

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

17 June 2014

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

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

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

Generating this motivation to the best of our ability is really worthwhile.

1.1.3. Striving in guarding the mind

This section of the text is divided into two:

1.1.3.1. Showing, or the presentation

1.1.3.1. Explaining

1.1.3.1. SHOWING

18. *This mind of mine, therefore
I shall hold it well, I shall guard it well.
Apart from the discipline of guarding the mind
What shall one do with many disciplines?*

In his commentary Gyaltzab Je presents the meaning of this verse with the following:

Abandoning faults and achieving qualities depends on the mind. Therefore I shall hold this mind of mine well with mindfulness and introspection, and guard it well, so as to not let it degenerate.

Apart from the discipline of guarding the mind, what shall one do with the many other disciplines of prayers and so forth that don't guard the mind? They are unnecessary.

I have explained the meaning of the line, *abandoning faults and achieving qualities depends on the mind* many times over in the past. It's a point that I regularly emphasise in my teachings. Abandoning every fault and achieving all qualities depends on none other than one's own mind. Here, faults includes all non-virtues as well as all the delusions, and qualities can range from the simplest qualities up to the greatest qualities that can be achieved. That all of these faults and qualities are dependent on one's own mind is an incisive point, showing that the responsibility for overcoming faults lies with ourselves and that we cannot rely upon others to overcome them for us. Likewise, we cannot rely on someone else to develop qualities for us because they depend solely on our own mind, and thus we need to develop good qualities for ourselves.

Having presented that abandoning faults and achieving good qualities depends on the mind, the commentary goes on to say, *I shall hold this mind of mine well, with mindfulness and introspection*. This point indicates that the way to abandon faults and achieve qualities is to apply mindfulness and introspection. As mentioned previously, mindfulness in this context relates to constantly keeping in mind what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded. Introspection refers to keeping constant vigilance over the three doors of our body, speech and mind, checking whether one is adequately

adopting things that need to be adopted, and discarding what has to be discarded.

Guarding the mind *so that it does not degenerate* relates to not allowing the virtuous mind to degenerate. In order to protect the qualities of kindness, love and compassion and so forth, so that they don't degenerate, we need to always guard the mind with mindfulness and introspection. This also relates to whatever vows and commitments we have undertaken—we have to guard them so that they don't degenerate. To take that further, when the commentary asks, *apart from the discipline of guarding the mind what shall one do with other disciplines and prayers and so forth that don't guard the mind?*, it is saying that if one does not apply the discipline of guarding the mind, then practices such as doing prayers and so forth will have minimal effect. That is the main point.

What we need to derive as a personal instruction here is that the main discipline that one needs to apply is to guard the mind from non-virtue and negativities. If our practices such as reciting prayers and mantras are done with mindfulness as a way to create virtue, then they will have a positive effect. But if we don't apply mindfulness then they won't really have much positive effect. This explanation should encourage us to remember this crucial advice and to try to apply mindfulness whenever we engage in our regular commitments and practices. In this way our practice will be intact and we will gradually gain positive effects from it.

What we really need to understand from this presentation is that if we do our prayers and normal commitments with a mind that is distracted by the objects of delusions, then our practices will not have much effect. If we wonder why we are not obtaining any significant result from our practices, then we need to check whether we are applying mindfulness during those practices. We all know from experience that when we engage in practices with a distracted mind we don't derive many results from our practice.

So, as much as we can, we need to apply mindfulness while doing our practice. As I regularly emphasise, it is important to try to ensure that our practices are intact and that we fully utilise our time in practice. It is only by engaging in practices fully with mindfulness that they will bring about significant positive effects. This is exactly the point that is being emphasised here. It is a really significant point and it is appropriate to pay heed to it.

1.1.3.2. EXPLAINING

The previous verse showed that one needs to apply mindfulness. This section explains how to do that in four subdivisions.

1.1.3.2.1. The way of guarding the mind

1.1.3.2.2. The reason why it is necessary to guard the mind

1.1.3.2.3. The benefits of guarding it

1.1.3.2.4. Generating mindfulness to guard the mind wholeheartedly

¹The outline shows us how meticulously the text is presented. The logical and systematic presentation addresses the topic in a way that is suitable for those who wish to follow this practise. Gyaltzab Je's outlines highlight the

¹ Here there was a pause as the heating was adjusted. Geshe Doga then explained in English that the underfloor heating was installed over the concrete floor for health reasons, and that it was funded by a donation from a student called Radim, who had offered Geshe Doga two gold bars. Geshe Doga said that he could not accept them, so Radim gave them to Tara Institute. They were sold for around \$12,000, which paid for the underfloor heating. Later, when Radim became ill, the Centre paid for his trip back home.

systematic manner in which Shantideva composed his text. First it shows that it is necessary to guard the mind. We then naturally wonder how we do that, which he explains under these four headings. The way to guard the mind is presented first. That is followed by the reasons why it is necessary to guard the mind. Then, if one wonders what the benefits would be, the benefits are presented. Finally, there is a presentation of how to actually generate mindfulness to guard the mind wholeheartedly. So Gyaltsab Je's commentary shows us how Shantideva very meticulously, and very logically and systematically, presents advice for us to incorporate into our practice.

You can see the significance of this presentation by relating it to taking an interest in meditation. Do we really consider why we need to apply mindfulness? Do we know the manner of actually applying it and the benefits of applying it? Do we really contemplate these points? Probably not. These initiatives don't come about easily. We can see how Shantideva presents his material here in a very systematic way so that we can really understand the significance and take the practice to heart.

1.1.3.2.1. *The way of guarding the mind*

19. *If one is in the midst of a restless crowd,
One will focus and be conscientious of one's
wound.
Similarly, in the midst of unruly people,
One guards continuously the wound of the
mind.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

A person with a wound on his body who is in the midst of a restless crowd will apply himself very strongly to protect the wound. Similarly, if one is in the midst of unruly people, who could serve as a condition for afflictions to arise in one's mind, then one needs to continuously guard the wound of one's mind.

If one does not guard one's mind, then it will be the condition that cuts off the life of one's higher status and liberation.

This presentation is quite clear. The essential point is made with an analogy: when a person with a wound goes into a hustling, bustling crowd they would be very vigilant about protecting their wound, so that it isn't further damaged, thus causing more pain. *If one is in the midst of unruly people who could serve as a condition for afflictions to arise in one's mind*, refers to the way in which others can easily influence us in such a way that we generate delusions in our minds. In such an environment, one needs to continuously guard one's mind, just like the earlier analogy of protecting a wound in a crowd. One needs to pay particular attention to guarding the mind at such times.

Furthermore, *if one does not guard one's mind then that would be the condition that cuts off the life of one's higher status and liberation*. This means that not guarding the mind will prevent one from achieving one's higher goals. This is a very clear explanation that we really need to take to heart and carefully contemplate in our practice.

It is when one meets with the conditions for afflictions to arise that one needs to pay particular attention to guarding the mind. This is the essential point that is being presented here. Our minds are so easily influenced by the delusions, so we need to always be on guard. We need to guard our wound-like mind against any conditions that will cause delusions to be generated. If we find that delusions such as

anger and attachment arise from even the slightest conditions, then that is a sign that we need to pay particular attention to guarding the mind. These are significant points.

If we are easily influenced by objects of delusion, then even minor conditions will cause the delusions to arise. That is a clear sign of a mind that needs to be guarded well. Some people actually get very upset when they can't find an object of delusion, such as an object of attachment. They actively seek out objects of attachment and experience misery and suffering when they can't find them. Craving objects of delusion shows how habituated the mind actually is with the delusions.

On a further note, paying particular attention to guarding the mind applies in all forms of practice. Many of you would have heard the story of the person who was meditating and when asked what they were meditating on they responded, 'I am meditating on patience'. But when some critical remarks were made, they immediately became upset. That is a sign of not guarding the mind. While generally assuming that they were meditating on patience, they failed to guard their mind, lost their temper and were not able to practise patience in that moment. These are examples in the teachings that show how we need to be constantly vigilant. I also remember an instance where someone came up to me and said that he wanted to become a monk. I questioned whether he should consider it more deeply and he said, 'Oh no! I am really adamant about this! I am very sure that I really want to become a monk'. Then two weeks later he found a partner, and moved in with them!

The main point here is to be extremely careful about guarding one's mind when the conditions for the delusions to arise are present. The teachings tell us that when there are no apparent conditions for delusions to arise someone may look like a real Dharma practitioner, but as soon as particular conditions arise they may act as a very ordinary person.

1.1.3.2.2. *The reason why it is necessary to guard the mind*

This is again a very important point that we need to keep in mind. The reason is presented in the next verse along with an example.

20. *If one is afraid of even the small suffering
Of a wound and guards it,
Then why does one not guard, frightened by the
catcher
And crusher mountains, the wound of the mind?*

Again, this is explained quite clearly in the commentary, but the main point here is the need to take it to heart.

If it is suitable to guard a wound due to fearing slight physical pain, then why does one not guard the wound of the mind from negativity and downfalls due to fearing the sufferings of being crushed by the mountains of the Catcher Mountain Hell and the Crusher Mountain Hell? Both of these would be the result of mental degeneration.

One should guard one's mind with the thought: 'It would be a great mistake not to guard it'.

As presented in the commentary, because of the fear of *physical pain* from further injuring a wound, *it is* considered reasonable or *suitable to guard any wound* one may have so that it does not come into contact with anything that would cause physical pain. We pay so much attention to guarding a wound, because of fear about experiencing physical pain, so why do we not guard the wound of the mind from

negativity and downfalls out of fear of the suffering of the hells of mass destruction, where, some of you might recall from the teachings, beings are crushed between two giant masses of mountains? These hellish experiences and great suffering are none other than the result of not guarding the mind from negativities and downfalls. So they are the ultimate result of allowing the mind to degenerate. The conclusion, as explained in the commentary, is that *one should guard one's mind with the thought that it would be a great mistake not to guard it.*

Here it is good to relate this to our understanding of karma, knowing that when one creates negativity the result will be the undesirable result of experiencing suffering. Therefore, if one does not wish to experience suffering it is appropriate that we prevent the cause of suffering, which is guarding the mind from negativity and downfalls.

When we really contemplate the reasons why we need to guard the mind we will be encouraged to actually apply the methods to do so. So contemplating these reasons is a very significant point.

1.1.3.2.3. *The benefits of guarding it*

This is similar to the very reason why we practise Dharma—simply put, we want happiness and we don't want to experience suffering.

The verse relating to this heading is:

21. *If one lives by such a conduct
One is suitable to abide amongst unruly people
Or amongst women.
The stability of striving in the vows will not degenerate.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

If one continually practises stopping the afflictions, the stability of the mind striving in the vows will not degenerate, regardless of whether one abides in the midst of unruly people with much anger, or whether one abides in the vicinity of women with much attachment.

The point, *if one continually practises preventing the afflictions from arising*, is something that we can apply to ourselves. If we find that the afflictions are arising quite readily, then perhaps we are not applying the antidotes on a continuous basis. If we apply them sometimes, and relax at other times, then, of course, that will have little effect on the delusions. The point here is that we need to continuously practise preventing the afflictions from arising, and then *the stability of the mind striving in the vows will not degenerate.*

This is how we protect self-liberation vows, bodhisattva vows, tantric vows, and whatever other vows or commitments we may have made. The way to protect vows is, as mentioned previously, to apply the antidotes to the afflictions on a continuous basis. Then, regardless of whether one abides in the midst of unruly, angry people, or whether one abides in the vicinity of beautiful goddesses, it will not affect one's mind.

Here we need to recall that Shantideva was giving this advice to fully ordained monks, so we need to understand his examples and illustrations in this context. Nevertheless Shantideva's advice applies to all who are striving to guard their mind and practise the Dharma.

The point here concerns guarding the vows and commitments one has taken. Of course, if those who have taken ordination do not guard their minds against the afflictions, then the vows will be given up at a later stage—in

some cases very quickly. However, in a broader sense, the point relates to any vows; the layperson's vows, the self-ordination vows, the bodhisattva vows and the tantric vows many of you have taken. The best method to guard and protect these vows from degenerating is to continually practise mindfulness to stop the afflictions, and to apply antidotes to the afflictions when they arise. That will help to stabilise the mind so that the vows do not degenerate.

1.1.3.2.4. *Generating mindfulness to guard the mind wholeheartedly*

Having mentioned its benefits, we need to use mindfulness to guard the mind wholeheartedly. Therefore mindfulness is specifically presented as a very important element of our practice. The verse relating to that is:

22. *It is easy not to have gain, or praise,
A body, or livelihood.
It is also alright for other virtues to degenerate,
But do not let the mind degenerate at all.*

Here, Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Although one gains no food, clothing and the like, receives no praise such as veneration, and has no livelihood to support body and life, that is easy.

To lose virtue unprotected by the mind is easy as well, but the mind of the Great Vehicle should not be allowed to degenerate under any circumstances.

Again, this is not too difficult to understand. *Although one gains no food, clothing and the like, receives no praise such as veneration, and has no livelihood to support body and life, that is easy*, refers to the fact that these conditions are not really all that important.

When the commentary states that *to lose virtue unprotected by the mind is easy as well*, it is referring to virtues that are stained by worldly concerns. While on one hand they are classified as virtues, on the other hand they are stained because they are not protected from the stains of the worldly concerns, or self-interest. So if these virtues were to decline or degenerate, then that is not so important. This relative unimportance is measured in comparison to losing *the mind of the Great Vehicle*, which is bodhicitta, which *should not be allowed to degenerate under any circumstances.*

Compared with bodhicitta, virtues that are stained by worldly concerns or self-interest and other basic needs in relation to our immediate needs are quite insignificant. But the bodhicitta mind must be protected under all circumstances, and one should never allow it to degenerate.

While we may not yet have developed bodhicitta, any level of kindness, particularly the mind wishing to benefit others, is, as I regularly emphasise, a really precious mind. When that is further developed, we develop love and compassion, which serves as a cause to develop bodhicitta. The greater the wish to benefit others, the greater the conditions for bodhicitta will be. Once developed, of course, the bodhicitta attitude will be sustained by the continuing wish to benefit others. Therefore, one should not under any circumstances underestimate this state of mind of kindness and wishing to benefit others.

We can develop that wish to benefit others to a certain extent, and the instruction here is to always protect that mind and never lose that wish to benefit others, because that is the most valuable asset that we can ever have. It should be the centrepiece of our practice, like a fortress, and then all of the remaining practices will enhance that bodhicitta. That is the significance of this instruction.

As I have shared before, at our level a substitute for the actual bodhicitta attitude would be generating the attitude, 'I will not harm any living being, even slightly, and I will endeavour to benefit others to the best of my ability'. We can definitely manage to generate such a highly beneficial state of mind on a regular basis. As it is a substitute for bodhicitta for us, it is a highly significant state of mind.

1.2. Guarding mindfulness and introspection, which are the methods for guarding the mind

This section is explained in two subdivisions:

1.2.1. Showing, or the presentation

1.2.2. Explaining

1.2.1. Showing

The relevant verse is:

23. *You who wish to protect your mind,
Guard with wholehearted effort
Mindfulness and introspection,
I request with hands folded.*

The commentary explaining this verse reads.

You, who wish to guard your mind, since one cannot guard one's mind if one is separated from mindfulness and introspection, do not let the mindfulness that does not forget the virtuous object, and the introspection that analyses the situation of the three doors, degenerate, I, called Shantideva, request this with my hands folded.

What is being presented here very clearly is an exhortation. Shantideva is pleading with us, saying, 'You want to *guard your mind*, but it cannot be guarded without *mindfulness* or *introspection*. Therefore you must definitely *not let mindfulness*, which *does not forget the virtuous object*, and *introspection*, which *analyses the three doors, degenerate*. Having *folded hands* is a gesture showing that Shantideva is imploring us to adopt mindfulness and introspection. We can see this in everyday life. When we make a specific request to someone there are gestures like putting one's palms together and saying, 'Please do this'. Referring to this gesture is a way of showing the importance of mindfulness and introspection as a method of guarding the mind.

I have already explained the significance of mindfulness, and the actual explanations of what mindfulness is in detail, so we can leave the explanation of this verse at that.

1.2.2. Explaining

This is subdivided into two:

1.2.2.1. The faults of lacking introspection

1.2.2.2. Guarding mindfulness as the method for guarding introspection

1.2.2.1. THE FAULTS OF LACKING INTROSPECTION

This heading is further sub-divided into five:

1.2.2.1.1. Any action devoid of introspection lacks power

1.2.2.1.2. One does not generate pure wisdom

1.2.2.1.3. One does not generate pure morality

1.2.2.1.4. Earlier accumulated virtue is destroyed

1.2.2.1.5. It obstructs the achievement of virtue not accumulated earlier

1.2.2.1.1. Any action devoid of introspection lacks power

Here, *action* refers specifically to virtuous actions. What is explained under this heading is that when introspection is not applied to any virtuous action then the power of that virtuous action is reduced.

The verse that relates to this is:

24. *A person that is wracked by illness
Does not have energy for any work.
Similarly, a mind disturbed by ignorance
Does not have energy for any work.*

As clearly explained clearly in the commentary:

A person who is wracked by strong illness does not have the ability to work in the fields. Similarly, a mind that is wracked by the ignorance of not knowing what needs to be practised and what needs to be abandoned does not have strength for any type of virtuous action.

The analogy used here is that someone who is weighed down with heavy illness won't have the physical energy to be *able to work in the fields* of the farm, and so forth. *Similarly, a mind that is riddled or wracked with the ignorance of not knowing what needs to be practised and what is to be abandoned, will not have the strength for any virtuous actions.*

While wisdom is specifically emphasised in the next verse, this verse refers to the fact that a mind that is dominated by the ignorance of not knowing what is to be practised and what is to be abandoned will not have sufficient strength for any type of virtuous action. If, through ignorance, you don't know what is to be abandoned and what is to be adopted, you won't understand the significance of any virtuous action you may create. So your virtuous activities won't carry as much weight as they would if you understood their significance.

Basically, when the introspection that is particularly vigilant about one's actions of body, speech and mind, is not applied, then whatever virtuous actions one engages in, such as listening, will not have much effect. This even applies to listening to the Dharma. Further, the proper means to contemplate will be affected by the lack of introspection, and thus not carry much weight. As well as this, meditation will not carry much weight if introspection is lacking. That is the point being made in this verse.

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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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

24 June 2014

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

To generate the motivation for receiving the teaching think, “For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well”.

1.2.2.1 THE FAULTS OF LACKING INTROSPECTION

1.2.2.1.2. One does not generate pure wisdom

If we lack mindfulness and introspection our ability to generate pure or perfect wisdom will be hindered. The following presentation will be relatively easy to comprehend as the meaning is not too difficult to grasp, but what we need to keep in mind is that it is advice we need to *apply* to ourselves, in relation to our own practice. All of us have already spent significant time listening to the Dharma, thinking about it and even trying to meditate. What is being presented here is that even though one has spent significant time engaging in this, if one does not continuously apply mindfulness and introspection then it is still possible for one's practice to degenerate. This is a really key point to keep in mind. As I emphasise regularly, we see cases where certain individuals may have spent quite a bit of time and energy studying and so forth, but then after some time they give up the Dharma. What causes them to give up their Dharma practice is not having applied mindfulness and introspection in their regular life.

The verse relating to this heading reads:

25. *Even the listening, contemplation and meditation
Of someone having a mind devoid of introspection,
Like water in a leaking vase,
Will not be kept in mind by memory.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the verse:

If one is separated from introspection, then one will not generate perfect wisdom. A person may even have the wisdoms of listening, contemplating and meditating from before, but if they lack introspection then, like water that does not remain in a broken vase, they do not abide in mindfulness and thus their wisdom degenerates. This is due to degenerated introspection.

The advice here is really succinct, but for us to incorporate its meaning into our life, we need to take this advice as a personal instruction. When we consider the fact that this advice is given by Shantideva—a bodhisattva himself—from his own insight and profound wisdom, illustrating that the most crucial point on the path to enlightenment is to maintain mindfulness and introspection. That should then encourage one to actually take this advice to heart.

The commentary starts with, *If one is separated from introspection*. Introspection here refers to the mind that is constantly vigilant of the way we conduct ourselves through our mind, through our physical actions, and through our speech. What is being presented here is the result of not applying introspection, which is something we need to recall

again and again, for example, ‘What are the thoughts occurring in my mind?’, ‘How am I conducting my physical actions?’, ‘What kind of speech am I uttering?’ One must check on the basis of distinguishing between what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded, then analyse how one is conducting oneself through one's body, speech and mind. In a meditation session, having applied mindfulness and identified the object and focused on it, after a while that which checks whether we are still keeping our focus on the chosen object is done by introspection. So if our mind has wandered off and we've become distracted, then it is through introspection that we will notice that, and then we need to reapply mindfulness. This approach is being explained here in terms of mindfulness with our body, speech and mind in our daily lives.

Thus, as the commentary explains, if one is separated from introspection then the consequence is that *one will not generate perfect wisdom*. The Tibetan term *te* implies that a reason is to follow, which is presented here with the example of a broken or cracked vase. In the regular offering prayer that we do here before tea and meals there is also the word *te*; however some teachers have said the meaning would be more profound if the word *nyi* (or sole) is used instead, which would reflect that the lama is the sole creator of all.

So, what is being explained is that even if a person has previously gained a certain amount of wisdom through *listening, contemplating and meditating, if they lack introspection*, then that would affect their mindfulness as well. A lack of mindfulness arises because of not applying introspection, they are mutually supportive of each other—to have good mindfulness one needs to have adequate introspection.

The example of a cracked vase presented here is similar to that given in Lam Rim teachings, in which the analogy extends to three types of vases describing the conditions from which one needs to be free in order to listen to the teachings: the upside down vase; the dirty vase and the leaky vase. As the Lam Rim explains, it is really important to be free from these conditions in order to be a good recipient for the teachings, so they can benefit one's mind. I have emphasised this point previously.

Using the first example, if one were like an upside down vase when listening to teachings, then, just as one cannot pour water into the vase, likewise when one listens one cannot pay attention, and no matter how many teachings are presented they will not go into one's mind. With a dirty vase, if clean food and drink are put into it, then it will spoil the food. In relation to listening to teachings, this analogy shows that one needs to be free from a negative motivation as this will spoil the teachings. Even if the teachings themselves are pure, one will completely misinterpret them and get the wrong meaning. Thirdly, a vase may be upright and clean, but if it has a leak then no matter what is put into it, it will all come out. Common sayings support this, e.g. ‘what goes in one ear comes out the other’. So whatever the teaching one has listened to, one needs to be able to retain it. The point is that we need mindfulness to retain whatever instructions or teachings we receive.

We need to understand the proper manner of listening to the teachings. The Lam Rim states one needs to be free from the three adverse conditions (the analogy of the three vases) and apply the six recognitions. These are important points. Just as water does not remain in a broken vase, someone who lacks introspection will not be able to abide in mindfulness. This again shows how mindfulness is supported by

introspection. If one lacks introspection that affects one's mindfulness, and also the wisdom of listening, contemplating and meditating, then whatever wisdom one has gained will degenerate. This is all due to the degeneration of introspection.

1.2.2.1.3. *One does not generate pure morality*

This indicates that someone who lacks introspection will not be able to generate pure morality.

The verse reads:

26. *A person listening, having faith
And striving strongly in many ways,
Because of having the fault of lacking
introspection,
Becomes sullied by the dirt of downfalls.*

Gyaltsab Je explains this verse as follows:

A person with faith who has listened to many teachings and strives strongly in many different ways to practise virtue, but who has the fault of not having introspection that knows what is right and what is wrong, will be sullied by the pollution of the dirt of the downfalls. Therefore one should strive in guarding introspection.

This explanation is very relevant at this time. If *a person* already has *faith, has listened to many teachings* and has striven *strongly in many ways to practise virtue* but has not maintained the introspection of knowing what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded, then their practice is *sullied by the pollution of the stains of the downfalls*.

We can see so many examples of this within the Tibetan community itself, with geshe and even lamas giving up their vows. Some have practised significantly for many years and later gave up their vows. We can also see many westerners who were once ordained Sangha, monks and nuns, who have now given up their vows. On a personal note, when I was in India many years ago I met a monk who was from Amdo. I recall I was really taken by his good composure, and apparently he had spent 12 years in retreat. He seemed like a very subdued monk, a very unique and genuine sort of monk at that time. However, at a later stage apparently he gave up being a monk and started living a lay life. This is quite astonishing to see.

I have heard many accounts of otherwise quite learned and good monks who have later disrobed. I recall another instance in the year 2000 at a Kalachakra initiation teaching in Bodhgaya. I was sitting up in front with Geshe Sonam and just in front was another youngish monk. As His Holiness passed by to the throne he would stop and pat me on the back and talk to me. The young monk in front recognised me and called me by name. I asked Geshe Sonam who he was and he told me he was quite a learned monk, actually a geshe from Sera Je who teaches the young monks in Namgyal Monastery, His Holiness' personal monastery in Dharamsala. Apparently His Holiness was fond of him because of his good knowledge and ability to teach other monks. This young geshe was fond of me and started to ask me questions on debate topics. The answers I gave him seemed to satisfy him. He said that if I needed any text books or anything from Dharamsala he could send them to me. He would even help me during the tea breaks to go to the private toilets inside, so I didn't have to go outside. So anyway, we had a good rapport. Then about a year later I heard that he had travelled to Canada, is no longer a monk and is now living a regular life as a lay person. This brought

to my awareness how pitiful it is to lose such great teachers to an ordinary life.

At the conclusion of this verse Gyaltsab Je mentions *Therefore one should strive in guarding introspection*. The implication here is that even if one is quite learned and has gained quite a lot of wisdom from listening to the teachings over many years, contemplating the meanings and even meditated to a certain degree, then, if all of this is not supported with continuous mindfulness and introspection there is still the chance for one to be sullied by stains of the downfall. Thus, introspection is presented as being essential to maintain one's practice.

A commitment that many of you are already doing regularly, called the *Six Session Guru Yoga*, is structured as a means to maintain mindfulness and introspection continuously. One meditates and reviews the vows and commitments three times in the morning and three times in the afternoon/evening which helps one maintain one's mindfulness and introspection throughout the day.

The *Six Session Guru Yoga* practice requires not just reciting the words, but recalling the meaning to the best of our ability. Again, we have all spent significant time hearing a lot of teachings, thinking and contemplating so it would be a great pity if we lost whatever wisdom we have gained now, or if it degenerated. So, in order to maintain the understanding we have gained we definitely need to apply mindfulness and introspection. I regularly encourage you by saying 'always protect your mind with mindfulness and introspection'. This includes myself too; I also need to be mindful and careful of my practice. There is a Tibetan expression which says that the teacher shouldn't be like a trumpet. This analogy is used as the opening of the trumpet is faced outward and the sound goes out loudly. So it is for mutual benefit that we need to be reminded of this point.

I acknowledge that you already spend a lot of time studying and paying attention to the teachings, which is great. Now the only thing is to remind you to maintain that by practising with mindfulness and introspection. The main point is to maintain a continuity of practice.

1.2.2.1.4. *Earlier accumulated virtue is destroyed*

This indicates that earlier accumulated virtue can be destroyed with the lack of introspection.

The verse reads:

27. *The thief of a lack of introspection
Follows degenerated mindfulness.
Although having accumulated merits
The thief steals them and one goes to the lower
realms.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning, along with an analogy:

A person without introspection will be robbed by the thief of the afflictions of their earlier accumulated wealth of merits due to degenerated introspection, which forgets the virtuous object.

When earlier accumulated wealth is stolen the person becomes a beggar. Similarly, when earlier accumulated merits are stolen the person becomes destitute of merits and goes to the lower realms.

When a person lacks introspection *the afflictions will rob them like a thief*. What they are being robbed of is their *accumulated merit*. Usually a thief would rob someone of their wealth and the analogy here relates to our accumulated merits. This explains that merits accumulated earlier can be taken away

due to a degenerated introspection which forgets the virtuous object. The connection here is that if one is not mindful of the virtuous object then one will forget it. Furthermore, with a lack of introspection one does not bring one's mind back to the virtuous object. Thus, because one does not bring one's focus back to the virtuous object, one's earlier accumulated merits will degenerate. Referring to the analogy, *when accumulated wealth is stolen a person becomes a beggar*, even when a wealthy person is robbed, because their wealth is gone they will be left with nothing and become a beggar. Using this same analogy, *when earlier accumulated merit is stolen, the person becomes destitute and goes to the lower realms*. The significant point here is that if one forgets the virtuous object, which is all the accumulated virtues that one has accumulated, (and the causes for one to obtain a fortunate rebirth) then, with a lack of introspection, all of those virtues can degenerate, which is the cause for one to go to the lower realms.

So we need to be really careful not to lose the virtues that we have put so much effort into accumulating earlier. In relation to ourselves, we have definitely listened to the teachings, accumulated knowledge and understanding and engaged in practices for accumulating merits. When all that we have acquired does not degenerate then they would be significant causes for a fortunate rebirth. However, if they were to degenerate through forgetting the virtuous object due to lack of mindfulness and introspection, then we actually lose the causes we have already accumulated. That is why we need to take this instruction to heart.

1.2.2.1.5. *It obstructs the achievement of virtue not accumulated earlier*

This means that lacking introspection will prevent one from accumulating further virtue which one may not have accumulated already.

If one maintains introspection then one's earlier accumulated virtue will not be destroyed, and one will not be obstructed from achieving virtue one has not yet accumulated. In contrast to that, if we were to lack introspection, then earlier accumulated virtue is destroyed and we are further obstructed from achieving virtues that we have not yet accumulated. This is how we need to incorporate the need to apply and always maintain introspection, as opposed to lacking it, and the consequences of that.

The verse relating to this heading reads:

28. *This gang of affliction robbers
Looks for an opportunity.
If they get a chance they steal virtue
And kill off the life of a happy rebirth.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning:

This gang of affliction robbers looks for an opportunity to steal the wealth of virtue. If one does not protect oneself with introspection, and they get a chance, they will steal one's virtue and also destroy the result, happy migrations and the life of liberation, in the progress.

Having contemplated the faults of not having introspection one should strive in introspection that checks the situation of the three doors

The commentary is quite clear and the analogy highlights the main point. Just as a gang of robbers look for an opportunity to steal others' wealth, as soon as there is an opportunity, they will not hesitate—they will rob immediately. Likewise the afflictions we have in our mind are like the gang of robbers who are waiting for an

opportunity to steal away our virtues. If one does not protect oneself with introspection and the afflictions get a chance, *they will steal one's virtue and also destroy the results of one's virtue, which is a happy migration and the life of liberation* which we are *in the process* of building. In conclusion, having contemplated the faults of not having introspection, one should strive in the introspection that investigates how we conduct ourselves through our three doors. Periodically we should check how we are conducting ourselves through our three doors of body, speech and mind. As mentioned earlier, the explanation here is quite clear: the main point is for one to actually take the advice to heart and put it into practice.

1.2.2.2. GUARDING MINDFULNESS AS THE METHOD FOR GUARDING INTROSPECTION

Mindfulness and introspection are presented as supportive of each other: in order to guard mindfulness one needs to apply introspection and vice versa. To have introspection we need to also apply mindfulness. This heading is divided into two:

1.2.2.2.1. Showing

1.2.2.2.2. Explaining

1.2.2.2.1. Showing

The verse reads:

29. *Therefore, do not send mindfulness
Away from the door of the mind.
Should it happen, place it closely
By recalling the sufferings of the lower realms.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning thus:

Because there are many faults if one does not have introspection, do not send the mindfulness of not forgetting the virtuous object away from the door of the house of the mind. In case mindfulness weakens and does leave, remind yourself of the sufferings of the lower realms, and immediately protect the house of the mind again.

Because of the many faults associated with losing introspection, using the analogy of mind as a house, one should not allow mindfulness (particularly forgetting the virtuous object), to leave from the door.

The commentary further explains '*in case mindfulness weakens*' and it does go (because a beginner's mindfulness is hard to maintain all the time), one needs to remind oneself again of the sufferings and the pitiful situation of the lower realms, and that this is the consequence of a lack of mindfulness. Then one will immediately protect the house of the mind again.

1.2.2.2.2. Explaining

Having thus presented how to guard mindfulness, next follows the various conditions for guarding mindfulness as a method of guarding introspection. These are subdivided into three.

1.2.2.2.2.1. Relying on the outer condition of a virtuous friend

1.2.2.2.2.2. How to generate the inner condition of correct mental application

1.2.2.2.2.3. How to generate the inner conditions of mindfulness and introspection

1.2.2.2.2.1. Relying on the outer condition of a virtuous friend

What are the various conditions for guarding mindfulness as a method of guarding introspection? The first is relying on the outer condition of a virtuous friend, or what we call a teacher or guru. The teacher is a virtuous friend, thus relying

on the lama is relying on a virtuous friend. This then becomes an external condition for one to be able to maintain one's introspection.

The verse reads:

30. *From following the lama,
Through to advice by the abbot,
Out of fear, the fortunate ones are respectful,
And generate mindfulness easily.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

The fortunate ones respect the trainings and will follow the advice of their abbot, preceptor, friends in pure training and the like out of a feeling of shame and consideration and fear of being degraded by others. These are methods for protecting mindfulness.

Since they generate easily the mindfulness that does not forget the virtuous object, regardless of whether they listen, contemplate or meditate, they base their practice on mastering mindfulness.

The method for protecting mindfulness presented here is that those who are *the fortunate ones* will respect the trainings and follow the advice of the abbot and the like out of a feeling of shame and consideration. For those in the ordained community the abbot is the one from whom vows are received. A preceptor gives precepts to the lay community who take lay precepts. Friends in pure training would be in the larger sangha community—those who help one accumulate virtue - friends in pure training. As one has taken vows and precepts from a prominent being and made promises to such a prominent being, it would be improper to breach them. It is said that the significance of receiving the vows and commitments from highly accomplished masters is that the mere recollection of them will help one to be more mindful of not breaching the vows. The hesitation to break those vows will be stronger because of the great respect one has for the lama (qualified virtuous friends—teacher, abbot etc.) *With the fear of being degraded by others*, means that when one has fear of being looked down upon, or where others may say something to put one in a bad light, then through consideration of this one will be able to apply mindfulness. These are the methods for protecting mindfulness since they generate easily the mindfulness that does not forget the virtuous object. The key point here is that since the mindfulness of not forgetting the virtuous object can easily lapse, regardless of whether one has listened, contemplated or meditated, you must base your practice on mastering mindfulness in order to protect your earlier merit and vows etc.

Shame and consideration are two very important virtues we need to maintain. The difference between shame and embarrassment is that the focus of shame is one's commitment to others, such as one's lamas and Buddha etc. If one avoids engaging in faults that would cause disgrace to those others, this is shame. Embarrassment arises because an action is not good for one's own reason i.e. it is not good for me to break these vows. This uses oneself as a reason to avoid faults in consideration of others.

In summary, take *relying on outer conditions* as a personal instruction to recall the importance of relying on qualified spiritual masters and virtuous friends who encourage us and to help us accumulate virtue. On a wider scale, one can rely on Dharma brothers and sisters in our life, like-minded people who help remind us of the Dharma. Having respect for them and relying upon them is meaningful for oneself as a method to protect one's mindfulness, and as a way to guard introspection.

1.2.2.2.2. How to generate the inner condition of correct mental application

Having explained the outer conditions next the method to generate the inner conditions of correct mental application is presented. This next verse serves as a proclamation, or what we should recall.

The verse reads:

31. *Buddhas and bodhisattvas
Are endowed with unobstructed sight of everything.
Say, 'I am always in the field of vision
Of their five eyes.'*
32ab. *By contemplating this, shame,
And likewise respect and fear are attained.*

As explained by Gyaltsab Je in the commentary:

Further, the buddhas and bodhisattvas can see all phenomena without obstruction, regardless of place or time. So one remains at all times clearly in the sight of their five eyes. Considering this generates shame, which takes oneself as the reason, and because one has respect for the teacher and the Dharma and fear of the fruition, one should take care and practise mindfulness.

The first line presents the extent of the buddhas' omniscient mind, and it is because the buddhas have five wisdom eyes that one is always in their presence. Bringing this to mind, along with the qualities of the buddhas' omniscience and the qualities of the bodhisattvas, one should always feel their presence, because they are in constant awareness of our being.

The way to envision shame is that if one recalls that one is always in the presence of the buddhas and bodhisattvas then one does not want to show disrespect, so one refrains from engaging in misdeeds. This is how one applies mindfulness and introspection in relation to shame.

As the commentary continues, *because one has respect for the teacher and the Dharma and fear of the fruition, one should take care and practise mindfulness.*

The next point, which is the consideration for others, comes because of the respect one has for the teacher and the Dharma and fear of the results of one's negative consequences (one's misdeeds). By recalling the reason of others, one again applies mindfulness, and it is in this way that one practises mindfulness on a continuous basis. Again, what is being explained is not obscure, it is quite clear. The main thing for one to take to heart as personal instruction is to apply this in our practice.

To summarise the main point: recall that the Buddhas are omniscient. This means that they know all existence completely and entirely; past, present and future. Think, 'I am always in their presence and so I dare not engage in misdeeds, lapse from my commitments etc.' This recollection is how our mindfulness is supported with introspection.

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

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Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

1 July 2014

As usual we can spend some time in meditation practice.
[Meditation]

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

For the benefit of all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. Therefore I will listen to the teachings, and put them into practice well.

I regularly emphasise the importance of the motivation and this is exactly the point which is presented in the next verses. These verses are very poignant explanations about the significance of our state of mind and so forth, so we really need to pay attention to them.

1.2.2.2.3. How to generate the inner conditions of mindfulness and introspection

This has two subdivisions:

1.2.2.2.3.1. How to generate mindfulness

1.2.2.2.3.2. How to generate introspection from mindfulness

1.2.2.2.3.1. How to generate mindfulness

Here, there are two lines:

*32cd. They also repeatedly generate
Recollection of the Buddha.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on these lines reads

A person who thinks in this way will also recollect the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Because this happens repeatedly, they will easily generate mindfulness of the Three Jewels.

This explanation follows last week's presentation in that *a person who thinks in this way* refers to using shame and embarrassment to apply mindfulness. An individual who conducts themselves with shame and embarrassment in mind will recollect the qualities of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, which are three of the six recollections. In addition to the recollection of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, the six recollections also include recollection of the downfalls, recollection of morality and recollection of the deities.

As presented here, the qualities of the Three Jewels are interrelated in the sense that the more one reflects on the enlightened activities of the Buddha, the greater the admiration and faith in the Buddha's words, i.e. the Dharma. Generating strong faith in the Dharma will then naturally bring about a keen admiration and faith in those who actually practise the Dharma, i.e. the Sangha. So in this way one recollects the qualities of the Three Jewels, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

Furthermore the more one recollects the qualities of the Three Jewels, the more mindful one will be about not

creating the downfalls, and the recollection of morality and so forth will come about as well. Constantly bringing to mind an awareness that one is in the presence of the buddhas and the deities at all times will help one to generate a sense of shame about breaching any vows one has taken, and then through that shame there is a hesitation about incurring the negativities or the downfalls. The same applies to embarrassment with respect to others. So the recollection of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha helps to generate a sense of shame and embarrassment about incurring the downfalls and so forth.

1.2.2.2.3.2. How to generate introspection from mindfulness

Here again, we take note of the way mindfulness and introspection are interconnected. If one applies mindfulness well, then that will help to generate introspection as well. The verse relating to this is:

*33. When mindfulness remains at the door
Of the mind for the purpose of protection,
At that time introspection is born
And the one that left returns.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of this verse thus:

At the time when one, through mindfulness, remains alert to protect oneself from the afflictions, then introspection, which analyses which action is suitable and which is unsuitable, comes into existence, and that which has degenerated at a time will return.

Since the skill in practice depends on mindfulness and introspection, one should become adept in this.

As the commentary explains, by applying *mindfulness one remains alert to protect oneself from the afflictions*. Here mindfulness relates to being either mindful of a virtuous object, or mindful of what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded. So mindfulness means being alert to the possibility of afflictions arising and thus protecting oneself from them. This is really the most significant point about applying mindfulness.

Here we can recall one of the great Kadampa masters Geshe Byel Kunkyen who said, 'I always guard my three doors, lest I fall victim to the afflictions'. One really needs to apply mindfulness in this manner, as a means to guard the mind against the afflictions, and thus ensure that they do not take root. That is the positive outcome of applying mindfulness.

As the commentary further explains, the consequence of following the practice of maintaining mindfulness to protect oneself from the afflictions, is that introspection, which analyses *what actions are suitable and what are unsuitable*, comes into existence. This presentation is systematically showing us how introspection arises by virtue of applying mindfulness. When one applies mindfulness appropriately, and maintains it, then introspection will naturally arise, which in this context is a mind that vigilantly analyses and checks what actions are to be adopted and what actions need to be discarded.

I regularly stress the importance of maintaining mindfulness of one's virtuous object while in meditation. When we have mindfulness of the object, then the introspection that checks whether the mind has become distracted or not will arise naturally. The same applies to

mindfulness and introspection about what actions are to be adopted and what are to be abandoned. This is a very systematic explanation that clearly shows how mindfulness and introspection support each other.

When the commentary says, *that which is unsuitable comes into existence and that which has degenerated at a time will return*, it is referring to the fact that if mindfulness or introspection start to weaken, they can easily be restored. The more one maintains mindfulness about one's activities and actions, the more it will help the development of introspection. In the event that mindfulness or introspection start to degenerate or lapse, then, because of the earlier application, they will easily be able to return. So that is the point being explained here.

Furthermore, as the commentary explains, *since the skill in meditation and practice depends on mindfulness and introspection, one should become adept in this*. The point here is that becoming skilled in meditation and practice depends on how much mindfulness and introspection is being applied, and held without degeneration.

1.3. The practice of guarding the mind with mindfulness and introspection

Having explained the necessity of applying mindfulness and introspection, the next part of the text deals with the actual practice of guarding the mind with mindfulness.

This is subdivided into three:

- 1.3.1. Training in the morality of restraint
- 1.3.2. The way of training in the morality of accumulating virtuous dharmas
- 1.3.3. Training in the morality that accomplishes the welfare of sentient beings

1.3.1. Training in the morality of restraint

This has two subdivisions:

- 1.3.1.1. Striving to purify the actions of the three doors
- 1.3.1.2. Protecting the three doors from degeneration

1.3.1.1. STRIVING TO PURIFY THE ACTIONS OF THE THREE DOORS

Here there are three sub-headings

- 1.3.1.1.1. Investigating the actions of body and speech
- 1.3.1.1.2. Investigating the actions of the mind
- 1.3.1.1.3. Explaining the permitted and forbidden actions

1.3.1.1.1. Investigating the actions of body and speech

This is subdivided into four:

- 1.3.1.1.1.1. Investigating the motivation before a physical action
- 1.3.1.1.1.2. Advice related to looking and so forth
- 1.3.1.1.1.3. Relating it to other actions
- 1.3.1.1.1.4. Investigating the action of abiding

These are important points that I regularly emphasise. This part of the presentation is also very suitable for beginners, as they will find it systematic and very logical. They are able to relate to this explanation very well, because it relates to normal, everyday activities.

Investigating the motivation before a physical action relates to the fact that the mind is paramount in all our actions. The mind is the forerunner of all physical and verbal activities. Whether we conduct a positive physical activity, or whether it is harmful depends on our

motivation prior to engaging in that action. Likewise whatever speech we utter, whether it is positive and beneficial, or harmful or negative, is also dependent on the motivation that precedes the speech. This presentation shows how the mind is the forerunner of all activities.

1.3.1.1.1. Investigating the motivation before a physical action

The verse that relates to this heading is:

- 34. *Initially investigate
Whether this mind is flawed.
At the time I shall remain
Steady like wood.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains:

Before engaging in any physical action, such as walking, investigate this mind of yours to see whether the motivation for the action is flawed or not.

In case a flawed motivation has arisen, then, while remembering the antidote against the afflictions, remain steady like wood, and not be moved by the motivation.

As the commentary explains, *before engaging in any action such as walking*, first check or *investigate this mind of yours to see whether the motivation for the action is flawed or not*. As explained here, prior to engaging in any action such as walking or going about, one checks one's state of mind to see what is motivating this action. 'Is the motivation a positive one? Is it an appropriate motivation for the action I am about to engage in? Or is it tainted with some negativity?' This is how to check one's motivation prior to engaging in the action itself.

As the commentary further explains, if one finds that a *flawed motivation has arisen* or taken root, then, the moment one notices that the motivation is stained, by *remembering the antidote to the affliction*, one *remains steady like wood*.

To understand this analogy it is necessary to know that the Tibetan term *shing* applies to wood in general, and it is also the term for trees. In this case, as some other commentaries indicate, the example relates to a massive tree that remains steady during a storm and is not moved by gusts of wind. This example is used to illustrate how one needs to apply the antidote to remain steady and not be moved by the afflictions.

When one notices that one's motivation is tainted and applies the antidote to the afflictions, then one will be able to remain steady and not be moved by that tainted motivation or superstitious thoughts and so forth. So the mind itself remains steady and not moved by a faulty motivation or the afflictions.

As I regularly emphasise, whatever the practice we do, particularly with meditation, we need to be mindful that the practice serves its purpose of overcoming the afflictions in one's mind. As I have related to you in the past, I spent a significant amount of time in my youth attempting to meditate. As I have confided in you in the past, despite my earnest efforts to apply the meditation practice, trying to lead a modest life, being content with whatever I had and not concerned about nice clothing and food, these efforts could, at times, have been tainted with some worldly concern, wondering how others

would view me and so forth. Nevertheless the attempts I made at that time have definitely had a positive effect on my wellbeing now that I am older. Judging by the positive effects that I experience now, the earlier attempts to meditate and so forth have not been in vain, and may have been focused in the right direction. At this stage in my life I can confidently say that my meditation practice is pure, without the stains of worldly concerns.

Geshe-la in English: When I was 20 years old, 21 years old, 22 years old, 23 years old, at that time when there is good food and bad one, I chose bad one! If there is good cloth and not good one, I choose not good one. At time very, very good learning—now I no attach food, no attach cloth, no attach reputation! That time I learning, now beneficial for me! Normally I say I need small food, easy food, not need many different food; stomach full and good for health that is enough! Some people two hours cooking, eat ten minutes, finished! Important healthy food need, delicious or not delicious not really important, healthy need. Delicious only here [pointing to tongue]—afterwards gone! Some people eat rotten egg, rotten meat, not knowing, say 'yes, yes', then stomach pain and some dead. Most important health!

Coming back to the main point, our motivation is of paramount importance. Whatever activity we engage in we need to first check our motivation. Those of you who live with a partner know from experience how, if you do not check your state of mind and allow negative states of mind such as anger to become prevalent, you can easily engage in inappropriate gestures and behaviours that can upset your partner. Behaving in this way will not be received well, even by someone who is close to you. We see so many examples of the complications, harm and hostility that arise as a result of not having paid attention to one's state of mind, prior to engaging in the activities that affect your companion.

If you take this advice to heart, and really pay attention to your state of mind, then, having contemplated the faults of anger, when you notice anger arising you will know that it is not a really suitable state of mind with which to interact with others. By virtue of recognising that, you will be able to prevent yourselves from mishaps and harming others. This is the practical approach to protecting yourselves.

1.3.1.1.2. Advice related to looking and so forth

Here again we can notice the very practical advice Shantideva is giving to those listening to his teachings. His practical advice on how to conduct oneself and behave properly, just the same as the advice and care that a parent would give to their children.

Having mentioned the importance of checking the mind before engaging in physical actions, now comes advice about how to look with one's eyes.

This has four subdivisions:

- 1.3.1.1.2.1. The general conduct of looking with the eyes
- 1.3.1.1.2.2. How to look when tired
- 1.3.1.1.2.3. How to act when another person comes close
- 1.3.1.1.2.4. How to act after one has rested

1.3.1.1.2.1. The general conduct of looking with the eyes

The verse that relates to this is:

35. *I never allow myself to be distracted
And do not look around meaninglessly.
Rather, with a firm mind,
I always look with my eyes downcast.*

These are quite easy points to understand and the commentary is also quite clear.

I shall never allow myself to be distracted and look around meaninglessly, because this causes the mind to degenerate. With the virtuous object firmly in mind I shall always look with my eyes cast down the length of one yoke in front of me.

As the commentary explains one *should never allow oneself to be distracted and look around meaninglessly*. This means not looking around without any purpose. One should guard against that sort of conduct. If one were to look around meaninglessly then that would *cause the mind to degenerate*, through losing its focus on the virtuous object.

Then the commentary further explains that while maintaining *the virtuous object firmly in mind I shall always look with my eyes cast down the length of one yoke in front of me*. In some texts such as the *Vinaya Sutra*, the distance is described as the span of one arm's length.

The main point is that one maintains one's focus on the virtuous object, and that when one walks, one looks just at the space in front of oneself. That covers the general conduct of looking with the eyes.

1.3.1.1.2.2. How to look when tired

Next comes how to look when one is tired. This is covered in these two lines:

- 36ab. *To rest one's sight
One should occasionally look around.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

To refresh one's constitution, and if tired, one occasionally lifts one's gaze and looks around.

When one is tired or looking for a resting place, *one can occasionally lift one's gaze and look around*.

Holding one's gaze at a certain distance for too long might lead to physical discomfort, and mentally one may start to feel a bit tired. So, in order to refresh one's physical constitution, and to revive the mind, we are advised to occasionally lift up our gaze a bit and look around in order to refresh ourselves.

We know that whenever we are engaged in some sort of task, after a while we get a bit tired and we need to look up and stretch out our arms. This is how we normally refresh ourselves. However, this does not imply that we should forget the virtuous object and just look around meaninglessly. The purpose of looking up is just to refresh ourselves, and it should not be a means to become distracted again.

1.3.1.1.2.3. How to act when another person comes close

At this point we can again reflect upon the heart-warming nature of Shantideva's advice. I have heard people say, 'My parents never taught me how to receive guests and how to care for them!' Shantideva is showing us here how to relate to others in appropriate ways.

Some people become very shy when guests arrive, and are not really able to say much. This indicates that they are not really able to interact with and relate to people at a social level.

36cd. When someone appears in the field of your vision

Look up and say, "It is good you came".

37ab. To check whether there are dangers on the road

Look repeatedly in the four directions.

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning as follows:

If someone comes into one's field of vision, while we have our eyes downcast, once they are in front of us we smile at them and say 'How good you came'.

Also, while walking along a path one needs to repeatedly look around in the four directions to check whether there are any dangers or not.

As explained here in the commentary, if, while you are engaged in gazing downward, someone comes near you, then you look up and greet them with a smile. Even just a smile can make others feel at ease and comfortable. Following this pleasant facial gesture, one utters welcoming pleasant words. That is how to conduct oneself.

Furthermore *while walking along the path*, the conduct one needs to adopt *is to repeatedly look in the four directions*, to check whether there are any dangers or not. This is very practical advice. One should always be vigilant as one walks about, otherwise accidents will happen. We can see the very practical nature of this advice. It is also applicable to driving, isn't it? Basically, Shantideva is presenting, with reason and logic, the most suitable way to conduct ourselves virtuously in all our activities, much as parents give advice to their children.

1.3.1.1.2.4. How to act after one has rested

This of course is quite easy to understand. Having given advice on how to rest when one is tired, how does one conduct oneself after a rest?

The following four lines explain this:

37cd. Having directed your sight outwards during the break

Look behind your back.

38ab. Having checked in front and behind

Go or come.

The commentary explains the meaning as follows.

Further, after one has rested and set out again, direct your attention outwards and look also behind your back for your possessions. Having checked whether in front or behind are any cliffs and so forth, one either continues along one's path or goes back, as is appropriate.

Having applied the advice on resting, as one sets out again, we are next advised to *direct your attention outward, and also behind your back for your possessions*. This refers to making sure that there are no obstructions, or dangers, either behind or in front.

Having checked in front and behind that there aren't *any cliffs or so forth* refers to the fact that some routes can be treacherous, and very dangerous. So one needs to look carefully in front, to see if there are any cliffs or not, and

then, ensuring that there is no danger, one proceeds along the path.

Looking backward ensures that it is possible to turn back if needed, as well as ensuring one does not leave one's possessions behind. Again, this is very practical advice.

1.3.1.1.1.3. Relating it to other actions

The relevant two lines are:

38cd. Act in this way at all time

Upon understanding the purpose.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

Having understood the need for the benefit of self and others, act like this with all your physical and verbal actions.

In summary, whatever one's actions, whether verbal or physical, one needs to first check their purpose, whether they benefit oneself or others, and then, if there is a benefit, engage in those actions.

We will recite the *King of Prayers* for Kim Foon's father who has just passed away in Malaysia. Kim, her sister Kim Yoke, and William are three of our more dedicated students, and it is good for us to do prayers for them at this time.

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

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Edited Version

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Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

8 July 2014

As usual we can spend some time in meditation practice. [meditation]

Aim to receive the teachings with a bodhicitta motivation such as:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, in order to free them from all sufferings and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. For that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

Such a motivation is crucial for ensuring that your approach is a proper practice.

We have explained the headings How To Act When One Rests and Relating It To Other Actions. Recall how those explanations gave very practical advice about how to conduct oneself in such situations. In relation to protecting oneself from dangers after resting, when one starts to move about, the advice was about how to be cautious: look behind to make sure no possessions have been left behind; ensure you are not in danger; look in front and make sure there is no precipice or danger points around and then move with caution. This was very practical advice.

This line from Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains what is meant by *relating it to other actions* and serves as a summary that relates to all of our actions.

Having understood the need for the benefit of self and others, act like this with all your physical and verbal actions.

Whatever actions we engage in, physical or verbal, in all instances first check whether there is a benefit for oneself or a benefit for others. Having thoroughly checked, if one finds there is a benefit for oneself and/or others then engage in the actions. Again, this is immaculate advice as it encourages us to use our own wisdom to assess our actions.

1.3.1.1.4. Investigating the action of abiding

The verse reads:

39. *Initiate your actions thinking:
'I shall abide with my body like this.'
From time to time check
How your body is abiding.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

After having had the thought, 'I shall remain in this position', stop the actions of the body and place it for the time being in the planned position.

Look in the explained way, from time to time to check how the body is abiding, and strive to act without fault.

When engaging in a virtuous deed on a physical level (it can relate to body, speech and mind but here it relates to the physical), and *after having the thought 'I shall remain in this position,'* an example of an action may be if you decided to engage in a focused meditation. You would think 'Now I will position myself in the seven-point posture of Buddha

Vairochana, and having taken this initiative you would adopt the appropriate posture. Then, having adopted the posture you would strive to maintain it for the duration. You would periodically check how your body is abiding, and whether you have adopted the correct posture or not. This applies to any physical action; sitting, standing or moving about—adopt the physical posture and strive to act without fault. The succinct advice here is to constantly be aware of one's actions, whether physical, verbal or mental state, and be vigilant in checking 'how am I conducting myself?' This ensures that you are conducting yourself without fault and in line with creating virtue. If you find yourself at fault, immediately try to overcome it. This is the main advice. Having given detailed advice on how to conduct oneself physically, next is investigating the state, or conduct, of the mind.

1.3.1.1.2. Investigating the mind

This is subdivided into two

1.3.1.1.2.1. Fastening the mind to the virtuous object

1.3.1.1.2.2. Analyse whether it is single-pointedly focused on virtue or not

1.3.1.1.2.1. Fastening the mind to the virtuous object

The verse reads:

40. *Check with all your effort
That the crazy elephant mind
Does not lose the great Dharma pillar
The way it was fastened to it.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Check with all your effort that the unsubdued and crazy elephant mind does not lose the great pillar of the Dharma object that one accepted to contemplate single-pointedly, the way one fastened the mind to it.

The main point of the explanation here is how to ensure that one's mind is fastened to a virtuous object. The mind here is likened to an unsubdued and crazy elephant which would cause havoc due to its completely wild nature. Firstly, it is untamed, and on top of that it is crazed, so an elephant like that would go on a rampage and cause huge destruction, unless it was secured tightly to a strong pillar.

This analogy illustrates our state of mind, which is untamed from the three poisons of attachment, anger and ignorance, and crazed with different delusions. Such an untamed and crazed mind, if it is not fastened to a pillar like a Dharma object, can cause so much damage and destruction. Therefore the advice here is, in order to prevent one's mind from causing so much damage and destruction, *check with all your effort that the unsubdued and crazy elephant mind does not lose the great pillar of the Dharma object.* For us, the pillar or object must be a virtuous object, and just as one would tie an elephant to a pillar, one ties the focus of one's mind to the virtuous object, or what the commentary calls *the Dharma object that one accepted to contemplate single-pointedly the way one fastened the mind to it.* This line indicates that as one has previously determined to contemplate on a chosen object, one needs to constantly ensure one does not lose focus on that virtuous object.

1.3.1.1.2.2. Analyse whether it is single-pointedly focused on virtue or not

After one has fastened one's mind to a virtuous Dharma object (pillar), next one needs to analyse whether it is single-pointedly focused on it or not. This is very succinct advice on how to conduct oneself on a mental level. One can derive

so much meaning from just going over the outline and relate to the significance of the meaning of the verse.

The verse reads:

41. *However I strive in concentration
I shall not let loose for even one moment.
'What does this mind of mine do?' I ask.
Analyse the mind in detail in this regard.*

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

I shall not even for one moment lose my concentration on the virtuous object and be distracted to something else. Analyse your mind repeatedly, saying: 'This mind of mine does suitable and unsuitable actions.'

The significant point here is that while the advice is to focus one's mind single-pointedly on the virtuous object to develop concentration, at the same time, internally in one's mind, one should also analyse one's state of mind checking what kind of thoughts are occurring, what kind of actions are being initiated. The mind has the ability to constantly initiate either suitable or unsuitable actions. So there is a need to check what kinds of thoughts are being manifested in one's mind. Note that from the very onset it is extremely crucial to train oneself in meditation, to develop not only calm abiding, but also special insight, because calm abiding, a state of single-pointed concentration on an object for as long as one wishes, in itself is not sufficient to further enhance one's progress along the path to enlightenment. The teachings constantly emphasise this point. So in addition to calm abiding, one needs to develop special insight, and it is with this combination of concentration and special insight that one can start to really engage in an actual meditation practice capable of removing the subtle afflictions and delusions in the mind. This is a crucial point: while engaging in meditation we should not allow ourselves to feel comfortable just focusing single-pointedly on a chosen object, and maintaining just that. Rather we must also constantly investigate our state of mind, which serves as the basis to develop special insight.

The analysis one employs to check one's state of mind is one which is done while maintaining one's focus on the object, not wavering away from it. So while maintaining this single-pointed focus on the object, one must also employ an analysis that investigates one's state of mind, i.e. what thoughts are occurring and whether they are virtuous states of mind or negative states of mind. Employing this sort of analysis enhances one's intelligence and wisdom, and further develops that wisdom, which can later become special insight.

Lama Tsong Khapa advocates abandoning mere single-pointed concentration, and striving to develop the union of calm abiding and special insight. This is a significant and unique point which we really need to understand. We need to make attempts to develop this training now in our meditation so it will leave a positive imprint in our mind. When we apply this technique it becomes a means to sharpen the mind and further enhance wisdom. Otherwise if one only develops single-pointed concentration, and it is not done in an appropriate manner, then there is a danger of the mind becoming duller and duller rather than sharper, clearer and more intelligent. It is crucial that we apply the proper technique.

1.3.1.1.3. Explaining the permitted and forbidden actions

First, to give an idea about what this heading means in relation to explaining the meaning of the verse: the Buddha

presented certain actions as being permitted and certain actions which are forbidden. Within those which were forbidden there are certain actions which may be temporarily relaxed a bit, as a way of adopting another practice. This is the meaning of practicing equanimity in this context. Thus here, equanimity means that with certain forbidden actions one may temporarily relax the rules a bit, as the means to adopt another virtuous practice.

The verse reads:

42. *If, in the context of dangers or prayer
You are unable, be as comfortable as you can.
In the same vein, at the time of generosity
Morality is treated with equanimity, it is
taught.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains the verse:

If one is unable to perform certain extremely subtle actions of body and mind at the time of:

- Danger to one's life,
- Making offering to the Triple Gem with prayers,
- Actions for the superior purpose of others,

At such times it is permissible to relax one's state or being, even if one is not able to engage those subtle forbidden actions.

From the *Sutra Requested by Inexhaustible Wisdom*:

Thus, at the time of generosity, contain morality and practise equanimity.

The commentary explains that at a time when there is either danger to one's life, or when one is making extensive offerings to the Triple Gem, or particularly when one is engaging in superior actions of benefiting or helping other beings, if one is unable to perform certain extremely subtle actions of body and mind at that time, then '*one should practice equanimity and put one's mind at ease.*'

The citation to qualify this presentation is from the *Sutra Requested by Inexhaustible Wisdom*.

Thus, at the time of generosity, contain morality and practice equanimity.

This is saying that at a time when one is not able to practise both simultaneously, and it is the time for mainly practising generosity, then one should practice equanimity, and leave one's subtle practice of morality. The purpose is to be skilful in accomplishing the path sequentially.

Further down, the commentary explains:

This is to achieve the proper sequence of the path, because if one mistakes the sequence then one will not achieve the former or the latter.

The points of the path should be practised sequentially. In order to practise the points sequentially, first adopt those which are initially presented and relatively easy to practise before engaging in a more difficult practice. The quote from the sutra indicates this point.

The commentary presents a hypothetical doubt which may occur:

Query: How can one regard it with equanimity since morality is greater than generosity?

This is a reasonable doubt, for it is indeed a greater virtue to practise morality than generosity, because morality is harder to practise. Generosity can be practiced by lay as well as ordained practitioners, while certain practices of morality, like observing the self-liberation vows, can only be practised by ordained Sangha. Therefore morality is said to be harder to practise than generosity.

Thus, if we had to identify the main focus of the practice and who is appropriate to do those practices, lay people would focus mainly on generosity, and ordained Sangha would need to practise primarily on morality as their main practice.

So, as the query states, if morality is more virtuous, how can one leave that in equanimity, meaning how can one relax the practice of morality?

The next two verses serve as an answer to the query and read:

43. *After initiating the intended action
Do not think about anything else.
For the time being accomplish that very action
With your thoughts focused on it.*
44. *In this way all is accomplished well.
Otherwise neither will be accomplished.
The secondary afflictions, which are non-
introspection,
Will not increase in this way.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains exactly why:

One does not divert mentally from the first practice in a series that have to be practised sequentially. Generosity, which has to be practised first, is practised alone with a firm mind for the time being. This is to achieve the proper sequence of the path, because if one mistakes the sequence, then one will not achieve the former or the latter.

In relation to the first part - *One does not divert mentally from the first practice in a series that have to be practiced sequentially* - this highlights that some practices are presented in sequential order. When practices are presented in a sequential manner it is important to primarily focus on the first practice as a way to establish a firm basis to engage in the next practice of the sequence. As explained here, *This is to achieve the proper sequence of the path, because if one mistakes the sequence, then one will not achieve the former or the latter.*

Take the analogy of constructing a wall: the foundation must be firm and stable. If it is not stable, when you start building the wall and putting the next layer on top it can very easily topple over. The consequence is that you neither have a good foundation nor a wall which comes on top of it. With this analogy it is very clear that when a practice is presented sequentially one needs to focus on the first practice to serve as a basis to practise the rest.

Hence the commentary continues:

By knowing and following the stages of the path the secondary afflictions, which are not introspection and which do not know the sequence, will not increase. Hence, one should strive to become proficient in the sequence of the path.

So this is all very clear.

1.3.1.2. PROTECTING THE THREE DOORS FROM DEGENERATION

This is divided into two subdivisions:

1.3.1.2.1. Protecting the training of the body from degeneration

1.3.1.2.2. Protecting the training of the mind from degeneration

1.3.1.2.1. Protecting the training of the body from degeneration

This is further divided into three meticulously presented subdivisions:

1.3.1.2.1.1. Not letting the body fall under the control of distractions

1.3.1.2.1.2. Abandon meaningless activities

1.3.1.2.1.3. Analysing the motivation at the time of the action

1.3.1.2.1.1. Not letting the body fall under the control of distractions

45. *Various types of idle gossip
And many great plays,
If one becomes involved in any of these,
Abandon attachment to them.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the verse:

Do not engage in meaningless talk, such as gossip about kings or robbers, and also do not engage in dance or one of the many other kinds of spectacular performances. If there is a purpose or if it is to harmonise with someone, then one should abandon attachment for the action.

This succinct and practical advice is good for us, as it explains how to conduct ourselves in our daily life. The advice is that, whenever possible, one should not engage in meaningless talk such as idle gossip. The text cites gossip about kings or robbers, however for us it would be like gossiping about politics etc. There are sayings that express sentiments like, 'when one engages in gossip the whole day can just pass by', and one has just squandered a whole day gossiping. Engaging in gossip can increase delusions such as anger or attachment. According to the ten non-virtuous actions, by nature gossip is said to pose the least heavy negative karma. But if one is not mindful, it can end up being the worst as it wastes one's time. Because one may not perceive it to be very severe, one thinks it is OK to gossip. But if in fact one spends most of one's time just gossiping, then this will deprive you of your precious time to engage in other practices. So, while by nature gossiping is said to be the least heavy in negative karma, by doing it habitually we can actually waste our whole life. Furthermore, the advice extends to not engaging in dance or one of the many other kinds of spectacular performances, which would include watching movies etc. Again, such performances can cause delusions to arise in one's mind.

An exception is presented: *If there is a purpose or if it is to harmonise with someone one may engage in an action.* Here *harmonise* means 'if it is in accordance with someone else's wishes'. For example if someone said 'Please come to the movies with me. You definitely have to come with me', if you had a choice you would not go because you wouldn't want to waste your time. However, in order to please the other, and not to go against their wishes, you may find yourself sometimes having to comply and say, 'OK, I will go with you'. In situations like this, the advice is to do so without strong attachment—one should abandon attachment to the action.

There are certain categories within the Vinaya vows which are forbidden actions, but which are, under certain circumstances, permitted. For example, singing is actually a forbidden action for ordained Sangha because it can create attachment and distraction. However, if it seems necessary to sing to benefit others, then under those circumstances it is permitted. There are also other categories of actions which a Sangha member maybe permitted to engage in, if it is for the sole purpose of benefiting others. This shows the great kindness of the Buddha in presenting the vows in a way where, under certain circumstances, if it is beneficial to sentient beings, the actions are allowed. In summary, we can see how meticulously the Buddha presented vows which

say: 'avoid such actions normally but if there is a benefit for others then you can engage in it'.

1.3.1.2.1.2. Abandon meaningless activities

The next verse provides advice on how to conduct appropriate physical actions.

The verse reads:

46. *Meaningless digging, cutting of grass,
And drawing in dirt: if one does these,
Upon remembering the trainings of the
Tathagata,
Out of fear, abandon them immediately.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Even if one is not a bhikhu, when one is engaged in meaningless activities such as digging, cutting grass, drawing in the dirt etc., then one should remember the trainings of the Tathagata and, being afraid of the shortcomings of one's actions, stop them right there.

The definitions of meaningless activities are contained within the vows of a fully ordained monk, and they are not to engage in them. For example, digging, cutting grass and drawing in the dirt. However, the commentary indicates that even if you are not a bhikhu or a fully ordained monk—not all bodhisattva trainees are ordained—you should also avoid engaging in meaningless activities such as digging, cutting grass or drawing in the dirt. By remembering why the Buddha actually presented these activities as needing to be avoided, and being afraid of the shortcomings of one's actions, one needs to refrain from such activities. Activities are meaningless not just because they don't have any specific purpose. Some can harm other beings, such as cutting grass. At certain times of the year there are lots of bugs on the grass so by cutting grass, you would actually harm the lives of many insects.

1.3.1.2.1.3. Analysing the motivation at the time of the action

Similar advice was presented earlier. Basically, whatever action one engages in, really check and investigate one's motivation for engaging in the activity first.

This point has three subdivisions:

- 1.3.1.2.1.3.1. Showing
- 1.3.1.2.1.3.2. Explaining
- 1.3.1.2.1.3.4. Summary

1.3.1.2.1.3.1. Showing

The verse reads:

47 *If you wish to move
Or wish to speak
First analyse your mind
And then be smart through steadfastness.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

At the time when one wishes to move one's body or wishes to speak, one should first investigate one's mind to make sure it has not fallen under the control of the afflictions or self-cherishing, and then engage accordingly in what has to be practiced and what has to be abandoned.

While the explanation is quite clear, the commentary further explains that at all times *when one wishes to move one's body, or wishes to speak* (i.e. any physical or verbal actions), one should first check one's state of mind to ensure that it is not influenced by delusions, particularly the self-cherishing mind. Then when one is sure that it is not influenced by any of these negative states of mind, one can engage in the action

according to what is to be practised, and what is to be abandoned.

1.3.1.2.1.3.2. Explaining

This is subdivided into five categories:

- 1.3.1.2.1.3.2.1. What to do when one wishes to generate afflictions
- 1.3.1.2.1.3.2.2. What to do at the time of mental excitement
- 1.3.1.2.1.3.2.3. What to do at the time of praise and so forth
- 1.3.1.2.1.3.2.4. What to do when one thinks about the welfare of others
- 1.3.1.2.1.3.2.5. What to do when one wishes to generate anger or sadness

If there is a wish for anger to be generated, or if sadness occurs, then what can we do at that time? We can notice the manner of how to conduct oneself in such circumstances will be presented very meticulously and succinctly. So we can leave the explanations for our next session.

I would like to thank those who organised the lunch for His Holiness' birthday last Sunday again. Everyone really enjoyed and appreciated the lunch, and I feel that our requesting prayers for His Holiness' long life was fruitful. So, our efforts have been really worthwhile. On a personal note, that night I had a very auspicious dream with His Holiness. His Holiness was present at an offering ceremony, so after some conversations I took the initiative to go up to him to offer a *khatag*, but he indicated that it was not necessary. He then proceeded to consecrate a big jug full of inner-offering nectar, and afterwards indicated that I could have some. When I presented a small container in which I normally keep my inner-offering, he commented 'Oh, that is such a small container, while my jug is really big'. However, when he poured some nectar into my small container, miraculously a really tiny flow of nectar came down to fill my container just to the brim.

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

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
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Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

15 July 2014

As usual we can spend some time in meditation.

[meditation]

Generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

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

1.3.1.2.1. Protecting the training of the body from degeneration

1.3.1.2.1.3. Analysing the motivation at the time of the action (cont.)

1.3.1.2.1.3.2. Explaining

This has five sub-divisions which we listed last week.

1.3.1.2.1.3.2.1. What to do when one wishes to generate afflictions

This heading refers to the actions to take when afflictions are about to be generated. The relevant verse reads:

48. *When one's mind wants to be attached
Or when it wants to be angry
Do not move and do not speak,
Abide like a tree.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary on the verse is quite clear:

When the mind wishes to get attached or wishes to become angry, do not engage in a physical action and do not speak. Rather, abide like a tree and be able to hold the antidote.

As the commentary explains, the moment the mind generates that thought of attachment or anger, one should avoid engaging in any physical or verbal actions. Rather, as the analogy explains, one should *abide like a tree*. The analogy is referring to a big tree, which cannot be moved by gusts of wind. Thus, one needs to remain unshakeable like a tree, being able to hold the antidote in the face of afflictions arising in the mind, not engaging in anything but remaining firm and stable.

The analogy of remaining unshakeable like a tree refers particularly to the times when afflictions such as attachment and anger are prevalent. One knows from one's own experience that when strong attachment or anger are prevalent any physical actions will be inappropriate actions. So at those times one's actions could not be virtuous actions. This is obviously the case with anger. We all know that any physical actions during a moment of anger cannot be a constructive or virtuous one. Likewise, we all know through experience that when our mind is influenced by strong anger our speech will not be appropriate. Likewise, any words uttered when strong attachment is arising will be flawed and inappropriate, and not virtuous speech. So, as presented here, the moment one notices the afflictions arising one should remain firm and steady, and temporarily not engage in any activity.

This is really very practical and personal advice that we need to take on board. From our own experiences, we know that whenever we have acted out of moments of intense anger our physical actions have not been appropriate; likewise, our speech has been hurtful and inappropriate. The consequence of acting either physically or verbally in moments of intense anger is clearly undesirable, and we can all easily relate to that. It may be a little bit harder for you to accept and understand that physical actions and verbal speech in moments of intense attachment are also inappropriate. Nevertheless the fact remains that when one acts out of strong attachment those actions also become tainted and faulty.

However, as indicated previously, some of the advice about avoiding some inappropriate actions out of attachment is intended for those who have ordination vows. So you also need to understand this advice in its proper context.

1.3.1.2.1.3.2.2. What to do at the time of mental excitement

The verses relating to this heading read:

49. *Having mental excitement or mocking,
Having pride or conceit,
Or thinking about criticising,
Being cunning or thinking about deceit,*
50. *When being ready to praise oneself
And belittle others,
Telling others off or being argumentative,
Then one should remain like a tree.*

[The English commentary we have presents the following explanation in point form, although it reads as straight text in the Tibetan version.]

- When there is mental excitement with an object;
- When mocking others in jest;
- When full of pride due to qualities;
- When being conceited due to youth and other reasons;
- When thinking about criticising others;
- When one is cunning, and wants profit out of discontentment;
- When one thinks about deceiving others with pretension and dishonesty;
- When one praises oneself wholeheartedly by expressing one's qualities, and puts others down by mentioning their faults;
- When scolding others and being argumentative and quarrelling.

At these times one should remain unshakeable like a tree while being self-supporting with the antidote.

First is *mental excitement with an object*. You will recall that one of the main obstacles during meditation is excitement, which is when the mind waivers away from the meditation object and starts to focus on another object. Thus, diverting one's focus from the object of meditation to another object is called excitement.

Next is *mocking others in jest*. This refers to ridiculing someone for the amusement of others. Putting down someone else in this form is a fault. Again we are being given practical advice about what to avoid.

Third is how to counteract *pride due to* being puffed up about certain *qualities* one may have. Such pride manifests itself in the form of feeling pompous, thinking 'I know better than others. I have more knowledge than they do'. With an attitude like that, one is putting down others while making

oneself seem more important. We have discussed this delusion in detail in the past.

As mentioned previously, we should be really careful that whatever knowledge we gain from the Dharma, or from the teachings we study, does not become a cause to further strengthen one's pride. One needs to remember that all of the Buddha's teachings were intended to overcome pride, and not strengthen it. Bearing that in mind, if one is feeling a bit pompous about knowing more than others, and has the tendency to look down upon others, one should immediately remember that the purpose of having knowledge of the Dharma is to overcome one's own pride.

We need to take these verses as personal advice, remembering that Shantideva is giving this kind of advice for our benefit. When excitement occurs we can remember his advice to apply an antidote for overcoming excitement. If one finds oneself mocking or making fun of others, one should again remember, 'Shantideva has cautioned me against this negative tendency, so I need to counteract it'. And it is the same with pride and so forth.

Fourth is *when being conceited due to youth and other reasons*. [Some translations use the word, *haughtiness*, for the translation of the Tibetan word *gyakpa*.]

There are five conditions that can lead to conceit or haughtiness. These are youth, having a good form or physique, wealth, status or a good lineage, and an abundance of hearing.

There is a distinction between haughtiness and pride. When we studied Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*¹, we went into detail about the different kinds of pride, so we won't go over that again. In relation to the earlier mentioned five conditions i.e. being youthful, having a good physique, having sufficient wealth, being from a good family and having good knowledge, pride is a state of mind that has the tendency to look down upon others because one has these conditions and they don't. Whereas conceit or haughtiness² entails a sense of satisfaction about having these good conditions. So conceit or haughtiness has an element of attachment to one's good conditions and feeling a sense of joy or satisfaction about that.

Nagarjuna also highlighted the significant point that haughtiness is the root of a lack of conscientiousness. Feeling conceit about having these good conditions can lead to a lack of conscientiousness about one's Dharma practice. Nagarjuna supported this significant point with a quote from the sutras.

The sense of conceit in relation to an abundance of hearing refers to the knowledge one may have gained from hearing, which can lead to thinking 'I have a significant amount of knowledge now'. In relation to wealth, there is both material wealth and the wealth of knowledge. So here it refers to being conceited about the wealth of knowledge one has. One must be wary about that.

So we can clearly see how being conceited over having these five conditions is related to attachment. It is because of strong attachment to these favourable conditions that one generates that sense of conceit about having obtained them. Hence the teachings say that conceit fits into the realm of attachment.

Fifth is *thinking about criticising others*. This may easily come about when we are dealing with others, so we need to be very mindful about that.

Next is *when one is cunning and wants profit out of discontentment*. This refers to being discontented and because of that discontentment seeking to profit from others. The advice here is to apply an antidote to overcome and counteract that discontentment, which basically means practising less desire and more contentment. As I mention regularly, I can personally vouch for the fact that anyone who practises less desire and has more contentment will not have any real worries. The person who practises having less desire and contentment is the person who has no worries!

This is really the prime practice for ordained Sangha. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama has indicated, monks from other traditions such as Christianity definitely adopt this practice, and show clear signs of their success with it.

If there is no contentment with whatever wealth one has, then that will naturally give rise to worry, being constantly anxious and wanting to acquire more profit and more gain. When one practises contentment with whatever one has, the mind will naturally be more subdued, and definitely less anxious. However, practising contentment needs to be understood in the proper way. It doesn't necessarily mean to avoid having possessions and wealth entirely, and that one should give away everything. Practising poverty and having nothing is not necessarily practising contentment.

The real meaning of practising contentment is to have less attachment to one's wealth and so forth. The main thing one needs to understand here is that being content, or not, is a mental state related to attachment to one's wealth.

Indeed, without strong attachment one can actually utilise one's wealth to better one's conditions, and really enjoy them. With strong attachment, on the other hand, there's always that thought of, 'oh I am spending too much!' so there is always that sense of unease. Despite using one's wealth in trying to improve one's conditions, there is always a little bit of unease. However, although such miserliness has many faults, one of its qualities could be that it does contribute to saving money.

Geshe-la speaks in English: People save money but not happy. Same job, same money, but always 'I no get money ... I no get money, I no get job... Money is hidden away.

There are similar stories among the Tibetans about people having hidden money somewhere!

Seventh is *when one thinks about deceiving others with pretention and dishonesty*. As the teachings explain, the two ways to deceive others are pretence and dishonesty. Pretence refers to pretending that one actually has certain qualities in order to impress others, when in fact one lacks those qualities. Dishonesty is trying to hide one's faults, so that one is not seen in a bad light by others. As I regularly emphasise, one needs to be really mindful of the danger that one's own Dharma practices, such as meditation and so forth, don't become a means for pretence and dishonesty.

Next is *praising oneself wholeheartedly by expressing one's qualities, and putting others down by mentioning their faults*. This immoral practice is a breach of one of the bodhisattvas' commitments, and counted as one of the downfalls. We need to really take this to heart and see how easily our actions can become tainted with our views about our qualities. Whenever one talks about one's practice, one needs to be constantly mindful that one is not boasting about it. We must also be just as mindful about not putting others down.

¹ See teaching of 26 June 2012.

² See teaching of 19 June 2012

There's a particular word in Tibetan *kurdep*, which has the connotation of uttering things that are not true, such as proclaiming that one has qualities when one does not have them. Another example of an untrue proclamation is to hide the qualities of others, ridiculing and finding fault in them.

Lastly, *scolding others and being argumentative and quarrelling*.

Gyaltsab Je concludes his commentary on this section of the text with:

At these times one should remain unshakeable like a tree, while being self-supporting with the antidotes

With respect to *at these times*, it is said that whenever one finds oneself engaging in one of these eight activities, then, in order to counteract them, one should remain firm and stable like a tree, *while applying the self-supporting antidotes*. Then one will not be influenced by these negative tendencies, and one will be able to remain steadfast.

1.3.1.2.1.3.2.3. What to do at the time of praise and so forth

The verse relating to this heading is:

51. *When wishing for gain, honour and fame
Wishing for servants and entourage,
If one's mind wishes for service,
At these times remain like a tree.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

- When wishing for gain of wealth and so forth.
- When seeking the honour for others to put down one's mat and so forth.
- Wishing for a good reputation.
- Wishing to acquire servants and entourage.
- If one's mind wishes for service such as treatments for the body and so forth.

Also at these times one should remain like a tree, while having the power of the antidote.

This is a clear presentation of what to do about wishes such as wanting material *gain* such as *wealth and so forth*. The Tibetan word *kurte* can read as either honour or service, indicated here with the example of *others putting down one's mat and so forth*. One might also wish *for a good reputation* so that others talk well about one and so forth, or *to acquire servants and entourage*.

Wishing for service such as treatments for the body and so forth includes massages and so forth. The advice here is to avoid seeking such treatments merely out of attachment. The *Vinaya* text indicates that with some physical ailments it is necessary to apply oil to the body and to massage it in order to restore one's vitality, in which case it is permissible and accepted. This advice also needs to be understood in its proper context.

We need to take this as practical advice. If one completely immerses oneself in wishing for gain or wealth, seeking honour and a good reputation and so forth, then one's whole life can be preoccupied with trying to achieve this. We can spend a whole lifetime being completely immersed just thinking about how to gain these things. We may not actually put much effort into really doing anything practical to achieve our wishes, but we just go around thinking about it over and over again. That sort of daydreaming can be a distraction that wastes your life. So the advice here is to *remain like a tree*, referring back to the earlier analogy of an unshakeable tree, *while having the power of the antidote*.

1.3.1.2.1.3.2.4. What to do when one thinks about the welfare of others

The verse relating to this is:

52. *When casting aside the welfare of others,
And desiring one's selfish aims,
And having a mind wishing to speak,
At these times remain like a tree.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

When one considers the welfare of self and others, ...

This refers to the bodhisattva training, the aspiration to benefit others. Having made that aspiration,

... if one casts aside the welfare of others, wishes to work only for one's own welfare, and has a mind wishing to speak, such a person should remain like a tree.

If one casts aside the welfare of others, and wishes to work only for one's own welfare, at that time if one has a mind wishing to speak, then it is better not to speak or act. Such a person should remain like a tree.

When someone who is committed to working for the welfare of others actually casts aside the welfare of others then that is, without doubt, a grave fault. While that aspiration to benefit others remains in one's mind, if the wish to work only for one's own welfare occurs, then whatever one says will be tainted with a desire to gain something for oneself. Thus, whatever words one utters will not have the effect of benefitting others. Therefore the advice here is that when one has selfish motives, or is thinking about only one's own welfare, then it is better not to speak and remain like a tree.

From the perspective of an ordinary person, the normal way of thinking is to cast aside the welfare of others and think only about one's own welfare. So this is what one needs to avoid. If we really think about how we normally conduct ourselves, and do a thorough self-evaluation of how we normally think, it will become quite apparent that we neglect others by default, because we think only about our own achievements and accomplishments. This is only apparent when we actually stop to think about it. This is how we begin to transform ourselves, noticing how our normal habituated mind thinks. Understanding that leaves room for real transformation, and then we can actually change.

1.3.1.2.1.3.2.5. What to do when one wishes to generate belligerence or despondency

The verse relating to that is as follows:

53. *When being impatient, lazy and afraid,
Likewise, when stubbornness, incoherence
And a partisan attitude arise,
At these times remain like a tree.*

This section relates counteracting belligerence and despondency when they occur.

The commentary reads:

- When being impatient due to belligerence or suffering;
- When being afraid of practising virtue and so forth, due to laziness that is not joyful about virtue;
- When one is stubborn because of being unrestrained or incoherent;
- When the mind favours one's own side, friends and so forth.

At these times one should remain like a tree while practising the antidote.

In Tibetan the words for anger and belligerence are similar. As presented previously, belligerence is one of the secondary mental factors. As you will recall, there is a difference between anger and belligerence. Anger is one of the root afflictions, while belligerence is listed as a proximate or secondary affliction. When anger targeted towards a living being becomes more intense, it then turns into belligerence. So belligerence is a more intense form of anger.

The object of belligerence, as presented previously, is an animate object, not inanimate objects, whereas anger can be focussed on any object. There are the three types of objects of anger: suffering, sentient beings and inanimate objects. You can generate anger towards all three objects, whereas belligerence is targeted only towards living beings.

Thus the first situation is *being impatient due to belligerence or suffering*.

Next is *being afraid of practising virtue and so forth due to laziness that is not joyful about virtue*. When the mind is in a heightened state, one is more prone to feeling belligerent. When the mind is feeling despondent then that is when laziness occurs. Therefore, as presented here in the commentary, *being impatient due to belligerence or suffering*, and *being afraid of practising virtue and so forth due to laziness that is not joyful about virtue* are at the opposite ends of the spectrum. At one end, if one's mind is feeling very heightened, then it is more likely that belligerence will arise, and at the other, laziness can occur when the mind is feeling despondent.

In relation to feeling despondent with a sense of, 'I can't do it, I can't manage', on a recent visit to the Drolkar centre, Carol came up to me and conveyed, 'I don't really have a strong inclination to go to the Kalachakra. I feel hesitant to taking a lot of commitments. If I am not able to observe them, then that will be a cause for me to go to the lower realms and I wouldn't wish that for myself. I would rather stay here with you Geshe Doga and be on a safer plain'. She was teary when she relayed that to me.

However she had already organised to travel with Geshe Sonam, who was encouraging her to go. Of course I wouldn't stop Carol from going—after all, she had decided to go anyway. Therefore I encouraged her to go and receive the blessing 'and take on as much as you can do'. However, her intention of taking the commitments seriously was a good sign.

Carol was expressing her hesitation even in taking the lay-person's vows, saying that 'I might not be able to keep them'. Of course, the way to take vows is to first establish the basis by taking the self-liberation vows. Then based on that, one can take the bodhisattva vows and later the tantric vows. That is the sequence of how one takes these vows.

The next situation is *when one is stubborn because of being unrestrained or incoherent*. The Tibetan term *chetol* has the connotation of someone who is not able to really think things out clearly, and just does things randomly. It is used to refer to someone who doesn't really have many values, and who does anything they want. Even in the everyday world such a person would not be considered as reliable or trustworthy, because they just do whatever they want. Incoherence refers to the lack of a relationship between what is said earlier and what is said later.

The final example is *when the mind favours one's own side, friends and so forth*, which means to favour taking the side of one's friends and colleagues and so forth, and abandoning all others.

In summary, the commentary states:

At these times one should remain like a tree, while practising the antidote.

1.3.1.2.1.2.4. Summary

The verse relating to the summary reads as follows:

54. *Having thus analysed the strong afflictions
And the mind striving in meaninglessness,
The brave person will then guard
The mind steadfastly with antidotes.*

Here Gyaltsab Je explains:

Thus, having investigated the mind that strives in the afflictions and meaninglessness, one should not allow this mind to engage in negative actions with the antidote that is like a powerful hero, but keep it steady.

Having presented all of the conditions where one needs to practice applying the antidotes appropriately, and having investigated the mind that wishes to engage in the afflictions and meaningless activities, *one should not allow this mind to engage in negative actions with the antidote that is like a powerful hero*. Here, the antidote is likened to a very powerful person, who is not easily overcome by foes and so forth. One applies powerful antidotes against the delusions or afflictions and thus *keeps it steady*.

This summary verse encapsulates all of the earlier points about afflictions, and summarises how to actually apply the antidotes.

At the conclusion of our regular prayers, we can do the *Eight Verses of Mind Training* which we also did last week. Mary-Lou's father passed away yesterday, so we can dedicate the practice for her late dad.

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

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Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

22 July 2014

Based on the refuge and bodhicitta we have generated as a motivation for the practice we can now engage in the meditation.

[meditation]

We can set the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: for the purpose of benefiting all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will engage in this teaching and put it into practice well.

At this point please remember the verses we covered in our last session. Recall how meticulously that advice was presented and how really applicable it is to our daily situation. It is very important to keep that essential meaning in mind.

1.3.1.2.2. Protecting the training of the mind from degeneration

This is subdivided into three:

1.3.1.2.2.1. Protecting with the individual antidotes

1.3.1.2.2.2. The common antidote

1.3.1.2.2.3. The way of training in meditating on the antidote

1.3.1.2.2.1. Protecting with the individual antidotes

The verse reads as follows:

55. *Strong ascertainment and strong faith
Stability, respect and politeness,
Knowing shame and having fear,
Peaceful and striving to please others.*

There are two verses under this heading. Gyaltsab Je's commentary addresses verse 55 first. It reads:

If one were to ask 'how does one protect the mind'? Strongly ascertain the points of advice by abandoning doubt and wrong consciousnesses with regards to them; generate strong faith through belief in the Three Jewels and the points of advice, faith and aspiration; stable intent and practice; being polite by being respectful and humble with everybody; shame that is fearful of negativity by reason of oneself; being afraid of the ripened result by contemplating the shortcomings; having pacified senses and striving for the purpose of making others happy.

The five senses are normally engaged in objects of distraction, so to protect the mind is to protect it from being completely drawn into the objects of distraction through the five senses. Take note of the distinction between protection and restraint. The very term 'protection' infers that in the likelihood of the mind becoming distracted, it should withdraw from the object of distraction (withdrawal implying protection of the mind). However 'restraint', suggests not allowing the mind to become distracted with the objects of distraction from the very beginning.

The emphasis here is to protect the training of the mind from degeneration. If one does not protect the mind it is likely that degeneration from one's training or practices would occur. The heading of the verse is explicit here: 'Protecting with individual antidotes'. In relation to the degeneration

that occurs in the mind, the cause is distraction through the five senses. Primarily we need to be cautious of our eye sense, mental sense, the mind itself which generates thoughts, and the ear sense. As you can notice, these cause most distractions.

Our thoughts present distraction on a more continuous basis as the object of our mental faculty. One must be cautious and protect the mental faculty from engaging in distracting, discursive thoughts, because they can occur randomly at any time. The next main distraction comes through our eye sense, and because there are so many external objects, we naturally become influenced by them. Likewise we hear a lot of things through our ear sense, and are very easily influenced by them, and thus become distracted.

Indeed when the eye sense comes into contact with beautiful objects it causes the mind of attachment to arise. Conversely, when it comes into contact with unappealing visual objects, anger arises. Likewise jealousy can arise when we see with our eyes the prosperity and good things others have. It is similar with objects of the ear sense; when we hear praise etc. this easily provides the means for attachment and ego to arise. However when we hear unpleasant things, these can immediately cause distress, agitation and anger to arise in our mind. So we do know from experience that a lot of our emotions, particularly the delusions in our mind, are very much influenced by the objects we encounter through our senses.

Again, protection here means being able to withdraw our mind from our engagement with objects as soon as we notice distraction occurs. Protection is really important for us because we are easily influenced by our senses. Our eye sense sees a beautiful object and then grasping starts to develop. It is this grasping at beautiful objects that causes attachment to increase in our mind. That in turn can cause the sense of wanting to own or to possess the object, and if one is not able to possess it, distress arises in the mind due to strong grasping. As the term itself suggests, grasping is holding onto, and not being able to let go of certain objects, whether they be objects of attachment or objects of anger. When we come into contact with certain objects we immediately grasp onto them and don't let go, which causes the delusions in our mind to become intense and strong.

Whether it is our eye sense or other senses that come into contact with objects of distraction, if we protect our mind by not interacting with them, then the delusion and its consequences will not arise strongly and affect us in a negative way. So, we must sever the connection with that object. While this specifically applies in our meditation session, it also relates to our everyday life.

In explaining how to protect the mind the commentary says: *Strongly ascertain the points of advice.* Advice here means upholding the commitments or vows one may have taken. In relation to the practices, we need to apply the measures explained forcefully. If we do not protect our mind we will degenerate or lapse from the commitments and pledges we have taken and thus fail to engage in the advice or the practice. The commentary continues: *by abandoning doubt and wrong consciousnesses with regards to them.* This very clearly states that one needs to abandon doubt and the wrong consciousnesses which come to wrong conclusions about this advice. The way to do this is to engage in thorough investigation, gain a thorough understanding of the practices in the beginning, during the actual practice and at the end. You need to investigate and understand at all three times to remove doubts and wrong consciousnesses (leading

to mistaken understanding or conclusions) in relation to this advice.

Abandoning doubt refers to abandoning the mind that wavers in two directions. In this state one cannot confirm anything and one is unable to gain the necessary conviction.

In relation to the advice and instructions to be followed, if we have qualms about it, if we start to hesitate or become influenced by other possibilities that are maybe not valid and so forth, then as soon as this doubt arises in the mind, we are very vulnerable to giving up the practices or allowing them to degenerate. As mentioned earlier, thorough investigation needs to be employed to completely remove any doubt. This first requires hearing about the advice extensively, then we use the wisdom and understanding gained from hearing to contemplate or investigate what we have heard. Having thoroughly investigated and thought about it, we can apply the meditation, and once experience is gained from this, a firm conviction develops in the validity of the practices such that it will not degenerate.

This is how an intelligent trainee engages in the study of the practices: thorough investigation and analysis, again and again, then conviction is established. Engaging in one's practice then becomes very firm and stable. This is why the method employed by intelligent trainees is said to be the most suitable.

The commentary then explains: *generate strong faith through belief in the Three Jewels and the points of advice*. Generating strong faith in the Three Jewels indicates gaining an understanding that the Three Jewels are infallible in protecting you, thus they are suitable as your refuge and will not deceive you. The method of gaining conviction in the Three Jewels arises first from investigating the Dharma Jewel and understanding its qualities. When you develop a good understanding and see the qualities of the Dharma Jewel, you can then naturally generate admiration, faith and conviction in the one who taught it, which is the Buddha Jewel. Then having developed faith in the Buddha and Dharma Jewel, since the ones who follow these are the Sangha Jewels you naturally develop faith in them as well. This is how one generates conviction in the Three Jewels.

One needs to have *strong faith* and *aspiration* in the Three Jewels and the points of advice, and *stable intent*, which means developing a firm and stable intention toward the practices and advice. Furthermore, one needs to adopt a conduct where one is *polite by being respectful and humble with everybody*. These are all methods to protect one's training and adopt the advice.

Continuing with the commentary's explanation, the next part expands upon engaging in the practice by maintaining *shame that is fearful* (afraid of committing) *negativity by reason of oneself*. Shame was explained earlier. The commentary continues with: *being afraid of the ripened result by contemplating the shortcomings*, which refers to being afraid of the ripened results of the negativities by contemplating their shortcomings. It continues: *having pacified senses and striving for the purpose of making others happy*. A bodhisattva has intention only to benefit others, so for the purpose of benefitting others needs to engage in conduct which will inspire them, not cause them to lose faith or be critical etc. If a bodhisattva were to cause others to lose faith in the Dharma, or feel critical towards them that would cause the others to create huge negative karma. So, as a means to protect others from the negative mind of losing faith or criticising a bodhisattva, a bodhisattva needs to ensure that

they are engaging in the means and conduct of making others happy.

When others are made happy with your good conduct then there is no reason for them to criticise you, because they are happy and inspired with what you are doing, your behaviour etc. This is a very important point to take as personal instruction: when we have the means to make others happy, which we all do, why would we intentionally engage in behaviours and conduct that would make them unhappy? It would be totally inappropriate to intentionally engage in the means to make others unhappy or cause unnecessary discomfort and sorrow in their minds. This behaviour will make others unhappy with you, criticise you etc. Therefore, taking this on a personal level, we need to try to employ means for making others happy in all situations.

The next verse under this same heading:

56. *Do not be put off by the desires
Of the childish that strive with each other
And think with affection, "They have these
minds
Due to their generation of afflictions."*

Gyalsab Je's commentary reads:

Do not be put off by the contradicting desires of childish people where, having benefitted one, the other one gets angry. Have compassion for them thinking, 'this mind is generated within them due to afflictions and without them having any control over themselves. I will liberate them from their afflictions.'

In such a way do not fall under the control of the afflictions.

Again this is relevant advice for us in our daily lives as these sorts of occasions occur quite regularly. When in the commentary it explains, *do not be put off by contradicting desires of childish people where, having benefitted one, the other one gets angry*, relate it to when you take the measure of being kind to someone, then even without an intention to hurt them, the others get upset. We can see this happening readily in a circle of relatives: if you are nice to one relative then another might start feeling jealous about that and may start to complain.

In relation to beings who act childishly towards you, the advice says not to be put off by their behaviour. 'Put off' here means you should not be put off the intent of benefiting them nor generate a negative mind towards them. Instead you should have compassion towards them, thinking that *this mind is generated within them due to afflictions and without them having any control over themselves*. You can see the advice here is very true; that when certain beings are under the influence of the delusions e.g. intense anger, even one individual can create so much destruction and kill so many others out of an angry mind. We have examples right here. In Tasmania an individual killed 32 people, and in another coastal place again some other killings occurred, and many people were killed. This was done by one individual—out of his mind, the cause was being obsessed, or completely dominated by delusions such as anger. When we witness this sort of account our natural response might be to become appalled, condemn the person and become angry with them. But in fact when one thinks about what compelled them to engage in such grave negative acts, it is none other than the delusion in their own mind, mainly anger. And when one contemplates that, one sees reason to feel great compassion for them rather than condemning them, seeing how under the influence of the delusion they have no control over their own actions.

We can see too that there are certain individuals who, if they are at a trial say, 'I was given the order to kill so I had no control'. These are examples of how when one engages in negative actions such as the act of killing etc., one does not have control over oneself. Normally we would think that someone is independent and has control over whatever they want to do. If they had control they would not commit the act, but the implication of having no control over their actions is that they are compelled to do that act. Normally we would feel reason to condemn them if we thought they had control, like they had a choice and did it anyway, but the implication here is to feel compassion for them because they have no choice and control over their own actions. That is the main point.

With this understanding one should find oneself resolving to liberate them from their afflictions, rather than condemning them and becoming agitated with them. In understanding such situations, the next piece of advice says: '*In such a way do not fall under the control of the afflictions*' oneself. So when relating to others who have engaged in great misdeeds, one needs to protect oneself from the influence of the afflictions. If one doesn't protect oneself then we fall short and become agitated and angry towards the other. So therefore this is a direct instruction for oneself to be responsible for one's own state of mind.

In order to back up this explanation of how one needs to practice in such a way, the commentary presents a citation:

From the *Ornament of Mahayana Sutras*,

By thinking how they are without power due to constant faults,
Possessing the mind, do not hold it against beings.

As clearly presented in this quote, when someone is afflicted by the faults or the delusions, they don't have the power to control what they do. Thus, one should not hold their negative actions against them. It is really important to understand how every action one engages in, be it positive or negative, there is always a state of mind that compels one to engage in those actions.

The commentary then cites another text.

From the *Four Hundred Verses*:

Just as a physician is not upset with,
Someone who rages while possessed by a demon,
Subduers see disturbing emotions as the enemy,
Not the person who has them.

The verse from the *Four Hundred Verses* clearly explains with the analogy of a physician. A physician will not be upset with someone who is possessed by, for example, a demon, because when someone is possessed they might do things which a normal, rational person would not do, such as fighting back, doing wild things like hitting etc. However the physician knows they are affected by their ailments and will not be upset, rather they will be intent on treating them. Likewise the buddhas see disturbing emotions as the enemy. They do not consider the person who has anger as negative, rather it is the afflictions within them that need to be overcome. That is because it is the afflictions in the mind that cause them to engage in actions which are harmful.

As I regularly advise, when someone is really angry you should be cautious around them; they might do anything, they might hit you or hurt you because in intense moments of anger they are not able to act rationally. With the recent unfortunate circumstances of the Malaysian Airlines plane being shot down, my comment was, when the plane is in an area where rebels are carrying their weapons with an

agitated mind and angry, and just want to kill, then an accident on such a scale can occur. They would not analyse well and would see no reason to not to use their weapons to shoot anything down. This is an example of how we need to be very wary and cautions around people who are really agitated because we might get hurt ourselves. So if your partner is really upset and angry, you must be careful and cautious.

With this unfortunate event of the plane being shot down, why would the aeroplane go in that direction? Why would they take that route when it is so dangerous? Damien was looking at a map and said that it is actually the normal flight path. Even though I wasn't looking at any map, and I didn't exactly know the location, it was my assumption that the plane pathway shouldn't go that far off in the north of Europe. Apparently they are still investigating how it actually might have gone off route. The routes should be the same for Singapore Airlines and Malaysian Airlines.

Anyhow the main point is that when people are agitated and angry they will have no qualms, they will not hold back in using their weapons, and that is when disasters can occur.

1.3.1.2.2.2. The common antidote

What is being referred to here are common antidotes which could be applicable to all afflictions.

The verse reads:

57. *Objects free from the unutterable
Are for self and sentient beings.
Without ego, always protect this mind,
Like an emanation.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

The engagement in virtuous actions, which are free from forbidden and natural misdeeds, is for the purpose of oneself not degenerating and for the benefit of sentient beings. Engage in actions as if they are illusions or magical apparitions by holding them with the wisdom realising emptiness.

Thus always protect your mind without pride or exaggeration.

In *The engagement in virtuous actions which are free from forbidden and natural misdeeds*, the term used to reflect misdeeds is also translated as 'unutterable' and 'unmentionable'. We'll use 'unmentionable' as it refers to misdeeds of a certain kind where the consequences are so grave that they cannot even be mentioned by the supreme beings, let alone engaged in. We have discussed the forbidden and natural misdeeds earlier. Forbidden misdeeds specifically relates to the misdeeds laid down by decree, and natural misdeeds are negative regardless of context. So engaging in virtuous actions which are free from such misdeeds is done for the purpose of oneself, not to degenerate from that advice etc. and for the benefit of sentient beings. That being the case, the advice here is that one needs to engage in actions while remembering that they are like illusions or like magical apparitions, as a means to prevent the delusions from arising. That is how we need to view things, seeing them as not truly existent, by holding them with the realisation of emptiness, realising that they are empty of inherent existence, then that understanding will prevent strong negative minds of delusions such as anger and attachment etc. from arising. When one has an understanding of how things are not truly existent this serves as an antidote to overcome all afflictions and thus all misdeeds. In this way always protect your mind without pride or arrogance.

As explained in other texts, a being who has a realisation of emptiness during meditative equipoise will view all existence like the sky, empty like space, and when they are in a post-meditative state they will be able to see all phenomena as being like mere illusions. This is how one needs to maintain one's view of phenomena as a way of not being affected by the afflictions in the mind.

1.3.1.2.2.3. The way of training in meditating on the antidote

The verse reads:

*58. Having repeatedly contemplated one's attainment
Of supreme freedom after a long time,
Hold on to that mind
As immovable as Mount Meru.*

Think: After a great accumulation, which lasted for a long time, I have attained the precious human rebirth with freedoms and endowments. By contemplating repeatedly the great purpose and rarity of the precious human rebirth, generate the intent to definitely achieve the great purpose. Then firmly hold that mind, as immovable as Mount Meru.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary clearly explains here that having engaged in a great accumulation, incurred over a long period of time, as a result one attains a precious human rebirth with freedoms and endowments. Contemplating on the difficulty of obtaining a precious human rebirth, obtaining something which has been so difficult to obtain, repeatedly contemplating the great purpose and rarity of the precious human rebirth, one generates the intent to definitely achieve the great purpose. One needs to hold this intent firmly in the mind, as immovable as Mount Meru.

The main point of the advice is that one needs to repeatedly contemplate the precious human rebirth one has obtained. One aspect of this advice can be how we should not feel discouraged, even if it takes a long time to accumulate certain merits, the results are definitely achieved. So by relating to the good consequences we have obtained now, it can encourage us to further develop and engage in the practices to gain further good results in the future. This is how we need to maintain a mind which is free from despondency and have a courageous mind to continue with the practices and hold our mind firm and stable.

1.3.2. The way of training in the morality of accumulating virtuous dharmas

This is subdivided into two:

1.3.2.1. Abandoning attachment for the body which is the cause not to train in morality

1.3.2.2. To be skilful in practising virtue

1.3.2.1. ABANDONING ATTACHMENT FOR THE BODY WHICH IS THE CAUSE NOT TO TRAIN IN MORALITY

The meaning of morality here specifically refers to accumulating virtuous Dharma. Generally the definition of morality is the mind which employs restraint; restraint is presented as the definition of morality. However this refers mainly to restraint from a particular misdeed. In relating to this morality, accumulating virtuous Dharma, it is explained specifically in Lam Rim teachings how all virtues of a bodhisattva's conduct encompasses morality. In other words, all virtuous Dharma can be an aid to further enhancing a bodhisattva's morality. In a broader sense, all virtues engaged in by bodhisattvas are said to be morality.

The general definition of morality as the mind of restraint may be more suitable for that: for the morality of restraining from misdeeds.

Under the first subheading there are five subheadings.

We can leave this explanation for the next teaching session.

As you are aware the next session will be the discussion followed by the exam. So as usual it will be good to engage in the discussion with a proper motivation and proper conduct and also the exam as well.

And then also for the seminar which is coming up at the end of next month, you need to have a good discussion amongst yourselves as how to conduct that.

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

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

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Discussion

Block: 2 Week: 13

Assigned: 29/07/14

The login username is "studygroup", the password is "bwol" (just remember "Bodhisattva's Way of Life").

Week: 1 (6 May 2014)

1. Shantideva writes:

- 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?***

With reference to this verse, give a general account of how the afflictions do not grant freedom from cyclic existence. Then, in particular, identify the main cause for all sufferings.

Week: 2 (13 May 2014)

2. What is the definition of patience? Of the three kinds of patience, which is specifically discussed in verse 40 in relation to the example of fishers, butchers, farmers and the like? Illustrate its application with an example drawn from your experience.

- 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?***

Week: 3 (20 May 2014)

3. When it is said that one must make an effort to abandon the deluded afflictions from the root, what is the root? And what is its exact remedy? Answer with some explanation of the metaphor of the eye.

4. What is the definition and meaning of conscientiousness?

Week: 4 (27 May 2014)

5. Identify the two purposes and explain how the six perfections are definite in number in relation to them.

Week: 5 (3 June 2014)

6. What is the difference between restraining the mind and protecting the mind? How does this relate to meditation and the practice of Dharma?

Week: 6 (10 June 2014)

7. The practices of the six perfections are all depended on the mind. How does the giving and taking meditation practice combine all the essential points of the six perfections?

8. What three conditions need to be intact for any of the practice to become a perfection?

Week: 7(17 June 2014)

9. Compared with bodhicitta, virtues that are stained by worldly concerns or self-interest and other basic needs in relation to our immediate needs are quite insignificant. But the bodhicitta mind must be protected under all circumstances, and one should never allow it to degenerate.

While we may not yet have developed bodhicitta, how can we develop a substitute?

Week: 8(24June 2014)

10. Shantideva gives us advice that we should take as personal instruction....The most crucial point on the path to Enlightenment is to maintain mindfulness and introspection. How does mindfulness and introspection work together?

Week: 9 (1 July 2014)

11. What are the three types of Morality?

Week: 10 (8 July 2014)

12. Focusing Single pointedly on the Virtuous object will help us develop concentration. What is the additional practice that is advised to perform at the same time as developing concentration?

Week: 11 (15 July 2014)

13. What are the various situations where we should cultivate this behaviour of being unmoved - like a big tree?

Week: 12 (22 July 2014)

14. Verse 57 says:

*57. Objects free from the unutterable
Are for self and sentient beings.
Without ego, always protect this mind,
Like an emanation.*

Explain this verse.

What is the 'unutterable' that is abandoned?

What is the purpose of Morality?

What is the basic method of using emptiness to protect the mind?

Tara Institute 'Shantideva's Bodhicharyavatara' Block 2, Study Group 2014

Exam

Name:

5 August 2014

1. Shantideva writes:

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Abides within the net of attachment in my mind,
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With reference to this verse, give a general account of how the afflictions do not grant freedom from cyclic existence. Then, in particular, identify the main cause for all sufferings.

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