This indicates that just engaging in some sort of gross or worldly concentration is not sufficient. It will not suffice as engaging in the real practice of holy Dharma as it does not help to subdue the mind. This is an important point.

Shantideva is really exhorting us to engage in the real practice of Dharma. I try to emphasise this essential point again and again, with the intention that you might actually pay heed to this advice and use your understanding and knowledge for the practice of subduing the mind. Otherwise, if we don't make any effort now when we have the opportunity, our mind will remain unruly and unsubdued for an infinite period of time. These are really important points that we need to keep in mind.

If being absorbed in some meditative concentration brings some sort of bliss then we cannot say that it has no benefit at all. It does have some temporary benefit, but it won't help to actually subdue the delusions. So it cannot be a cause for liberation; indeed, it enhances the conditions to remain in cyclic existence for a longer time. I am relating all this to you as a friend who has genuine concern for your wellbeing!

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

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*Edited Version*

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## Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

27 May 2014

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Based on the motivation that we have already generated during the recitation, we can now engage in the meditation practice. (*pause for meditation*)

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

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

When one generates this motivation, even as an aspiration, we can see how incredible and expansive the thought: "in order to benefit all sentient beings, I, myself, will need to achieve enlightenment" actually is. One individual being thinking of all sentient beings and meditating for their wellbeing is really wonderful, and a powerful means to accumulate extensive merit.

From our last session we are at the point where it states:

If the different types of trainings are summed up in accordance with the *Ornament of Mahayana Sutras*, then there are the six perfections.

All the practices of the bodhisattvas can be subsumed into the six perfections. In other words, there is no practice which does not fit into the category of the six perfections.

### **The six perfections are the definite number from the point of view of higher status.**

The six perfections serve as a means for obtaining higher status. If one were to ask: "why do bodhisattvas need to obtain higher status?", then it is because engaging in the bodhisattva's deeds to perfect their practices can take up to many lifetimes. So, in order to be able to practice continuously with the conducive conditions in all future lifetimes, the excellence of high status is needed. There are four excellences of high status: excellent body; excellent resources; excellent entourage; and excellent activities or actions.

The practices of the six perfections serving as causes to obtain these excellences are also referred to in the early parts of the *Extensive Lam Rim*:

In particular, to obtain complete leisure and opportunity requires many roots of virtue, such as having a foundation of pure ethical discipline, augmenting it with generosity and the like, and when dying making a connection with your next lifetime through stainless aspirational prayers.

For bodhisattvas to continuously train in the practices to achieve enlightenment, they need to have a good basis (sound body) in all successive life times. While we may not yet be able to engage in the practices of the six perfections to the extent of a bodhisattva, we can however practise a similitude of the six perfections. So, as

explained in the teachings the specific cause for obtaining a *good body* is the practice of *morality*.

Just having the excellent base of a sound body is not sufficient, one also needs *good resources* to sustain one's body. So, *generosity* is a specific cause for obtaining good resources such as wealth and so forth.

Furthermore, it is not sufficient just to have good resources, if one lacks good companions. Thus, a good *entourage* (excellent companions) are also required as a necessary condition to engage in the practices. The specific cause for obtaining excellent companions is the practice of *patience*.

Finally, in order to obtain what one wishes to achieve, one needs to have the excellence of *activities*. Because reaping the fruit of any activity is dependent on the completion of that activity, one needs to conduct excellent activities. The cause which for excellence of activities is *joyous effort* or enthusiasm.

Thus, these four are called the four excellences. Having acquired them one needs to ensure they do not become causes for afflictions to arise, so the next two perfections are presented as a means to prevent that. This is an essential point because for us in our situation, we will find that whenever we acquire these excellences they can very readily become a cause for afflictions to manifest. For a practitioner aspiring to achieve enlightenment, if the excellences become a cause for afflictions to arise, then it will defeat the very purpose of one's endeavours to achieve that state. So the next two perfections, concentration and wisdom become the specific causes that prevent the excellences or good conditions from becoming a cause for afflictions to arise. *Concentration* is the means to control or subdue the mind and will prevent manifest afflictions from arising. *Wisdom* (which encompasses analytical wisdom) allows one to recognise and distinguish between what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded and so stops afflictions from developing further; ultimately removing them from their very root.

Each of the six perfections has a specific result. If one were to ask "what is the result of having practiced morality?" the positive result is explained precisely. Likewise this is the case with generosity, patience etc. The specific results to be reaped by engaging in the six perfections are explained in detail in the teachings.

The point here is that we need to be mindful that our practices (e.g. meditation) do not become the means to escalate the afflictions in our mind. A practitioner such as a bodhisattva uses the practice of concentration as the supreme means to overcome the delusions and afflictions in their mind. In our situation, if we are not mindful of our practice of (for example) meditation, it is very easy the delusions, such as pride, competitiveness, jealousy and so forth to escalate. Rather than the practice becoming a means to subdue the mind it becomes the means to further strengthen the delusions, which is a disgrace. This is an important point to bear in mind. Of course if we don't pay heed to this cautionary advice, then it is mere words and we would not get any benefit.

So, if it is possible for practices such as meditation to serve as means to further enhance the eight worldly

concerns, then one needs to be really mindful. From when I was quite young I have paid particular attention to the practice of meditation. When I analyse and look back now, I notice that there were definitely taints of worldly concerns in the early years. However these days I can assure you I am quite free from that. I'm declaring to you openly what I feel is true for myself, which is what His Holiness the Dalai Lama has repeatedly encouraged us to do.

Explanations on the six perfections are clearly and extensively explained in Lama Tsong Khapa's *Extensive Lam Rim*, so please take the initiative to read the text. It specifically covers the way each perfection serves as a specific cause to acquire a specific result, and serves as a good condition to further enhance our practice. It also explains that if one were to be missing any of these good conditions, then that becomes an obstacle for one's practice.

### **The six perfections are the definite number from the point of view of the two purposes**

Bodhisattvas have made the pledge to work for the welfare of all sentient beings, and aspire to achieve enlightenment for that purpose. The bodhisattvas' purpose for engaging in practice is two-fold: to fully actualise one's own ultimate potential and to benefit other sentient beings.

*Generosity* becomes a most important practice to benefit others. The first means of fulfilling others' purposes is to benefit others by providing material wealth, including food and clothing; then grant them with the wealth of dharma knowledge. Providing material assistance will make them more receptive to receiving the ultimate help of the Dharma. If one is generous to others but harms them at the same time, then while some benefit may remain from the generosity, most of it will be nullified. So while engaging in the practices of generosity, one must refrain from harming the beings to whom one has been generous by using the practice of morality—this is the most essential element for accomplishing pure benefit without harm.

While one may successfully refrain from harming others, they may cause us harm; but if one retaliates, then again, one will be harming them. Even if initially one didn't have any intention to harm them, when one retaliates they will be harmed. So, to prevent oneself from retaliating and bear harms upon oneself, one needs to practise *patience*. As such the practice of patience is most essential in order to willingly accept harms inflicted by others.

The text explains one must acquire *wisdom* to obtain liberation and freedom. For wisdom to assist one achieve liberation, one has to be free from a distracted mind because if one is distracted one will not be able to utilise wisdom. The practice which serves as an aid to free oneself from distractions is *concentration*, which refers here to the concentration of being able to focus on an object for as long as one wishes, i.e. the state of calm abiding. Thus, this level of single-pointed concentration supported by the wisdom realising emptiness becomes the supreme means to achieve liberation.

One cannot possibly develop concentration and cultivate wisdom if one is affected by laziness. So the optimum means to overcome laziness is to practice *joyous effort* or enthusiasm. This is how the practices of the six perfections are meticulously presented as the means to fulfil both purposes.

### **The six perfections are the definite number from the point of view of complete achievement of the welfare of others.**

The *Extensive Lam Rim* presents:

You first relieve others' poverty by giving away material goods. Then you do no harm to any living being and, in addition, are patient with harm done to you. Without becoming dispirited you joyously persevere at helping those who harm you. You depend on meditative stabilisation and inspire them through displaying supernormal powers and so forth. When they become suitable vessels for the teachings, you rely on wisdom and give good explanations, cut through their doubts and thereby bring them to liberation. Because you do all this, the perfections are fixed as six in number.

As explained, to relieve others from the suffering of poverty one first helps others with the practice of *generosity*, by providing them with material goods. To prevent oneself from harming them one needs to practise *morality*. That which serves as the means to protect oneself from other's harm is *patience*. As there is the danger of losing one's patience if one feels daunted or overwhelmed when facing the harm by others, one needs to practise *joyous effort* so that one doesn't give up benefiting others.

When one obtains the ability to perform miraculous feats which is depended on the practice of *concentration*, one can then enchant others and draw them close to you. Thus when others become the perfect recipients for receiving Dharma teachings, by relying on *wisdom*, the bodhisattva can then provide the clear explanations that completely eliminates all doubts and leads them to the state of liberation.

This, then, is how the six perfections serve as a means for the complete achievement of the welfare of others.

### **The six perfections are the definite number from the point of view of containing all the Mahayana**

As further presented in the *Extensive Lam Rim*:

You are indifferent to resources because you are not attached to those you have and do not pursue those you lack. Since you then have the ability to safeguard precepts, you adopt and respect ethical discipline. You are patient with the suffering that comes from living beings and inanimate things, and you are enthusiastic about whatever virtue you set out to cultivate, so you do not get dispirited by either of these. You cultivate a non-discursive yoga of meditative serenity and a non-discursive yoga of insight. These six comprise all the Mahayana practices through which you advance by the six perfections, for you accomplish these practices in stages by means of the six perfections and you do not need any more than these six perfections.

The text explains that when one practices supreme *generosity*, one can become detached from the resources one already has and will not engage in pursuing resources which one lacks. In other words, one is content



with what one has. With that ability one can safeguard one's practices of *morality* so they become purer. Basically, it becomes a supreme practice for having less desire and being content, hence one becomes an object of respect. Based on the achievements of the earlier practices, when one engages in *patience* one is able to endure the suffering caused by other sentient beings or inanimate objects. Because one is able to endure these sufferings, that is be *enthusiastic* or joyous in one's virtues, that is how the practice of patience induces joyous effort.

As explained in the text:

You are enthusiastic about whatever virtue you set out to cultivate so you do not become dispirited by either of these.

Furthermore, you cultivate a non-discursive yoga of meditative *concentration*, which is the state of clam abiding, and the *wisdom* of special insight. These six then comprise all the Mahayana practices, through which you advance by the six perfections.

### **The six perfections are the definite number from the point of view of the complete path or method**

The *Extensive Lam Rim* presents:

The path—i.e., method—for not being attached to the resources that are your possessions is generosity, because you become free from attachment to your things by becoming habituated to giving them away.

The text explains meticulously that the supreme means to overcome attachment to one's own possessions is by actually giving them away. When you are *generous* with your own possessions it becomes the method for overcoming attachment to them.

The text continues:

The method for restraining yourself from the distraction of trying to possess what you do not possess is ethical discipline, for when you maintain a monk's vows, you do not have all the distractions of making a living.

What is being explained here is that ethics or *morality* is the best basis for preventing one from having distractions in one's mind.

As mentioned earlier, within the three trainings the first is morality because by engaging in the practice of morality it will reduce the gross levels of our distractions. Then when one is free from the gross distractions, through the practice of *concentration* one can then further enhance the ability in one's mind, overcoming more subtle distractions.

The text continues:

The method for not abandoning living beings is patience, because you do not despair at the suffering caused by the harm others inflict.

The reason we would feel discouraged and abandon working for the benefit of sentient beings is when we lose our patience. When we are unable to endure hardships, either when others harm us or due to our own sufferings, then that experience may cause us to give up helping beings. So, the practice of *patience* protects one from this.

The text continues:

The method to increase virtues is joyous perseverance, because you increase them when you joyously persevere at what you undertake.

If someone were to state "I really want to practice meditation", or "I really want to study. How can I best do that? What is the best method?", then the text explains that the best method is to develop *joyous effort* or enthusiasm, which becomes the supreme method to increase one's ability to practice and study.

The text continues:

The methods for clearing away obscurations are the final two perfections, because meditative stabilisation clears away the afflictions and wisdom clears away the cognitive obscurations. Thus the perfections are fixed as six in number.

As explained, *meditative stabilisation* clears away the afflictions and *wisdom* clears away the cognitive obscurations or the obscuration to omniscience. Thus as the text states, the perfections are fixed as six in numbers.

### **The six perfections are the definite number from the point of view of the three higher trainings**

The *Extensive Lam Rim* explains:

The nature of the training in ethical discipline [the first of the three trainings] is the practice of ethical discipline.

The precondition of the training in ethical discipline is generosity, because once you have generosity that is indifferent to resources, you can properly adopt an ethical discipline.

This is similar to what was explained earlier: through *generosity*, when one has less attachments and more contentment, it becomes easier for one to actually practice discipline or *morality*.

The Lam Rim text continues:

The aid to the training in ethical discipline is patience, because the patience of not retaliating when scolded, etc. safeguards your properly adopted ethical discipline.

*Patience* here refers to an aid to training in ethical discipline. The verse explains how they are all interrelated—to practice one needs the base of the others as well.

The Lam Rim text continues:

*Meditative stabilisation* is the training of mind [the second training, the training of meditative concentration], and *wisdom* is the training in wisdom [the third training]. As for *joyous perseverance*, it is included in all three trainings, so the perfections are fixed at six in number.

This concurs with Gyaltsab Je's commentary of the *Bodhicharyavatara* which lists the six reasons of why the six perfections are definite in number and we have covered all of them.

### **CAUSE, NATURE, DIVISION, MEANING OF THE NAME AND RESULT OF THE SIX PERFECTIONS**

Gyaltsab Je's commentary presents the six perfections under the headings: Cause, Nature, Division, Meaning of the Name, Result of the Six Perfections. Again, the actual practices of the six perfections are those that only a

bodhisattva or true Mahayana practitioners will possess as they are practices which have to be combined with bodhicitta (as explained later). However at our level, even though we have not actually developed bodhicitta, and our practice may not be an actual practice of the perfection of generosity etc., to whatever extent we can engage in the practices, we can say that we have a similitude of the practice of the six perfections within ourselves now.

### CAUSE

Under this heading Gyaltsab Je states:

It is bodhicitta that is held by method and wisdom and focuses on the three baskets of the Mahayana teachings and depends on the special Mahayana lineage and the condition of a Mahayana teacher.

Bodhicitta is the cause for the practices of the six perfections. Take the example of generosity, whether our level of generosity becomes a practice of the perfection of generosity or not is dependent on whether we have the conditions in ourselves or not. So if we find that we lack the condition, then of course our practice of generosity will not be an actual perfection of generosity.

### NATURE

Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

The nature of generosity is the virtuous mind of giving and all the actions of body and speech that arise from it.

*The definition of generosity is the virtuous mind that wishes to give.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

Morality is contained in the thought of abandoning harm to others and abandoning sole personal liberation.

Harm here refers to the ten non-virtuous actions. The first seven of these encompass the three of the body (killing, stealing and sexual misconduct), the fourth is speech (allowing harmful or divisive speech and idle gossip), all of which cause direct harm to others. The basis is in the three non-virtues of the mind (covetousness, harmful intent and wrong views).

Morality contains the actual deeds, and the causes of those negative deeds towards others, as well as abandoning sole personal liberation. While sole liberation is not an abandonment for those following the lower vehicle, for a bodhisattva sole liberation is definitely something which has to be abandoned. If bodhisattvas do not protect themselves from the thought of self-liberation they will degenerate their bodhicitta. Therefore protecting themselves from sole liberation is part of their ethical practice.

In brief, *the definition of morality is the mind that restrains from harming others.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

Patience is a mind that abides in its natural state, unaffected by harm and suffering and also strongly abides in the dharma.

*Patience as a mind that abides in its natural state refers to being able to remain in a natural or calm state in the face of harm or suffering.* Other texts define patience as a mind which does not become troubled in the face of harm and

sufferings. Patience has three types: not being disturbed in the face of harm; or sufferings; and strongly, i.e. definitely, abiding in the Dharma.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

Enthusiasm is the joy of accumulating virtue and achieving the purpose of sentient beings and the actions of the three doors which arise from it.

*Enthusiasm or joyous effort is the state of mind which takes joy in accumulating virtue.* Thus when one derives joy from accumulating virtue, then naturally the actions that arise from the three doors (mainly body, speech and mind) are in accordance with benefitting others and overcoming negativities.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

Mental stabilisation is the single pointed abiding on a virtuous object.

To the statement *mental stabilisation is the single-pointed abiding on a virtuous object* some texts add *from its own side*, meaning through its own power. This carries more weight.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

*Wisdom is the discerning that occurs upon analysing ultimate and conventional objects.*

### DIVISIONS

*Generosity* has [three sub-divisions:] generosity of the Dharma; material generosity; and generosity of fearlessness.

The generosity of fearlessness refers to protecting the lives of other beings.

*Morality* has [three sub-divisions:] the morality of vows (observing vows); accumulating virtue and achieving the welfare of others.

There are actually eleven ways of achieving the welfare of others as the divisions of morality encompass all the virtuous deeds of a bodhisattva. The *morality of the vows* and the *morality of accumulating virtue* relates to fulfilling one's own ultimate purpose while the morality of achieving the welfare of others is fulfilling the purpose of other beings. As Lama Tsong Khapa mentions in the prayer *Foundation Of All Good Qualities*:

Even if I develop bodhicitta, but don't practice the three types of morality,  
I will not achieve enlightenment.  
With the clear recognition of this,  
Please bless me to practice the bodhisattva vows with great energy.

These are really essential points to keep in mind. The morality of vows is also presented as the morality of restraining from faults.

*Patience* has [three subdivisions:] the patience of thinking nothing of being harmed by others; tolerating one's suffering; and definitely abiding in the Dharma.

In the first division of patience, what is being emphasised is not allowing one's mind to be disturbed when others harm oneself. This implies willingly enduring or willingly accepting harm from others; when one is able to do this then it does not cause one's mind to become disturbed, and thus harm others by retaliating.

In the second division, tolerating one's suffering, again being able to willingly bear or accept the sufferings becomes a means for one's mind not to become disturbed. These are important points for one's practice. Indeed, for whatever one wishes to achieve because whatever one's endeavours, there are bound to be hardships and difficulties, and if one is not able to endure them or accept them, then it can cause the mind to become daunted and the mind can start to get upset and angry.

*Enthusiasm* has [three divisions:] armour-like enthusiasm; enthusiasm in accumulating virtue; and enthusiasm in achieving the welfare of sentient beings.

*Mental stabilisation* has [three divisions:] mental stabilisation to abide in happiness in this life; for achieving qualities; and for accomplishing the welfare of sentient beings.

*Wisdom* has [three divisions:] the wisdom which realises the ultimate; the conventional; and the actions for the benefit of sentient beings.

### **THE MEANING OF THE NAME**

In Sanskrit the word for generosity is *dhana*. You will notice some temples have *dhana* written on the donation box as a way to encourage generosity when making offerings. Here:

*Dhana* means to willingly give up that which is to be offered, hence generosity.

*Shila* means to cool the heat and misery of the afflictions, hence morality.

Patience because of being patient with aggression. In Tibetan the term *sopa* has the connotation of bearing or to tolerate aggression.

*Enthusiasm* because of training for the highest.

*Mental stabilisation* because of mentally holding.

*Wisdom* because of knowing the ultimate.

### **RESULTS**

As explained in *Precious Garland*:

From giving there arises wealth, from ethics happiness,  
From patience a good appearance, from joyous effort  
[effort in] virtue, brilliance,  
From concentration peace, from wisdom liberation,  
From compassion all aims are achieved.

The result of *generosity* is that one will obtain wealth, and the result of *morality* is that one will obtain the happiness of the high status.

As a result of *patience*, one will obtain a good complexion,  
As a result of practising patience, one obtains lustre and a good appearance.

As a result of joyous effort one obtains virtuous brilliance.

As a result of practising *concentration*, one obtains a subdued mind.

As a result of practising *wisdom*, one obtains liberation or a liberated mind.

With compassion one obtains the two purposes which encompass one's own purpose and the purpose of benefitting others.

Having explained how the six perfections serve as a means for obtaining all these excellences, if we were to ask ourselves, "would I like to have these good

conditions?", our answer would definitely be "Yes! I would like to have these good conditions, all these excellences".

Again, we might not yet be capable of engaging in the actual perfections of these practices, but we do have the capacity to practice a similitude of them to the best of our ability, so to that extent it is most meaningful and most worthwhile for oneself. When it is accompanied by the right (altruistic) motivation then it definitely becomes a really meaningful practice.

As Gyalsab Je's commentary presents:

The nature, division and so forth of the six perfections should be ascertained more extensively from the *Small* and *Great Stages of the Path*. The way of practising them is explained extensively here in this text.

To understand a more extensive presentation of the nature, division and so forth one would need to refer to the *Extensive Lam Rim* teachings. However as the commentary states, the way to practice is presented in this very text in the following verses.

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

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*Edited Version*

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# Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བལྟས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

3 June 2014

Based on the motivation we generated in the *Refuge and Bodhicitta Prayer* that we have just recited we can now engage in the practice of meditation. [meditation]

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

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

In our last session we covered a general presentation of the way of training in the six perfections. A lot of material was presented then, and it is good to keep it in mind as we cover the individual presentations of each of the perfections.

## INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION

### CHAPTER 5 EXPLAINING THE WAY OF TRAINING IN MORALITY BY RELATING IT TO INTROSPECTION AND MINDFULNESS, THE METHODS FOR KEEPING VIRTUOUS DHARMAS PURE

There are two parts to the chapter:

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

#### I. EXPLAINING THE TEXT OF THE CHAPTER

This has two subdivisions:

1. Explaining extensively how to practice
2. Concluding summary showing that one has to practice the meaning and not just the words

##### 1. EXPLAINING EXTENSIVELY HOW TO PRACTICE

This is subdivided into four sections.

- 1.1. Guarding the mind as a method for guarding the training
- 1.2. Guarding mindfulness and introspection as methods for guarding the mind.
- 1.3. Practice of guarding the mind with mindfulness and introspection
- 1.4. Method for perfecting the trainings

With these outlines, we need to take note of how meticulously the material is being presented. If we pay particular attention to this, we will notice that we are being presented with a supreme technique for meditation practice. We may assume that we are meditating, but if we fail to apply these points, we are not actually meditating properly.

##### 1.1. Guarding the mind as a method for guarding the training

As most of us have taken many vows and agreed to comply with certain commitments, this section presents the trainings on how to protect our vows and commitments.

There are three sub-divisions:

- 1.1.1. By protecting the mind all will be protected
- 1.1.2. The reason for this
- 1.1.3. Striving in guarding the mind

##### 1.1.1. By protecting the mind all will be protected.

This is again subdivided into three:

- 1.1.1.1. Showing in brief the necessity of protecting one's mind
- 1.1.1.2. The fault of degenerating the mind
- 1.1.1.3. The benefits of protecting the mind

##### 1.1.1.1. SHOWING IN BRIEF THE NECESSITY OF PROTECTING ONE'S MIND

This is presented in the first verse of the chapter:

1. *They who wish to protect the trainings  
Protect the mind after focusing it strongly.  
Without protecting this mind  
It is impossible to protect the trainings.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

They who wish to protect the trainings of generosity and the other perfections from degeneration must strongly focus their mind on the trainings, and then protect the mind from wandering off to mistaken objects.

This explanation is in fact a personal instruction. As mentioned here, those *who wish to protect the trainings of generosity and the other perfections from degeneration must strongly focus their mind on the trainings, and protect the mind from wandering off to mistaken objects.*

Basically, those who wish to engage in the trainings such as the six perfections—generosity and so forth—as well as the three higher trainings—the trainings of morality, training of concentration and the training of wisdom, need to protect their minds. For example, those who wish to train in morality must definitely protect their minds, likewise those who wish to train in concentration and wisdom also need to protect their minds.

One needs to understand what protecting the mind means in this context. Here it specifically relates to protecting the mind from being influenced by the delusions that obstruct one's training. With respect to the six perfections, if one's mind is influenced by the delusion of miserliness then there is no way one can practise generosity. If one's mind is influenced by corrupt ethics, then there is no way one can practise pure ethics or morality. If the mind is influenced by anger then one cannot practise patience. If one's mind is influenced by laziness then again there is no way that one can practise joyous effort. If the mind is influenced by distraction and excitement, then it cannot engage in the training of the perfection of concentration, and if the mind is influenced by corrupt wisdom then one is not able to practise wisdom properly.

This is how we need to understand the need to protect the mind from the delusions. You will have noticed that when I introduce the meditation technique I always emphasise that meditation is a method for protecting the mind, and why it is important to do that. Some of you might wonder why I emphasise this point again and again. The reasons that I share it with you are precisely as presented here. I place great importance on these points because, as explained here, it definitely relates to the core practice.

I have said many times that there is a difference between protecting the mind and restraining the mind. You might have taken notes, although if you just left it on the paper as notes then I don't know if you will recall it. Restraining the mind means to make the effort, from the very beginning, not to allow the mind to be influenced by the delusions. Protecting the mind means to take notice when the mind is being influenced by delusions, at which point one

immediately applies antidotes to turn the mind away from them.

As the commentary mentions, *if one does not focus the mind strongly on the trainings and protect the mind from wandering off to mistaken objects*, then it is impossible to engage in the trainings such as generosity and so forth. We should follow the example of the Kadampa masters who, as mentioned previously, practised protecting the mind in the form of a dialogue with the delusions. 'When you are strong, I will apply the antidote to combat you with great force. When you relax then I will also relax'. That is the scope of one's attack on the delusions. If one relaxes when the delusions are strong they will overpower the mind and, as one has not protected the mind, one will be unable to apply the actual training or practice.

This is a really succinct point about meditation as well as the practice of Dharma. As I have mentioned previously, meditation and the practice of Dharma really come down to the same point. Meditation, as I explain regularly, protects the mind from being influenced by the delusions, by keeping it focussed on a virtuous object. Likewise the practice of Dharma protects the mind from the delusions, by withholding the mind from negativities and mistaken conceptions. That measure of withholding the mind from following misconceptions and mistaken views is called the practice of Dharma. As you can see, my regular explanation on these points is similar to the very point that Shantideva is presenting here—if one does not protect the mind from wondering off and from focusing on mistaken objects then it is impossible to engage in the trainings.

This succinct point is an explanation of the meaning of training or practising Dharma, and the meaning of meditation.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

If one does not protect the mind from wandering off, then it becomes impossible to protect the trainings.

Here *wandering off* specifically implies that the mind is being influenced by the deluded distractions. If one does not protect the mind from this then the consequence is that it will be impossible to actually protect one's training, meaning that one will not be able to apply the trainings or the practices of the Dharma.

We should keep these explanations in mind whenever we refer to the text or read it, as a way to be mindful and contemplate the main points. The reason to contemplate these points is so that when the delusions arise we will be able to immediately recall that following these delusions will cause one to lapse from one's training and practice. It is when we notice the delusions arising that we need to apply particular attention and apply the methods for protecting one's mind.

The delusions that we need to protect ourselves from were explained in detail in the earlier chapter which identified the delusions, their faults and so forth.

#### **1.1.1.2. The fault of degenerating the mind**

This relates to the faults that arise from allowing the trainings to degenerate as a result of the influence of the delusions on the mind. The verse relating to this reads:

2. *Letting the elephant mind wander  
Creates harm beyond pain.  
The unsubdued crazed elephant  
Does not do as much damage here.*

Gyaltsab Je's explanation of this verse in his commentary reads:

Letting the crazed elephant mind wander off to mistaken objects creates the harm beyond pain of the *naraks* [hell realms]. The normal unsubdued and crazed elephant does not create as much suffering here in this world. Hence one should strive in protecting the mind.

The explanation here is quite clear. However to give some further clarification, the state of our mind is presented here as being analogous to a crazed, untamed elephant. If an untamed elephant is let loose it will cause a lot of havoc. Likewise, if we allow our mind to just wander off towards objects of delusion then that will create a lot of harm. The harm that it causes is, of course, not only the sufferings in this life, but also in our future existence, such as the sufferings in the hell realm. Some may think, 'What's wrong in allowing the mind to just wander off and become distracted? How could a distracted mind possibly harm oneself?' This presentation explains that the consequence of allowing the mind to wander off and be distracted by mistaken objects, or objects of delusions, is that it will cause great sufferings, in this life and future lives.

When the commentary states, *the normal unsubdued crazed elephant does not create as much suffering here in this world*, it is referring to stories about untamed elephants being given intoxicants like alcohol to make them even wilder, and then letting them loose in battle. They cause a lot of damage which can be used to overpower the enemy. In the analogy here, an elephant that is already untamed is given mind-altering substances such as alcohol or drugs. When an elephant in such a crazed state is let loose it can cause lot of damage.

The implication here is that the damage will at worst be physical damage to the environment, the buildings and people, who might be crushed and lose limbs, or even die. However such a crazed elephant cannot bring about the intense sufferings of the hell realm. In comparison, as mentioned previously, the consequences of allowing a mind to become distracted by the delusions are much more severe, not only in this life, but in the immeasurable sufferings of lower realms, such as the hell realm, in future lifetimes.

By reflecting on this illustration, and really thinking about the gravity of the consequences of having an unsubdued distracted mind, the conclusion, as presented here, is that *hence one should strive in protecting the mind*. We could elaborate on how the mind is like an untamed elephant, but this should be sufficient for now.

#### **1.1.1.3. The benefits of protecting the mind**

Having first explained the faults of not protecting the mind, one might wonder, 'Well, what is the benefit of protecting the mind? Does protecting the mind have any benefits?' So we can see that this is a very systematic and logical presentation which relates well to our normal state of mind, with its many queries and doubts. These doubts are being systematically addressed one after another. So we can see that this is a really marvellous presentation.

The benefits of protecting the mind is explained in two subdivisions:

- 1.1.1.3.1. In brief
- 1.1.1.3.2. Extensive

##### **1.1.1.3.1. In brief**

The relevant verse reads:

3. *If one tightly fastens the elephant of the mind  
Comprehensively with the rope of mindfulness,  
All dangers become completely non-existent  
And all virtues will come into one's hand.*

This explanation is similar to that in the *Essence of the Middle Way*.

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

Through tying the crazed elephant mind to the virtuous object by tying all one's actions of body, speech and mind comprehensively with the rope of mindfulness, all the general dangers of this life and the next become non-existent, and all the virtues of the practices of the three types of beings of the graduated path to enlightenment fall naturally into one's hand.

Therefore, one should never let one's mindfulness of the virtuous object degenerate.

The mind is analogous to the crazed untamed elephant; The virtuous object is analogous to the pillar to which you would tie the elephant so that it does not cause havoc; The rope to tie the crazed elephant is analogous to mindfulness.

What one is binding to the pillar is one's mind as well the three doors of body, speech and mind.

If one were to apply mindfulness as a means to bind our crazed, untamed mind to a virtuous object then *all the general dangers of this life and the next become non-existent, and all the virtues of the practices of the three types of beings of the graduated path to enlightenment fall naturally into one's hand*. This is implying that one will naturally be able to engage in all of the practices of the three scopes.

So we can see how wonderful this text really is, as it presents the essential practices for meditation and Dharma practice.

One needs to take particular notice of the essential meaning of this presentation. The object to which one binds one's mind with mindfulness, is not any random object; as specified here it has to be a virtuous object. If it were possible to subdue our mind by being mindful of any object, there would be no need for the text to specify that it needs to be a virtuous object. So the essential point being presented here is that the meditation object has to be a virtuous object if it is to serve as an antidote to overcome negativities.

In summary, the commentary states, *therefore one should never let one's mindfulness on the virtuous object degenerate*. This is an essential instruction. I regularly emphasise when I introduce meditation that meditation is the optimum means to protect one's mind. The specific emphasis here is that one should never let one's mindfulness of the virtuous object degenerate or lapse. Applying mindfulness means that during the meditation session one will be able to protect one's mind from mistaken conceptions and views, and delusions. Then, through that familiarity with mindfulness during the meditation practice, one will be able to maintain that awareness of the virtuous object, even when one has come out of the formal meditation sessions.

As we familiarise ourselves with the virtuous object throughout the day, and the following days and weeks and months, then due to that familiarity we will naturally be able to recall the virtuous object at the end of our life when we come to our death. As explained in the teachings, if, at the time of death one's mind is in a virtuous state then there is no possibility of taking rebirth in the lower realms. This is how we need to see the way in which our everyday practices are related to the crucial juncture of passing on from this life to the next.

By engaging in practice through being mindful of the virtuous object we are able to take the essence of our precious human life and make it meaningful. Of course the optimum way to make our life meaningful is to create the causes for enlightenment, next best is liberation, and at the very least we take a good rebirth in our next lifetime with all the good conditions.

What we can derive from this explanation is that protecting our mind from delusions lies within our own hands. If we take the initiative to apply mindfulness then we can actually protect our mind from the influence of the negativities, delusions and so forth. Protecting one's mind protects one from immediate external dangers, as well as from future sufferings. That is what is being explained here.

#### 1.1.1.3.2. *Extensive*

The extensive explanation reads:

4. *Tigers, lions, elephants and evil spirits,  
Snakes and all other enemies,  
The guard of sentient beings in the hells,  
Evil mantras [or sorcerers] and likewise blood  
drinkers [or blood thirsty demons],*
5. *Simply by fastening this mind  
They all become controlled.  
Solely by subduing the mind  
They all become subdued.*

The commentary on this verse explains:

It is appropriate to fasten the mind to a virtuous object. By subduing the mind one overcomes all dangers such as tigers, lions, crazy elephants, evil spirits, snakes, and all human enemies. One also overcomes the looming danger of the guards of the sentient beings in hell, those that harm others with evil mantras such as sorcerers, as well as the harm of the different types of spirits called blood thirsty demons and the like. Stopping the cause for any threat in this way, solely by fastening the mind with the rope of mindfulness completely to a virtuous meditation object, equals binding all dangers, and one will not be harmed in the least.

Solely subduing the mind with mindfulness and introspection, and thus stopping engagement in negative actions, equals subduing all dangers. Therefore one should strive in subduing the mind.

While this presentation is quite clear, the point that we can derive here is that *stopping the cause for any threat in this way solely by fastening the mind with the rope of mindfulness completely to a virtuous meditation object, equals binding all dangers*. In other words, fastening our mind to a virtuous object will protect us from all the other dangers mentioned earlier, *and one will not be harmed in the least*.

Other texts explain that harms, like those mentioned earlier, will not befall upon someone who observes ethics purely. The concluding exhortation is that *subduing the mind solely by mindfulness and introspection, and thus stopping engagement in negative actions, equals subduing all dangers*. Therefore one should strive in subduing the mind.

#### 1.1.1.2. THE REASON FOR THIS

This is presented in two subdivisions:

- 1.1.1.2.1. Faults depend on the mind
- 1.1.1.2.2. Qualities depend on the mind

##### 1.1.1.2.1. *Faults depend on the mind*

This is a presentation showing that both faults and qualities are dependent on the mind itself. The way the faults are

dependent on the mind is presented under three subheadings:

#### 1.1.1.2.1.1 Quotes

These are unmistakable citations from the sutras, from the teacher himself

#### 1.1.1.2.1.2. Reason

#### 1.1.1.2.1.3. Summary

#### 1.1.1.2.1.1. Quotes

The verse that relates to this section is:

6. *That all dangers  
And the boundless sufferings  
Arise from the mind  
Is shown with faultless quotation.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

One's experiences of dangers and sufferings are created by one's own mind. The reason is because all dangers and the boundless suffering of this life and future lives arise from one's own negative mind; this is said by the Able One, who explained faultlessly and perfectly all objects of knowledge.

Gyaltsab Je first states that *one's experiences of dangers and sufferings are created by one's own mind. The reason is that all dangers and the boundless suffering of this life and future lives arise from one's own negative mind. All dangers and sufferings that we experience are created by one's mind, because all the dangers and boundless sufferings of this life and future lives arise from one's own negative mind. This was said by the Able One (Buddha Shakyamuni) who explained faultlessly the objects of knowledge.* Then the commentary gives a number of quotations:

As he said in the *Sutra of Clouds of Jewels*:

If one controls one's mind one controls all phenomena.

He also said:

Whether it is virtue or virtuous karma, it is accumulated by the mind.

He also said:

The mind precedes all phenomena. If one knows the mind well, one knows all phenomena well.

Also from the *Perfect Compendium of Phenomena*:

All phenomena depend on the mind.

The Buddha also said that a subdued mind is a happy mind.

#### 1.1.1.2.1.2. Reason

7. *The weapons of the hell beings,  
Who made them with purpose?  
Who made the burning iron ground?  
From whence did the burning inferno arise?*

8ab *All the likes of these  
Arose from negativity, taught the Able One.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning of these lines:

If the sufferings that are experienced by sentient beings in the hells, and elsewhere, do not arise from the person's own preceding negative mind, then who forged purposefully the weapons of the hell guardians, these swords, spears and so on? These were not made purposefully by a creator god, nor were they made purposefully by someone else. Who created the burning iron ground, who created the hosts of females that cause one to climb and fall off the crystal mountain? There is no other cause or creator.

The points at the beginning are quite easy to understand, the emphasis being that these *sufferings of the hell realms and elsewhere were not made purposely by a creator god, and nor were they made purposely by someone else.* If we were to take the example of this very building, it was created by someone else, and then we partake of the good conditions here. However, unlike the physical conditions that we experience in this world, the various types of hell realms are said to be created by none other than one's own mind. It is not as if someone specifically created the hell realms for someone else to take us there. It is actually the creation of our own mind. The point made in answer to the opening rhetorical question is that *there is no such god which created these sufferings realms, nor were they made by someone else.*

Then the commentary asks, *Who created the burning iron ground, who created the hosts of females that cause one to climb and fall off the crystal mountain?* Those of you who are familiar with the explanations presented in the Lam Rim teachings will recall the specific hellish state where, due to one's own negative actions in the past, in particular severe, lustful attachment to women resulting in sexual misconduct, one would have visions of women on top of a mountain calling out to you. As you hear the sirens beckoning, you try to climb up the mountain but there are downward facing swords that cut you. Then, having reached the top, you hear the sirens beckoning you from the ground, but when you try to go down, the swords are facing up at you, and again you are pierced by them.

These suffering experiences arise from a hallucination that there is someone calling you. It is due to familiarity with the object of attachment and, in particular, engaging in sexual misconduct that one really believes the sirens are calling out to you. In the process of listening to that, one experiences immense suffering. When we think about it, this is not too farfetched at all. Even in their dreams, someone who is really affected by strong, lustful desires can have all sorts of unimaginable experiences. This is explained extensively in the Lam Rim teachings, so you can refer to that. As Shantideva emphasises, *there is no other cause or creator* for such things, other than being the consequence of one's own state of mind.

Then Gyaltsab Je continues in his commentary:

Since it is also incorrect to say that they are generated without cause, the Able One taught in the *Close Placement with Mindfulness Sutra* and others that they are generated from one's own negative mind.

From *Close Placement with Mindfulness Sutra*:

The mind is the greatest among all enemies.  
There is no enemy like the mind.

We'll just read through the commentary as I have explained the points that are presented here when I taught the *Madhyamakavatara*.

An allegorical opponent: They were generated from the aggregation of fire, but this is a faulty parable.

An opponent without refined reasoning who wishes to deny karmic cause and effect poses this quailm: Where a pure water stream appears to humans, blood and pus appears to hungry ghosts. This is however only an appearance created by the ripening of previous negative karma, and the blood and pus cannot be used by hungry ghosts in the slightest. Because if it existed, then it would have to also appear to humans.

Answer: This is thoroughly mistaken. That something does not appear is possible of course, but if we accept

that it is necessarily non-existent, then also the fires of hell are only mere appearances due to previous negative karmas. If we have to say here also, “Fire does not exist”, then it would be the same up to the eons and finally we also say that the hells do not exist. The need to deny karma then arises.

That it is suitable to appear to humans is also not established. According to the view of the nihilists and you, there are no hot or cold sensations when suffering is generated.

As these are points which have been presented earlier you can refer back to those teachings.<sup>1</sup>

#### 1.1.1.2.1.3. Summary

*8cd. Thus, in all the three realms  
There is nothing as dangerous as the mind*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Since all faults arise from mind, all three realms are created by one's mind. There is no danger apart from this.

What, *since all faults arise from the mind, all three realms are created by one's own mind. There is no danger apart from this*, means that just as all qualities arise from the mind, all faults also rise from the mind. Therefore, in order to increase one's qualities, one needs to apply one's mind appropriately. To minimise and overcome all faults, one has to apply antidotes and so forth, which are generated within one's own mind. That is the main point.

That covers the verses that specifically explain how the faults depend on the mind.

The main point we need to understand as a personal instruction is that since we all have faults and many shortcomings, the best way to address that is to look within. While we might not be able to detect subtle faults or shortcomings, the grosser levels are not too obscure. At a manifest level we can detect some negative states of mind and the faults that arise from them, and it is up to us to take notice of that, and apply appropriate measures to overcome those shortcomings. That is the most practical approach, because if someone else were to point these faults out to us we might become very angry and defensive, rather than accepting what they say.

*Geshe-la says in English that a good mind, which is very pleasant and filled with compassion, does good actions, and is liked by everyone. There's also a bad mind that no-one likes. We need to see them as separate, enemies even, and make sure the good mind works to defeat the bad mind. I always say that a good mind is a good friend. My best friend is my mind of loving kindness and compassion—I don't have much bodhicitta though. I encourage the good mind and say 'go away' to the bad mind. I do this all the time and day-by-day my good mind wins.*

It is through applying these measures that we will then become accustomed to right ways of thinking. This is a point that is good for us in the western context to understand. It's good to make a distinction between yourself and the negative state of mind. Then it is more acceptable to point the finger at the fault, 'It's not me that's at fault. It's my negative state of mind that is at fault'.

The point here is that we need to make that distinction between oneself as an individual being who has qualities and good potential, and the faulty negative states of mind. When one is able acknowledge and accept that it is the

negative state of mind that is influencing one to engage, seemingly without control, in negative actions that are harmful, and which are not appreciated by others. When we recognise that within ourselves, then when we relate to others it will be easy to accept that it is not the person who is at fault but their negative state of mind that is compelling them to say, or do things that are inappropriate and so forth. Then one will protect oneself against becoming angry at the person. Rather one will feel compassion for them, knowing that they are influenced by their negative states of mind.

In this way we can see for ourselves that one way of looking at things will lead to compassion and love for the other, but a different kind of view of the same object can generate anger and hateful thoughts. Then we can understand how our own state of mind influences our attitudes and perceptions and so forth. When we can detect that for ourselves then we will reach the crucial point of understanding that when we have a wrong perception that causes us angst, and hatred and anger and so forth, then we need to transform and change that perception. These points are the crux of our practices, and are not to be taken lightly.

If two individuals living together are sincerely practising in this way, then there will be no reason to frown at each other—they will always be nice and smile at each other. So even in this life you can see that there are great practical benefits to be had from practising the Dharma.

Based on these mind training practices we can then reach a point where we are capable of feeling love and compassion for the enemy, rather than anger. By using correct ways of perceiving things we can see that there is no real enemy, and that there is no person out there aiming to get us. Rather, the harm that they are inflicting upon us doesn't come from the person themselves but from the influence of their delusions, and negative states of mind. So this is where we can develop real compassion for them, rather than becoming angry with them. When one trains in this way, it is definitely possible to see one's enemy as one's best teacher or best friend.

In fact, this way of training is the subject of the following verses presenting the practices on generosity, morality, patience and so forth.

#### 1.1.1.2.2. Qualities depend on the mind

This relates to the practice of the six perfections, which we will cover in our following sessions.

Basically the presentation is that the six perfections depend on the mind: generosity depends on the mind; morality depends on the mind; patience depends on the mind; joyous effort depends on the mind; and concentration and wisdom depend on the mind.

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

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the teaching of 30 September 2003.



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# Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

10 June 2014

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Based on the motivation we generated during the recitation, we can now engage in the practice of meditation.

[meditation]

You can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: for the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. For that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

## 1.1. Guarding the mind as a method for guarding the trainings

### 1.1.1.2. The reason for this (cont.)

#### 1.1.1.2.2. Qualities depend on the mind

Here there are six subdivisions:

1.1.1.2.2.1. Generosity depends on the mind

1.1.1.2.2.2. Morality depends on the mind

1.1.1.2.2.3. Patience depends on the mind

1.1.1.2.2.4. Enthusiasm depends on the mind

1.1.1.2.2.5. Mental stabilisation depends on the mind

1.1.1.2.2.6. Wisdom depends on the mind

So, what is being presented here is that the practices of the six perfections are all dependent on the mind. Actually, the giving and taking meditation practice we engaged in earlier also combines all the essential points of the six perfections. When we visualise giving our body, wealth, merits etc. this includes the practice of generosity. With the sincere intention for other beings not to experience any suffering, when we take their suffering upon ourselves one is naturally refraining from harming them, thus it includes the practice of morality. When we generate a sense of compassion for other sentient beings we naturally refrain from feeling anger towards them, thus it encompasses the practice of patience. When we do the practice willingly and joyfully, then that encompasses joyous effort. Having a focused mind while engaging in the practice includes the practice of concentration. Likewise, because the intelligence of differentiating between what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded—the intelligence of knowing what is beneficial and what is harmful—increases through repetition of this practice, it includes wisdom as well.

Thus when we do this practice sincerely with all the conditions intact it definitely becomes a very profound practice. While we may not be able to incorporate the actual practices of the six perfections in our meditation practice yet, we can, however, still adopt an approximation of the six perfections. Our ability to do this depends on our motivation. As explained in the teachings, three conditions need to be intact for the practice to become a perfection. For example, when the practice of generosity is accompanied with actual bodhicitta, the realisation of emptiness, and sealed with the profound dedication of complete enlightenment, then it becomes the perfection of generosity and so forth. So, if we generate the bodhicitta motivation to the best of our ability, recall the view of emptiness during the practice, and seal our virtues with the dedication towards obtaining enlightenment at the end, this will then

ensure that our practice becomes an approximation to the actual perfection of the practices of generosity and so forth.

The *Heart Sutra* clearly indicates the need for the practice to be accompanied by the understanding of emptiness when Shariputra asks Avalokiteshvara, *How should any son or daughter of the lineage train who wishes to practice the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom?* and Avalokiteshvara replies *Any son or daughter of the lineage who wishes to practise in the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom should look upon it like this, correctly and repeatedly beholding those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.*

While each of the six perfections are not explicitly mentioned in the *Heart Sutra* the way the perfection of wisdom is to be practised relates to each of them and this is how we derive an understanding of the teachings. So, if one wonders, 'what is the difference between the individual practices such as generosity and so forth and the perfection of those practices?', then you need to understand it as was explained earlier.

In relation to the three conditions mentioned earlier, we already have the basis of love and compassion, we also have some understanding of emptiness, and we know how to dedicate our virtues. So the reason I emphasise this point again and again is to remind you that you already have a good basis for understanding the teachings. It is now a matter of putting your understanding of the Dharma into practice. Whenever we have any time to engage in a practice it is good to draw upon the understanding we have already gained from the teachings and then actually apply it in our practice. That makes it much more meaningful. For example, with love and compassion the general description is wishing other beings to be happy and to be free from suffering. However, we can make that practice much more profound with the understanding we have gained from the teachings. This is how we can develop the essential practice and make it more meaningful for ourselves. I encourage you in this because you have already received so many teachings and ways of applying these in your practice, and it would be a pity not to utilise that. It is with the intention of benefitting you that I encourage you again and again.

What I am trying to emphasise is that we need to use what we have already received and what we already know. With that serving as a basis we can then endeavour to acquire some new understanding or knowledge. Often we fall short in our practice by not utilising what we already know and keep looking for something new or grander. Often I find that many people fall short in their practice because of this attitude, and don't really advance themselves. I am not saying that gaining more or new knowledge is wrong. I am not implying that and you should not misunderstand me. What I am emphasising here is that we need to utilise what we already have, and if we acquire new understanding or knowledge, based on that, then it can only enhance our practice and will not confuse it.

As I emphasise regularly, love and compassion is the basis, and by maintaining this we can then incorporate other understandings, or knowledge, to enhance that within ourselves. That would be good—otherwise we could completely go astray. If I were to relate something as my personal practice I would say that it is the attempt to adopt love and compassion in my everyday life. This is actually a point I related to the late Khensur Rinpoche when I was in India. I spent about an hour with him, listening and talking, when he asked me, 'What are you meditating on these days?' and I said that I take love and compassion as my

main practice and we had a discussion about that for about an hour.

Rinpoche said, 'Oh, that is a simple practice, even lay people and elderly people, who are not monks and nuns, would practice that'. Perhaps Khensur Rinpoche was expecting me to give a much more profound answer. So when he questioned me further I said that I felt that this practice encompasses a lot of other practices. Of course I was sharing what I truly believe. Indeed, when we train our mind more and more on love and compassion, then every time we generate that mind it brings us closer to enlightenment. So this is why I see it as an essential practice. Sadly, Khensur Rinpoche passed away shortly after this meeting.

The three main conditions that help to subdue the mind are love, compassion and concentration (or mental stabilisation). So if we can take these three as our essential practices then there is no question that we can work towards subduing our mind.

With the first perfection of generosity, what is being explained here is that it actually depends on a state of mind which is generated within oneself. This dispels the doubt that if generosity were to depend on material objects then how could one practise generosity if one lacked material objects to give? So, to clarify this point, what is being explained is that the perfection of generosity does not depend on external material objects but actually on one's state of mind.

The worldly perspective is that if someone were to give \$100 to another person we would say they are very generous, because they gave \$100. We immediately relate to the object they give as a mark of their generosity, as if the giving of that physical money was the actual practice of generosity.

A literal translation of the Tibetan term for the perfections *par-chin* is *gone beyond*, which relates to the practices that have gone beyond the states of samsara and nirvana and reached the state of complete enlightenment. The Svatantrika middle-way school gives a very literal explanation of the term *gone beyond* and says that the perfections of the practices of generosity and so forth are found only in a buddha's mental continuum. However, the Prasangika middle-way school differentiate between that which is actually gone beyond and that which is in the process of going beyond. Thus, the perfected practice of generosity, which has actually gone beyond, is indeed found only in a buddha's mental continuum. However the practice of generosity, which is in the process of going beyond, is in the trainee's (bodhisattva's) mind. According to the Prasangika, it would be a case of applying the name of a result upon the cause: the perfection of generosity is the practice of generosity that is in the process of going beyond in the bodhisattva's mind. It is good to understand the difference in interpretations from the different schools.

#### 1.1.1.2.2.1. Generosity depends on the mind

This heading is subdivided into two:

1.1.1.2.2.1.1. Completing the perfection of generosity does not depend on eliminating the poverty of all migrators.

1.1.1.2.2.1.2. It is perfected through the acquaintance with the mind of giving.

1.1.1.2.2.1.1. *Completing the perfection of generosity does not depend on eliminating the poverty of all migrators*

The verse reads:

9. *If generosity goes beyond  
Through eliminating the poverty of migrators,  
Since migrators still have poverty,  
How could the previous refuge have gone  
beyond?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

If it were necessary to eliminate the poverty of all sentient beings to complete the perfection of generosity, then, since impoverished migrators still exist, how could the generosity gone beyond exist?

How could the previous Buddha protectors possibly have completed the perfection of generosity? It would be impossible.

Bringing up this hypothetical query Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains that, *if it were necessary to eliminate the poverty of all sentient beings to complete the perfection of generosity* then, since there are still impoverished beings in need of things that would imply that the Buddha has not perfected the practice of generosity. This doubt is a way to present that the practice of the perfection of generosity does not depend on eliminating the poverty of all living beings.

We need to understand that our practice of generosity should not depend on the other, whether they are rich or poor, in great need or not. From our own side we need to be able to engage in the practice of generosity that is generated in our own mind.

Another practical illustration is that if the practice of the perfection of generosity depended on being generous with material objects that would mean that ordained Sangha would not be able to perfect the practice of generosity, because they don't have many material possessions to give away.

Another more prominent illustration would be Buddha Shakyamuni's own life. In his early days he would not have given up the wealth of his royal kingdom because that would have deprived him of the means of being able to practice generosity. Later, he actually left behind all his princely wealth, and become completely renounced.

Here again, the point is that the practice of generosity is not dependent on actual material wealth or completely satisfying other's needs. Rather it is dependent on the intent of giving, which is generated with one's own mind.

The means to perfect the practice of generosity is explained under the next heading.

1.1.1.2.2.1.2. *It is perfected through the acquaintance with the mind of giving*

The verse reads:

10. *Through the mind offering to all sentient beings  
All possessions including their results,  
Generosity goes beyond it is taught.  
Therefore it is only mind.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

It is taught that the generosity gone beyond is perfected through acquainting one's mind with the wish to give away one's body, possessions, roots of virtue including their results, and one's merits to all sentient beings.

For this reason generosity depends on the mind.

The commentary clearly explains that the resultant or perfected state of generosity, which is completely going beyond, which is the mental continuum of an enlightened being, is reached through acquaintance with the mind that wishes to give away, now, one's body, possessions and roots of virtue including the results.

Again, the actual definition of generosity is the mind of giving or the intention to give. So the way to practise generosity is by generating the state of mind of wishing to give away one's body, possessions, roots of virtue etc. Again, we can relate to the giving and taking practice we did earlier. I need not elaborate too much on the importance of this practice, as it is exactly what is being presented here by Shantideva and further explained in the commentary, as being an essential practice. So we can see that our earlier practice, when done fully, encompasses all of these points.

So the way to engage in the practice, for it to become an authentic practice of generosity, we train our mind, gradually and slowly, to increase the intention of giving. To become an actual practice of generosity try to make it free from miserliness and, to the best of our ability, encompass an understanding of emptiness—that oneself, the giver, what is being given, and the action of giving, is empty of inherent existence. Incorporate that understanding as much as possible and then dedicate at the end. In this way our practice of generosity becomes really profound and we get so much merit from engaging in these practices. Giving away these merits as well makes it a profound practice.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

For this reason generosity depends on the mind.

We gain a better understanding of this point after the explanation.

#### 1.1.1.2.2.2. Morality depends on the mind

This is subdivided into two:

1.1.1.2.2.2.1. Completing the morality gone beyond does not depend on the absence of sentient beings that one could kill

1.1.1.2.2.2.2. It is completed by acquainting the mind of abandoning.

*1.1.1.2.2.2.1. Completing the perfection of morality does not depend on the absence of sentient beings that one could kill and so forth.*

This does not depend on the absence of beings that one could harm. The point explained in the next the verse is that the perfection of morality is actually completed by acquainting the mind with abandoning the intention to harm.

*11ab. Fish and so forth, where should they flee to  
So as not to be killed?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

It follows that the completion of the morality gone beyond does not depend on removing all sentient beings that could possibly be killed, because it is unfeasible to move all the animals such as fish and so forth to a safe place.

The explanation here is that completing the perfection of morality does not depend on removing all sentient beings that could be possibly killed, because it is not feasible to move all animals such as fish to a safe place where no one could harm them. We may be able to move some fish to a safe place where they would not be killed, but to remove all fish to where no one would be able to kill them is something that cannot possibly be done. Also there is no person who could always guard them, so that no-one comes and harms them.

*1.1.1.2.2.2.2. It is completed by acquainting the mind of abandoning*

The first two lines of the next verse explain this:

*11cd. Through the mind of abandoning,  
Morality goes beyond, it is taught.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary highlights:

For this reason the morality gone beyond is achieved by acquainting the mind of abandoning, such as on the mind abandoning the thoughts of killing or stealing.

The practice of morality, relating to the perfection of morality, is dependent on a mind where from the depths of one's heart one makes the commitment that, 'I will not harm others. I will not kill even if my life is at stake. I will not take the life of other sentient beings'. In the commentary, *for this reason*, aligns to the earlier point that it is not even possible to find a safe haven for all of the animals and so forth, so they can never to be harmed. The perfection of morality is not dependent on establishing the situation (or place) where no beings will be harmed. Rather, as explained here, the morality gone beyond is achieved by acquainting the mind with abandoning the thoughts of killing and stealing. When one generates the mind of abandoning negativities such as killing and stealing (and likewise the other ten non-virtues), this clearly illustrates that while refraining from killing and stealing etc. is a good deed, doing so when one makes an actual commitment and intentionally generates the mind to refrain from such misdeeds, one gains much more virtue.

Many of you would already have vows which would include these sorts of commitments, but again even with the vows it is good to refresh them. It is much more meritorious to have vows than not, so one gains much more virtue when one actually intentionally develops the mind of refraining from engaging in misdeeds. Whenever one generates the mind of intentionally refraining from the ten non-virtues, such as making a commitment like, 'Today, at all costs, I will not engage in the act of killing or taking others' lives. Likewise I will not engage in the act of taking others' possessions. I will not engage in the act of sexual misconduct. Likewise I will not engage in lying, stealing, harsh words, divisive speech, idle gossip and so forth', then that is acquaintance with abandoning those negative deeds, and what we call the practice of morality. Each time we generate the intention of refraining from these misdeeds we accumulate great merit, much greater merit than if one were to just naturally refrain from these misdeeds.

The quote from a sutra encompasses the definition.

From a sutra:

If the morality gone beyond is explained: It is the intent to give up harming others.

#### 1.1.1.2.2.3. Patience depends on the mind

Patience is the mind which, in the face of harms and sufferings, does not become disturbed. This has three subdivisions:

1.1.1.2.2.3.1. Meaning

1.1.1.2.2.3.2. The example

1.1.1.2.2.3.3. Relating the meaning and the example

*1.1.1.2.2.3.1. Meaning*

The verse reads:

*12. Unsubdued sentient beings equal space,  
Destroying them is impossible.  
Merely destroying this mind of anger,  
Equals destroying all enemies.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Patience is completed by destroying one's anger, which equals destroying all external enemies. It is not achieved through the extinction of the objects of one's anger.

This is conclusive because unsubdued sentient beings equal space and it is impossible to destroy them all. Therefore patience also depends on the mind.

I have referred to the explanation *patience is completed by destroying one's anger which equals destroying all external enemies* several times. What is being implied here is that the practice of patience is not trying to overcome all external enemies since that is impossible. The actual practice of patience is dependent on one's own mind.

It is dependent on one's mind as it specifically destroys the anger in one's mind. Completing the perfection of patience is dependent of destroying anger in one's mind, rather than trying to overcome the external enemies. The commentary goes further when it says *this is conclusive because unsubdued sentient beings equal space and it is impossible to destroy them all*. The commentary concludes, *therefore also patience depends on the mind*.

#### 1.1.1.2.2.3.2. The example

The verse reads:

13. *To cover the whole earth with leather,  
Where should the leather come from?  
To cover one's soles with leather  
Equals covering the whole earth.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary proceeds:

Where would one find enough leather to cover the whole earth to prevent one's feet from being harmed by thorns and other sharp objects on the ground?

Covering the soles of one's shoes with leather will do the trick and prevent the feet from being harmed by thorns, sharp stones and the like. It equals covering the whole earth.

The verse poses the rhetorical question *where would one find enough leather to cover the whole earth?*, which implies that it is not possible to find enough leather to cover the whole earth to prevent one being harmed by thorns and other sharp objects. However *covering the soles of one's shoes with leather will do the trick and prevent the feet from being harmed by thorns*. So that is the method that equals covering the whole earth.

#### 1.1.1.2.2.3.3. Relating the meaning and the example

The verse reads:

14. *Similarly, I do not oppose  
External phenomena.  
I should reverse this mind of mine,  
Where is the need to oppose others?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

Similar to the analogy, it is impossible to oppose all harmful external phenomena. Instead one focuses one's mind on these objects and reverses the mind from generating anger. By acquainting the mind in such a way, patience is completed. Why should I oppose the objects of anger, it is impossible and unnecessary.

The commentary explains that, *similar to the analogy* of not being able to find enough leather to cover the earth to prevent sharp objects from harming oneself, *it is impossible to oppose all external phenomena*. The method used to perfect patience is to focus one's own *mind on these objects*, and reverse *the mind from generating anger*. This is a very

profound point—the actual practice of patience implies overcoming anger within oneself. By acquainting the mind in such a way, patience is completed. The point is emphasised again with another rhetorical question, *why should I oppose the other objects of anger since it is impossible to oppose them and actually quite unnecessary*. There is no reason to try to oppose all others and objects when it is possible to overcome the anger in one's own mind.

What is being explained here is that the practice of patience implies overcoming anger within oneself, rather than trying to overcome all external enemies. So if one thinks that, 'I can only be patient if all my enemies are overcome', then that is missing the point. If one wishes to overcome enemies then one needs to overcome anger within oneself. That is equivalent to overcoming all the external enemies and will be the mark of perfecting the practice of patience.

That completes the explanation on patience and how it is dependent on the mind. For the practice of patience to become a perfection of patience, again it would have to encompass the three essential conditions of bodhicitta: the altruistic motivation of bodhicitta; understanding the view on emptiness; and the dedication. This applies to all of the practices of the six perfections in order for them to become the actual perfections.

#### 1.1.1.2.2.4. Enthusiasm depends on the mind

The definition of enthusiasm or joyous effort is the mind which takes joy in virtue.

The verse reads:

15. *The results of generating a clear mind  
Is Brahma and so forth.  
Results of inferior practice endowed  
With body and speech are not like that.*

The first part of Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

The complete acquaintance of enthusiasm also depends upon the mind that has completed meditation. A clear mind of joy for meditating on an absorption of the first concentration brings about results contained within the grounds of absorption, such as rebirth in the place of Brahma.

This part of the commentary explains the reason why *the complete acquaintance of enthusiasm depends on the mind*. A clear mind of joy for meditating on an absorption of the first concentration which is a higher state, brings about results contained within the grounds of absorption, such as rebirth in the place of Brahma. This means that when even a moment of clear mind and joy arises from the absorption in the first concentration, because one applied joyous effort and achieved that state of mind, the result is to be born in the heavens of Brahma. Achieving this state also implies strength of the mind. The emphasis here is that when the mind is clear and strong, accompanied with the joy of practising such a meditation, then it can bring about a great result.

The next part of the commentary reads:

If one's actions are unrelated to such a strong mind, then one's mind is endowed with actions of body and speech, and such actions with lesser enthusiasm do not have the ability to produce a mind of the first concentration and so forth. Such a result depends on a strong mind.

When the mind lacks that strength and there is no joy in practices such as meditation, then one's physical and verbal actions will also carry less potency. So even if one were to attempt to meditate it will not bring about the results of

obtaining the first concentration and so forth. Thus, such results depend on joyous effort, which actually depends on the strength of one's mind.

#### 1.1.1.2.2.5. Mental stabilisation depends on the mind

Mental stabilisation is the mind which in its own power has the ability to focus on an object for as long as one wishes.

16. *All recitations and austerities,  
Even if practiced for a long time,  
Done with a wandering mind  
They are meaningless, the Knowledge teaches.*

This is indeed a direct reprimand for ourselves.

Gyalsab Je's commentary reads:

The completion of mental stabilisation gone beyond depends on a clear mind free from mental excitement and mental sinking and held by the mental application of renunciation.

Although one practices the recitation of mantras and austerities such as Nyung Nye for a long time, the mind is distracted to other objects.

We need to understand that in order for mental stabilisation to be an authentic mental stabilisation it has to be a clear mind that is free from mental excitement and mental sinking, or stupor. This can be helped by the mental application of renunciation.

From the Buddha's sutras,

Bhikhus, austerities, prayers and so forth that distract the mind to the desire realm do not have a result.

They are shown to be meaningless because of not giving the desired result.

We need to understand this quote in relation to recitation of mantras, austerities such as Nyung Nye, practices, retreats etc. which have been shown to be meaningless, because of not getting the desired result.

This explanation does not mean that there is no benefit at all in these practices; there is definitely a benefit even if one's mind is a little distracted. For example, there is still benefit in reciting mantras as you stop any other verbal negativities such as idle gossip etc. So to that extent there is definitely some benefit. However if one's mind is distracted, one will not reap the full benefit of the practice. This applies to any practice including the Nyung Nye practice. If one does a Nyung Nye of course one derives some benefit from merely engaging in the practice, but if the mind is distracted one will not reap the full benefit, just a minimal benefit.

The personal instruction here is that when we are doing any practice it is highly advisable to try and do it without a distracted mind. If one were to do one's practices in this way one will reap the actual intended benefit. Thus, it is good for us to prevent ourselves from being distracted.

#### 1.1.1.2.2.6. Wisdom depends on the mind

- 17 *They who do not know the main supreme  
Dharma,  
This secret of the mind, although wishing  
To attain happiness and destroy suffering,  
They will wander meaninglessly in the hells  
without respite.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary reads:

Wisdom also depends on the mind. A person that is not a vessel for the main dharma or the supreme meaning, and is thus not shown these, does not know the secret of mind, the ultimate truth.

Although they wish to attain highest happiness and destroy the sufferings of cyclic existence, they naturally wander to the realm without respite, where there is nothing of these things they wish for.

Therefore wisdom depends on the mind.

Again, the definition of wisdom is the mind which is able to clearly differentiate and discriminate between the subtleties of the objects to be examined.

The commentary clearly explains that wisdom depends on the mind, and that a person is not a vessel for the supreme meaning if they do not know the secret of the mind, the ultimate truth. This refers to the nature of the mind which is its non-inherent existence (or emptiness). To perfect wisdom, when the mind realises emptiness of all phenomena it also needs to realise the emptiness of one's own mind. For someone who does not know the ultimate truth of their mind, then although they wish to attain higher status and destroy the suffering of cyclic existence, they can actually wander in the samsaric realm without respite where there are none of the things they wish for. In other words, we could wander in the cycle of samsara, the nature of suffering for limitless time. However, by understanding the ultimate reality of all phenomena in relation to one's mind, one would free oneself from this, and attain liberation, or enlightenment.

Wisdom is perfected to the state of going beyond, to the state of enlightenment, when one understands the ultimate reality of one's mind. The commentary concludes *therefore wisdom depends on the mind.*

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

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