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# Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

12 April 2016

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With the positive motivation that we generated during the Refuge and Bodhicitta prayer in mind, we can now engage in our meditation practice. Once the motivation is set, the practice becomes really worthwhile.

[meditation]

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

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the Buddha's teachings, as there is no more supreme method than the Mahayana teachings. Then, having listened to the teachings, I will put them into practice well.

### 3.1.2.2. THE WAY OF MEDITATING ON EQUALISING SELF AND OTHERS

3.1.2.2.2. *Explaining the reason why it is suitable to meditate on it as equal*

3.1.2.2.2.1. **Extensive explanation (cont.)**

3.1.2.2.2.1.3. *Clearing away obstructing thoughts of 'It is unsuitable to meditate on equalising self and others'*

First the commentary presents this argument:

These two situations are not the same as two different people are unrelated, but the hands and feet of one person belong to the same group, and the old and young person and the earlier and later life belong to the same continuum. In the latter situation, it is appropriate for one to help the other, but in the first situation it is inappropriate.

*These two situations are not the same as two different people are unrelated*, refers back to examples that were presented in our last session: the hands can help the feet when they are sore, and the person in the earlier part of their life helps the person in the latter part of their life.

Here the argument is that *the hands and feet of one person belong to the same group and the old and young person and the earlier and later life belong to the same continuum. In the latter situation it is appropriate for one to help the other, but in the first situation it is inappropriate.*

There is also a connotation of refuting the non-Buddhist view that the same self goes from the morning until the evening, as well as from this life to the next life. In fact we regularly hold this misconception ourselves. We have no qualms about thinking that the person who wakes up in the morning is the same person in the afternoon and late in the evening, and that there has been no change from morning to night. We have this notion due to the misconception of viewing the person as being permanent. When one lacks an understanding of impermanence - specifically subtle impermanence - then it does appear that it is the same person. We instinctively think that the person who came in through the door earlier is the same

person sitting on the cushion now, but in fact the moment of the person who came in through the door earlier has already ceased to exist, and there is a new moment of the person now. Thus, we are changing from moment to moment. This misconception that it is the same person from morning to night arises from not understanding subtle impermanence.

Then the following verse is presented as an answer to that qualm.

101. *That called continuum and collection  
Are false, like the rosary and army,  
There is no-one suffering,  
What should they abandon belonging to whom?*

The commentary then explains the meaning of this verse:

Answer: It follows there is no independent group or continuum, because that called continuum and group are falsities labelled on the earlier and later parts of that possessing the continuity, and on the parts of the group; like the rosary and army that are a falsity labelled on their different parts.

As explained in the commentary, *it follows that there is no independent group or continuum, because that called continuum and group are falsities labelled on the earlier and later parts of that possessing the continuity, and on the parts of the group.* The examples given here are *the rosary and army.* What is labelled as rosary is completely dependent on the many beads that make up the rosary – you don't call one bead a rosary; likewise with an army – you don't call one soldier an army. A rosary is dependent on the many parts that are many individual beads, and an army is also dependent on the many parts that are many individual soldiers. This shows that there is no independently existent rosary or army, because each has to depend on many other parts.

A continuum is also dependent on earlier parts and later parts. For example, establishing morning depends on an afternoon and an evening – without an afternoon and an evening one cannot refer to morning. Likewise evening is dependent on earlier parts of the day, such as afternoon and morning. Establishing night depends on there being a morning. Since they are dependent on each other they cannot be truly existent. As they are designated or imputed phenomena they are a falsity and not truly existent. That is what is being clearly explained with these examples.

Next, the commentary presents a further hypothetical argument:

If you say 'Since they are contained by the mind of one person, they fall under the control of that person and therefore, even though they are different from the point of view of object and time, the suffering of one is eliminated by the suffering of the other'.

Then the answer to that argument is:

Because there is no self of the person that is suffering, there is also no happiness or suffering that is controlled by any controller. For this reason, there is no independent possessor engaging suffering and hence, all sufferings of self and others have no distinction. However, there is the suffering of self and other who are nominally dependent on each other, and therefore it is appropriate to eliminate one's suffering.

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This again relates to the point that there is *no* independently existing *self of the person who is suffering*. Therefore *there is also no happiness or suffering that is controlled by any independent controller*.

The next two lines of the verse serve as an explanation of this point:

**102abc.** *Without a possessor of suffering  
Everything is without distinction*

The explanation of these two lines, as presented in the commentary, is:

For this reason, there is no independent possessor engaging suffering, and hence all sufferings of self and others have no distinction. However, there is the suffering of self and other who are nominally dependent on each other, and therefore it is appropriate to eliminate one's suffering.

Since *there is no independent possessor* who has the experience of *suffering*, there is no *distinction* between the suffering of oneself and the suffering of others in that sense. As there is no independent possessor of that suffering, there is no difference between oneself and others. However, while there is no independent possessor of suffering, there is the suffering of *self and others, who are nominally dependent on each other*. So there is suffering, which arises in dependence on other causes and conditions and, as that is the same for oneself and others, *it is appropriate to eliminate one's suffering*, as well as the suffering of others.

Because suffering is nominally existent, it is possible and thus suitable to eliminate suffering. If suffering were to exist inherently and independently, in and of itself, or from its own side, then it would not be possible to abandon suffering. However, while suffering does not exist independently it does exist nominally, which indicates that it exists in dependence on its causes.

By identifying the causes of suffering one can eliminate the causes, and then suffering will naturally cease. This is the crux of the point, which is that because suffering is dependent on its causes, and not independently existent, one can overcome suffering. Thus it is possible and appropriate to abandon suffering.

When this is understood with respect to one's own suffering, then it can be related to the suffering of others. Just as one's own suffering is dependent on causes and conditions, and thus appropriate and suitable to be overcome, the suffering of others is also dependent on causes and conditions, and thus appropriate and suitable to be overcome.

#### 3.1.2.2.2. Short summary

The relevant lines of verse read:

**102d.** *Because it is suffering, it is to be eliminated.  
What use is this definiteness here?*

**103.** *The statement 'Why should one eliminate  
The sufferings of others?', is not up for debate.  
If one reverses, then one reverses all,  
If not, then one is like sentient beings.*

Then the commentary explains the meaning of these lines:

Therefore, because the suffering of others is suffering, it is suitable to be eliminated by me. What use is the concrete division into self and other? Since one needs

to eliminate all the suffering of others, there is no argument like, 'Since it does not harm me why should one reverse the suffering of others?' If one reverses one's sufferings because one does not desire them, then it is appropriate to reverse the suffering of everybody. If the sufferings of others are not to be eliminated, then one's own sufferings also become something not to be eliminated, like the sufferings of others. Therefore, because the suffering of others is suffering, it is suitable to be eliminated by me. What use is the concrete division into self and other? Since one needs to eliminate all the suffering of others, there is no argument like, 'Since it does not harm me why should one reverse the suffering of others?' If one reverses one's sufferings because one does not desire them, then it is appropriate to reverse the suffering of everybody. If the sufferings of others are not to be eliminated, then one's own sufferings also become something not to be eliminated, like the sufferings of others. Hence, one should put great importance into eliminating the sufferings of others by cherishing others as one cherishes oneself.

The first part of the explanation presents the absurdity of the very concrete distinction we make between self and other. What is being presented here is that as there is no difference between the need to eliminate suffering within oneself and the suffering of others, one needs to definitely consider removing the suffering of others.

*If one reverses one's sufferings because one does not desire them then it is appropriate to reverse suffering of every living being. If the sufferings of others are not to be eliminated then one's own suffering also becomes something not to be eliminated, like the suffering of others.* What is being explained here is that if one thinks there is no need to eliminate the sufferings of others, then the same reasons should apply to oneself as well; i.e. that there is no need to eliminate one's own suffering.

However the fact is that we do strive to remove any suffering that we experience. Hence, *one should put great importance into eliminating the sufferings of others by cherishing others as one cherishes oneself*. The point here is that the instinctive wish to remove one's own suffering arises because of self-cherishing. There is no reason for striving to overcome one's own suffering other than not wanting to experience that suffering. And this is true regardless of whether we are engaging in Dharma practice or in mundane activities — whenever we experience pain we recognise it as something to be overcome.

That instinctive wish to overcome suffering is due to self-cherishing. So if we can change that attitude to cherishing others just as one cherishes oneself, then removing the suffering of others will become as instinctive as removing one's own suffering.

So we can see that this is very precise advice, using reason and examples. We can see how the text is meticulously presenting the practice of equalising and exchanging self with others, and we need to incorporate these reasons and explanations into our actual practice.

To give an example to illustrate the point, when those close and dear to us suffer, we take the immediate initiative to remove their suffering. The wish to remove their pain and suffering arises in part because they are

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related to me, i.e. one has a strong notion that they are my husband, wife, child or relative. Because of that we feel “I need to remove their suffering”. So our compassion and love and wish to remove their suffering and establish them in happiness is mixed with a self-cherishing attitude. Although there is a level of self-cherishing, we take the initiative to remove their suffering. So we are extending our concern beyond our immediate self. By using this example we can understand that it is definitely possible to generate the wish to remove the sufferings of others by merely focusing on their suffering. The very gross level of self-cherishing focuses merely on one’s own needs. But here we see that although there is some level of self-cherishing, one is extending one’s focus beyond oneself onto the need to remove the suffering of one’s partner, children and so forth.

With this illustration we can see that since it is possible to extend our concerns towards those who are related to us, it is definitely possible to also extend a genuine wish to eliminate suffering and establish happiness for those who are not related to us. This wish can arise when one contemplates the fact that they are suffering and deprived of happiness.

Right now, of course, due to our habituation and strong self-cherishing attitude we may not yet be capable of extending the wish to eliminate suffering and establish happiness much further beyond ourselves. However, if we train ourselves in thinking like this, then through familiarity, it will eventually be possible to generate this attitude: Because others are suffering, I need to take initiative to eliminate their suffering, and because others are deprived of happiness I need to establish them in happiness.

This is a really profound method. As Shantideva explains, the main reason for taking the initiative to eliminate the suffering of others arises from contemplating the fact that they are suffering, and just like oneself, they do not wish to experience suffering; and the main reason to establish happiness for others is because they are deprived of happiness and are in need of happiness, just like oneself. If we really contemplate this point and train our mind in thinking along these lines, then the more we find this to be sound reasoning, the more our mind will be attuned to actually taking the initiative to eliminate the suffering of others, and establish them in happiness.

#### **[Establishing a broad perspective]**

Of course at this stage in our training we will feel that we don’t have this capacity, and that we cannot do much. However, through training our mind by contemplating these points again and again, we are leaving a very strong imprint that carries on from this life to the next life. Because we have implanted a strong imprint of wanting to eliminate the sufferings of others and establish them in happiness, the attitude of cherishing others will be more spontaneous and natural in the next life. Further training in the next life will then strengthen that wish so that it becomes stronger and stronger.

We have to understand that as beginners we cannot expect to develop this in just one lifetime, so we need to establish the basis to engage in the training over many successive lives. By employing this method, even though

we may not see an immediate transformation taking place, every effort we make will eventually be accumulated into obtaining a significant result. We need to understand the importance of not having immediate big expectations of our Dharma practice. Rather we need to see that every small effort that we make now leads to big results in the future. When we have this attitude then we will definitely experience the benefit of the practice in this life as well.

When we view our practice as progressing gradually along the path, we will see that whatever practice we engage in comes down to acquainting ourselves with the means of overcoming self-cherishing, and establishing the mind of cherishing others. This practice not only brings about benefit in this life but implants a positive imprint that helps to establish the basis to engage in this practice over many lives.

As we progressively improve from life to life, we are working towards reaching the ultimate state of perfection, where we have completely eradicated all our negativities or defilements, and acquired all possible qualities – the perfected state of enlightenment. Reaching that state comes about from the practice of familiarising our mind with cherishing others, and then working towards eliminating their suffering and establishing them in happiness to the best of our ability.

We establish the causes for obtaining our goal of liberation and enlightenment by continuing with our meagre efforts in the practices now; it is through continual practice that we accumulate the causes for reaching liberation and ultimate enlightenment. This is how we need to understand the ultimate purpose of our practice.

It might seem that this is a bit of a side-track, but I feel that these are very important points to keep in mind. Accepting that there has been past life and that there will be future life gives our Dharma practice a real purpose. We are not practising the Dharma for some immediate gratification. Rather, we are practising in order to establish the conducive conditions for future lives that will enable us to further progress along the path to liberation and enlightenment.

In order to establish that basis, we have to obtain a good rebirth such as a human rebirth. It is not possible to progress along the path if we take rebirth in a lower realm. It is only on the basis of a higher rebirth and higher status - such as a precious human rebirth - that we can further progress along the path.

Securing whatever practice of Dharma we do now will, at the very least, establish the basis for one to obtain a good rebirth in the next life, which further establishes the means to create the causes and conditions for obtaining liberation and enlightenment. It is important to understand this.

Contemplating in this way will definitely assist us as we approach our death. At that time the only thing that we can rely upon is the Dharma practice that we have established in our life. We are moving further and further away from our possessions and friends in this life, and getting closer and closer to the conditions of our next life, including possessions, Dharma friends and so forth. The

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reality is that we are approaching death, so it is really worthwhile to establish the causes for good conditions in our future life. When we contemplate in this way then we can see the real purpose of the Dharma.

So it is good to have a very clear picture of how we are progressing towards establishing good conditions for our next life, in accordance with the explanations in the Dharma.

As explained in the teachings, the practice that will prevent one from falling into the lower realms is the practice of **morality**. We are all capable of practising morality, and in fact, because we intentionally avoid engaging in the ten non-virtues we are already engaging in that practice. When we establish the practice of intentionally not engaging in the ten non-virtues, then that is the practice of morality. Then there is no question that we will be protected from falling to the lower realms in the next life. So we need to assure ourselves with the firm belief that due to practising morality and so forth, we will definitely be protected from falling into lower realms in the next life. Having strong faith in this way will further encourage us to continue to practise morality and so forth.

The practice that is a cause for one to acquire good conditions to sustain oneself in the next life, such as wealth and so forth, is the practice of **generosity**. That is also something that we are capable of practising now. Generosity is defined as the mind of giving. So we can definitely engage in the practice of generosity. Of course, we need to be generous with material things to whatever capacity we can give, but the main point is to familiarise ourselves with the mind of giving.

The cause that secures a good entourage of friends and companions in the next life is the practice of **patience**, which we can also practise now. That which helps one to create the causes to be able to accomplish what one sets out to do is the practice of **joyous effort**, while the practice of **meditation** develops sound concentration. As you will recall, the chapters of the text present the six perfections, and we need to practise them in order to secure good conditions for our next life.

#### [The real protector]

The real protection against an unfortunate rebirth in the next lifetime is, as the teachings present, the Dharma. Here it is essential that we understand that the Dharma is a quality that is developed within one's own mind. For example, that which protects one from the lower realms is the morality that one observes now by avoiding the ten non-virtues and abiding by the ten virtues. The practice of morality is none other than within one's own mind stream. We make a decision to be moral and our observance of morality is what we develop within our own mind. That which prevents us from poverty is the generosity that we practise now, which is also developed within our own mind stream.

We shouldn't have lofty ideas about Dharma being an external protector. The Dharma is that which is developed within one's own mind. Ultimately, therefore, the real protector is something we have to establish within ourselves. It is essential that we understand that, otherwise we might be misled.

As presented in the teachings on the Three Jewels, the ultimate Dharma Jewel is true cessation and the true path. However true cessation and the true path are only found within the continuum of arya beings. So how can the Dharma Jewel protect us if it is only found within the continuum of arya beings?

We do, however, have a more immediate understanding of how the Buddha Jewel and the Sangha Jewel help us. The Sangha Jewel helps us when the Sangha give us direct assistance, advice and teachings and so forth. So we can see that we receive direct benefit from the Sangha Jewel. Because of our obscurations we may not be able to actually see the Buddha yet, but we are inspired by him and we definitely benefit from the advice and the teachings that he presented. So we can definitely see that we receive benefit from the Buddha Jewel.

However, it is a bit harder to see how the ultimate Dharma Jewel, the true path and true cessation within the continuum of aryas, actually helps us directly. While we may not have yet developed true cessation and the true path, we are nonetheless able to observe morality and practise generosity and patience and so forth. So these practices help us to protect ourselves, we need to view them as being the Dharma Jewel at our level. This is, I feel, a significant point for us to understand.

The beneficiary of the Dharma Jewel within the arya continuum, which is true cessation and the true path, is of course the aryas themselves, and other beings who are able to directly relate to the aryas, and receive teachings from them. The oral teachings of the Buddha are, of course, part of the Dharma Jewel, and that benefits us, since the transformation that slowly takes place within our mind is made possible by the advice and guidance we receive from the teachings of the Buddha.

Although the oral teachings of the Buddha are Dharma, they are not presented as the ultimate Dharma. The ultimate Dharma, which is the real protector, is true cessation and the true path, which are developed within one's own mental continuum.

It is good to understand how this works in relation to oneself.

#### 3.1.2.2.2. Refuting objections

This is subdivided into two:

3.1.2.2.2.1. Refuting that bodhisattvas become overwhelmed by their own suffering through contemplating the suffering of sentient beings

3.1.2.2.2.2. The need to contemplate suffering

3.1.2.2.2.1. *Refuting that bodhisattvas become overwhelmed by their own suffering through contemplating the suffering of sentient beings*

Here the heading is presenting a significant doubt as to whether *bodhisattvas become overwhelmed by their own suffering through contemplating the suffering of sentient beings*.

This is something that we experience at our level. When someone who is close to us experiences difficulties, or hardships, or illness, we feel uncomfortable, and because of our unease and discomfort we take the initiative to help them. Even though their problems make us feel uncomfortable it gives us the initiative to benefit them.

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While we experience some discomfort when others are ill and suffering, that is not what the bodhisattvas experience. They are never overwhelmed by the suffering of others, and they feel no sorrow.

Another significant point is that training one's mind and developing compassion, beginning with those who are close to oneself, is also one of the supreme ways of purifying one's own negative karma.

The verse that relates to this heading reads:

*104. If, 'Since sufferings increase due to compassion,  
Why generate them with urgency?  
If one contemplates the suffering of migrators,  
How can suffering increase due to compassion?*

The commentary on this verse begins with a hypothetical argument:

If you say 'out of compassion one makes all the sufferings of others one's own, then, one's sufferings become more. Thus, why generate suffering with intensity instead of abandoning it?'

The answer is:

When bodhisattvas contemplate the suffering of migrators, it follows that their suffering does not increase due to compassion, because this compassion eliminates all their feelings of suffering.

The commentary begins with the hypothetical argument, *If, out of compassion, one makes all the sufferings of others one's own, then one's sufferings become more. Thus why generate suffering with intensity instead of abandoning it?*

Bodhisattvas are constantly thinking about the sufferings of other sentient beings, and they are constantly contemplating how to eliminate the sufferings of sentient beings, so it would be absurd for them to be disturbed by that suffering. Thinking about the suffering of others does not cause bodhisattvas any suffering. On the contrary, it actually benefits them.

Initially when one contemplates the sufferings of others it may bring some discomfort, but when one actually forsakes that personal discomfort and thinks about the benefit of contemplating the suffering of others, then that makes the discomfort acceptable.

The commentary then explains that *when bodhisattvas contemplate the sufferings of migrators it follows that their suffering does not increase due to compassion, because the compassion eliminates all their feelings of suffering.*

In fact, contemplating the suffering of sentient beings actually counteracts one's own suffering. From our own limited experience we know that when we take a moment to contemplate the sufferings of others it can definitely help to eliminate our own suffering, because it takes our mind away from our own problems. When one thinks about the plight of others, it definitely helps one to alleviate any immediate discomfort one may be experiencing. If, even at our very ordinary level, we recognise the truth of this, then we can imagine how wholeheartedly and continuously working for the welfare of sentient beings will be a cause to bring great joy and happiness for bodhisattvas.

### 3.1.2.2.2.2. *The need to contemplate suffering*

The point here is that because contemplating the suffering of others can ultimately benefit oneself and help others, there is a definite need to contemplate suffering.

We can leave this for the next session.

A further practical point about how developing compassion for other beings can help to alleviate one's own suffering and bring more mental ease, is that it can definitely reduce anger towards others, as well as reduce jealousy, competitiveness and pride.

These defilements within our mind can cause us a lot of sorrow and angst, but by developing compassion we can reduce anger and relieve jealousy and so forth. When we feel compassion for someone then, rather than feeling jealous, we feel glad when things go well for them, and when things don't go well for them we feel sorry for them. Without compassion, however, the opposite will occur: we start becoming angry and upset when things go well for them, and if things don't go well, we might even be glad.

So we can see how, even at our level, generating some feeling of compassion definitely alleviates negative emotions. And of course the effect on bodhisattvas who continuously benefit other sentient beings will be far greater than anything we experience.

As mentioned in the teachings, the antidote to harmfulness is compassion. When one generates compassion then any thoughts of harm will definitely be overcome. When one does not have harmful intention then one is in a happy state of mind; because there is no intention to go out of the way to hurt and harm others, one's mind will be very comfortable and relaxed. So we can see that how a mind that does not harbour ill-will and harmfulness is a happy mind, and as a consequence the person is a happy person.

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

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# Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

19 April 2016

Based on the motivation we have generated, we can now spend a few minutes for our meditation practice.

[meditation]

As usual, we can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: for the sake of all mother sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will engage in listening to the Mahayana teachings, and put them into practice well.

## 3.1.2.2. THE WAY OF MEDITATING ON EQUALISING SELF AND OTHERS

### 3.2.2.2.2 Explaining the reason why it is suitable to meditate on it as equal

#### 3.1.2.2.2.2. Refuting objections (cont.)

##### 3.1.2.2.2.2.2. The need to contemplate suffering

In the text we are covering the need to contemplate suffering. This point follows from an earlier qualm that, if one generates compassion for others it will cause one suffering, so what purpose does it serve? The response presented here is that, for bodhisattvas, the more they contemplate the suffering of others, the stronger their compassion becomes. For bodhisattvas, generating compassion serves to eliminate their own suffering, rather than causing them more suffering. As I mentioned previously, whenever we feel compassion for another person, at that time there is no possibility of feeling anger towards them. As this was explained earlier, I don't need to go over it again. For those who are keen to put what they hear into practice, when a point is repeated, there is no problem as it is a pleasure for them to hear it again. But for those who do not put what they hear into practice, it may sound like an unnecessary repetition and hurt their ears!

The main point here however is that, although this advice is intended for bodhisattvas, the practices that enabled them to become bodhisattvas were taken step by step. This is also the approach we need to take. Instead of thinking 'Oh, these practices were intended only for bodhisattvas', if we put whatever level we can now into practice, then gradually, we will reach the stage of becoming a bodhisattva.

The step by step presentation here is in itself a guide to developing our practice and, most importantly, it provides us with a means to skilfully present the teachings to others, ensuring we do not present anything unsuitable for their current level of practice and state of mind. One may think one has to present all the profound and extensive teachings to others; however, instead of benefiting them, this might overwhelm them and cause more confusion. We need to remember how, when we were beginners in the Dharma, everything was new and at times seemed overwhelming. Then as we progressively began to understand, slowly, slowly, things became clearer and clearer to our mind. Thus, we need to present the Dharma to others in gradual steps.

The two verses that relate to this heading are:

105. *If through one suffering  
Many sufferings became non-existent,*

*Then it is only suitable for self and other  
That suffering is generated out of affection.*

106. *Even though Supushpa Chandra  
Knew the suffering caused by the king,  
He did not eliminate his own suffering,  
In order to exhaust the suffering of many.*

The commentary explains:

If it were the case that one insignificant suffering eliminates the many samsaric sufferings of the infinite migrators then, since it has a great purpose, it is only suitable for oneself and others to generate this suffering out of affection.

As it is stated in *The King of Concentration Sutra*, even though the bodhisattva Supushpa Chandra knew that he would receive the harm of being killed by the king, he did not eliminate his own suffering but accepted it, as he saw that this would alleviate the suffering of many sentient beings, and proceeded to the town. He did not listen to his entourage, who tried to stop him.

The main point here is that if one's own experience of suffering becomes a cause to eliminate great suffering for other sentient beings, then it is worthwhile to endure that suffering and willingly take it upon oneself. As the root text states *If through one suffering* presents the fact that when just one suffering becomes a means to eliminate the suffering of infinite migrators, then it becomes worthwhile to willingly accept it, because it serves a great purpose.

This presentation also gives us an insight into the great qualities of bodhisattvas, who willingly endure extensive difficulties and hardships for the benefit of sentient beings. The capacity of bodhisattvas to extend themselves in such great ways to benefit sentient beings, of course, comes from love and compassion. Thus we can see that love and compassion are the basis for bodhisattvas to acquire all their great qualities. When the commentary continues *it is only suitable for oneself and others to generate this suffering out of affection*, the main point is that when one's intentional acceptance of suffering becomes a means to generate compassion for other sentient beings, then it is suitable for one to experience that suffering.

The example presented here is from *The King of Concentration Sutra*. It relates the story of a great bodhisattva by the name of Supushpa Chandra, who resided mostly in isolation and didn't spend much time in towns and so forth. This bodhisattva knew it was time for the people in the town where the king ruled to hear the teachings. However, through his clairvoyance, he knew that if he did so, the king would become enraged and punish him with death. The bodhisattva knew that if he did not go into the city to give teachings, those people would not be free from suffering and obtain happiness. On the other hand, if he gave Dharma teachings, they would be able to be liberated from suffering and obtain happiness. So with this insight, the bodhisattva went into the city to present the teachings to the people for seven days. He taught continuously during the day and in the evenings he circumambulated a reliquary stupa. He didn't have to partake of food and drink because, having reached a high level of concentration, he was sustained by the food of concentration, so therefore didn't need to eat and drink. After the bodhisattva gave the teachings, as he foresaw, the king became enraged and gave orders to kill him. However, it is said that later the king developed great regret and built a reliquary stupa as means to purify his heavy negative karma.

As the commentary explains, even though the bodhisattva Supushpa Chandra knew he would receive the harm of being killed by the king, *he did not eliminate his own suffering*, meaning he disregarded his own suffering *as he saw that this* (that is, giving Dharma teachings) *would alleviate the suffering of many sentient beings, and proceeded to the town. He did not listen to his entourage, who tried to stop him*: his entourage also knew that the king would be enraged and punish him. However, he didn't listen to them but went ahead. This shows his great compassion. One of the greatest sufferings anyone can experience is the treat to one's life, yet out of compassion, the bodhisattva still went into the town for the sole benefit of other beings. Hearing stories like this, of great bodhisattva's deeds, should instil admiration within us and encourage us to make aspirational prayers such as: 'May I also be able to engage in extensive deeds like the great bodhisattvas to benefit sentient beings'. When I read stories like this myself, it instils in me the strong aspiration, 'May I be able to follow these examples of the great bodhisattvas to benefit sentient beings, if possible in this life, and in many lives to come'. At our level, making a strong aspiration is of great significance, as it leaves a strong imprint in our mind. This is one way we can put these teachings into personal practice.

### 3.1.2.3. THE BENEFITS OF MEDITATING ON IT

There are five subheadings:

3.1.2.3.1. Those dedicated only to the purpose of others do not have great sufferings

3.1.2.3.2. Working for the purpose of others as its happiness is superior

3.1.2.3.3. One's pride will be pacified

3.1.2.3.4. Not depending on reward and ripened results

3.1.2.3.5. For those reasons it is suitable to meditate on equalising self and others

We can derive some meaning from these headings themselves:

**Those dedicated only to the purpose of others do not have great sufferings.** Here, the text is being honest, admitting that while there might be some suffering when one dedicates to the purpose of others, it would not be so great compared to other sufferings.

**Working for the purpose of others as its happiness is superior.** Because the happiness one derives is superior, it is appropriate to work for others for that purpose.

**One's pride will be pacified.** As mentioned earlier, when one has compassion for others, negative afflictions such as anger, and as mentioned here, pride, will not occur. Thus when anyone exhibits pride or contempt for others, it is a clear sign they don't have compassion for others. When one has compassion for others, there is no room for contempt or pride to arise.

**Not depending on reward and ripened results.** This refers to benefiting others with no ulterior motive of receiving a reward or gaining the ripened result of that action at some time in the future. Rather, the text indicates that we should benefit others solely from the intention to alleviate their suffering and bring them happiness, and not for one's own personal gain.

**For those reasons it is suitable to meditate on equalising self and others.** In relation to this, we can reflect on how the teachings explain that, of the two different techniques for developing bodhicitta – the seven-fold cause and effect technique and the exchanging self with other technique presented here, – this technique is said to be much more

profound and powerful. The explanation here is that we willingly take others' suffering upon ourselves for the purpose of benefiting sentient beings. That is what makes it very powerful.

#### 3.1.2.3.1. Those dedicated only to the purpose of others do not have great sufferings

We usually have this doubt: 'If I work for the purpose of others I might suffer greatly'. This way of thinking prevents us from developing strong compassion. For bodhisattvas, this would not be a concern, but for us at our level, it seems to be a great concern. As a way to remove that doubt, the following advice is presented.

*107. When the continuum becomes thus acquainted  
One takes joy in pacifying the suffering of others.  
Like ducks entering a lotus pond  
One will even enter the hell without respite.*

The commentary to this explains:

If one's continuum becomes habituated to the meditation of equalising self and other as explained before, then one takes joy in pacifying the sufferings of others. In order to destroy the sufferings of others one will disregard one's own sufferings and happily enter even the hell without respite just like ducks into a lotus pond. One will not have any mental suffering working for the purpose of others.

Thus, one familiarises one's mind with the practice of equalising self and other again and again by contemplating the great benefits and virtues of the practice. Then, through repeated contemplation and familiarisation, one reaches a point of feeling confident that exchanging one's own happiness for the happiness of others is possible. As beginners and ordinary beings, we may initially feel daunted by the prospect of exchanging our own happiness for the happiness of others, i.e. exchanging the focus from oneself to solely focusing on the wellbeing and happiness of others. But that is because we have not acquainted our mind with this practice. The point presented here is that, through acquaintance, it becomes possible to develop this state of mind.

The actual meditation of equalising self and other involves exchanging one's previous focus – of working solely for one's own happiness, and eliminating suffering just for oneself – to that of working solely for the happiness of others and removing their suffering. This is the state of mind that one needs to familiarise oneself with. When one actually reaches that state through acquaintance, *then one takes joy in pacifying the sufferings of others.*

Furthermore, *in order to destroy the sufferings of others one will disregard one's own sufferings and happily enter even the hell without respite.* The example given here is *like ducks entering a lotus pond.* If there is a beautiful pond with lotuses, ducks will have no hesitation – they will immediately want to enter the pond where the water is nice and cool. We can see for ourselves how ducks will waddle together and joyfully head straight for water. This example illustrates how, when bodhisattvas see the sufferings of others, they willingly and joyfully attempt to help those who are suffering.

The last line of the commentary for this verse is *one will not have any mental suffering working for the purpose of others.* We might have some experience ourselves of experiencing physical suffering without our mind being greatly affected and disturbed, thus enabling us to avoid mental suffering.



### 3.1.2.3.2. Working for the purpose of others as its happiness is superior

108. *If one liberates sentient beings  
One has an ocean of joy.  
Is this not superior?  
What use is it to desire liberation?*

The commentary explains:

If one liberates sentient beings from cyclic existence then one will be filled by an ocean of joy that accomplishes all one's wishes, and one will be satisfied. Is this not superior? What use is it to desire liberation only for oneself? Remembering that all sentient beings have been one's mother, one should strive for their purpose.

This shows again that what brings the greatest joy for bodhisattvas is when they see other beings free from the suffering of cyclic existence. Bodhisattvas are indeed blessed and noble beings – their only wish is for sentient beings to be free from suffering. When they see other beings free from suffering, it fills their mind with *an ocean of joy* and accomplishes their wishes, so they are satisfied. Here, the rhetorical question, *Is this not superior?* is presented to indicate that this is indeed a superior state of mind. Then the commentary asks another rhetorical question: *What use is it to desire liberation only for oneself?* If that state of mind is indeed superior, then what use is it to desire liberation just for oneself? This part of the commentary concludes, *remembering that all sentient beings have been one's mother, one should strive for their purpose.* When one remembers the kindness of one's own mother then relates it to all beings having been one's mother, it becomes an impetus for one to naturally and spontaneously want to bring them happiness and remove their suffering, as a way to repay their kindness. This is the point of contemplating the kindness of beings as having been one's mother.

The first step in the seven-fold cause and effect sequence of developing bodhicitta is recognising all beings as having been one's mother. When one reflects upon one's own mother's kindness and really brings it to heart then, as we expand the scope of that meditation, it becomes possible to see all beings as being extremely kind as well. So, based on the recognition of one's own mother's kindness in this life, one can then relate that to all beings, and see them as being as kind as one's mother because of the kindness they have shown to us in the past.

The main point is that one would be able to relate to other sentient beings in the same way as one would relate to one's own mother. When one sees one's own mother who has been kind, one feels great joy and naturally wishes her to be happy; likewise it is possible to relate to all other beings in the same way.

As a meditation practice, contemplating the passages and points here even for few minutes can really settle one's mind. It will definitely have good effect.

### 3.1.2.3.3. One's pride will be pacified

We need to take this presentation as a personal instruction and reflect on how, when one engages in the actual practice, one's pride will be pacified. In contrast to this, when one learns a bit about the teachings and Dharma, if it serves as means to increase one's pride and a sense of contempt over others, then it has defeated the purpose. This is when the Dharma becomes poison instead of being a remedy, which is really unfortunate. All of the Buddha's teachings are said to be a means to overcome pride. So when those very teachings

become a cause for one's pride to increase, then one will not have benefited from the teachings. This is a real loss. So it is important for us to constantly try our utmost not to allow pride to take over our mind.

109ab. *Thus, though one works for the purpose of others  
There is no vanity or astonishment.*

The commentary explains:

Thus, as one takes great joy in the purpose of others, even though one works for the purpose of others, one will not be vain, thinking 'I have nurtured them with kindness,' or feeling astonished with one's deeds.

Referring again to the bodhisattva practices, when one takes great joy in the purpose of others while wholeheartedly benefiting them without any ulterior motive, there is no sense of vanity such as the thought, 'I have nurtured them with great kindness'. This counteracts our normal worldly way of thinking. Normally, we may think 'Oh, I have done such wonderful things for others', 'I have gone out of my way to do great things for them'. Such thoughts of vanity arise due to the self-cherishing mind. When we say 'I have nurtured them with kindness', there is a strong emphasis on the 'I' which focuses very much on one's own sense of fulfilment. In addition, we also have a feeling of astonishment with our own deeds, 'oh, all the wondrous things that I have done'. Such feelings need to be eliminated. One would not have such feelings when one works solely for the purpose of others.

Thus, when one is free from self-interest and solely works for the benefit of others, this completely counteracts any sense of pride; likewise with anger, jealousy, a sense of competitiveness and so forth.

### 3.1.2.3.4. Not depending on reward and the ripened results

109cd. *As one singularly takes joy in others' purpose,  
There is no hope for a ripening result.*

As one only likes to accomplish the purpose of others there is no hope for a ripening result.

Again, this is emphasising that when one works solely for the purpose of others, it should be without any self-interest of seeking a reward, or hope of a ripening result either in this life, or in future lives. Often we lament, 'I have done so much for them, but look how they treat me' [*laughter*]. If one were free from self-interest, there would no such complaint or lamentation.

### 3.1.2.3.5. For those reasons it is suitable to meditate on equalising self and others

110. *Therefore, just as one protects oneself  
From slight unpleasantness,  
One should generate the mind of compassion  
And protect others.*

Since it is appropriate to meditate on equalising self and others, one should generate a mind of compassion and protect others from their undesired suffering just as one protects oneself from even just a few unpleasant words.

Having explained the benefits of equalising and exchanging self with others, the commentary continues *since it is appropriate to meditate on equalising self and others*. What comes next in the Tibetan text is the line *just as one protects oneself from even just a few unpleasant words*. We all can relate to this. When someone utters something that offends us, or others accuse us of something we feel we haven't done, we immediately become defensive saying 'How could you say this to me? How could you accuse me?' Even the slightest

remark like this can hurt us, and we become protective of ourselves. So, just as one has that natural inclination to protect oneself, one should generate the mind of compassion and protect others from undesired suffering. The main point here is that one should develop the mind of compassion that extends to other sentient beings, and wishes to protect them from suffering.

#### 3.1.2.4. *If one meditates on equalising self and others, one can develop it*

This is a significant point to counteract our qualms or doubts about whether this practice is possible or not. We might at this point think, 'Exchanging self with others sounds noble, but how could I possibly achieve it or meditate on it?' Here, the text is saying that if one meditates on it, meaning that if one acquaints one's mind with that, then it is definitely feasible.

As a way to explain the verses, the commentary presents this hypothetical doubt or argument:

Argument: Since one does not generate the thought that thinks of the other's body or eye as 'my body' or 'my eye,' how could one generate the awareness that accepts and rejects others' happiness and suffering as one's own?

The answer to this is presented in the next two verses:

111. *Although others' drop of semen and blood  
Does not become an object<sup>1</sup>,  
Through familiarisation,  
One says, 'mine' and knows it as such.*
112. *Likewise, why does one not hold  
The body of others by saying, 'mine?'  
By replacing one's body with that  
Of another, there is no difficulty in this regard.*

As the commentary explains, the meaning of these verses serves as an answer:

Answer: Without familiarisation, then this would be correct. But, if one is able through familiarisation to know and grasp at the drop of the father's and mother's semen and blood as one's own object, saying 'this is mine,' then why should one not be able to hold the body of others as one's own through familiarisation? One should be able to. If one meditates, then one generates the mind thinking of it as one's own. Hence, having contemplated the benefits of eliminating the sufferings of others one should strive to eliminate them.

Then, if one purposely stops cherishing one's body and meditates on substituting another, it will be without out difficulty, like meditating on cherishing self.

What is being explained here is that *through familiarisation*, one holds onto the concept of one's body, which is none other than the product of the *father's semen and the mother's blood* [or ovum]: in other words, separate substances. We have no qualms about holding onto this body as my body. We not only call it 'my body' but we also have strong clinging to it. This comes from familiarisation or habituation, which makes us instinctively grasp at this body as 'my body'. Habituation is similar to what we call instinct. A newborn baby instinctively recognises its mother; we can also see examples of animals having a strong sense of clinging to the mother and immediately recognising them.

Then, as we grow up, we identify strongly with our own body as being 'mine'.

Thus if, through familiarity, we can hold as 'mine' an object such as one's body, which originates as substances from others, then *why should one not be able to hold the body of others as one's own through familiarisation?* While the text may literally seem to be advising one to hold others' bodies as 'mine', it actually means that, just as we cherish our own body, it is possible to cherish other beings. That is the main point. Again we have a rhetorical question, 'why is it not possible?', meaning that indeed it is possible if one meditates or familiarises one's mind by cherishing others just one cherishes oneself. *Hence, having contemplated the benefits of eliminating the sufferings of others one should strive to eliminate them.*

In conclusion, *thus, if one purposely stops cherishing one's body and meditates on substituting another, it will be without out difficulty, like meditating on cherishing self.* So just as we now have a natural and spontaneous attitude towards cherishing oneself, through familiarity it will be possible for us to cherish other beings. So we will be able to substitute cherishing oneself with cherishing other sentient beings.

Having explained the benefits and the possibility of exchanging self for others, one may question, what is the method of exchanging self and others?

## 3.2. The way of exchanging self and others

Here there are two main sections:

3.2.1. In brief

3.2.2. Extensive explanation

### 3.2.1. In brief

Again, there are two subdivisions:

3.2.1.1. The way of exchanging self and other

3.2.1.2. The reason why it is suitable to meditate on it

#### 3.2.1.1. THE WAY OF EXCHANGING SELF AND OTHER

113. *Understanding that self is faulty  
And that others are an ocean of qualities,  
Meditate on completely rejecting self-grasping  
And on accepting others.*

Since cherishing oneself is the source of all shortcomings it is faulty and needs to be abandoned with great purpose, and since cherishing other sentient beings is the source of all that is good, it has an ocean of qualities. Understanding this, one should meditate on completely abandoning cherishing self and accept cherishing others.

Here, the text specifically presents the faults of cherishing oneself and the qualities of cherishing others. Without recognising the faults of cherishing oneself and the benefits of cherishing others, there is no way one would even consider generating this mind of exchanging self with others. So, to engage in the practice, one needs to remove the obstructions, which are cherishing oneself and neglecting others.

*Since cherishing oneself is the source of all shortcomings it is faulty and needs to be abandoned with great intent which means with great purpose - and since cherishing other sentient beings is the source of all that is good, it has an ocean of qualities.* As I have expounded in other teachings, the shortcomings one experiences now are said to have all come from cherishing just oneself. There is no gain but only loss when one solely cherishes oneself, whereas cherishing other beings is the source of all that is good.

<sup>1</sup> Gyaltsab Je: In some translations the line 'although not becoming an object' does not exist.

We can readily relate this to our current situation. For us, having a sound body, and all the other good conditions intact is the result of cherishing others. For example, not causing harm to others, such as taking their life, is the cause for one to have a sound human body. And by having engaged in acts of generosity in the past, one now experiences good conditions and resources. Thus, we can see that all the good qualities we have now are the result of having engaged in virtue: first of all, refraining from harming others; and then having the intention to benefit them. So, leaving aside the ultimate benefit of obtaining liberation and enlightenment, and the benefits of a fortunate rebirth in future, even now we can directly relate to the positive consequences and the benefit to oneself of cherishing others.

### 3.2.1.2. THE REASON WHY IT IS SUITABLE TO MEDITATE ON IT

Argument: Since sentient beings are of infinite number, it is impossible to hold them as self.

This doubt may occur to us because there is an infinite number of sentient beings. How could one possibly cherish them all as one cherishes oneself? The verse that serves as an answer to this doubt is:

**114. Just as the hands and so forth  
Are asserted as parts of the body,  
Why does one not assert  
Embodied beings as limbs of migrators?**

Answer: Even though the hands and feet are different, because they are parts of the body one desires to protect them. Likewise, although embodied sentient beings are many, if one meditates on cherishing them, then why should one not wish to cherish the migrating beings, just like cherishing the limbs of one's body? It is suitable to desire so.

When we separate the body into different parts, there are quite a lot of them. For example, when we talk about our hand, each of the hands has five fingers so altogether there are ten fingers; our feet have ten toes, and so on. There are many parts to the body, yet we protect them all equally because they are part of 'my body'. *Likewise although embodied sentient beings are many, if one meditates on cherishing them, then why should one not wish to cherish migrating beings just like cherishing the limbs of one's body? It is suitable to desire so.* In relation to the infinite number of sentient beings, the way that I understand it is that, in meditation, we extend our aspiration to all sentient beings; in our mind, we extend to all beings the wish to benefit and cherish them. However, in practice, one can only benefit those in our vicinity, the beings we come into contact with. If we think that in order to cherish other beings, we have to physically benefit them, then that would be impossible. For example, if we think that helping others means giving them money, the number of human beings alone on the planet now is more than 7 billion! I wonder if anyone has enough money to give even one dollar to each human? It would be hard enough to find someone in Australia who could give one dollar to each of the 24 million living here.

So, as I understand it, the way to practise is that first we develop the keen wish to benefit others. Then, whoever we meet, and whoever is in our vicinity, we will be able to help to the best of our ability. This is something we are capable of doing. We can extend help to those around us. So while we develop the thought of cherishing others in our mind and extend it to all beings, at a practical level, we benefit those with whom we come into contact. This is how we put

exchanging self with others into practice. We need to remember, however, to train one's mind not to forsake any living being.

Just like we protect our limbs, we need to protect other sentient beings, for the very reason that just like oneself they do not wish for any suffering and wish to experience happiness. That, in itself, becomes a reason why all sentient beings are like parts of our self. They are exactly the same, they have the same sentiments as we do, wishing to experience happiness, and not wishing to experience any suffering. With that in mind, we can extend our attitude of cherishing all other beings.

We recite the Tara Praises this evening to dedicate for Ross's success in his treatment. It is good for us as Dharma friends to pray and extend our prayers to help each other. This is something really significant and worthwhile for us to do.

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

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Edited Version  
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# Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

26 April 2013

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

During the meditation practice we would have been further strengthening our motivation. However, just as a reminder, let us generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

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

Generating such a motivation, even for a few moments, will definitely establish very strong positive imprints in our mind.

We have been covering a very meticulous presentation of how to engage in the practice of exchanging self and other. Just last Wednesday I spent about an hour contemplating these points and it occurred to me what a very profound presentation it is. The term exchanging self and other refers to changing an attitude of cherishing just oneself to an attitude of cherishing others.

Earlier, the text described this in terms of exchanging one's happiness and suffering. Previously one focused only on one's own happiness and removing only one's own suffering, and this is exchanged with a focus on establishing others in happiness and removing their suffering.

Following that, the text explained how, just as one previously cherished one's own body as being very precious and held it as 'mine', one can, through familiarity and training, exchange that view with one that cherishes others in the same way.

Although it's not specifically mentioned in the text, I feel that it is appropriate to include the accumulation of virtue and the shunning of negativity into the practice of exchanging self with other as well. Whereas previously one would have engaged in accumulating virtues just for oneself, and shunned negativity just for one's own purpose, this is exchanged with accumulating virtue and purifying negativity for the sake of other sentient beings.

So you can see how, when we really think about these very meticulously presented points, we can expand our way of thinking with this very profound practice.

These are of course the actual practices of bodhisattvas, but they are also intended for us to engage in according to whatever capacity we have now. When we think about these profound practices we also gain an insight into the incredibly noble and amazing deeds of the bodhisattvas. They are perpetually engaged in these very practices solely to benefit other sentient beings, so their presence is truly marvellous.

Of the two techniques of developing bodhicitta, the seven-point cause and effect sequence, which has been presented in other teachings, and this technique of exchanging self and

other, it is the one presented here that is said to be much more vast and profound.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama praises this often. He praises the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* as being the most supreme text presenting the methods for developing bodhicitta and explaining the deeds of bodhisattvas. In particular he praises this practice of exchanging self and other as the most profound method for developing bodhicitta.

It is good to really take this to heart. We have the opportunity to understand and engage in these practices, so it is important that we don't waste it.

## 3.2.1. Extensive explanation

This presented with the following three subdivisions:

3.2.1.1. Explaining the way of exchanging self and other

3.2.1.2. The way of following up in thought

3.2.1.3. The way of following up in action

### 3.2.1.1. EXPLAINING THE WAY OF EXCHANGING SELF AND OTHER

This is subdivided into two:

3.2.1.1.1. Extensive explanation

3.2.1.1.2. Brief summary

#### 3.2.1.1.1. Extensive explanation

This has three further subdivisions:

3.2.1.1.1.1. Meditate on cherishing others

3.2.1.1.1.2. Abandoning cherishing self with effort

3.2.1.1.1.3. Contemplating the faults of holding self as the most important, and the benefits of holding other as the most important

We can see how profound the topic is just from these outlines. The very meticulous presentation also shows us how to engage into the practice in a gradual way.

#### 3.2.1.1.1.1. Meditate on cherishing others

There are five ways of meditating on cherishing others.

3.2.1.1.1.1.1. It is possible to exchange self and other, and vanity is pacified

3.2.1.1.1.1.2. Advice to make an effort to meditate without hope for a ripening result

3.2.1.1.1.1.3. Giving even greater purpose to the benefit of others

3.2.1.1.1.1.4. If one meditates, one is able to generate it

3.2.1.1.1.1.5. Meditate on exchanging self and other because both self and other wish to be freed from suffering

3.2.1.1.1.1.1. *It is possible to exchange self and other, and vanity is pacified*

This hypothetical doubt is raised:

Argument: I am not able to meditate on exchanging self and other.

This relates to the doubt 'I'm not able to meditate on exchanging self and other' that we may have.

The following lines of verse respond to that doubt:

115. *Just as one generates through familiarity  
The awareness of 'mine' for a body lacking self,  
Why should one not generate the awareness of  
'mine'*

*For other sentient beings through  
familiarisation?*

116ab. *Thus, producing the purpose of others  
Vanity and grandiosity do not arise,*

The commentary explains the meaning of these lines as follows:

Answer: Through familiarity, one generates the grasping at 'mine' for the body, even though the body lacks a self. Likewise, why should one not be able to generate the awareness of 'this is mine' through familiarising oneself with cherishing other sentient beings? If one meditates, one can definitely generate it.

As this meditation on holding all sentient beings as self accomplishes the purpose of others, one does not generate feelings of vanity and grandiosity.

As the commentary explains, while in reality our body lacks a self, we instinctively hold the body as self because of our familiarity with that view. That being the case, as the commentary explains, *why should one not be able to generate the awareness of 'this is mine' through familiarising oneself with cherishing other sentient beings?* This rhetorical question implies that if one meditates, one can definitely generate this awareness. Just as one instinctively cherishes oneself now, it is definitely possible to cherish other sentient beings through becoming familiar with the thought of cherishing them.

When the commentary states, *as this meditation on holding all sentient beings as self accomplishes the purpose of others, one does not generate feelings of vanity and grandiosity*, it is saying that because one is totally dedicated to benefitting others, there is no room for vain and grandiose thoughts such as 'Oh, I am so important as I am doing such a great service for others'. That sort of pompous pride will not arise.

**3.2.1.1.1.2. Advice to make an effort to meditate without hope for a ripening result**

This means that one's practice is to be done without any hope for a good result for oneself. So working for other sentient beings should be free from any thoughts about the ripening of good karma in the future.

The following verses and explanations in the commentary are quite clear. The verse relating to this heading reads:

**116cd. Similar to not expecting a reward  
When eating food<sup>1</sup>.**

**117. Hence, when protecting self  
From some small unpleasantness  
Meditate on the mind of protection  
And compassion for migrators.**

As the commentary explains:

For example, it is similar to not expecting a reward for eating one's food. Since it has infinite benefits, one should meditate on compassion and protecting migrators from suffering just as one would protect oneself from even small unpleasant words.

The example presented states that one doesn't eat a meal in expectation of a reward. One eats the meal just for the sake of needing to eat. In the Tibetan text the first part of the presentation is *one protects oneself from even a small unpleasant word*. This means that we instinctively protect ourselves from criticism or even the slightest unpleasant words from others. So, just as one protects oneself, one should also protect other sentient beings in the same way, with the understanding that there's infinite benefit in doing so.

The point of meditating *on compassion and protecting migrators from suffering* is that just as one protects oneself from the slightest suffering, likewise out of compassion one needs to protect other sentient beings from experiencing suffering. The point is that it has to be based on compassion, because

without compassion for others, one would not generate the wish for them to be free from suffering.

What is being presented here in simple terms, is that if we wish to know how to protect other sentient beings, then the method is to protect them with a compassionate heart, just like we protect ourselves.

The example presented here is that just as we protect ourselves from hurtful words, likewise we need to protect others. We also need to take the initiative to protect other sentient beings from our own harsh and hurtful words. If we don't like hearing even the slightest unpleasant remark, then this is exactly the same for other sentient beings. So we need to be very careful not to utter hurtful words to other sentient beings. Why? Because just as we are hurt, they are also hurt.

We find many instances of how unskilful and harsh speech causes a lot of hurt and disharmony. Therefore we really need to pay attention to this point. These practices aren't just some sort of explanation to be heard and perhaps forgotten; rather, if we actually apply them in our own practice, then we can derive the intended benefit from these teachings.

**3.2.1.1.1.3. Giving even greater purpose to the benefit of others**

The verse relating to this outline reads:

**118. The protector Chenrezig  
Blessed therefore even his name,  
Out of great compassion,  
To eliminate migrators' sufferings of cyclic  
existence.**

The commentary then explains:

Since one needs to protect sentient beings from even small suffering, the protector Chenrezig blessed out of great compassion even his name to eliminate also the slightest of the frightening sufferings in cyclic existence: 'By thinking of my name may the frightening sufferings of cyclic existence become non-existent.'

In the *Array of Stalks Sutra* it explains it as remembering the name trice.

As explained here, Chenrezig (or Avalokiteshvara), is said to have made extremely powerful aspirations when he was a trainee on the path. When he was a bodhisattva training on the path to enlightenment, out of great compassion and not being able to bear the sufferings of sentient beings, he made very powerful aspirations such as, 'May even merely hearing my name become a means to eliminate the sufferings of sentient beings'.

Due to that combination of great compassion and such powerful aspirations, along with great wisdom, it is said that when Avalokiteshvara became enlightened, merely reciting his name brings great solace for sentient beings. As the commentary says, this is mentioned in the *Array of Stalks Sutra*. Reciting Avalokiteshvara's name is a very powerful mantra, and many people take it upon themselves to recite the Chenrezig mantra regularly as a means to generate compassion and help to eliminate the sufferings of other sentient beings.

I've mentioned previously how, at our level, we also need to take heed of the importance of making strong aspirational prayers. If we think, 'Oh, I'm good for nothing; I cannot possibly achieve anything', then the more we think in that way the less competent we will feel. Regardless of our actual state now, we can definitely have the capacity to generate the grandest aspirations to benefit other sentient beings.

<sup>1</sup> Needs to be read in the context of the first part of the verse.

Such aspirations have great significance. Enlightened beings are equal in being free from all faults, having an omniscient mind and compassion for all beings. However it is said that due to the strong aspirational prayers to benefit other beings when they were training on the path, and the merit accumulated at that time, when they become enlightened they are able to serve specific purposes to benefit sentient beings.

*By thinking of my name may the frightening sufferings of cyclic existence become non-existent.* Because of the combination of such strong aspirations based on great compassion, having accumulated extensive merits, and generating the great wisdom of omniscience, mantras such as the name of Chenrezig become a very powerful means to eliminate the suffering of sentient beings.

This is actually the meaning of the Tibetan word *jin-lab* that is translated as blessing. *Jin* means to bestow, and *lab* has a connotation of transforming the mind. So when people say 'I received blessings from a deity or holy objects such as statues and so forth', we need to understand that the real blessing is received when the mind transforms into a more positive and peaceful state.

#### 3.2.1.1.1.4. *If one meditates, one is able to generate it*

While the word meditate is used here, the connotation of the Tibetan term is familiarity. So when one becomes familiar with it one is able to generate it, or if one meditates on it one is able to generate it. The next verse is preceded by this hypothetical doubt or argument:

Argument: Although there are many benefits, it is difficult to meditate on exchanging self and other.

At this stage one may acknowledge that there are many benefits from engaging in the practice of exchanging self with other, but think that it is very difficult to practise. One may feel, 'How could I practise it?'

The next verse is one of those verses that is quoted often, which people find to be very significant and powerful advice.

**119. Do not be turned off by difficulty.  
Through the force of familiarity  
The one whose name instilled fear when hearing  
it,  
Becomes the one without whom one is joyless.**

The commentary explains:

Answer: One should not be turned off by the difficulty of meditating on it because if one meditates, then one can realise it. Through familiarisation even the enemy whose mere name instilled fear in us when hearing it, becomes later a friend without whom we are joyless.

This presentation is clearly intended to counteract a very familiar mindset that we have that prevents us from engaging in various practices and virtues: 'Oh, it's too hard; too difficult'. The presentation here is that even though something may be difficult, one can master whatever one wishes to accomplish through familiarity.

We need to refer to these points again and again. We can acknowledge our limitations and faults and shortcomings, but we do have a mind, which carries the potential to change and further develop. When we become familiar with something, it is possible to change and adopt it. That is the point we need to remind ourselves of.

*If one meditates on or becomes familiar with something then one can generate or realise it.* The example to illustrate this is an *enemy whose name initially instilled fear in oneself* – just

hearing their name instils fear. Yet even with such an enemy, if one attempts to gradually and slowly become familiar with them, then it becomes possible that the enemy will turn into a friend. One can become so close to them that one feels unhappy if they're not present.

Here a complete transformation has taken place: an individual considered to be an enemy, whose presence once instilled a lack of joy and unhappiness, and whose absence caused happiness, becomes so close that without their presence one feels unhappy and joyless. In the past I've shared with you that I've had personal experience of this transformation into friendship through acquaintance and familiarity.

The reverse of this is also true. You might be so close to someone that you could not bear to be separated from them. But later on, even after having been together for ten or fifteen years, now you cannot bear to be in their presence and it makes you unhappy if they're close by. This is due to familiarity with focusing on their faults. When one starts to focus on the faults of others, the mind becomes more and more acquainted with seeing only faults, and that's when the other becomes an arch enemy who one cannot bear to see.

As the great master Atisha very succinctly said: proclaim your faults and hide your qualities; proclaim the qualities of others and hide their faults. This is very profound advice that we need to put into practice.

Indeed, if one starts to become acquainted with seeing the faults of the other, one may reach a point where one doesn't see any qualities. One even starts to actually look for faults in the other, which may very well be just a projection of one's own faults onto them. In either case one may reach a point where one does not see any quality in the other, which causes animosity and anger.

#### 3.2.1.1.1.5. *Meditate on exchanging self and other because both self and other wish to be freed from suffering*

This is again a very logical presentation of how it is reasonable to exchange self with others because oneself and others all wish to be free from suffering.

The verse relating to this is:

**120. They who wish to rescue quickly  
Self and others  
Should practise the secret advice  
Of exchanging self and other.**

The commentary explains:

For those reasons, they who wish to rescue quickly self and others from the faults of existence and peace should practise exchanging self and other, which is the secret Mahayana advice on the ultimate meaning of meditation, which is kept from those who are not a vessel.

In the first sentence, *the faults of cyclic existence* refers to samsara, and *peace* refers to the personal liberation of the lower vehicles. Those who wish to *rescue quickly self and others should practise exchanging self and other, which is the secret Mahayana advice.* Here *secret Mahayana advice* doesn't refer to secret tantric teachings, but rather a secret not to be disclosed to those who have very strong self-interest and thus are not able to relate to these teachings. This also relates to the self-interest of the practitioners of the lower vehicles.

As mentioned further, *the ultimate meaning of meditation is kept from those who are not a vessel.* Here an unsuitable vessel refers the hearers and solitary realisers whose ultimate goal is to achieve personal liberation. For those who have a very

strong self-interest these teachings will not be suitable, because they would not be able to relate to, and practise them.

The ultimate meaning of meditation on exchanging self with other, as presented here, is that it serves as the very foundation of the practice of generating and developing bodhicitta. It is likened to the life-wood, which is the central piece of wood placed in a statue or stupa. Just as the life-wood serves as the central piece of a statue, the practice of bodhicitta is the very centre and life force of the Mahayana and the lamrim teachings.

It is as presented in the beginning of the *Three Principal Aspects of the Path*:

The essential meaning of the Victorious One's teachings,  
The path praised by all the holy victors and their children,  
The gateway of the fortunate ones desiring liberation

### 3.2.1.1.1.2. Abandoning cherishing self with effort

This is subdivided into two:

3.2.1.1.1.2.1. Self-cherishing is the cause for all fears

3.2.1.1.1.2.2. It is that which induces all harmful actions

3.2.1.1.1.2.1. *Self-cherishing is the cause for all fears*

The verse relating to this heading is:

121. *Out of those that generate fear for a small object  
Due to attachment to their body,  
Who would not abhor, like an enemy,  
This body that generates fear.*

The commentary further explains:

If due to attachment to one's body, without having exchanged self and others, one generates great fear for even small objects of fear such as scorpions and poisonous snakes, then who that is skilled would not abhor this body like an enemy? It is unsuitable to cherish it.

The commentary explains that, *due to attachment to one's body, which is without having exchanged self and others, one generates great fear for even small objects of fear such as scorpions and poisonous snakes.* We have an instinctive fear of these creatures because of our strong self-cherishing. As that is the case, *then who that is skilled, meaning who that is knowledgeable, would not abhor this body like an enemy?* This is referring to cherishing the body. Obviously we need to have a body, but the implication here is that cherishing it is not suitable.

3.2.1.1.1.2.2. *It is that which induces all harmful actions*

Here 'that' refers to cherishing one's body, which is another way of being attached to one's body. This is what induces harmful actions. The relevant lines of verse are:

122. *Desiring to practise the ritual of curing  
The afflictions of the body's hunger, thirst  
And the like, one kills birds, fish,  
Animals and hides in ambush.*

123ab. *They who, for profit and praise  
Even kill their father and mother*

The commentary which relates to these lines is:

Those who cherish self, and out of the desire to practise the ritual of curing the body's afflictions of hunger, thirst and the like, will burn in the hells without respite because they kill birds, fish and

animals, ambush travellers and steal the wealth of others.

In order for the cherished body to receive profit and praise, they even kill their father and mother.

The commentary clearly explains the negative consequences of strong self-cherishing out of the desire to protect one's body. *The ritual of curing the body's afflictions*, refers to protecting one's body from *hunger, thirst and so forth.* To do this individuals engage in negativities such as *killing birds, for food, or fish and animals, ambush travellers and steal the wealth of others.* Then as a consequence of these deeds they *will burn in the hells without respite.* Their negative deeds definitely ripen into this suffering.

As further explained, *in order for the cherished body to receive profit and praise, they even kill those who have been very kind to them, like their own father and mother.* This refers to actual events that have occurred in the past; the king who was killed by his son. There is also another story of the son who killed his mother as a way to gain profit. In fact these events also occur today.

We saw the recent tragedy in Nepal where the whole royal family was assassinated by a prince. He would have been influenced by his uncle or someone else saying, "If you kill your father then you can become king". These unthinkable acts that are perpetrated on those who have been extremely kind to oneself arise from self-cherishing. The desire for gain and profit blinds the perpetrator to the fact that they are harming those who have been extremely kind to them.

We hear on the news about children killing their parents, or parents killing their children and we need to understand that these are the results of the fault of self-cherishing. We cannot think, 'Oh this will never occur to me!' These extreme situations were caused by self-cherishing, and are a reminder that we need to be mindful and careful about our own self-cherishing.

While we can use these explanations to be cautious and mindful about protecting ourselves from a self-cherishing mind, it can also become a means to generate compassion for others when they engage in such negative deeds. Because we know that they are blinded by their own self-cherishing, we extend our compassion to those who engage in such negative deeds. The teachings present many methods for thinking about the faults of self-cherishing.

The remaining lines of verse under this heading read:

123cd. *Or steal offering from the Triple Gem  
Burn in the hell without respite*

124. *Hence, who that is wise would not view  
This body that is desired, protected  
And made offerings to,  
As an enemy, and deride it?*

The commentary further explains:

Further, they will steal offerings from the Triple Gem and thus they will also burn in the hells without respite. Thus, who that is skilled will not view this body that is desired, protected and made offerings to on the basis of cherishing it, as an enemy, who will not deride it? One needs to stop all forms of self-cherishing.

*They will steal offerings from the Triple Gem, and thus they will also burn in the hells without respite* refers to the consequences of cherishing oneself or one's body. *Thus, who that is skilled will not view this body that is desired, protected and made offerings to on the basis of cherishing it, as an enemy? Who will not deride it?* These are rhetorical questions which imply that one really

needs to see self-cherishing as an enemy. The conclusion is that *one needs to stop all forms of self-cherishing*.

We need to understand this explanation in its proper context. Protecting and making offerings to one's body as a means of sustaining one's body in order to benefit others is of course most suitable. The *Four Hundred Verses* mentioned that by understanding this body as being a vehicle to benefit others, one needs to sustain, and nourish it. One definitely needs to protect this body, which has been acquired through the practise of morality, as a means to benefit others. The longer we can sustain this body, the more opportunity we will have to practise morality and so forth.

### **3.2.1.1.3.1.3. Contemplating the faults of holding self as the most important and the benefits of holding other as the most important**

This is subdivided into two:

3.2.1.1.3.1.3.1. A list of the faults and benefits of cherishing self and other

3.2.1.1.3.1.3.2. It is appropriate to abandon self-cherishing

3.2.1.1.3.1.3.1. *A list of the faults and benefits of cherishing self and other*

Here there are two subdivisions:

3.2.1.1.3.1.3.1.1. Extensive explanation

3.2.1.1.3.1.3.1.2. Short summary

#### **3.2.1.1.3.1.3.1.1. Extensive explanation**

This is subdivided into five:

3.2.1.1.3.1.3.1.1.1. From the point of view of generosity

3.2.1.1.3.1.3.1.1.2. From the point of view of harm

3.2.1.1.3.1.3.1.1.3. From the point of view of praise and fame

3.2.1.1.3.1.3.1.1.4. From the point of view of inducing action

3.2.1.1.3.1.3.1.1.5. From the point of view of benefit and happiness

#### **3.2.1.1.3.1.3.1.1. From the point of view of generosity**

The verse relating to this is:

**125. *Saying, 'If I give, what shall I use?',  
Is the way of ghosts; the egotistical thought.  
Saying, 'If I use, then what will I give?',  
Is thinking about others; the Dharma of gods.***

The commentary explains:

The way of ghosts, the egotistical thought, where out of miserliness one thinks, 'If I give my wealth to others, then what will I use?' generates fear. The thought of, 'If I use it, then what will I give to others?' is only about the welfare of others. It is the Dharma of the gods and gives rise to all that is good and perfect.

Everyone is afraid of *ghosts*, and here they are used as an illustration of something that causes fear. *The egotistical thought, where out of miserliness one thinks, 'If I give my wealth to others, then what will I use?' generates fear*. This fear of having nothing left if we were to give to others is a thought that brings about miserliness. This prevents generosity, and thus prevents one from accumulating the virtue and merit that, in the long run, will be beneficial for oneself. That is a thought that should generate fear!

Whereas *the thought of, 'If I use it, then what will I give to others?'* is the thought that equals the beneficial thoughts of *the gods*. There are those who are concerned that if they consume too much themselves they will have nothing left to give to others; such genuine concern arises from a mind of cherishing others and wishing to benefit them. So they don't use too much for themselves for the fear of not having enough to share with others. Some even have a hard time

eating, thinking 'If I eat this then how could I feed others, who are much more disadvantaged than me?' There are people who think like this, and these noble thoughts are equal to the gods.

#### **3.2.1.1.3.1.2. From the point of view of harm**

The verse reads:

**126. *If one harms others for the purpose of self  
One will fall into the hells and the like.  
If one harms self for the purpose of others  
One will attain all good perfections.***

The commentary explains:

If one inflicts harm on others, such as killing, in order to attain happiness for oneself, one will fall into the hells and the like. If one harms and gives up one's body and wealth for the happiness of others, then one will attain all good perfections.

This is basically an account of cause and effect, and the consequences of karma. As mentioned here, *if one inflicts harm on others, such as killing, in order to attain happiness for oneself*, then while the intention might be happiness the consequence will be falling into the hells and suffering. Rather than happiness, one will in fact, only experience suffering.

From a worldly perspective, giving up *one's body and wealth for the happiness of others* may be even seen as a foolish act. "How foolish of them to give away their *body and wealth* to others". But when done with the proper intention, with the mind of cherishing other sentient beings, *then one will only attain the good perfections*. So the benefit of cherishing others is, as explained here, good consequences and results.

While these explanations are quite clear, the main point is to take them as a personal instruction and put them into practice; then they will become more meaningful. Often people comment, 'Oh, I've studied Buddhism for a while but how should I practise?' The answer is 'Put into practice what has been presented here'. When we actually put this reasonable and practical advice into practise, then that is when we derive the greatest benefit from the teachings.

Even spending some time reading and contemplating the meaning of this text, will definitely bring great solace to one's mind, making it calmer and more subdued. So, there is great benefit in doing that.

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

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Edited Version  
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# Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

3 May 2016

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Based on the motivation we generated during the refuge and bodhicitta prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. [meditation]

During the meditation practice we will have further strengthened our motivation. Generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

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

Generating such a motivation, even for a few moments, will definitely establish very strong positive imprints in our mind.

### 3.2.1.1.1.3. Contemplating the faults of holding self as the most important and the benefits of holding other as the most important

3.2.1.1.1.3.1. A list of the faults and benefits of cherishing self and other

3.2.1.1.1.3.1.1. Extensive explanation (cont.)

3.2.1.1.1.3.1.3. From the point of view of praise and fame

The verse reads:

127. *Due to the wish to attain it oneself  
One will have lower rebirth, inferiority  
and stupidity.  
If one transfers it to others,  
One will attain honour in a happy rebirth.*

The commentary explains:

Wishing to be elevated by praise and fame, one will take a lower rebirth in the next life. Even if one takes rebirth as a human, one will be of low caste, bad appearance and stupid. If one habituates oneself in transferring the wish for elevation to others, one will have a happy rebirth in the next life where one will receive perfect praise and honour.

*Wishing to be elevated by praise and fame* relates to wishing to be elevated by praise and fame just for oneself. When one has this attitude, the text explains the result is that *one will take a lower rebirth in the next life*. Then *even if one takes rebirth as a human, one will be of low caste and bad appearance*, which means not having an appealing appearance, and have a *stupid* mind.

What needs to be understood from this explanation is that when the focus of *wishing for elevated praise and fame* is merely for oneself, and while it may not seem like such a bad thing, what occurs when one focuses mainly on oneself when pursuing elevated praise and fame, is that a lot of afflictions arise in one's mind and thus one creates negativity. For example, out of jealousy one criticises those who are doing well or doing better than oneself; one sees others as one's rivals and a sense of

competitiveness arises; one has contempt towards others and puts them down and feels a sense of pride toward those who appear to be inferior to oneself. This is how we create negativity as a result of pursuing praise and fame merely for oneself. If the intention of pursuing praise and fame is a means to benefit others, that's different. But here the commentary emphasises the consequences of the negativities that occur when one pursues this aim only for oneself.

Most of our faults actually arise from a wish to become famous or well known or to be praised. This becomes a downfall for us because in pursuit of fame and praise a lot of the other negativities follow.

We need to take heed here of Shantideva's very succinct and precise advice on how to engage in a practice that will benefit oneself ultimately and not harm oneself. Again, many may wonder about what's wrong with being famous or being praised, but the key point to understand is that when the focus is merely on one's own gratification, one's own selfish gain, then the pursuit of that incurs many negativities.

The consequences are explained in that, *one will take rebirth in the lower realms in the next life, and even if one were to be reborn as a human* then all of the following disadvantages would occur. This is similar to what Shantideva mentioned earlier in the text when he said, 'while wishing to be free from suffering, beings run towards the very causes of suffering. And although they wish for happiness, they destroy their own happiness like an enemy'. These same points are being presented here, which is in essence a succinct presentation of karma.

When one focuses just on oneself, then even though one wishes for a good outcome, the actual consequences one experiences are negative. But if one practices the opposite (explained next in the commentary) and, *if one habituates oneself in transferring the wish for elevation to others*, i.e. wishing praise and fame for others, one actually transfers the focus to others and the consequences are that *one will have a happy rebirth in the next life, where one will receive perfect praise and honour*.

When one engages in the practice of offering praise to others, and wishing fame for them, this stops a lot of negativity from arising in our minds, because there's no chance for jealousy etc. to arise when one truly wishes others to have praise and fame. For example, when others are doing well one would be very happy for them, because that is exactly what one has wished for.

Jealousy arises when one is not happy with others' good fortune, when good things happen for them such as praise and fame. If we are keen to actually practise Dharma we need to put into practice offering praise and fame to others. At first glance this concept may sound strange, however one will begin to understand that when one engages in a selfish pursuit one creates a lot of negativity, and if one practises the opposite and wishes wellness for others, then that is when one actually practises virtue. This is the main point.

We need to understand this very good advice, given to us in very simple terms. It points out that if you harbour feelings based on selfish interest, it will only bring about negative results rather than good ones. However, if you

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harbour good attitudes and positive states of mind, this allows one to accumulate virtuous deeds, which ultimately brings about good results for yourself. This is the very compassionate advice being presented to us by Shantideva.

### 3.2.1.1.1.3.1.4. From the point of view of inducing action

This heading refers to the type of actions one takes.

The verse reads:

**128. If one commands others for the purpose of self,  
One will experience being a slave and the like.  
If oneself works for the purpose of others,  
One will only experience being a lord and  
master.**

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

If one enslaves others, taking their freedom, for the purpose of self, then one will experience later inferior status; being a slave and the like. If one works and commands oneself for the happiness and benefit of others, one will later be a lord and master, and experience higher status, having a good appearance and the like.

Again this explanation relates to the disadvantages of cherishing just oneself and the great advantages of cherishing others. We can see that this situation, *enslaving others and taking their freedom, for the purpose of self*, occurs a lot even in these times, where people completely take advantage of others. Employers at times take complete advantage of their employees, making them work for many extra hours with minimal or no extra pay.

So at this time and age there are still those who are enslaved, basically working for almost nothing, required to do too much work and under too much pressure. Unfortunately we see this taking place. So when this is done out of self-cherishing, the consequence is that, *one will experience later, an inferior status, and being a slave and the like* in the future oneself.

The opposite is, *if one works and commands oneself for the happiness and benefit of others, one will later be a lord and master, and experience higher status, having a good appearance and the like*. This explains that good attributes will come about naturally and spontaneously without exerting oneself, when one puts oneself into the service of other sentient beings with an attitude of cherishing them.

You may feel like this explanation doesn't relate to you now because you're not a master enslaving others and making them work, thus there is no danger of these negativities. But one needs to keep in mind that this can occur at any time. If one reaches such a position of being in charge under whatever circumstances, then this is when the danger of misusing power and taking control of others can occur. Therefore one needs to be mindful and engage in practices now so that in the event one gains power one will avoid mistreating others.

A prevalent fault or downfall is where we become obsessed with getting higher status, wanting to be recognised, and having a high calling. When we think about the various types of problems we have, and the different suffering we experience, it really does stem from a strong clinging on to me: my individual happiness; I want things to be my way; I have to achieve my goals; I want everything to be perfect just for me.

When we harbour such attitudes, the stronger we hold the feeling of wanting things to go well just for me, harbouring the attitude of - me, me, me all the time, then when things don't go our way and our expectations are not met, we feel totally overwhelmed with disappointment and suffering. All the problems we experience are really due to a singular focus just on oneself.

If you were to make an attempt to actually shift your focus and think about the welfare of others, how they also need happiness and want to be free from suffering, and contemplate their sufferings, then the moment you actually shift your focus you will find from your own experience that you get an immediate release. Your mind becomes much more expansive, and as your own problems start to become less significant you get a release from your own problems.

If one doesn't pay attention, and continuously thinks about one's own problems and difficulties, and whether things have been going according to your own wishes, then the problems just perpetuate, and it's one problem after another. However, while we may not have overcome the root of our problems yet, when we shift our focus onto others, even that temporary release we get gives us some solace and some space to think more clearly. We gain courage and insight from that experience, and this gives us the impetus to practise further. This is how we see the benefit of the practice.

We experience difficulties and problems that are clearly created by our own self-cherishing mind. In this abundant country we all have a nice place to live in and have food at our table every day. None of us here have to worry about not getting our next meal, or not finding a place to stay. So in terms of the general external conditions for our sustenance, everything is adequate. However we all have complaints of one sort or another and how things are not right. This shows that the problems are caused by an ego-centric self-cherishing mind not getting its own way and never satisfied; in essence, being obsessed with one's own needs and wanting things to be one's own way.

In a relationship between two people, if one partner starts to have an attitude that things have to be their way, when the other makes a suggestion they reject it feeling it 'doesn't accord with my wishes'. When one person asserts their strong, opinionated mind then that's the moment conflict arises. Conversely, the moment a partner says, 'If it's OK with you then it's fine with me' and is happy with that, the potential friction immediately subsides and there is no room for conflict or agitation.

We can see clearly from this example that the moment there's a strong opinionated mind where a person won't accept something the other wants, because it doesn't accord with their own personal wishes, then that creates conflict. We can learn something from the simple statement: 'if it's OK with you then it's fine with me' because the opposite 'even if it's fine with you, it's not ok with me' is how problems begin. This is the point to keep in mind.

To share one incident, last Thursday on my regular visit to the sea-baths, as I was bathing there, one elderly

person came to me and commented, 'you're a Buddhist monk aren't you?' And I said yes. Then he said 'I've actually seen you on many occasions from a distance and seen you are very joyful and happy. It occurred to me that it might be because you are a Buddhist. I thought if I could be like you, who always seem to be happy and joyful, then that would be really good. I'd be fulfilled if I could be happy as you are'. Then he said, 'I actually started going to a Buddhist centre to go to some teachings'. Actually it turns out to be one of the Kadampa centres.

So although he didn't confirm that he's a Buddhist he said he'd started to go to a Buddhist centre. He was showing a genuine interest, and that is the point. The moral of this incident is that when people use their intelligence, they want to follow the example of someone who is happy and joyful, rather than wanting to be rich and famous.

Previously I've also shared a story about a merchant who sells fruit and his comments to me. I used to occasionally go to Southland and have coffee at a particular cafe. Opposite to where I sat down and had coffee was a merchant selling fruit; I think he was of Italian background. He would smile at me and occasionally come up and greet me and say 'Hello, how are you?' Once when he greeted me, I asked him 'How are you?' he said 'Oh, not so good'. I asked him if business was going well. I thought maybe he had financial problems. He said 'No, business is going quite well, but I'd rather be like you. That would be nice'.

I have many such stories about people just coming up to me and sharing their thoughts and telling me about their life. Someone came up to me in the Southland Shopping Centre once and said 'I haven't seen anyone as nice and as happy as you', and shook my hand.

All these anecdotes illustrate the main point presented here which is that if one starts to really familiarise one's mind with cherishing others, then that's something that brings a great sense of joy within oneself. It attracts others and they seem to acknowledge you and be happy in your presence. These are the positive results we start to gain when we make a genuine attempt to practise cherishing others and overcome self-cherishing.

### 3.2.1.1.1.3.1.5. From the point of view of benefit and happiness

The verse reads:

129. *Whatever happiness is found in the transitory worlds  
Came from the wish for the happiness of others.  
Whatever sufferings are found in the transitory worlds  
Came from the wish for self to be happy.*

The commentary explains:

In short, whatever happiness there is in the transitory worlds, it all came from the wish for others to be happy and from working for others. Whatever sufferings there are in the transitory worlds, they all came from the self-cherishing that wishes happiness for the self. Therefore, one should stop the self-cherishing with effort.

The commentary again emphasises the point that all the happiness seen in the world is actually the result of

working for the sake of others, from cherishing others. Whereas *whatever sufferings* one experiences in the *worlds* actually comes from the *self-cherishing* mind, which is in essence presenting the natural cause and effect sequence of karma – how one experiences the results of all the karma one creates.

### 3.2.1.1.1.3.1.2. Summary of the meaning<sup>1</sup>

Shantideva is saying here: I do not have to elaborate too much on the faults of self-cherishing and the advantages of cherishing others; the following example clearly illustrates the difference between the two.

The verse reads:

130. *What need is there to say a lot?  
The childish work for their own benefit  
And the Able One works for the benefit of  
others,  
Look at the difference between the two.*

The commentary goes on to explain:

What need is there for extensive elaborate explanations? The childish receive all they do not wish for because they cherish their own well-being, while the Able One works for the welfare of others and perfect all that is good. Just look at the difference between these two and generate belief.

The point the commentary explains here is that without having to use *elaborate* and *extensive explanations*, by simply looking at the difference between the *childish*, or ordinary beings, and the *Able One*, who is the Buddha, we can see the clear difference.

It indicates that once the Buddha was an ordinary being like us, with all the faults and shortcomings we now have. However through engaging in the practice, particularly the attitude of cherishing others and developing bodhicitta, this path led the Buddha to become a renowned enlightened being. We can see how the Buddha is completely free from all these faults and endowed with all great qualities. Whereas we ordinary beings are still harbouring self-cherishing attitudes, and experiencing all the shortcomings and sufferings of the negative consequences of our actions.

This clearly shows the disadvantages of self-cherishing and the great advantages and benefit of cherishing other sentient beings. When one looks at it in this way one will be able to *generate belief*, meaning that one will strongly believe in the advantages of cherishing others and the disadvantages of cherishing oneself.

### 3.2.1.1.1.3.2. It is appropriate to abandon self-cherishing

This is subdivided into four:

3.2.1.1.1.3.2.1. The unseen faults

3.2.1.1.1.3.2.2. The faults that one can see

3.2.1.1.1.3.2.3. A summary of the faults

3.2.1.1.1.3.2.4. It is suitable to give up self-cherishing

### 3.2.1.1.1.3.2.1. The unseen faults

The verse reads:

131. *If one does not perfectly exchange  
One's happiness for the suffering of others  
One will not achieve enlightenment*

<sup>1</sup> Last week this heading was introduced as 3.2.1.1.1.3.1.2. Short summary

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*And one will also lack happiness in cyclic existence.*

The commentary explains:

If one does not exchange perfectly the happiness of self for the suffering of others and reverse from the initial attitude of working for the happiness of self and eliminating the suffering of self, by cherishing others, i.e., working for their happiness and striving with effort to eliminate their suffering, then one will not achieve enlightenment.

One may think, 'Even if I do not achieve enlightenment and remain in cyclic existence that would be OK', but one will also lack perfect happiness in cyclic existence.

The first part of this explanation states, *if one does not exchange perfectly the happiness of self for the suffering of others and reverse from the initial attitude*, which as explained earlier, is giving one's happiness to others and taking the suffering of others upon oneself. The commentary then further explains the exchange of one's own happiness for the suffering of others where it reads that, *and reverse from the initial attitude of working for the happiness of self and eliminating the suffering of self, by cherishing others, i.e., working for their happiness and striving with effort to eliminate their suffering*, meaning that if one does not engage in that *then one will not achieve enlightenment*.

From this one may start thinking that, *Even if I do not achieve enlightenment and remain in cyclic existence that would be OK, but one will also lack perfect happiness in cyclic existence*. If one were to think 'it's fine to remain in cyclic existence joyfully and with happiness', as mentioned here, *one will also lack perfect happiness in cyclic existence*. Thus one will not experience any true happiness while remaining in cyclic existence.

The phrase, lacking perfect happiness in cyclic existence, refers to uncontaminated true happiness. We experience general happiness as humans, and the god realms also have a certain level of happiness, but the happiness the text is referring to here is ultimate happiness.

I wonder if there's a difference in the term 'happy' and 'happiness'. There was a comment made in the Happiness conference by one speaker who said 'I don't really know what happiness means'. That just brought to my mind that maybe happiness is something that is a little bit more obscure, whereas happy, we can talk about being happy or sad.

### **3.2.1.1.1.3.2.2. The faults that one can see**

This refers to the most obvious faults one can relate to even in this life.

The verse reads:

**132. *Leaving aside the world beyond,  
Servants and helpers will not work and  
Masters will not pay wages,  
One will not even achieve the purpose of this  
life.***

The commentary explains:

If one does not meditate on giving up self and cherishing others, then, leaving aside the faults of future lives, also in this life one's servants and helpers will not work and the master one did work for will not pay wages. One will not achieve even the purpose of this life.

The meaning of this verse is that, *if one does not meditate or familiarise on giving up self and cherishing others, then, leaving aside the faults of future lives*, which means leaving aside the consequences to be experienced in future lives, even in this very life, the disadvantages would be for example that, *servants and helpers will not work and the master one did work for will not pay wages*. So *one will not achieve even the purpose of this life*.

This example illustrates that the master needs workers (or employees) to work for them, and if they don't work, the master's purpose will not be fulfilled. Also, as the servants' goal in life is to achieve wages to live, if they are not paid then their purpose is not achieved. In short, if you don't change your attitude these are the consequences to be experienced. My interpretation of this example is that if from the workers' side they only work with minimal interest, and are negligent and not putting their heart into it in order to fulfil the master's wishes, and are only interested in getting their wages, then of course the master will be unhappy and not pay their wages. Therefore the servants will lose their wages and lose the goal they wished to achieve. Whereas if they changed their attitude and took a genuine interest in their work and did it wholeheartedly to fulfil their duties, with the attitude of making the other happy, they would naturally get their wages. That is something that one would gain as a by-product of the work. So from the servants' side if they changed their attitude toward the work, and did it more willingly and wholeheartedly, then they'll fulfil their own purpose too.

If the master is miserly about paying the wages and tries to avoid paying the workers in a timely manner, then of course the servants won't be happy either. Therefore if the master maintains that attitude they will lose their workers or servants and their purpose will not be fulfilled. However if their attitude changes and wages are given willingly and in a timely manner, then that would make the servants happy and the master would fulfil their own purpose. The example is about the need to change one's attitudes to gain the ultimate benefit.

### **3.2.1.1.1.3.2.3. A summary of the faults**

The verse reads:

**133. *One gives up the perfect bliss and happiness  
That establishes the seen and unseen happiness.  
Due to the cause of harming others,  
They are deluded and take on frightening  
suffering.***

The commentary explains:

As one does not put great purpose into the welfare of others one has given up exchanging self and other; the method for achieving happiness in this life and in future lives. Thus, one has thoroughly abandoned perfect happiness. The childish that are deluded with regards to what is the method for happiness and suffering, due to the cause of inflicting the harm of suffering onto others, have taken into their continuum frightening and difficult to bear suffering.

It is quite clearly explained here that, *as one does not put great purpose into the welfare of others one has given up exchanging self and other; which is the method for achieving happiness in this life and in future lives*. If *one does not put great purpose into the welfare of others and gives up*

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*exchanging self and other*, then the consequences are that, *one has thoroughly abandoned perfect happiness*, as one has actually abandoned the very cause of one's happiness.

So, *the childish that are deluded with regards to what is the method for happiness and suffering, due to the cause of inflicting the harm of suffering onto others, have taken into their continuum frightening and difficult to bear suffering*. It's as if they've taken upon their own suffering by accumulating the causes of suffering.

Earlier there was mention of being mistaken about what one wishes for, and the causes for achieving it. While one may wish for something, one often fails to engage in the appropriate causes to achieve it.

### 3.2.1.1.1.3.2.4. It is suitable to give up self-cherishing

The first verse reads:

134. *Whatever harm there is in the transitory worlds,  
Whatever danger and suffering come into existence,  
If all that arises from self-cherishing,  
Then what does this demon of self-cherishing do for me?*

The commentary to this verse reads:

If all the human and non-human harm in the transitory worlds, all the mental fears and physical sufferings that come into existence, arise from self-cherishing, which has taken the self as object, then what good is this great demon of self-cherishing for oneself? It causes all that one does not desire, and one should abandon it.

This reiterates what was presented earlier but provides more detail on how all the fears of *humans and non-humans* in this world, such as *the mental fears and physical sufferings that come into existence, arise from self-cherishing*. So we can see that even the fear generated by a small insect, like an ant for example, when you start shaking something near it, it immediately starts running away to protect itself, due to its self-cherishing.

It is said that this is true for every kind of fear and every kind of mental or physical agony we experience – all arise from self-cherishing. This verse further emphasises the faults of self-cherishing.

If one has caused others fear or pain etc., as a consequence it returns as your experience of mental agony. All fear stems from the self-cherishing mind.

It emphasises that, as all the fears and unwanted sufferings arise from that, then what use is self-cherishing to oneself? This is a rhetorical question implying that there is no use whatsoever.

The next verse reads:

135. *If one does not give oneself up completely,  
One will not be able to abandon suffering;  
For example, if one does not let go of fire  
One is unable to stop being burned.*

The commentary explains:

If one does not completely give up cherishing oneself then one will not be able to eliminate the suffering of all sentient beings. For example, like not being able to stop being burned if one does not let go of fire in one's hand.

The example here shows that if you have something hot and burning in your hand, such as fire, if you don't let go of it then your hand will be burned. If you want to protect your hand from the burning you have to let go of the fire. The moment you let go your hand is protected from being burnt.

What is being explained here is that as long as one holds on to self-cherishing, one will not be able to eliminate the suffering of other sentient beings. In order to eliminate others' suffering one actually has to let go of one's own self-cherishing attitude. As soon as one does it will be possible to eliminate their sufferings. This is the point. When it's so hard to give up self-cherishing it's no wonder that it's so difficult to become a buddha.

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

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Edited Version  
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## Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

10 May 2016

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Engaging in the *tong len* meditation practice is highly meaningful. Of course, it is good to reflect on the actual meaning of the practice. The text that we are studying here meticulously and succinctly presents logical reasons to think about why we need to benefit others. Basically it is because we have not thought to benefit others that we have experienced so much loss, so many problems; all because of the lack of that positive attitude.

What has one gained from merely focusing on one's own purpose until now? Nothing but more problems and difficulties! Our present condition is the result of thinking only about fulfilling our own purpose. This clearly shows the great disadvantage of thinking in this way. We can see that the great enlightened beings, on the other hand, have achieved the ultimate state of enlightenment because of having solely contemplated the purpose of others.

In terms of the *practice*, as we recall from earlier presentations, we first generate the mind that wishes to benefit others, followed by the wish to achieve enlightenment; whereas, in terms of actually *achieving the goal* one first attains enlightenment, whereby one is able to fulfil the purpose of others.

As presented in the seven-fold cause and effect sequence for developing bodhicitta, the preceding causes – particularly developing great love, great compassion and the superior intention – are all methods for developing the wish to fulfil the purpose of others. Based on having developed these minds one then generates the mind of bodhicitta, the determination to achieve enlightenment to fulfil the purpose of all living beings. Thus one must first fulfil one's purpose – which is to attain enlightenment – so that one is able to completely fulfil the purpose of other sentient beings, which is to be free from all suffering and established in the ultimate state of happiness.

Based on this systematic and logical presentation we need to utilise the good conditions we have right now to familiarise the mind with the wish to benefit others, to fulfil their purpose. As mentioned earlier in the text (verse 130), leaving aside elaborate explanations, one can understand the disadvantage of cherishing oneself by looking at the difference between ordinary sentient beings and the Buddha.

Referring back to the seven-fold cause and effect sequence, the six causes are preceded by the foundation practice, the development of equanimity. Equanimity is where one generates an unbiased mind towards all living beings. One further strengthens this basis by generating the mind that recognises all beings as having been one's mother, followed by remembering their kindness, and then generating the wish to repay that kindness. These

first three of the six causes are the foundation for fulfilling the purpose of others.

Next, one strengthens the wish to benefit all mother sentient beings by contemplating that the best way to repay their kindness is to remove all their sufferings and establish them in the ultimate state of happiness. When one develops the intense mind of genuinely wishing all beings to be endowed in happiness, this is known as heart-warming love. Then, when one wishes all beings to be completely free from suffering, one will have developed great compassion.

One further enhances that great love and compassion by going beyond the mere wish for others to be endowed with happiness and free from suffering, and actually taking personal responsibility to free all beings from suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness. This is when one develops superior intention. Having developed superior intention, one questions whether one has the ability to free all beings from suffering right now. It becomes evident that one is lacking that ability. When one further investigates who may have that ability, one sees it is not the foe destroyers who have reached the state of self-liberation – such as the hearers and solitary realisers – neither do bodhisattvas who have reached even the highest level, such as the tenth ground. It becomes clear that it is only the Buddha, the fully enlightened being, who has the full capacity and ability to fully benefit sentient beings.

At this stage, one makes a strong resolve to achieve enlightenment for the purpose of all sentient beings, to free them from suffering and lead them to ultimate happiness. When one develops that mind unceasingly and spontaneously, one has actually developed bodhicitta. This is how we need to understand the stages.

Most of you already know this presentation quite well, but I am reminding you so that you put it into practice; that is what I feel is most essential. The main point is to integrate what you have learned into your practice. While I cannot claim to have advanced a great deal in my practice, I can assure you that from the very beginning of my attempts at study, I have always been keen to try and put whatever teachings possible into practice. As a consequence of that, I naturally have a strong inclination to put whatever I learn into practice, rather than just gaining knowledge from the teachings of the texts.

When students comment 'I have done a lot of study, now what should I practise?', this is a clear sign that, from the start, their study was never really done with the intention of doing practice. If one intended to put one's study into practice as a priority from the very start then, as one studied, one would have naturally found ways to put what one learned into practice. As one's knowledge of the teachings progressed, one's means for developing one's practice would have naturally increased. The main point here is to put whatever one has understood into practice: do not leave it for later on, but apply it in one's daily practice right now.

As you will have noticed, I have emphasised again and again in Study Group on Tuesday nights, and also on Wednesday evenings the need to put whatever one understands into practice. This is my only concern. I

don't have any great concern that you won't understand or learn, but I am reminding you to put your understanding into practice.

As I mentioned in a recent teaching at the Drol Kar Centre, I practice what you already know. I am not engaged in any profound practices that are beyond your conception and understanding. We are not deprived of the lack of understanding of the Dharma, but we do lack the habit of putting it into practice. Indeed, all of you have already gained quite a good understanding of the Dharma, in relation to others in this country who have no access to the Dharma. What may be lacking though, is actually putting your understanding into practice.

When we put our understanding into practice, it will definitely help subdue our mind, and when the mind is subdued, the mind is much happier and gentler. Otherwise there could be the great fault that the knowledge we have gained only becomes a means to increase our delusions, such as pride, anger or attachment. What could be worse than for a follower of the Dharma to be obsessed with attachment? As practitioners, we need to be mindful of this. If one has attachment to one's own beliefs, and aversion towards others' views for example, that is a big downfall, whether it is towards other religious seekers or others in general. This is what poisons the mind. Individuals who hold this sort of mindset cannot be called true practitioners. I am constantly careful about falling victim to these kinds of negative states of mind myself. I feel it is really important that, as true Dharma seekers, we remain mindful of not allowing the knowledge we have gained to become a poison for our mind, rather than a remedy to subdue the mind and overcome the delusions.

Now we come to the next heading in the text. More elaborate explanations were given last time about the preceding verse, which explains that if one does not completely give up the focus on oneself, one will not be able to abandon suffering. The example given is that if one does not let go of fire, one is unable to stop being burned. These are good, practical analogies given to illustrate the need for us to abandon suffering.

### 3.2.1.1. EXPLAINING THE WAY OF EXCHANGING SELF AND OTHER (CONT.)

#### 3.2.1.1.2. Brief summary

##### 3.2.1.1.2.1. The way of exchanging self and other

136. *Thus, to pacify harm to oneself  
And to pacify the suffering of others  
One should offer oneself to others  
And hold others as oneself.*

The commentary explaining this verse is:

Since disregarding others and cherishing self is the source for all that is undesired, one should give up cherishing self and cherish others as oneself, offering oneself for the purpose of all sentient beings, so as to pacify harm to self and the sufferings of others.

The commentary explains the meaning quite clearly. To emphasise the points we need to put into practice, the first part mentions: *Since disregarding others and cherishing self is the source for all that is undesired.* In other words, cherishing oneself is the source of all our misery and shortcomings. In relation to experiencing difficulties and

problems, we often hear people ask, 'Why me? Why am I suffering?' If one is really keen to know, then when one investigates it becomes clear that one's problems arise because of self-cherishing. In fact, it is the combination of self-grasping and self-cherishing: it is said that self-grasping is likened to a king and self-cherishing is like the king's minister. Just as a minister would follow the king's every command, similarly the self-cherishing mind follows every command given by the self-grasping mind.

In this way, the self-cherishing mind engages in a lot of negative deeds under the command of the self-grasping mind. As a consequence one experiences a lot of suffering, problems and difficulties. So, as mentioned here, this mind is the source of all that is undesired, thus *one should give up cherishing self, and instead cherish others as oneself, offering oneself for the purpose of all sentient beings.* Spending some time contemplating these points by reading this verse and reflecting on the meaning becomes a practice in itself. I would consider this a real form of meditation. Putting it into practice is what we need to do after gaining some understanding.

This explanation is presented quite succinctly. First, the faults of self-cherishing are explained as the source of all that is undesired and all our problems. This is followed by the actual practice of exchanging self and other: one gives up cherishing self and instead cherishes others. Just as one cherished oneself previously, one exchanges that by focusing on others. That is the actual exchange that one does in the practice of exchanging self with others.

The next verse under the same heading reads:

137. *I say 'I am under the control of others.'  
Mind, understanding this with certainty  
You shall from now on think about nothing else  
But accomplishing the welfare of all sentient beings.*

'Mind, you should understand with certainty that from now on I am under the control of others. From today onwards you shall think only about accomplishing the welfare of sentient beings and not about other things such as accomplishing only the purpose of self.'

Having presented the need to exchange self with others and to engage in the practice of cherishing others, the text reprimands one to be really mindful. Once one has committed to cherishing other sentient beings more than oneself, then one puts oneself in the service of others, allowing one to be under their control. Here it is suggesting pointing the finger at oneself, saying, *From today onwards I shall only think about accomplishing the welfare of sentient beings and not about other things such as accomplishing only the purpose of self.* The advice here does not suggest going around instructing others, but rather taking this practice upon oneself. It is about adopting this mindset and making the resolve oneself to serve other sentient beings. This is really a pith instruction for bodhisattvas' practice, so we need to be inspired to follow the example here and put it into practice as much as we can. When we take this advice as personal instruction, it serves its purpose: it becomes meaningful by enhancing one's practice of compassion.

The points presented here again emphasise how one should integrate Dharma practice in one's own mind. If

the practice is left on one side, and oneself on the other side, then one falls short of really utilising what is being presented here.

### 3.2.1.1.2.2. Stopping wrong actions upon having done the exchange

Having made a resolve to exchange oneself with others, one needs to back that up by stopping all wrong actions. This is what is being presented next.

*138. It is unsuitable to accomplish the welfare of self  
With eyes and the like that belong to others.  
It is unsuitable to mistreat them with the eyes  
And the like that are for their purpose.*

If one dedicates oneself as a servant for sentient beings then it is unsuitable to use one's eyes and the like to mistreat them. It is unsuitable to look angrily at sentient beings with the eyes that belong to them or to use these eyes to achieve only one's own welfare. One needs to achieve their purpose.

Since it is unsuitable to mistreat sentient beings with eyes and the like that belong to them, if one recognises that one mistreats them with the three doors, one needs to restrain oneself again and again upon contemplating the faults.

As the commentary explains, after having exchanged self with others, one needs to dedicate oneself to being a servant of sentient beings. This is in line with comments I have made on Wednesday night that, as far as my motivation is concerned, I see myself as someone who is in the service of you, the listeners. While I may be sitting up here on the throne, as far as my motivation and attitude are concerned, I am down there with you, serving you. We can see that Shantideva is emphasising this point here.

When one has entrusted oneself as a servant to other sentient beings, one should not mistreat them, for example, by looking inappropriately at them: *it is unsuitable to look angrily at sentient beings with the eyes that belong to them*. In other words, having dedicated oneself to benefiting others, one does not use one's eyes to give them dirty looks, or use one's limbs, arms or legs to make inappropriate gestures, by hitting, pushing or kicking others and so forth. If one has taken to heart the commitment to cherish other sentient beings, these ways of mistreating others are totally inappropriate.

Instead, one should use one's eyes to only look compassionately and gently upon others. As mentioned in one of the earlier verses, the mere sight of other sentient beings should immediately cause one to recall that 'it is by this very sentient being that I shall become enlightened'. Shantideva mentions how when one sees other sentient beings one should look upon them with a compassionate attitude. If we are not careful, when we have a disagreement with someone or when someone happens to pass by, it is easy to give them a dirty look or make an inappropriate gesture. We need to be mindful of this. As the commentary continues, when *one recognises one has mistreated them with the three doors* – that is through one's physical actions, one's speech or one's mind – at that time one should *restrain oneself again and again upon contemplating the faults*. This is how we need to guard our three doors.

While not mentioned here specifically, mistreating others occurs when we engage in any of the ten non-virtues, so a succinct way to remember how to guard our three doors is to restrain oneself from the ten non-virtues – such as not engaging in covetousness, harmful intention or harbouring wrong views, in relation to the mind. Whenever one notices any of these states of mind arising, one should recognise it and restrain oneself.

It is good to note again the difference between restraint and protection. When any of one's three doors are already engaged in a harmful activity, one needs to apply restraint. Protection, on the other hand, means not allowing one's mind to go towards that negativity from the very beginning. As the text on moral conduct, the Vinaya explains, among the restraints, restraining one's mind is supreme, because when one restrains one's mind, one naturally refrains from all the non-virtues of body and speech. When one is not able to restrain one's mind, one finds oneself engaging in physical and verbal misdeeds.

To give an illustration, if one is unable to restrain one's mind from the influence of anger, due to that angry mind one would not hesitate to use harmful speech against others, hit, or even kill them. However, if, from the very beginning, one doesn't allow the anger to dominate the mind, this will naturally protect one from verbal and physical misdeeds. When we derive the essence of the text, we can then find ways to put that meaning into practice.

### 3.2.1.1.2.3. Practising faultlessly

*139. Then, having to put sentient beings first,  
Whatever is observable on one's body  
By stealing from it  
One uses it for the benefit of others.*

For this reason, having to put the purpose of sentient beings first, one views without forgetfulness the food, clothing and others that one observes on one's body by stealing from it - that is giving up grasping at these objects as mine, one uses them for their benefit, as a servant would use the food, clothing and other resources of the master.

As the commentary explains, after one has made the resolve to serve other sentient beings, whatever one normally uses them for to sustain one's body such as food, clothing and the like, as if stealing from one's own body, one uses it only to serve other sentient beings. As the commentary further clarifies, this means giving up grasping at these objects as 'mine'. So while one still needs to use resources, one uses it with the attitude that it is for the purpose of other sentient beings. For example, when the servants of a king partake of the clothing, food and so forth that are provided to them by the king, they have no sense that they own those things. The servants' food and so forth are provided to sustain them as a way to further serve the king. Likewise, when we partake of food and so forth, we need to do so with the attitude that this is a means to serve sentient beings. Even offering one's food and drink is in line with what is being explained here, keeping the attitude always that one is nourishing oneself in order to serve other sentient beings. The advice presented here is very beneficial, even in everyday life. If we were able to really have consideration



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for others, always engage in appropriate gestures in relation to them, and always see oneself as their servant, then from one's own side one will only be engaged in positive interactions. There is no doubt this will create the basis for good relationships and good communication with others.

Of course, there are times when in spite of engaging in the means to benefit others, they are still not happy and may show a lack of respect, appreciation and even distance themselves from one. However although they harbour such attitudes, if one actually puts this advice into practice then at least from one's own side one will not have done anything wrong, and there is no reason for one to feel bad. So regardless of how others treat you, if you engage in the practice as presented here, it makes one's life really meaningful.

I have heard that some couples make agreements to treat the other as 'number one'; some even demand the other 'you have to treat me as number one'. If both sides treated the other as number one, then that would be a good mutual relationship. But if one demands the other to treat them as number one, but in return they don't treat the other as number one, then that is not fair. The main point here is that if there is mutual concern, where both treat the other as a priority, a benefit can be derived.

Indeed, we can see many instances of those who take the initiative to go beyond their own selfish needs and think about others. Some parents have commented that one of their children always shares with others and has concern for others. That child is naturally seen as being very considerate and good. Within families, we can see those who have consideration for other members of the family and have genuine concern about the others' welfare; a family member takes the initiative for the well-being of the family as a whole, whereas others are always thinking about their own selfish needs. Even in worldly society, when someone is seen as selfish and only thinking of themselves, they are not held in high esteem. So we can see that the advice presented here relates to everyday life as well.

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

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*Edited Version*  
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## Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

17 May 2016

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Based on the motivation we generated during the refuge and bodhicitta prayer, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice. *[meditation]*

The hallmark of having meditated on exchanging self and other is that the love and compassion in our heart increases. So it is good to check as to how effective the practice has been by gauging how much love and compassion has increased.

While there are subtler levels of suffering that one can focus on, in general it is obvious how sentient beings are experiencing great suffering and are deprived of happiness. Not bearing to see sentient beings deprived of happiness and wishing them to be happy is what is called love, and not being able to bear sentient beings' suffering and wishing them to be free from suffering is compassion. Meditating again and again on cultivating these attitudes, and thus familiarising one's mind with them, brings about a real transformation in one's mind.

When one realises how, despite developing this noble wish, sentient beings are still continuing to lack happiness and experience suffering, a deep sense of personal responsibility for establishing them in happiness and freeing them from suffering begins to develop. One sees that it is crucial to take up the responsibility for establishing sentient beings in ultimate happiness and freeing them from all suffering, because merely wishing them to be happy and free from suffering has not brought about any change to their situation.

For that mind of taking personal responsibility to generate spontaneously, one needs to have first familiarised one's mind with the development of love and compassion. This means meditating again and again on love and compassion, and acquainting oneself with these states of mind. Without first familiarising oneself with love and compassion, the initiative to take on the responsibility for leading all beings to happiness and freeing them from all suffering will not arise.

The most supreme method for enhancing love and compassion is the technique of giving and taking, which is the meditation practice we have just engaged in. Familiarising ourselves with this practice means meditating on giving and taking again and again. Without familiarising and acquainting ourselves with the wish to give, for example, we won't be able to give. Even though we may have the ability to do so, what prevents us from giving is the lack of familiarity with the mind of giving. Similarly, taking the suffering of others upon oneself is also based on familiarising one's mind with that practice. Even if we have the ability to take responsibility to help others to be free from suffering, if we don't do so it is because we lack that familiarity. So familiarising

one's mind again and again with the practice of giving and taking is essential.

Indeed, the practice of giving and taking is really the core practice of the bodhisattvas. It is through acquaintance with this practice that one enhances and strengthens the mind of love and compassion to the point of taking on the personal responsibility for bringing happiness to others, and removing their suffering. Then one will be able to develop what is called the superior intention, which is the mind developed just prior to generating actual bodhicitta.

If, after having meditated on the seven-point cause and effect sequence, one has not yet developed the superior intention, then by engaging in the practice of giving and taking, one will definitely be able to develop this mind. As this is such a powerful practice to benefit others, we can see why it is a core practice of bodhisattvas.

From the very outset the very purpose or goal of meditating on the seven-point cause and effect sequence is to benefit other sentient beings, i.e. to free them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness. That goal is then further enhanced throughout the developmental stages of the awakening mind.

On a personal level it is important to try to gauge whether our practice has produced any fruit, and the extent to which an unbiased love and compassion towards all beings has developed. As we develop our practice we need to further strengthen it, not leaving it at a mere wish. Rather than just wishing, for example, 'it would be nice if I could do the giving and taking practice', it means really developing the sentiment 'I need to be fully taking on that responsibility' from the depths of one's heart. That is the key point.

An example of the difference between a mere wish to practise, and the actual practice is, for example, gauged by our reaction when seeing someone who is deprived of food and who is really hungry. If you have the ability to help alleviate such a person's immediate suffering of hunger by giving them some food, but do not actually take the initiative to do so, then although you may wish them to be free from the suffering of hunger, you have not actually put that wish into practice. That would be a clear sign that your practice has remained mere words, and that you have not really taken it to heart.

This may appear to be a very simple practice. However it is at this level initially that we need to begin our practise. At our level now we don't have the ability to engage in high-level practices like the bodhisattvas, who are able to give away their flesh, their blood and their bodies to others. But we do have the ability to practise giving food to those who are hungry.

Having attempted to meditate on love and compassion, and engage in the practice of giving and taking, it is reasonable to ask whether there has been any actual transformation taking place within our minds. One way to gauge whether a transformation has taken place would be to look at whether our attitudes have changed. For example, prior to our attempts to engage in developing love and compassion, when we saw a disagreeable person experiencing difficulties or undergoing some sort of suffering, we might have spontaneously thought 'Oh, that serves them right. They deserve to suffer'. Rather

than wishing for them to be free from suffering, we added on more suffering in the sense of thinking that it serves them right.

Likewise when a disagreeable person lacked happiness we would have felt that it served them right, and that they were not entitled to any happiness. So rather than wishing others to be established in happiness, we wanted them to lack happiness, and rather than wishing for the other to be free from suffering we might have even wished them to experience more suffering. This is the extent of the negative mind and attitude that we might have harboured previously.

Having then taken the initiative to voluntarily engage in the practice of developing love and compassion one focusses on all beings in an unbiased manner, seeing them equally deserving happiness, and to be free from suffering. One meditates on this point and familiarises oneself with it again and again. The hallmark of this practice having taken effect is when we see that same disagreeable person suffering later on, we feel 'Oh, how wonderful it would be if they would be free from this misfortune or suffering'. And when we see those who are deprived of happiness, we begin to feel how unfortunate it is that they lack happiness, and how wonderful it would be if they could be established in happiness.

When that attitude arises readily, then that is the true sign that a transformation has taken place. At our level we are not yet able to actually generate bodhicitta. However, through familiarity we can definitely acquaint our mind with love and compassion, and develop that to the point of sincerely wishing others to be happy and free from suffering. That is such a wonderful state of mind to be in, and such a radical change from our earlier ways of thinking.

Developing such a mind of unbiased love and compassion towards others, wishing them to be endowed in happiness and free from suffering, regardless of who they are – whether they are disagreeable, or an object of earlier disagreements – will definitely bring great benefit to both oneself and others.

So whilst we have not yet developed the awakening mind of bodhicitta, this incredibly positive transformation of our previous attitude to one of unbiased love and compassion is a very sound foundation for developing bodhicitta. It is good to keep this mind.

When we really think about the benefits of developing such attitudes we can unhesitatingly accept that love and compassion is the root of all happiness, and that it is the very essence of one's life.

In terms of happiness in the world in general, at a societal level and within a community, love and compassion is definitely the basis for true wellbeing. The person who has a mind of love for others will not have any intention to harm others, because the intention to harm cannot arise when there is love for others. Without such an attitude one could defiantly harm others, but when there is true love and compassion, the attitude of harming others cannot arise. The only thought that would arise would be the wish to benefit them. When that attitude is prevalent, how could there be harm and violence in a community?

We need to constantly check the extent to which our love and compassion has developed and increased. With this habit of investigating and employing constant vigilance over our state of mind, our practice will stabilise and become more durable. By practising in his way we are also securing our own happiness. As I've regularly emphasised, the consequence of losing love and compassion is equivalent to the loss of our own happiness. It would be pitiful if we allowed that to happen.

Maintaining a genuine sense of wellbeing and happiness is directly related to generating love and compassion, and then maintaining and further enhancing that love and compassion. This practice will be really meaningful because it is done with logic and reason through tested experiences. Then we will have utilised our intelligence and wisdom appropriately.

If one doesn't utilise one's intelligence to further enhance love and compassion as a basis for one's own happiness and for the wellbeing for others, then our intelligence will not only have gone to waste but could potentially even be harmful. So we need to pay careful attention to this.

Leaving aside the importance of love and compassion on a large scale, we can see the consequences for a couple when love and compassion weakens. That is when harmful intentions start to develop. It may start slowly with bickering and hurting each other with words and so forth, but as that love and compassion and genuine concern further declines, then more extensive harm starts to occur.

### **3.2.1.1. EXPLAINING THE WAY OF EXCHANGING SELF AND OTHER**

#### **3.2.1.1.2. Brief summary**

#### **3.2.1.1.2.3. Practising faultlessly (cont.)**

Now we need to come back to the text, otherwise we will not cover much of it.

The following explanations give very precise instructions on how to engage in this practice of exchanging self and other. The commentary on verse 139 reads:

For this reason, having to put the purpose of sentient beings first, one views without forgetfulness the food, clothing and others that one observes on one's body by stealing from it - that is giving up grasping at these objects as mine, one uses them for their benefit, as a servant would use the food, clothing and other resources of the master.

The commentary meticulously explains how to put love and compassion into practice for the reasons that have been presented earlier. For *the purpose of putting sentient beings first, one views without forgetfulness the food, clothing, and resources one uses for one's body by stealing from it.* [Other translations use the word 'snatching' instead of stealing.] As the commentary explains, stealing or snatching from the body means giving up grasping at these objects as mine. So one develops the mind of giving up grasping at these objects, one's resources and so forth, which are used to sustain one's body as 'mine', and uses them for the benefit of other sentient beings.

Reflecting on these passages is really a form of meditation, and will really help the mind to settle down. I guarantee that if you are in a disturbed state of mind,

then contemplating these points will help to settle down your mind, and pacify it. It is good to sit down at times to read the text, and reflect on its meaning.

### 3.2.1.2. THE WAY OF FOLLOWING UP IN THOUGHT

The earlier verses have indicated the necessity of practising exchanging self with other. Having reached the point of actually practising exchanging self with other, this next section explains how to follow it up in thought.

This section is divided into two:

3.2.1.2.1. Indicating

3.2.1.2.2. Explaining

#### 3.2.1.2.1. Indicating

The verse relating to this is:

*140. Having made those lower and the like into self  
And having made self into others,  
With a mind free of discursive thoughts  
Meditate on jealousy, competitiveness and  
pride.*

The commentary explains:

Bodhisattvas focus on other sentient beings that are lower, equal and superior and take them as self and hold the self as other. Having thus exchanged the focus of grasping at self and others, one should induce certainty and meditate, if the meditating bodhisattva's name is Devadatta, with a mind free from doubting discursive thoughts on jealousy for Devadatta, competitiveness if equal and pride if lower.

As presented here, *bodhisattvas focus on other sentient beings that are lower, equal and superior and take them as self and hold the self as other*. Basically the practice that is being presented here is a way to overcome these faulty states of mind of jealousy, a sense of competitiveness, and pride.

When the bodhisattvas engage in practice they use every means and method to apply antidotes to counteract such faulty or negative states of mind. What is being presented here is how to use occasions where one actually feels jealous as a means to overcome jealousy. Likewise, with using occasions when competitiveness arises as an opportunity to apply an antidote for overcoming a sense of competitiveness, and using occasions where pride arises, to apply an appropriate antidote to overcome the negative or faulty state of mind of pride.

**Jealousy** is a mind that is unhappy about the success of others, unable to bear seeing success, good qualities and achievements of others. With equals, there's a sense of **competitiveness** where one feels uncomfortable when one's equals are doing better, or there is a sense of, 'I should be better than them'. With those who are lower or inferior to oneself in some field, one has a sense of **pride**, and feelings of contempt for them. These are really faulty states of mind that are the causes of negativity. The implication here is that we need to apply antidotes to overcome these faulty states of mind.

The commentary also presents an illustration of how to counteract these three faulty states of mind. To counteract jealousy, one engages in the practice of putting oneself in the place of the other, and assuming the higher place. To overcome the mind of contempt and pride over those who are lower, one places oneself in the lower state. So exchanging one's own position with the object of the deluded thought is the way of counteracting these

negative states of mind: if it is jealousy of one who is higher, then putting oneself in that state; if it is contempt for the lower, then taking the lower position oneself; and it's the same with competitiveness i.e. exchanging oneself with the other.

Of course there's no room for these negative states in the minds of actual bodhisattvas. That's because they've already engaged in the practice of seeing the faults of such negative states of mind. When the bodhisattvas were in the early stage of their practices, if there was even the slightest hint of jealousy they were able to immediately recognise that, and immediately see the shortcomings of jealousy, which counteracted that jealousy. Likewise there is not much room for pride to arise in a bodhisattva's mind. At early stages of their practice if there was the slightest chance for pride to arise, they were able to apply the methods and means to immediately counteract and overcome this negative state of mind.

Of course the practices presented here are for trainees on the bodhisattva path.

#### 3.2.1.2.2. Explaining

Explaining is subdivided into four:

3.2.1.2.2.1. The way of meditating on jealousy for the higher

3.2.1.2.2.2. The way of meditating on competitiveness for the equal

3.2.1.2.2.3. The way of meditating on pride for the lower

3.2.1.2.2.4. The results of the meditation

##### 3.2.1.2.2.1. The way of meditating on jealousy for the higher

The way of meditating on jealousy for the higher is subdivided into two:

3.2.1.2.2.1.1. The way of meditating

3.2.1.2.2.1.2. The way of practise after the meditation

###### 3.2.1.2.2.1.1. The way of meditating

This is how we need to meditate on jealousy. The relevant lines of verse read:

*141. He is praised but I am not,  
We do not find gain like him,  
He is praised but I am criticised,  
He is happy but I have suffering,*

*142ab. I have to do the work  
While he abides happily;*

Then the commentary explains:

When the bodhisattva Devadatta meditates on exchanging self and other, Devadatta is praised by others, but having taken sentient beings as self, one is of lower qualities and will not be praised. One does not find necessities for happiness in the same way as Devadatta and although the bodhisattva Devadatta is praised, we sentient beings, are criticised. He is happy and we sentient beings have suffering. We have to do the work of carrying, but Devadatta abides happily.

This is a clear explanation of how jealousy is developed in the mind when another is praised, such as when *Devadatta is praised by others*. *Having taken sentient beings as self, one is of lower qualities and will not be praised*, refers to feeling jealous because we, oneself and others, are not praised. Another example is when the other finds *the necessities for happiness*, and *we sentient beings are criticised*.

We are jealous because *he is happy and we sentient beings have suffering. We have to do the work of carrying, but Devadatta abides happily. Jealousy develops from thinking, 'How come they get all the good things? That's not fair!'*

When we see how jealousy arises, we can see that just avoiding such states of mind overcomes jealousy, and thus it serves as an antidote for overcoming jealousy. This presentation also applies to the way in which pride is developed; the same contemplation also counteracts pride very effectively.

While these are analogies of how jealousy and so forth arise, they do not apply to actual bodhisattvas. Rather they are part of training in how to counteract jealousy and so forth.

The remaining lines of verse presented under this heading are:

- 142cd.** *He is great in the world  
But I am known for my lack of qualities.*
- 143.** *What should one do without qualities?  
We are all endowed with qualities.  
There are those that are lower than him  
And there are those with regard to whom I am higher.*

The commentary then explains:

This bodhisattva is greatly renowned in the transitory worlds for his ethics, listening and so forth, but I am known for inferiority and a lack of qualities. Through effort you achieved qualities but what should we, the sentient beings without qualities, do? We sentient beings shall all practise to become endowed with qualities.

That we are low and he is high is posited relative to each other. Thus there are occasions in relation to others with superior qualities that these bodhisattvas are inferior, and there are occasions in relation to the other inferior sentient beings that I am superior. Therefore there is no need for us sentient beings to be discouraged and we should practise with effort for complete enlightenment. One should meditate on holding others as self, by thinking in this way.

The first part of the commentary indicates that *this bodhisattva is greatly renowned in the transitory worlds for his ethics, listening and so forth.* The jealous mind thinks, 'Oh, this bodhisattva is renowned for his ethics and his learning and so forth, but I'm only known as inferior and lacking qualities'. *Through effort you achieved qualities but what should we, the sentient beings without qualities do?* is a lamentation: 'We don't have any qualities, so we are shunned'. One way to overcome such sentiment is to think that if *we sentient beings practise*, we will all become *endowed with qualities*.

The earlier part of the commentary is a presentation of an attitude that can wear you down. You feel, 'Oh, he's so renowned, and I don't have any qualities', and when you think in that way then your mind becomes weighed down by a lack of confidence and so forth. The line *we sentient beings shall all practise to become endowed with qualities*, shows us that as we have the ability we can gain qualities. This is a sentiment that will uplift the mind and make it courageous.

As a way of overcoming a mind concerned about him being high and me being low the commentary says, *we are*

*low and he is high is posited relative to each other.* This presentation shows us that, there is, in fact, no ultimate high position, and no ultimate low position. What is considered as being high or low is all relative to each other. That is the main point here. As specifically explained here, because it is relative, *there are occasions in relation to others with superior qualities that these bodhisattvas are inferior, and likewise, there are occasions in relation to the other inferior sentient beings where I am superior.*

*Therefore there is no need for sentient beings to be discouraged and we should practise with effort for complete enlightenment.* This is followed by the conclusion that, *one should meditate on holding others as self, by thinking in this way.*

This section has dealt with the qualities of hearing, listening, learning, and so forth. Next comes this hypothetical argument:

Argument: You are lower than the bodhisattva Devadatta due to degenerated ethics and view.

Having indicated ways of overcoming feelings of despondency because others have other higher qualities, this hypothetical argument relates to the thought, 'Oh, I'm still *lower than the bodhisattva Devadatta due to degenerated ethics and view.* His ethics and view are so much better, and that's why I'm lower'. In response to this, these two lines of verse are presented:

- 144ab.** *Ethics, view and faults  
Are out of our control as they are powered by the afflictions.*

The commentary answers the hypothetical question saying:

Answer: The degenerated ethics and view, faults due to lifestyle and so forth, i.e., degenerated view and action, are due to the power of the adventitious mental afflictions and not faults I created purposely under my own power.

As explained here very precisely, *degenerated ethics* i.e. behaviour and so forth *and faulty view, faults due to lifestyle and so forth*, are *due to the power of the adventitious mental afflictions and not faults I created purposely under my own power.* We need to remind ourselves of these essential points again and again in relation to both others and ourselves. It is not the individual being who is at fault, rather the faults are due to the influence of the mental afflictions. It is the afflictions that are at the fault rather than the individual person, whether it is oneself or others.

This is in line with the explanation in Aryadeva's *Four Hundred Verses* where it indicates that the Buddha does not see other individual beings as faulty; rather he sees the delusions within their mind as the fault. These are essential points. When one reprimands oneself one needs to understand that, 'It is due to the delusions in my mind that I'm engaging in such negative behaviours, or holding faulty views. So if I overcome these delusions, then all will be rectified, and all will be good.

It is, of course, due to delusions that we engage in behaviour that is clearly harmful to ourselves and others. No-one with any intelligence wants to engage in behaviours and acts that are clearly harmful. Yet, uncontrollably, we still engage in such actions or deeds because of the strong influence of the delusions.

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When the delusions are overcome then such negative behaviours and faulty views will all naturally subside. The point here is that it is within our own hands: if we do not want to experience the consequences of ill-behaviours and faulty views, then we need to overcome the delusions. Then the negative consequences will pass us by.

The emphasis here is on *the power of the adventitious mental afflictions*. The Tibetan word *lu-pur-wa* - translated here as adventitious - has the connotation that it arises intermittently or occasionally. So by implication these mental afflictions are not permanent, i.e. due to certain conditions they arise, but when the conditions are not met they are not there. Thus, because they arise occasionally, they are not a permanent entity of the mind and can be totally removed.

Amongst several analogies presented in Maitreya's *Uttaratantra*<sup>1</sup>, one is that the delusions are like clouds in the sky, in that they arise occasionally and are thus adventitious. Proof that the clouds are not a permanent entity of the sky is seen when the wind blows the clouds away, and the real entity of a clear and blue sky becomes evident.

Another analogy to illustrate that the delusions are adventitious that is presented in the same text, is that they are like murky water. If the particles of the dirt that make the water appear murky were to be one with the entity of water, then they would be inseparable, and the murky water will always remain murky. However the fact that the dirt particles are adventitious means that after some time the dirt settles down, and the water becomes clear.

The delusions are adventitious in the sense that they are not intrinsically one with the mind; they arise due to certain causes and conditions. The main point is that the delusions can be separated from the mind, and therefore the mind can be freed from the delusions.

A contemporary analogy is desalination projects, which are possible because of the fact that salt can be separated from seawater. If the salt and water were not separable then there could be no such projects. I have heard that desalination is quite expensive. The point of the analogy is that if salt and seawater were one entity then the water and salt could not be separated. Likewise, if the delusions were of one entity with the mind then they could not be separated from the mind, and one would always be affected by them.

The main point here is that mental afflictions are adventitious, which means that they can be separated from our mind.

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

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<sup>1</sup> *Great Vehicle Treatise on the Sublime Continuum*, translated by Jeffrey Hopkins  
Chapter 8