

# Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

10 November 2015

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

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

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

## 2.1. Abandoning distractions

### 2.1.2. The way of abandoning it

#### 2.1.2.4. THE BENEFITS OF RELYING ON ISOLATION

##### 2.1.2.4.4. Distinction of individual discernment (cont.)

##### 2.1.2.4.4.2. Individually discerning the antidote against attachment to friends and relatives

This is subdivided into three

2.1.2.4.4.2.1. It is unsuitable to be attached to friends and relatives

2.1.2.4.4.2.2. The reason for that

2.1.2.4.4.2.3. Thinking of oneself as a guest that stays each day in a different abode

2.1.2.4.4.2.1. *It is unsuitable to be attached to friends and relatives*

This section of the text explains the disadvantages of being overly attached to friends, relatives, and close companions. Indeed, strong attachment to those closest to us seems to lead to a lot of mental agony. It is suitable to generate compassion for close ones, relatives and friends, but strong attachment is the cause of a lot of mental agony. Of course we may engage in relationships with the idea that we are going to derive happiness from that relationship, but it often leads to more suffering, more agony and more disturbance to the mind.

The faults of attachment are specifically explained in the following passages of the text. Really, the main point is that having an overly strong attachment to one's close and dear relatives can be a hindrance to one's practice. These faults are quite clearly explained in the text and are not very difficult to understand.

The verse relating to this heading reads:

31. *Although this body came as one,  
If the flesh and bones, which were born at the  
same time,  
Disintegrate and separate from each other,  
Then what need is there to mention friends and  
relatives?*

The commentary explains the meaning as follows:

One should give up the craving of not wanting to be separated from friends and relatives. Even though this body came as a whole, if the flesh and bones, which were born at the same time, disintegrate and separate

from each other, then what need is there to mention that one will be separated from friends that came unrelated, through the power of their own individual karma? Think that you will quickly be separated.

The commentary states that *one should give up the craving of not wanting to be separated from friends and relatives*. In addition to attachment to relatives, friends, and companions, which is, of course, a fault, the specific attachment being referred to here is attachment to not wanting to be separated from a partner in a close relationship. One needs to give up that craving. As presented here, the disadvantage of having this craving is that one will experience enormous mental suffering when separation inevitably takes place.

The reason for giving up this craving (which also serves as an antidote to it) is that *even though this body came as a whole, the flesh and bones (which were born at the same time) disintegrate and separate from each other*. Of course, the self and the body are inseparable during this lifetime. However, one is born with a body that will naturally disintegrate, and when that happens, the self and the physical body will separate from each other.

So *what need is there to mention that one will be separated from friends that came unrelated, through the power of their own individual karma?* This rhetorical question implies that as one will be separated from this very body that one is born with, there's no question then that one will be separated from close relatives and friends, and so forth. That will definitely happen.

Contemplating these points is the means to overcome that craving of not wanting to be separated from close friends and relatives. Thinking *that you will quickly be separated* will then help to overcome that craving. When one contemplates these points thoroughly and overcomes the strong craving of not wanting to be separated, then when the actual separation takes place, there won't be as much agony and suffering.

##### 2.1.2.4.4.2.2. The reason for that

Having explained that it is unsuitable to be attached to friends and relatives, the text then explains why that is the case. So we can see how the text presents the material very meticulously, backing up explanations with sound reasoning.

The verse relating to this heading is:

32. *When one is born, one is born alone,  
And when one dies, one dies alone.  
Since others will not take our fortune and luck,  
What is there to do with obstructing friends?*

The commentary explains:

Although one stays together for a short time, there is no need to grasp at that, because when one is born, one is born alone and when one dies, one dies alone. Since others will not take the sufferings of one's ripened results of the karmas that one created in relation to them, what good are those friends that obstruct the creation of virtue? As one is not benefited by them in the slightest, it is unsuitable to be attached to them.

As explained here in the commentary, *although one stays together for a short time, there is no need to grasp at that*. The reason for this is that *when one is born, one is born alone and when one dies, one dies alone*. Since others will not take the sufferings of one's ripened results of the karmas that one created in relation to them, what good are those friends that obstruct the creation of virtue?

While these points are quite clearly explained, we need to contemplate them carefully, and put them into practice so as not to create negativity and harm in relation to one's close ones, relatives and so forth. This is particularly important with Dharma friends, where we need to take particular care not to obstruct their creation of virtue. Indeed, rather than obstructing them, we need to be helping them to create more virtue. One needs to really pay attention to this point.

There are some who claim to be helping others but who are acting with a completely wrong motivation. Some say they are helping the other when in fact they are engaging in sexual misconduct. Behaving in this way is completely contrary to the Dharma, and such a person doesn't even come close to being a real practitioner. One is, in fact, just deluding oneself and the other.

As mentioned in Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*, obstructing virtue is one of the heaviest negativities. Since we consider ourselves as Dharma practitioners, we need to pay great attention so that we do not obstruct the collection of virtue by other Dharma practitioners.

Individually, of course, we may engage in negativities, and when we recognise that we have created negativity, we need to acknowledge that. As I've mentioned previously, we acknowledge that we have engaged in the negativity, develop strong regret about having done so, and then engage in confession practices. If we find ourselves engaging in negativity, then that is the time to engage in purification practices by confessing those negativities. We also need to rejoice when we engage in virtue, and when we encourage others to also engage in virtue. Then we can rejoice in that too.

However the reverse of that is also practised where, as I've mentioned previously, people rejoice in the fact that they've created some negativity, and regret that they have accumulated virtue. That is the complete antithesis of Dharma practice. This is an example of one's wisdom eye being blinded. One needs to not be blinded, but to take the initiative to use one's wisdom and intelligence to engage in proper Dharma practice.

The main point being related here is that one should overcome attachment to close ones, such as relatives, friends, and companions, because that attachment can serve as a condition to create a lot of negativities. It can also obstruct the creation of virtue. However the result of that negativity can only be experienced by oneself—one can't share the negative consequences of one's negativities with another person. One has to experience those consequences by oneself.

Then the commentary concludes, *as one is not benefited by them in the slightest, it is unsuitable to be attached to them*. This is the real point that one needs to keep in mind.

#### 2.1.2.4.4.2.3. *Thinking of oneself as a guest that stays each day in a different abode*

The analogy being presented here is that of discarding an abode in which one has resided temporarily. Another analogy is of how big gatherings of people will eventually disperse. For example crowds of people swarm around Victoria Market during the day, but by evening the market is completely empty. A recent example was His Holiness's visit to Uluru. I stayed at a guest house which, I was told, had over 200 guests at that time. But the next day, after His Holiness left, most of the guests had left and that abode was now empty. This idea also applies to families. For example, I've heard that there were ten children in the family who

originally owned this building, and I heard from one young man who came here that there are very few decedents of that family. These examples show us how gatherings, abodes and so forth naturally disperse.

The verse relating to this reads:

33. *Just as those travelling  
Perceive an abode,  
Those on the road of existence  
Should perceive the abode of birth.*

The commentary explains:

Just as guests travelling on the road perceive the guesthouse as an abode to stay in for one day, likewise it is inappropriate for those who travel on the road of existence due to karma, to have attachment for them that are of the same kind, blood relatives, and the abode of birth where one was born once.

The commentary begins with the analogy of *guests travelling on the road finding a guesthouse as an abode to stay in for one day*. Likewise, it is inappropriate for those who travel on the road of existence due to karma, to be attached to those who are of the same kind, blood relatives. As we have all been born in this abode of human existence it is as if we are all blood relatives, in the sense that we are all of the same species, i.e. humans. However the time will come when we have to depart this abode and go on to different types of existences. Due to their karma some might be reborn in the unfortunate realms such as the hungry ghost spirit realms; others might be reborn in the human realms again; and yet others find rebirth in the god realms. So in this way the different types of existence, which are similar to abodes, keep on changing.

The point here is there's no point being attached to this abode, as one will eventually have to discard it, and go on to dwell in a different abode.

#### 2.1.2.4.5. *Distinction of non-distraction*

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.2.4.5.1. It is suitable for the skilled to rely on isolation

2.1.2.4.5.2. The benefits of relying on isolation

##### 2.1.2.4.5.1. **It is suitable for the skilled to rely on isolation**

Here *the skilled* refers to those who have great wisdom. Having contemplated the disadvantages presented in the earlier points, they will earnestly seek isolation.

34. *Until this body will be carried  
By four people,  
While the world is mourning,  
Remain in the forest.*

The commentary explains:

Since one is not beyond death at the end of one's life, one should remain in the forest and rely on isolation until one's body will be carried from one's home by four people while the world of one's friends is mourning.

The very fact that one is born means that one will have to inevitably experience death; that is the natural result of being born due to the influence of delusions and karma. Since that is the case then, as explained here, one goes into isolation as a way of applying all of one's time in practice and accumulating virtue before one's body is carried by four pallbearers to the cemetery.

If one were to take this explanation literally, then the best condition for practice is isolation, where one is not distracted. However if one were to take this as a personal instruction, then the main point is that one should dedicate

one's time to engaging in the practice of Dharma and accumulating virtue, and not be overly influenced or consumed by distractions from one's close relatives and so forth. In particular, one should bring to mind that when one's life comes to its end, then it will have gone without any essence if one has not engaged in practice. That is the main point to recall here.

#### 2.1.2.4.5.2. The benefits of relying on isolation

Again we can note here the very systematic and logical presentation of the text. Having explained that it is suitable for the skilled to rely on isolation, the logical sequence is to think about the benefits of relying on isolation.

Here there are three subdivisions:

2.1.2.4.5.2.1. There is no misery of mourning

2.1.2.4.5.2.2. Virtue does not decrease but increases

2.1.2.4.5.2.3. Hence, it is appropriate for one to rely on isolation

##### 2.1.2.4.5.2.1. There is no misery of mourning

The verse relating to this heading is preceded by this rhetorical question:

If it is asked, "What are the benefits of remaining in the forest?"

Then the verse is presented:

35. *As there is no friend and no-one with  
resentment,  
This body should remain alone in solitude.  
Being regarded as dead even before death,  
There will be no mourner when one dies.*

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse, which serves as an answer to the earlier rhetorical question:

Answer: In the forest there are no friends that generate attachment or hatred and there is no-one harbouring resentment against one because of wondering whether they have been harmed by one. Hence, one should remain in physical isolation. Having given up friends and relatives one will be regarded by them as already dead before death, and so there will be no attachment and no mourners when one dies.

As the commentary explains, *in the forest there are no friends who generate attachment or hatred, so there is no-one harbouring resentment against one because of wondering whether they have been harmed by one.* What is being clearly explained here is that when one goes into solitude to engage in practice then there are no immediate concerns about whether one will be offending others, or be harmed by others. One will be free from all the normal harms and conflicts that arise due to one's relations with others and so forth.

Therefore, as explained here, *one should remain in physical isolation. Having given up friends and relatives one will be regarded by them as already dead.* By remaining in solitude and engaging in the practice, even those who knew you before will not know exactly where you are. You often hear remarks like, 'Have you seen so and so?' To which others reply, 'Well, we don't know; they could be dead for all we know'. These kinds of remarks are appropriate when one has gone into solitude to engage fully in practice.

Thus there will be *no mourners* even at the time of death.

2.1.2.4.5.2.2. Virtue does not decrease but increases

The verse relating to this reads:

36. *There is nobody close by  
That will mourn or harm.  
Through this one will not be distracted  
From the recollections of Buddha and so forth.*

As the commentary explains:

If one is remaining in solitude in the forest, as there is no friend or enemy close by that will mourn or harm, one does not have any distractions from the recollections of Buddha and so forth, and from meditating on the path to liberation and omniscient transcendental wisdom. Hence, the skilled will give up distractions and retire to the forest.

As explained here, *virtue does not decrease but increases. If one remains in solitude in the forest, as there is no friend or enemy close by that will mourn or harm,* means that there will be no one to mourn if one is dead, and no-one to harm oneself.

*One does not have any distractions from the recollections of Buddha and so forth.* There are six recollections:

1. Recollection of the Buddha;
2. Recollection of the Dharma;
3. Recollection of the Sangha;
4. Recollection of morality;
5. Recollection of generosity; and
6. Recollection of the deities.

Furthermore, contemplating suchness and acquiring the conditions for liberation and enlightenment are further practices that one engages in without distraction in isolation. Thus the *skilled*, (those with great wisdom) *will give up distractions and retire to the forest,* to remain in solitude in order to engage in practice.

2.1.2.4.5.2.3. Hence, it is appropriate for one to rely on isolation

Having explained the benefits of isolation, the conclusion is that *it is appropriate for one to rely on isolation.* The verse relating to this reads:

37. *Hence, in the extremely delightful forest  
There is little difficulty but bliss and happiness.  
Pacifying all distraction  
I shall remain in solitude.*

The commentary explains:

Hence, by remaining in the extremely delightful forest, where physical and mental happiness increases, one has little difficulty as one obtains livelihood easily, and as there are no harms like sicknesses, happiness is generated. Therefore, one should pacify all distractions and abide in solitude. One will have less harm, and virtue will increase.

As explained clearly *here, by remaining in the extremely delightful forest,* i.e. the conducive conditions in the forest, *where physical and mental happiness increases, one has little difficulty,* because *one obtains livelihood easily, and as there are no harms like sicknesses;* as such *happiness is generated.* Thus, *one should pacify all distractions and abide in solitude.* By doing so *one will have less harm, and virtue will increase.*

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

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Edited Version

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

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Based on the motivation generated during the prayers, let us engage in our meditation practice. (*Meditation*)

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

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

## 2.2. Abandoning incorrect conceptualisation

This is divided into two:

2.2.1. Meditating on disillusionment of desire

2.2.2. Meditating on joy for solitude

### 2.2.1. Meditating on disillusionment of desire

This is sub-divided into three:

2.2.1.1. Contemplating that the result of cultivating desire is fraught with dangers

2.2.1.2. Contemplating the impure nature of the body, and so forth

2.2.1.3. Contemplating that it will give rise to much that is unwished for

#### 2.2.1.1. CONTEMPLATING THAT THE RESULT OF CULTIVATING DESIRE IS FRAUGHT WITH DANGERS

This is sub-divided into two:

2.2.1.1.1. Advice to strive in virtue

2.2.1.1.2. Contemplating the faults of desire

Having earlier presented the reason to seek solitude, this advice follows sequentially in that once in solitude one should then strive in virtue. These are very significant points.

##### 2.2.1.1.1. Advice to strive in virtue

The verse reads:

38. *Giving up all other thoughts,  
I shall strive single-mindedly  
In placing the mind in equipoise  
For the purpose of subduing it.*

The commentary then explains the meaning as follows:

Giving up all other thoughts such as attachment and harmful intent, and with only the one thought to meditate on the two bodhicittas, I shall strive to place my mind in single-pointed equipoise on virtue and then, to subdue the mind, strive to abandon the afflictions by meditating on the meaning of reality.

The commentary clearly presents that the condition of going into solitude means giving up all other thoughts, such as the eight worldly concerns, specifically, attachment. This includes attachment to one's own body, attachment to wealth and good resources, as well as attachment to dear ones such as relatives and friends. Giving up harmful intentions also includes ulterior motives, such as meditating for the sake of gaining renown as a great meditator. So having given up all such

thoughts, the commentary encourages one to have *only the one thought*, meditating on the two bodhicittas— aspiring bodhicitta and engaging bodhicitta. *I shall strive to place my mind in single-pointed equipoise* specifically relates to having the single-pointed mind of focusing on virtue. Thus one's sole intention is to completely use one's time for the benefit of other sentient beings.

*Only the one thought*, refers to the sole thought of benefitting sentient beings, and *single-pointed equipoise*, refers to placing one's mind in virtue. So what one strives to achieve in solitude is *single-pointed equipoise on virtue*, which indicates developing calm abiding. Based on this, to further subdue one's mind one strives, *to abandon the afflictions by meditating on the meaning of reality*. This reveals that having developed calm abiding, one further applies the antidotes for overcoming the afflictions and subduing one's mind, by achieving 'special insight'. With the aid of special insight one *meditates on the meaning of reality*, through which one then strives to abandon the afflictions. Shantideva meticulously summarises here that the purpose of going into solitude is to achieve calm abiding, and based on that, achieve special insight and subdue one's mind by overcoming the afflictions.

The instruction here is given on the basis of having given up attachment and choosing solitude, and then applying the practice in this way. How do those of us, who do not yet have all the conditions for going into solitude, take this advice as personal instruction to apply to our own practice? The approach is to apply our mind, even if only for a few minutes (up to one hour is great but if not, at least five to ten minutes a day). If one could begin one's meditation by applying and maintaining a single-pointed mind on a virtuous object (for a few minutes or as long as is comfortable), then one can contemplate how all things are empty of inherent existence (with whatever understanding one has) and apply that in one's practice. If one maintains such a practice at one's own level, it will establish the conditions for developing calm abiding and cultivating special insight.

To expand on personal practice further, the first part is subduing one's mind by single-pointed focus on virtuous objects, followed by analytical meditation on the nature of reality or emptiness. Then generate the bodhicitta mind by contemplating the seven-step cause and effect sequence. If one is familiar with it then one can combine it with the 'exchanging self with other' technique. Having meditated in these ways to generate the mind of bodhicitta, one can then generate the aspiring mind to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. After spending some time contemplating that, next acknowledge that just having the aspiration to achieve enlightenment is not enough—one needs to actually engage in the practices of a bodhisattva. Recall one's own vows (if one has taken bodhisattva vows) as a way to re-establish and enhance them. Meditate further on remembering the promise one made, and develop a keen determination to practice the six perfections. In this way one establishes a very good imprint in one's mind by putting these instructions into practice to the best of one's own ability.

In what has been explained here, one can notice that this practice also summarises the three higher trainings. The

first part - the practice of morality - relates to giving up all other thoughts. Thus as one gives up attachment one generates renunciation. In this way, giving up attachments such as the eight worldly concerns establishes the training of morality. Based on that, developing single-pointed equipoise is the basis for developing calm abiding, which is training in meditation; then cultivating special insight becomes the training of wisdom. In this way the three trainings are encompassed in this practice.

The commentary presents a quote:

From the *Sutra that was requested by the Fierce Householder*:

And further, Householder, if ordained bodhisattvas remain in solitude why should I remain in solitude? Only remaining in solitude is not virtuous practice ... Investigate by thinking, 'for what reason shall I perfectly complete my virtuous practice by remaining in solitude?'

This is one of the many passages that indicate how the direct recipients of Shantideva's teaching are the ordained community. The sutra says, *further, Householder, if ordained bodhisattvas remain in solitude why should I remain in solitude?* highlighting that when an ordained bodhisattva goes into solitude, the reason for doing so needs to be contemplated. The commentary states *only remaining in solitude is not virtuous practice*, meaning that going into solitude is not all that difficult – with the right conditions anyone could do it. But seeking solitude to engage in virtuous practice is the main point. So even if one has given up a nice house, nice food and nice clothing and has borne hardships, if one just remains idly in solitude without placing one's mind in virtue and accomplishing the practice, then being in solitude doesn't serve much purpose. We are being encouraged here to really contemplate the real purpose for going into solitude. Having contemplated this, and as one reassures oneself that it is for the purpose of engaging in practice, then it becomes a supreme condition for actually engaging in practice.

I'll relate a personal experience about the early part of my life. Having left my home town to go to Lhasa, which is quite a significant journey, I remained three years in the monastery. It is a tradition that after three years monks can go back to their home after completing this minimal requirement. I was missing home and thinking of going back because of the hardships in the monastery and being so far away from home. But when I sought permission from my teacher he didn't give it, and suggested it was better to stay in the monastery. At that point I thought, 'Why would my teacher stop me from going back home?' Obviously it was not very comfortable for me in the monastery where food was scarce and the living conditions very poor. So I had to really think, 'Why would I stay on in a monastery? Why would my teacher prevent me from returning home?' Then it occurred to me that the only reason my teacher had for me to continue staying at the monastery would be for me to fully engage in the geshe study program of all the major texts. When that became apparent in my mind, and that this was the only reason my teacher had for preventing me from

returning home, it encouraged me to fully commit myself to the monastery and engage in the geshe studies. Since then I have never turned back, and I didn't return home. For me, when the purpose became clear, it made it easier for my mind to bear the hardships.

We can apply this approach to any practice we engage in which may involve hardships e.g. the *nyung nye* practice. When someone does the *nyung nye* practice there are obvious difficulties such as abstaining from food and abstaining from drink for a day. So the body faces tiredness, heat and cold. With all hardships, if one doesn't constantly remember the purpose of doing the practice (such as the many benefits explained in the *nyung nye* practice) then it would be a case of experiencing a lot of pain, without obtaining much gain. But if one keeps the purpose in mind, and constantly reminds oneself that doing the practice is a way to gain extensive merit and dedicate it to others, then it serves the purpose.

If you are doing the *nyung nye* practice for the first time it may appear quite difficult. However in time one gets used to it and becomes encouraged when one sees the great benefits. The first time I did a *nyung nye*, abstaining from food was the least of my hardships. I did not find it difficult at all. I guess that was because I was never too keen on wanting good food or lavish meals anyway. It is definitely beneficial if one doesn't have strong attachment to food so that when one has to give it up it doesn't become too difficult. If one seeks out delicious meals, the thought of being deprived of them makes it difficult for your mind to consider giving them up. It would seem that having to give up any meal may be difficult for some. The stronger one's determination to renounce a lavish lifestyle and shun worldly desires, the easier it is to engage in a rigorous practice.

I recall Janette in Bendigo who liked to eat fish a lot. Apparently when she couldn't have fish for a while and saw some, she would start to tremble. This is not just a case of desire for fish. When anyone who has strong desire for food doesn't get a meal for a while, they start to tremble in anticipation of having one. The earlier quote is summarised in that explanation.

#### 2.2.1.1.2. *Contemplating the faults of desire*

To give up desires for an object one firstly needs to contemplate the faults of desire itself. What are the faults of desire? This is presented next.

The verse reads:

39. *In this world and also in the one beyond  
Desire objects generate great destruction.  
Here one will be killed, bound and cut,  
In the beyond, hells and so forth are  
established.*

The commentary explains:

Because of craving desire objects, they generate great destruction in this world, as well as in the one beyond. Here one will be killed, bound and cut, and in the world beyond hells and so forth will be established.

The commentary highlights that, *Because of craving desire objects, they generate great destruction*, where destruction also implies bringing about faults or suffering. *In this world* means in this life *as well as in the one beyond*. Here

indicates in this very life one can clearly see that engaging in killing out of desire, brings about the consequence of being *bound and cut* and beaten and so forth. In this very life one can clearly see the obvious shortcomings of the cravings of desire. *In the beyond*, meaning the world beyond or the next life, the result is to be reborn in the lower realms such as the *hells and so forth*.

The commentary quotes a sutra to back up these explanations:

*From the Sutra requested by the girl Supreme Moon:*

Due to the cause of desire, sentient beings fall into the lower realms. Due to attachment, they become hungry ghosts and animals.

The meaning of this quotation from the sutra is quite clear.

### 2.2.1.2. CONTEMPLATING THE IMPURE NATURE OF THE BODY AND SO FORTH

*And so forth* in the title indicates the body shares an impure nature with other things also of this nature.

This is sub-divided into two:

2.2.1.2.1. Contemplating the faults in relation to the situation of the cemetery

2.2.1.2.2. Contemplating the situation in relation to animate phenomena

#### 2.2.1.2.1. *Contemplating the faults in relation to the situation of the cemetery*

This is sub-divided into six:

2.2.1.2.1.1. There are no results that corpses experience

2.2.1.2.1.2. One is not beyond being cast aside in the cemetery in the end

2.2.1.2.1.3. It is unsuitable to protect others' or one's own body with greed

2.2.1.2.1.4. It is unsuitable to put on ornaments

2.2.1.2.1.5. It is suitable to be very afraid

2.2.1.2.1.6. Attachment to that wearing clothes is unsuitable

#### 2.2.1.2.1.1. **There are no results that corpses experience**

This title tells us that corpses cannot experience any results.

In the following passages it is quite clear what is being presented; it is something that is quite obvious in our world system.

The verses read:

**40. *The object of the many requests  
Made initially by the male and female  
matchmakers,***

***For whose sake one is unafraid  
Of negativity or bad reputation,***

**41ab. *Puts oneself into danger***

***And exhausts one's resources,***

The commentary then explains:

One makes requests repeatedly to the male and female matchmakers saying, "Please organise it that she stays together with me to make a home," without being afraid of negativity and bad advice. If this woman's body, for which one fearlessly disregards harm, puts oneself into harm's way and exhausts one's resources, ...

The first part clearly explains, *One makes requests repeatedly to the male and female matchmakers*. In Tibetan

matchmakers are called go-betweens. They are people who bring messages back and forth to make a match between potential couples. The requests are made by sending gifts or messages and making requests like, *Please organise it that she stays together with me to make a home*. From the male's perspective the request is made to the female, sending messages like, 'Make her consider staying with me'. Such requests are made with strong desire and *without being afraid of the negativity and bad advice*, or a bad reputation, regarding the relationship that may be happening. It continues with, *if this woman's body, for which one fearlessly disregards harm, puts oneself into harm's way and exhausts one's resources*, which is the consequence.

Again, this advice is targeted at the ordained community (in particular a fully ordained monk) to caution them against the pitfalls of a relationship with a woman. It very directly advises that by being attached to a *woman's body*, you are fearlessly disregarding the harm that you put yourself in, and *put oneself into harm's way*, with all the complications of a relationship etc. But also in a practical way, it will *exhaust* your own *resources*. The point here is that one has to spend a lot of money to beautify a wife, as she needs makeup, nice clothing, jewellery and perfume, all of which can be very expensive. These are expenses one would have to bear in order to present the woman with gifts and please her. Shantideva cautions those who might give up their practice, telling them to be careful!

It is clear that when one is under the strong control of attachment then it blinds one to the reality of the situation, and one makes a lot of mistakes. The great master Dharmakirti mentioned that when strong attachment occurs it obscures the faults in the other, and actually exaggerates their qualities. These are very significant points that obviously seem to be the case.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has clearly explained that if one were to ask whether money can get you friends, the answer is 'Yes! With a significant amount of money you might get friends'. But once those friends acquire what they want they will leave you. His Holiness further explains that this is an indication that money cannot buy true and reliable friendship. He then goes on to explain that a reliable friendship is one which will help you regardless of your financial situation. For example when you are in distress or difficult times, those that help you at that time are true friends. This is a reliable and trustworthy friendship. His Holiness says that the kind of friendship we need is not one obtained through our money; rather through our inner qualities. By having inner qualities, one can gain true friendship through kindness etc.

The verses read:

**41cd *That, when one embraces it  
Makes one very joyful,***

**42. *If it is nothing but a skeleton  
Without freedom or self,  
That one strongly desires and grasps at  
intensely,  
Why does one not go beyond misery?***

The commentary explains the meaning of these lines:

... the body that generates attachment and that one is so happy to embrace, is but a mere skeleton and

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nothing else, from the start without freedom or a self that protects it, and which one purposelessly desires strongly and grasps at intensely, then why does one not go beyond misery? One should abandon attachment and strive in the path to liberation.

The male is attached to the woman's body ... *the body that generates attachment and that one is so happy to embrace.* After a relationship is sought it feels like one possesses the other's body. The very body that one longs for and is happy to embrace is actually nothing *but a mere skeleton and nothing else.* In essence it is only a skeleton from the inside.

The phrase, *from the start without freedom or a self that protects it,* means that from the very beginning the relationship is in that nature, *which one purposelessly desires strongly and grasps at intensely, then why does one not go beyond misery?* When one contemplates the strong grasping at a body, which from its very beginning and in its very nature is nothing but a skeleton, and due to attachment produces so much suffering and agony, *then why does one not go beyond misery?* This rhetorical question implies that one should strive to go beyond misery, rather than being attached to the very object that causes the misery.

The conclusion here is that *one should abandon attachment and strive in the path to liberation.* In summary, if one has attachment and does not give up desire, this prevents one from going beyond misery and achieving liberation. If one wishes to strive for liberation one needs to give up attachment. Here the specific object of attachment is presented as a person of the opposite sex, but it actually means giving up all attachments.

Specific details of the explanation will be presented later on. This part mainly focuses on the technique of meditating on the imperfections of the body to which one is attached. The body here is presented as nothing more than a skeleton. To meditate on the imperfections of the body as an antidote to overcome attachment is more applicable to one's mind when using reasoning and logic rather than just taking it as 'Oh, this is what's been explained in the teachings so I have to meditate on the imperfections of the body'. Rather than taking it at face value and something one has to accept, if one bases one's conclusion on one's own investigation and reasoning, then the practice becomes acceptable and applicable to one's mind.

The reasoning that comes about through investigation is based on analysing the actual body that one is attached to. Initially one may be attached to the exterior such as the skin, but then one goes beyond the skin and what is beyond the beautiful skin is actually flesh, veins and sinews. Then one goes beyond that to fatty tissues etc. and then you go beyond that to the muscles. If you go further into the body in this investigation the reality is that you will come to the bones, and the bones are the skeleton. One does this investigation from the soles of the feet to the very top of the head, going through each and every part of the body. When one analyses the body in this way then the imperfections of the body appear as the nature and reality of the object. It is in this way that one gets the real sense of the imperfections of the body.

Applying the practice of meditation to focus on the imperfections of the body shows that a body which initially appeared attractive, becomes the object of meditation on the imperfection of the body. That is how it is done. As explained earlier, while initially there is an appearance of attractiveness, if one takes a step beyond that to mentally dissect and analyse the body, then one reaches the point where it appears as an actual skeleton.

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

24 November 2015

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

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

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

## 2.2.1. Meditating on disillusionment for desire (cont.)

### 2.2.1.2. CONTEMPLATING THE IMPURE NATURE OF THE BODY AND SO FORTH

#### 2.2.1.2.1. Contemplating the faults in relation to the situation of the cemetery

We now move onto contemplating the imperfections of the body as a way of overcoming attachment to the body. Here the specific focus is on desire for a woman's body from a male perspective. However, as I've explained previously, it also applies to a woman who is attached to a man's body. These explanations apply to both men and women.

#### 2.2.1.2.1.2. One is not beyond being cast aside in the cemetery in the end

No matter how attractive a body may appear, at the end it is taken to the cemetery and cast aside. That is its ultimate destination. So we can see that this is also a presentation of impermanence, in particular death and impermanence. Furthermore, it not only applies to the attractive bodies of others, but it also applies to one's own body. That is what we need to keep in mind.

There are two verses under this heading:

43. *When one first raises it with effort  
And draws it to oneself, she looks down  
bashfully.  
Whether one saw it before or not,  
A veil covers her face.*
44. *Just as the face of the afflictions  
When you see it is obvious to you now,  
then, after it is revealed  
By the vultures, why do you want to leave?*

The commentary explains:

She looks down bashfully when one first raises her face due to desire and draws it to oneself. Whether one saw it before or not, before going to the cemetery, her face is covered by a veil. Just as the face of the afflictions is obvious to you now, at the time of death, when vultures remove the veil and one can see her face very clearly, why, at that time, do you flee and leave? Also at that time, it is suitable to be attached to it.

The explanation in the commentary relates to the way the bride is traditionally brought to the groom in India. I don't know if there's the same tradition here of the bride having a veil over her face. Because the bride's face is covered, the groom will naturally want to see her face, and when the veil is first lifted the bride will shyly look down. That was often how the bride and groom first met, so the groom has a strong longing to see his bride's face.

As the commentary continues to explain, at that first meeting the groom anticipates unveiling the bride's face with strong longing and desire, but on her death she will be taken to the cemetery. Then, regardless of whether her face is veiled at that time or not, it will be unveiled by vultures at the cemetery. The commentary asks, 'At that time, when its bare nature is clearly exposed to you, why don't you long to see it? If you were strongly attached to the woman it would be appropriate to look at her then, but you run away'. This shows us the contradictions that exist in a desirous, longing mind.

What is clearly being presented here is that contemplating its natural imperfections of an attractive body is actually a method of reducing strong attachment and desire. These are really significant points to contemplate. Being completely obsessed with very strong desire for another person definitely causes mental disturbance and agitation. Therefore, a mind filled with strong desire cannot be calm. So when strong desire and attachment arise, this method is presented as a way to overcome that desire. It would be wise to apply it as a way of appeasing one's mind.

As explained in the commentary, when one meditates on the imperfections of the body, one is actually meditating on the natural defects of the body. Having contemplated the obvious defects first, one then goes further contemplating the defects of the body as it decomposes after death when it decomposes. This is yet another method to overcome strong attachment.

As I've mentioned previously, attempting to meditate on the imperfections of the body, while still holding onto the object as being attractive deep inside one's mind, will not work. For this meditation to actually take effect, one has to develop a firm and stable understanding of the imperfections of the body, and contemplate that. Only after repeated meditation will one be able to let go of the strong attachment. Attempting to meditate on the imperfections of the body while still harbouring a view of the other's body as being clean and attractive, will not do much to remove desire.

This is really a presentation of the ways of overcoming faulty states of mind. Here a distinction needs to be made between seeing the object itself as being at fault or repulsive, and the need to work on one's own mind as a way to overcome strong attachment to that object. Indeed, as presented here, attachment arises when the object appears as attractive and appealing. That mind of attachment exaggerates the qualities of the object, making it appear as being extremely attractive and appealing, and that's when strong attachment arises. In contrast, when the defects of the body are exaggerated and it appears to be completely unattractive and unappealing, then aversion arises in the mind. In both cases, it is the



faulty perception that leads to mental unrest, not the object itself.

The main culprit behind these faulty states of mind is, of course, ignorance. It is as if this ignorance compels the mind to judge the qualities of the object, making it perceive the object as being very attractive, thus leading to attachment. Likewise it is again ignorance that exaggerates the faults of the object, seeing it as being unattractive and thus leading to aversion.

There is a way to overcome these faulty states of mind. Meditating on the imperfections of an object helps to reduce attachment to it. That then enables the mind to settle down. When aversion arises on seeing an unattractive object, then meditating on love and developing compassion towards the object will help to overcome the faulty state of mind that sees only faults and imperfections. Then one can begin to see some of the qualities of the object, which will start to appear as being appealing.

These are really important points to consider, and put into practice. We have the knowledge and understanding of how these meditations can be applied, so if we fail to apply these techniques and instead become overwhelmed with strong attachment or strong aversion then that completely defies the whole purpose of these teachings. It would be a great pity if one doesn't use these methods, despite having access to them.

There's not much that someone who doesn't know anything at all about these methods and techniques can do with a strongly afflicted mind that can completely consume them. But as we do have these methods and techniques, we should use them. I am re-emphasising the points being presented here as a way to exhort you to try to put them into practice.

### **2.2.1.2.1.3. It is unsuitable to protect others' or one's own body with greed**

The verse under this heading reads:

45. *When others look at it  
You strongly protect it.  
But when it is eaten by them,  
Greedy one, why do you not protect it?*

The commentary explains:

When other men look at your woman, you jealously protect her from their glances. Greedy one, when this body of hers is eaten by vultures and so forth, why do you not protect it then? By being attached, it is suitable to be protected.

Again the commentary is using the example of a man being attracted to a woman, in particular his bride or partner. When others even just look at her, the man immediately notices that, and wants to protect her. If that is the case, then, as the commentary asks, 'why don't you protect her when her body is being eaten by vultures? As you are attached to her, it would be appropriate to protect her at that time as well'.

### **2.2.1.2.1.4. It is unsuitable to put on ornaments**

The relevant verse reads:

46. *If vultures and others, upon  
Having spotted it, eat this heap of flesh,*

*One is making offerings with flower garlands,  
sandal*

*And ornaments to the food of others.*

Then the commentary explains:

Further, if vultures, coyotes and others eat this heap of flesh upon having spotted it in the cemetery, then why is one making offerings with flower garlands, sandal and golden ornaments to their food? It is unsuitable to offer ornaments even when the body is alive.

This explanation is quite clear. The main thing is that when a beautiful body becomes a corpse, and vultures and coyotes and other creatures start to devour the body, then that beautiful body has become nothing more than food for those wild animals. If that is the case, 'why do you make offerings for beautifying the other's body with flower garlands and sandal and golden ornaments and so forth. It is as if you are offering ornaments to the food of wild animals'.

These passages present different ways to reflect upon the natural defects and imperfections of the body. The more one contemplates these logical reasons, the more that will help the mind to really begin to accept them. Rather than just accepting the words at face value, when one comes to a conclusion using logical analysis the mind becomes very strong and steady, and able to combat the faulty state of mind that exaggerates the qualities of the body, and sees it as being pure. When that occurs, then attachment is naturally reduced. This is how these meditation practices actually work.

### **2.2.1.2.1.5. It is suitable to be very afraid**

The relevant verse reads:

47. *If one is afraid merely by seeing a skeleton,  
Even if it does not move,  
Then why is one not afraid  
If some even move, like zombies?*

As the commentary explains:

If one runs away in fear because one merely sees an unmoving skeleton while being in the cemetery, then why is one not afraid when one sees them even moving about, like zombies, induced by the mind of motivation, while they are alive? It is suitable to be afraid of them as of zombies, and it is unsuitable to be attached.

Again the explanation in the commentary is very clear. When one sees a body completely exposed, with the flesh eaten away and only a skeleton remaining, one might want to run away out of fear. In fact that skeleton is just lying there and not moving at all, and yet one generates strong fear and wants to run away.

So *why is one not afraid when one sees them even moving about, like zombies*. As explained in the commentary, the movements of living people are basically motivated by a state of mind. It is their motivation that directs their limbs into the act of moving. The commentary asks, 'So when you see them moving, why aren't you frightened of them?' A zombie is a dead body that suddenly stands up and starts to move, and of course if we saw one we would be very afraid, and want to run away. In Nepal the doorways are quite low because, it is said, this will prevent zombies from coming inside as they can only walk while standing up straight. Apparently there were a lot of zombies in Nepal at some point in the past.

The main point here is that if one were to see a zombie then there's no way one would feel attachment to that being. Rather one would run away out of fear. So *it is suitable to be as afraid of ordinary people, as of zombies, and it is unsuitable to be attached*. As explained here, when there's strong fear then there's no place for attachment and no place for anger. What are otherwise strong negative minds such as anger, attachment temporarily cease in the face of fear.

#### 2.2.1.2.1.6. Attachment to that wearing clothes is unsuitable.

A faulty mind might be attached to a body because of the beautiful clothes it is wearing. This heading reflects on how there's no reason to be attached to clothes if it is actually the body that one is attached to.

I have seen on television women who have once been quite beautiful and who are now so thin that their body almost looks like a skeleton. Apparently some are successfully treated, and get back to normal, but I don't know what happens to the others. Looking like a skeleton is not attractive – people need to have some flesh on their body to look appealing.

Just a few days ago there was a report about a very tall but extremely thin young man playing basketball. I don't know what the story was about, perhaps because he was the tallest person, but he didn't look very appealing because he was so skinny.

It seems that there is a faulty state of mind which thinks that it is suitable to be attached to someone because they are wearing attractive clothes. There is this strong notion that if you are wearing nice clothes then others may start paying attention to you. If that is the case and if you want a boyfriend or a girlfriend, or you want others to notice you, then you should wear very nice clothes.

Some go to great measures to beautify their body before they go out, with clothes and make-up and so on, and that can take quite a long time. This reminds me of the time when I was staying with quite a wealthy and very nice family in Perth. The mother was quite interested in Buddhism, and the couple had two daughters and a son. Once when we were about to go out, the son commented on how his mother always seemed to take such a long time to get ready. The family might be ready to go but twenty minutes later she was still not ready. Even though she was no longer young she took time to beautify herself. But, I suppose that when you are from a well-known wealthy family, you want to present yourself well when you go out.

In general, I feel it is a good thing to make yourself presentable by being clean and wearing nice clean clothes. In a way it shows respect for others, and to a certain degree it is socially necessary.

Of course what is being systematically presented here are the various reasons that overcome different kinds of faulty states of mind. If, on seeing a body as being attractive one becomes attached to that body, then this text presents reasons showing how to overcome that faulty state of attachment.

Here the text is dealing with being attached to the attractive clothing on a body, and again presenting

reasons that will show why it is not suitable to be attached to that clothing.

As the verse reads:

48. *If one is attached although it is dressed  
Then why not desire it when it is undressed?  
If one has no need for it,  
Then why embrace it when it is dressed?*

The commentary explains:

When the body that one is attached to although being clothed, has been cast aside at the cemetery, why is one not attached now, despite it being undressed? One should be attached also then. If one has no need for it when being cast aside at the cemetery, then why embrace the dressed body? They are the same in being impure.

As the commentary explains, *when the very body that one is attached to when clothed, is cast aside at a cemetery, why is one not attached to it at that time, despite it being undressed*. What is being implied here is that the body that one was attached to when she wore beautiful clothes, is the same body that it is cast aside at the cemetery. 'So why are you are not attached to the body at that time?' This rhetorical question implies, that *one should be attached also then*.

As it is the same body then one should still be attached to that body. *If one has no need for it when being cast aside at the cemetery, then why embrace the dressed body now?* If one were to argue, 'well there's no reason to be attached to that body at the cemetery, because a body in the cemetery is not attractive. If one argues in that way, then 'why embrace that face and body now because it is *the same* in that it is also an *impure* body. There's no change in the impurity of the body, so why do you embrace it now?' As explained here, *they are the same in being impure*.

#### 2.2.1.2.2. Contemplating the situation in relation to animate phenomena

That is subdivided into three:

2.2.1.2.2.1. It is unsuitable to be attached as the impure becomes obvious

2.2.1.2.2.2. Attachment is unsuitable, as one realises it in dependence upon reason

2.2.1.2.2.3. Hence, stop grasping at the pure

#### 2.2.1.2.2.1. It is unsuitable to be attached as the impure is obvious

This is further subdivided into five:

2.2.1.2.2.1.1. It is unsuitable to be attached to objects of touch

2.2.1.2.2.1.2. Stopping the conception of purity

2.2.1.2.2.1.3. Body and mind are individually not the object of attachment

2.2.1.2.2.1.4. Contemplating these faults by relating them to oneself

2.2.1.2.2.1.5. Shape is not the object of attachment

2.2.1.2.2.1.1. *It is unsuitable to be attached to objects of touch*

The material under this heading explains ways of overcoming the faulty state of mind we have when we are attached to specific objects. The first verse reads:

49. *If from food alone arise  
Saliva and excrement,  
And if out of these one does not like excrement,  
Why does one specifically like saliva?*

The commentary begins with this comment:

If one says, 'I like the saliva of a woman'.

Then, as an answer, the commentary explains:

Answer: As saliva as well as excrement and urine arise from the same very cause of food, why do you prefer the saliva and dislike the excrement? They are the same in arising from an impure cause and in being an impure result.

The commentary logically explains that if one were to be attached to the saliva of the woman then, as saliva excrement and urine all arise from the very same cause i.e. food, *why do you prefer only the saliva and dislike the excrement? They are the same in arising from an impure cause and thus in being an impure result.*

The next two verses directly relate to attachment arising from touching an object. These logical reasons overcome strong attachment to objects that are impure in nature. When one contemplates these points carefully and relates them to the actual nature of the body, then any strong attachment will definitely reduce, and ultimately one will overcome attachment to that body.

The second verse under this heading reads:

50. *Cushions made of cotton that are soft  
To the touch one does not like.  
Saying, 'It does not have any bad smell.'  
The desirous are deluded regarding impure.*

As the commentary explains,

They discriminate between the cotton cushion that is soft to the touch and the feel of a woman. Saying that foul smells do not emit from a woman's body, when in fact it does, the desirous are deluded regarding the impure and thus act with attachment.

This is another presentation showing the absurd arguments posited by the mind of desire. If the desirous mind claims, 'I like the touch of the woman because it is soft', then the response presented here is, 'if that is your reason then why wouldn't you also be attached to cotton, which is also soft to the touch'.

The main point being presented here is that, *saying that foul smells do not emit from a woman's body, when in fact they do, the desirous are deluded regarding the impure, and thus act with attachment.*

The third verse under this heading reads:

51. *The corrupt desirous that are deluded  
Say, "Though the cotton is soft to the touch,  
One cannot have intercourse with it",  
And become angry with it.*

As the commentary explains:

The corrupt desirous people say that although the cotton is soft when touched, one cannot have intercourse with the cotton, and become angry with it. Hence, they intensely grasp only at that which is distorted. It is unsuitable to be attached to objects of touch.

This is a very clear explanation. The main point is that it is unsuitable to be attached to objects of touch.

#### 2.2.1.2.2.1.2. Stopping the conception of purity

The relevant verse reads:

52. *If there is no attachment to the impure  
Then why do you embrace the midst of others,  
Who are a bone cage bound by sinews,  
Given a face with the mud of flesh?*

The commentary explains that:

If you say, 'I have no attachment for the impure', then why do you embrace the midst of women, who are but a bone cage bound by a net of sinews and given a face with the mud of flesh? It is unsuitable.

As clearly presented in the commentary, if one were to say 'I have no reason to be attached to the impure', then the contradictory nature of the mind of attachment is illustrated in this response, *then why do you embrace the midst of women, who are but a bone cage bound by a net of sinews and given a face with the mud of flesh?* As presented here quite vividly, when we really think about it the basic structure that supports the body is the skeleton. Over the skeleton are sinews interleaved among layers of flesh, which is *given a face with the mud of flesh*. If one were constructing a body, then mud would be used to sculpt the face.

The next verse reads,

53. *Yours alone, which possesses many impurities,  
You utilise continuously, and  
Out of a thirst for the impure  
You desire also other bags of filth.*

And the commentary explains that,

Further, your very body, which possesses many impurities, you utilise continuously, and you also crave and are thirsty for the impurity of other impure bags. If you are not satisfied with your own body, then why do you desire the body of a woman? It is unsuitable.

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse very clearly, we do not need to clarify it any further.

#### 2.2.1.2.2.1.3. Body and mind are individually not the object of attachment

Having shown that the body in general is not a suitable object of attachment, this section shows how the body and the mind individually are unsuitable objects of attachment. The first verse under this heading reads:

54. *You say, "I like this flesh."  
If you desire to touch and look at it,  
Then why do you not desire the  
Inanimate flesh?*

The commentary explains:

You say, 'I do not like contact with cotton, but I do like the feel of the body of another'.

Answer: If you desire contact with, and to look upon the body of another, then why do you not desire the flesh of an inanimate dead body? You should like it but as you do not, it is unsuitable to be attached to the body.

This is showing the absurdity of saying 'I like the feel of a body, and there is no reason to be attached to cotton because it is an inanimate object'.

As your reason is that cotton is inanimate and a body is not, *then why do you not desire the flesh of a dead body as*

well? So again the text is showing the absurdity of the reasons one might give for being attached to a body.

The second verse in the section reads:

55. *The mind you desire  
You cannot touch or see,  
That which you can touch or see is not mind.  
What is meaningless copulation good for?*

The commentary starts with the following hypothetical argument:

Argument: 'I am attached to the mind of others'.

The commentary answers that argument:

Answer: You cannot touch or look at the mind you desire, and that which you can touch is not mind. Therefore, what good is it to embrace the meaningless body and be attached to it? As it is not good for anything, it is unsuitable to be attached.

As the commentary clearly explains, 'how can you say you are *attached to the mind* as an object of desire? It is something that cannot be touched. Moreover that which you can touch is not the mind. So why be attached to the mind?

2.2.1.2.2.1.4. *Contemplating these faults by relating them to oneself*

This is another very significant point. Having described the impurity of the bodies of others, one now applies all of these same reasonings to one's own body. *Precious Garland* also gives extensive explanations of the impurities of the body of others, and it too urges one to relate them to oneself.

The verse reads:

56. *That one does not realise the impure nature  
Of the body of others is not very surprising,  
But that one does not realise  
That oneself is impure is very surprising.*

The commentary explains that:

That one does not realise the impure nature of the body of others is not very surprising, but that one does not realise the impure nature of one's own body that continually disintegrates into something impure, this is indeed surprising. This is an ironic statement. Once one understands the impure, it becomes unsuitable to be attached.

This is another very clear presentation. Being unaware of *the impure nature of the bodies of others is not very surprising*, but knowing that one's body *continually disintegrates into something which is impure*, yet not realising its impurity, is quite astonishing.

One is very familiar with the fact that one's body is slowly disintegrating, yet despite this, one does not realise that this disintegrating body is impure. The main point is that once one is able to realise that one's own body is impure in nature, then that understanding can be easily applied to the bodies of others as well.

2.2.1.2.2.1.5. *Shape is not the object of attachment*

The verse relating to this heading is:

57. *Why reject the fresh lotus  
With petals unfolded by sunlight unobstructed  
by clouds,  
And take joy in the impure cage  
With a mind grasping for the impure?*

As the commentary explains:

If the pure fresh lotus with petals unfolded by the clear sunlight unobstructed by clouds has all these qualities, then why reject it and take joy in the impure cage due to the grasping for the impure? Since it is unsuitable to like it, it is also unsuitable to be attached to its shape.

As clearly explained here, when a lotus first *opens, with petals unfolded by the clear sunlight unobstructed by clouds, it has all these marvellous qualities*. Rather than being intrigued by, and even attached to this natural beauty, one pays more attention to a body that is impure by nature. Why do you *grasp at the impure*? It is because of the faulty mind of attachment.

The conclusion is that *since it is unsuitable to like it, it is also unsuitable to be attached to the shape of the body*.

These explanations are not obscure and are easy to understand. So the main point is to contemplate them, and then put it into practice.

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

9 February 2016

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

Once again we have this wonderful opportunity of being able to gather together and meet each other.

Over the break I travelled to India with some of you. I had a very fortunate time in India – it was a time like no other. An enormous crowd (I estimated it to be thirty-five thousand people) attended the teachings, and the arrangements were amazing. A free lunch was provided for all, along with free tea and bread in the morning teaching session and tea in the afternoon, and all of it was of good quality. Bottled water was available all the time; in various corners bottles of water were piled up like small hills, so you could take a bottle whenever you needed. Some were only half empty when they were discarded, which shows how plentiful the supply was. Those were just the good external conditions that were in place for the teaching sessions.

Of course the teaching was presented by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, a most extraordinary and unequalled teacher. And the topic of the teaching was the actual words of the Buddha himself. As His Holiness mentioned during the teachings, 'It is incredibly fortunate that we are together for these teachings. Because we are all followers of the Buddha, we definitely have a unique connection with him, and for that reason the Buddha is constantly looking down upon us with particular attention. With this understanding you should have no fears, and feel confident and relaxed'.

This is significant advice from His Holiness, and it is something that we need to always keep in mind throughout our lives. Then, if we can remember, 'As I have been a follower of the Buddha, he is definitely looking upon me with loving care and compassion' in the last moments of our life, just before death, this will provide the best conditions for a peaceful death. That, in essence, is what I can relay to you from the teachings in India that I attended.

In relation to my own conditions, I was definitely very comfortable while I was there. I felt very relaxed and didn't have any major complications or health problems, so I felt very good. It was only when I got back here that I realised how tired I was. For nearly five weeks I woke early, at around three o'clock, and sometimes two o'clock, to do my prayers. During teachings I usually don't eat much during the day, because I fear that it will cause drowsiness. But even though I was waking up very early and going to the teaching sessions two times a day, I noticed that my mind always remained fresh and clear. However all of that seems to have taken a physical toll, because when I got home I started to feel the impact of

the previous weeks. But now I'm refreshed and doing well again.

I'm relaying this account of my trip to India as many of you might have been wondering about my time there, and how things went. I can definitely state that the time I spent in India and the positive effects of all the teachings that I received from His Holiness has had a very, very profound impact on my mind. As recently as last night there was a clear indication of this, when I had a very vivid dream of the Dalai Lama presenting a yellow robe to me. This was a very clear sign of the very auspicious time I spent in India.

The real significance of me relaying all of this to you is to remind you of the main purpose of why we are gathering here. We need to constantly remind ourselves that the main point is to gain the means for cultivating a good kind heart. Both you and the teacher (myself in this case) have to always remember that this is really the main purpose. In fact, when one attempts to generate that kind good heart at every opportunity it becomes the most meaningful action that one can engage in.

I have personally received a lot of profound instructions about methods for generating a kind and good heart from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The significance of acquiring the means for generating a genuinely kind and compassionate heart is not all that obscure. When one thinks about it, it is quite clear that a kind heart is what ultimately contributes to one's wellbeing—it is one's real protector and guide. In every respect, the kind and compassionate heart is the most valuable asset that one can ever possess: it is the ultimate means for gaining personal happiness; it helps one to acquire all the good conditions for personal happiness; as well as removing the conditions for misery and suffering.

Furthermore, by engaging in study and learning how to develop a kind compassionate heart, we are acquiring the means to establish a real protector for ourselves. When that unfailing and trustworthy protector and saviour, that genuine, kind and compassionate heart, is established within us, we will be really genuinely relaxed and settled, and a happy person.

On the other hand, when one lacks these inner conditions for a true sense of happiness and wellbeing, then one constantly looks for an external companion to give that sense of happiness. That is why we are never really fulfilled. We are constantly searching for a trustworthy unfailing good companion or friend, and we are constantly unsettled because of our lack of success in this search.

That is where we take the wrong turn. If we actually believe that a trustworthy and unfailing protector and saviour and companion is somewhere out there, and that all we have to do is keep searching for them, then we are missing the point. Inevitably we won't find what we seek, and end up feeling lonely, and falling into despair. All of that will be eliminated once we establish a inner true friend and trustworthy companion.

For as long as we spend all our time and energy looking for external companions or external good conditions in the belief that this is where happiness lies, we will keep falling short of actually achieving a true sense of well-

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being and happiness, and experience one problem after another, and one difficulty after another. If we just change our approach and start spending quality time looking within, searching for, and developing the true unfailing inner friend and companion, then we will begin to notice that our life takes a turn for the better. A true transformation will start to come about and we will begin to become more and more relaxed, more settled, more self-reliant and confident, and genuinely content and happy in life.

When we endeavour to establish these good inner conditions or causes, it is certain that we will achieve positive results from our efforts. Here the positive causes are the development of love and compassion for others, taking their interests into account, which naturally brings about the positive result of experiencing personal wellbeing. As a way of nurturing and maintaining our sense of love and compassion for others, the practice of patience is indispensable. So we need to definitely practise patience as well. When we develop these qualities we will definitely experience the result that we seek.

I regularly emphasise this point again and again, and you should not take it lightly. I feel that I'm presenting something which will be most useful and valuable and meaningful for your own life. If you implement this advice, then it will definitely be incredibly beneficial for your life. If we take the initiative to look within ourselves, and evaluate what is essential for our wellbeing, then we will realise that we must never be separated from love and compassion at any cost. When we begin to acknowledge that love and compassion are indispensable, and that we need to nurture and always maintain it, then we will be keen to apply the methods to protect these qualities.

As mentioned regularly, meditation is a supreme technique that actually helps protect positive qualities from degeneration. Protecting a sense of happiness, a happy mind, a clear mind, and a positive attitude is essential for personal wellbeing. Those meditation practices are none other than the unmistakable methods for protecting one's mind. When we are able to protect our happy and clear state of mind, we will undoubtedly experience mental wellbeing.

At times, of course, we may experience some physical ailments. That is a given fact, and experiencing physical ailments is quite natural. But when we have secured positive inner conditions then, despite physical illnesses or any difficulties we may experience on a physical level, we can maintain a positive outlook and a happy state of mind.

There are, of course, times where we may feel a bit weighed down, and anxious and so forth. These feelings do of course come about, but what we need to recognise is that they are mostly related to unrealistic thoughts, which are called discursive or superstitious thoughts. When unnecessary doubts and fears take over our mind, and we give in to these discursive thoughts, then that is when our mind gets weighed down, and we end up being caught up in this cycle of unease.

However, when we take a strong stance in recognising that the main cause for our mental turmoil is none other than our own disturbing thoughts, then we can start to instil a state of mind where we don't allow disturbing thoughts, particularly irrational fears and doubts, to completely overwhelm us.

Thinking in this way helps to keep us focussed on the right track in life. The Buddha said that we should use this internal investigation as a mirror to see our own mind. The Buddha is quoted as saying that the Dharma serves as a mirror. We use an external mirror to see if our face has dirt on it that needs to be removed, because we cannot otherwise see our own face. Likewise the Dharma is said to be like a mirror that reflects the stains and dirt of our mind. Through seeing that clearly we can then attempt to remove those stains, which are the disturbing thoughts and delusions in our mind. This is paramount for any transformation that we wish to develop.

As I mention regularly, this internal investigation is done by none other than our own intelligence and wisdom. Ultimately it is our own wisdom that serves as the unfailing and consistent guide that helps us to follow the right path in our lives. We should always rely upon our own clear, discriminating wisdom.

I share all of this with you again, as a means of reminding you to reflect upon whatever practice you may be engaging in—whether it's meditation or engaging in the teachings, or studying the Dharma—and be mindful that all of these practices give us the means to clearly recognise and distinguish between what is useful and what is harmful. Then we can adopt what is useful, namely the qualities, and discard what is harmful, which is the delusions that lie within. If we can clearly distinguish between conducive conditions and conditions that are harmful, then it is most likely that we will be able to achieve what we are seeking to achieve.

Some lamas give the very practical advice of first asking the question, 'Why do I need to practise the Dharma?' The simple answer to that is, 'Because I wish for happiness and do not wish to experience any suffering'. This, in fact, encapsulates the real purpose of whatever virtues we engage in—it is because we wish to experience genuine happiness, and do not wish to experience any suffering.

The next question is 'Do I have the ability to practise the Dharma?' The answer is, as presented in the Lam Rim, that one definitely has that ability, because of having all of the necessary **inner conditions**. These are the **physical conditions** of a precious human rebirth with its eight freedoms and ten endowments. We also have the mental ability, which is a clear and discriminating wisdom. Therefore we have the necessary **mental conditions**.

With respect to **external conditions** we have the unmistakable teachers who present the teachings in a precise and clear manner. Of course these teachers need to have the qualifications of a perfect teacher, which is a full understanding and knowledge of the teachings. When we are able to recognise the Mahayana teacher and have faith in him, then that combination provides the

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intact external conditions to engage in the study and practice of the Dharma.

Thus one has the necessary internal conditions which encompass one's physical and mental conditions, as well as the external condition of having met with a perfect Mahayana teacher.

By reflecting on these points in the form of the questions and answers that are presented in the teachings, it is said that one will come to the conclusion that, because of having a precious human rebirth, we definitely have the ability to practise the Dharma. However it is not sufficient just to have all the right conditions. One needs to apply the teachings and actually engage in practising them right now. That conclusion comes from reflecting on the precious human rebirth as being extremely difficult to obtain, and very easy to lose.

Contemplating in this way, by raising hypothetical qualms and coming to conclusions based on presentations like that in the Lam Rim, for example, we develop very sound and logical reasons for not only recognising that we have the potential and the ability to practise the Dharma, but that we need to actually act upon it right now. The Buddha very meticulously emphasised death and impermanence as a means to exhort one to actually engage in the practice of Dharma.

One of the main reasons for reflecting like this is to counter laziness. One might recognise that one has good conditions, but laziness will prevent one from actually seizing the opportunity and acting upon it. The laziness that creeps into our life, of thinking that we could do it next month, or next year and so forth, arises from not contemplating death and impermanence.

Going back to the essential point of the need to develop the kind heart, the most purest and most altruistic kind heart that one can develop is bodhicitta. There is no more supreme altruistic mind than bodhicitta. This is what we need to focus on, and attempt to develop.

The most meticulous and thorough presentation of how to develop this precious awakening mind is none other than the text that we're studying now – *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life* by Shantideva. I can safely say that there is no more superior text explaining bodhicitta than what we are studying now. Keeping that in mind we can generate strong enthusiasm and joy about having the privilege of actually engaging in the study of this text, and trying to incorporate it into our lives. Indeed even just holding this text in our hands is said to be extremely fortunate.

This supreme altruistic mind of bodhicitta, the awakening mind, is based upon the genuine wish to benefit others. This genuine wish to benefit others stems from an unbiased love and compassion for others. When one cultivates a genuine unbiased love and compassion focussing on other sentient beings, then that actually becomes the basis on which to develop superior intention. This is the immediate preceding state of mind just before one actually develops the awakening mind itself, bodhicitta.

Superior intention is the state of mind where, based on love and compassion, one takes upon oneself the full responsibility of doing whatever is necessary to actually benefit all sentient beings. The reason why we do the *tong*

*len* practice (giving and taking meditation), before each session is to further establish that potential within ourselves.

When one develops that superior intention of taking full responsibility for benefitting all sentient beings, to liberate them from all suffering, and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, one reflects upon whether one has the ability to do that right now. Then one clearly sees that only an enlightened being, a buddha, has this ability. When one resolves to achieve enlightenment oneself in order to benefit all sentient beings, then one is utilising the full conditions to develop the awakening mind.

We need to be reminded again and again that the whole purpose of studying this text is so that it establishes the conditions to actually develop the awakening mind, based on all the good conditions that were listed earlier.

As I've mentioned previously, in the technique of developing the awakening mind through the giving and taking practice, superior intention is not specifically mentioned. It is, however, encompassed within the actual practice of giving and taking. When one equalises oneself with others, and gives one's happiness to them, and takes their suffering upon oneself, then that is actually cultivating superior intention. Just because it's not explicitly presented as part of this technique, it doesn't mean that one doesn't need to develop superior intention. Indeed it is of paramount importance, because without developing superior intention, one cannot possibly develop bodhicitta.

Before we conclude the session for the evening let us recite the dedication chapter of *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life* for the late David Brooks who passed away last week. He was a long time friend of many of us. We can dedicate our merit for him to have a peaceful passage onto the next existence.

We can also include in our dedications whoever may be needing help and assistance at this time, those who are directly connected to us, Tara Institute, its members and students, and one's family and relatives. As we recite this text we will see that it includes all beings who are suffering in different ways. That is something we can keep in mind.

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

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Edited Version

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

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

[meditation]

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

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

Just as we did in our meditation practice, we need to periodically remind ourselves of the need to familiarise ourselves with love and compassion; that we need to increase the love and compassion in our hearts; and that we need to see this as an essential practice. Indeed, the giving and taking meditation practice that we have just engaged in is the essential practice of the bodhisattvas.

When engaging in the practice of equalising and exchanging self with others, one begins by contemplating again and again the shortcomings of cherishing oneself, and the great advantages of cherishing others. Through the use of many different reasons and analogies, and thinking of the many shortcomings of cherishing oneself, one contemplates the advantages of cherishing other sentient beings.

Having done that as a preliminary practice, one then engages in actually exchanging oneself and others by giving one's happiness to others and taking upon oneself the suffering of sentient beings. We need to understand that the actual practice of giving and taking is dependent on having contemplated the shortcomings of self-cherishing and the benefits of cherishing other sentient beings.

This, of course, is pith practice of bodhisattvas. As we are inclined to engage in the practices of the bodhisattvas we need to really think about how this practice is related to the bodhisattvas' deeds. We also need to understand how the giving and taking practice essentially encompasses the seven-fold cause and effect technique.

The main point to contemplate is the intent of the deeds of bodhisattvas, which is to benefit sentient beings. When one contemplates what sentient beings wish for, the answer is that they naturally wish for happiness and they don't want to experience any suffering. So benefitting sentient beings needs to be in accord with that wish to bring about happiness and remove their suffering.

When one contemplates in this way one comes to the point where one cannot leave it at a level of a mere wish. Rather, one has to take personal responsibility for ensuring that all sentient beings are placed in happiness,

and that their suffering is removed. This is the point where one develops superior intention.

Then one naturally checks whether one has the ability to do that right now, one acknowledges that one does not, and realises that only an enlightened being has that ability. When one develops the unwavering aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the purpose of liberating all sentient beings from suffering and leading them to the ultimate state of happiness, then one has developed the altruistic mind of bodhicitta, the awakening mind. This is how we need to understand the practice of giving and taking as an optimum means for developing bodhicitta.

The preliminary stage of thinking again and again about the disadvantages and shortcomings of cherishing oneself is, of course, a way to gain personal happiness, although it may still be a temporary level of happiness. That is because unless and until one overcomes the manifest levels of delusions there is no way that one can experience a genuinely settled and happy mind.

Contemplating in this way one should then resolve, 'If I want to experience happiness, I have no choice but to combat the delusions that exist within my mind'. Lama Tsong Khapa gives very clear and precise instructions on antidotes to overcome the manifest level of these delusions. Contemplating and meditating on the imperfections of the object of attachment overcomes attachment; meditating on love overcomes manifest anger; and focusing on one's breath overcomes a discursive mind; meditating on the categories of the constituents is a way to overcome pride; and meditating on emptiness overcomes ignorance.

In presenting these antidotes, Lama Tsong Khapa's specific advice is that one needs to apply the antidote to whatever strong delusion one has at any given time. That is how we overcome intense delusions. So as beginners it is not advisable to choose any random object, but rather to focus on specific objects to overcome specific manifest or intense deluded states of mind.

When one genuinely wishes for others to be happy then one is generating love, and when one genuinely wishes them to be free from suffering then that is how one generates compassion for sentient beings.

So how do we implement this? Of course, when it refers to others in general we need to be skilful in presenting the ways and means for others to be happy and how to alleviate their suffering. When it comes down to individual beings, however, it depends on the individual circumstances. One of the most practical ways to extend one's love and compassion for other sentient beings is to present them with what they most need at that time, which will alleviate their immediate suffering, and provide the conditions that will endow them with happiness.

When, for example, someone is very hungry, the suffering they are experiencing at that moment is hunger. That will be alleviated by providing them with food and nourishment, and then they will be endowed with the happiness of being full again. That is a practical way to extend love and compassion towards that particular being at that particular time. Of course someone who is already full doesn't need food and if you insist on giving



them food you would not benefit them at all. There is no purpose in doing that, as they are not experiencing the suffering of hunger at that time. Indeed, if you were to insist that they eat, then rather than alleviating suffering and bringing them happiness, you might cause them more suffering by giving them a stomach-ache.

There are many practical ways to benefit others, from giving material aid such as food and clothing when it is needed, or uttering soothing speech when they are feeling depressed and unhappy. Then there is the simple act of being with someone when they are in need of company; even pleasant gestures and facial expressions can bring about a certain level of happiness and alleviate a certain amount of suffering.

At our level we need to think about bringing benefit to others in practical ways. We need to really familiarise ourselves with love and compassion as an essential day-to-day practice, and then we can actually engage in benefitting others at our own manageable and practical level. If we are not familiar with love and compassion then the eagerness to benefit others will not arise. For example, some people just walk by, even though they can see that someone is really in need of food. If they don't have that sense of love and compassion they will not take the initiative to benefit such a person, whereas if you have love and compassion for them then you will extend your help by giving them food.

The practice of love and compassion might seem quite simple and it may even sound like a mediocre practice, but I personally feel that there is no greater practice than love and compassion. As I mentioned earlier, it encompasses the pith practice of the bodhisattvas.

When one practises love and compassion it becomes a means to cultivate more patience towards others, extending whatever is needed, in whatever capacity one has, to immediately benefit others. The companionship and camaraderie that one develops with others is based on love and compassion, so we can see that this love and compassion is really the basis for our own wellbeing and happiness. Conversely, the lack of love and compassion is the foundation of unwanted things, like conflict and disharmony with others. All of these unwanted situations in life come from a lack of love and compassion. These are the points that we need to contemplate.

I have previously related an anecdote about love and compassion that I witnessed in Landcox Park. On the weekend people come for picnics to Landcox Park, and they naturally throw the leftovers into the garbage bin. On Mondays the bins are cleared and one of the collectors routinely used to take out the edible scraps and give them to the birds. Whenever he came all the birds would flock around in anticipation of getting food. I immediately admired this man's generosity in taking the initiative to feed the birds. For me that was a clear example of extending love and compassion to animals. However I haven't seen this person coming in recently.

When we really think about it, birds flock around humans, and ants come into kitchens because they are hungry. The ants have no intention of marching into peoples' kitchens and harming them. What is attracting them is food. When one thinks in this way what may

otherwise seem as a nuisance is an opportunity to practise some love and compassion, knowing that they are suffering and in need of assistance and help. With these practical examples we can see how love and compassion benefit other beings.

## **2. ABANDONING THE OPPOSING FACTORS TO CALM ABIDING**

### **2.2. Abandoning unrealistic thinking**

#### **2.2.1. Meditating on disillusionment for desire**

##### **2.2.1.2. CONTEMPLATING THE IMPURE NATURE OF THE BODY AND SO FORTH**

###### *2.2.1.2.2. Contemplating the situation in relation to animate phenomena (cont.)*

###### **2.2.1.2.2.2. Attachment is unsuitable, as one can realise in dependence upon reason**

This is subdivided into four:

2.2.1.2.2.2.1. Contemplating that it is impure because of being the source of the impure

2.2.1.2.2.2.2. Contemplating that it is impure because of being the result of the impure

2.2.1.2.2.2.3. Showing the impurity of the body with an example

2.2.1.2.2.2.4. Contemplating that one's own body is impure

It is through a false view of the body as being pure that one develops attachment to the bodies of others. So these contemplations on the impurity of the body are a way to overcome attachment.

###### **2.2.1.2.2.2.1. Contemplating that it is impure because of being the source of the impure**

This point is in accordance with the explanations given in the sutras. Because these points are quite clear we don't need to go into detailed explanations. The main condition for developing attachment to the body is by seeing it as attractive or appealing. The first reason to counter this shows how the body is impure because it is the source of impure products. When one contemplates how in fact there is nothing in reality that is really appealing then one will overcome attachment to the body.

The root text under this heading reads:

58. *If one does not desire contact  
With a place and smeared by the impure,  
Then how can one desire contact  
With the body from which the impure came  
from?*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je gives this explanation of the meaning of the verse:

If one does not desire contact with a place that has been smeared with impure things, such as filth or vomit, then why does one desire contact with the body from which the impurity came? It is unsuitable.

As clearly explained here, if one does not want to come into contact with something such as a cloth or a place that is smeared with filth, then it is reasonable to contemplate why one would want to make contact with a body that is the source of the filth such as vomit and so forth.

If we think about our own clothing being smeared with, for example, excrement, then we would consider it to be so dirty that we would not even touch it. We would rather hold our nose so we can't smell it, and move it away with a stick. This clearly shows that we do not

really like to come into contact with anything that we consider to be filthy.

So the first part of the explanation is that the body is impure because it is the source of that which is impure.

#### 2.2.1.2.2.2.2. Contemplating that it is impure because of being the result of the impure

59. *If you do not have attachment for the impure,  
Why do you desire to copulate with others  
Coming from the impure field,  
Generated by its impure seed?*

As just mentioned, we have no desire to be in contact with anything that is filthy, regardless of whether it is the source, or the product of what is impure. It is actually a matter of looking at the body in a different way. If we take a superficial view and don't think about it, the body may seem to be quite pure.

As the commentary explains:

If one does not have attachment for the impure, then why do you desire to copulate with the body of others that came from the impure field of the mother's womb, generated by the impure seed of the father's semen and mother's blood? It is unsuitable to be attached.

Normally we want to be clean, and we don't want to come into contact with anything that is filthy. Some may even be a bit snobbish, and say, 'I don't like anything that is unclean, and I certainly don't want to come into contact with anything that is unclean'. If we have the notion that we don't want to come into contact with anything that is filthy, we would naturally not want to be attached to anything that is filthy. Rather than attachment, we would actually want to keep our distance from it.

What is being presented here is *if one does not have attachment for the impure then why do you desire to copulate with the other's body which is impure?* If one truly does not want to come into contact with anything that is impure, then it would be absurd to be attached to it. We need to understand the logic being presented here. When we perceive something as being impure or unclean, we naturally don't want to come into contact with it. Attachment to something arises because we are not perceiving it as being unclean and impure. This is the logic that is being presented here.

The commentary poses the question *why* would one desire to copulate with the body of others that came from the impure field of the mother's womb. Here the mother's womb is presented as being analogous to a field where the crops are grown. The body that we (and others) possess is really none other than what has been cultivated from the seed, that comes from the father's semen and the mother's blood, (egg in western terms), which are also impure. Both the source, the field, and the seed, which matures into the body are from sources that are naturally impure.

So if you do not want to come into contact with anything that is filthy, then why would you desire to copulate with a body whose very source, along with itself, is impure? The response being presented here is that it is unsuitable to be attached.

Here we see the use of meticulous reasoning to overcome strong attachment to the body.

#### 2.2.1.2.2.2.3. Showing the impurity of the body with an example

60. *You do not desire even a small  
Insect born from filth, yet  
The body in the nature of multiple impurities  
You desire, despite being generated from filth.*
61. *Not only do you not disparage  
Your own impurity,  
You desire others' impure bags  
Due to a thirst for the impure.*

The commentary on these two verses reads:

Further, you do not like even a small dirty insect that was born from filth. How can you desire the body that is in the nature of many impurities and was generated from the thirty-six impure substances? Not only do you not disparage your own impure object, you desire the impure bags that are the aggregates of others out of a thirst for the impure. This is unsuitable.

As quite clearly explained in the commentary *if you do not like even a small dirty insect that is born from filth, then how can you desire a body that is in the nature of many impurities and was generated from the thirty-six impure substances?*

The thirty-six impure substances referred to here are listed in other texts that you may have access to. Basically they refer to the organs such as the lungs, the stomach, the bones, the marrow, the lymphatic system, the intestines, and external things such as nails and teeth. When one reflects upon what really makes up the body, especially the internal organs, one finds that there is nothing that is very attractive to be found there.

What one considers to be really attractive basically comes down to the skin, which is just the surface of the body. Based solely on that one may develop infatuation and attraction to the body.

#### 2.2.1.2.2.2.4. Contemplating that one's own body is impure

Having contemplated the bodies of others as being impure the text now turns to one's own body. This is divided into two sections.

##### 2.2.1.2.2.2.4.1. Contemplating the impure body

2.2.1.2.2.2.4.2. If one is attached to it, then it is suitable to be also attached to the body in the cemetery

##### 2.2.1.2.2.2.4.1. Contemplating the impure body

Contemplating the impure body is presented with this verse:

62. *Whether it is something pleasant like camphor  
Or cooked rice or vegetables,  
When it is put in the mouth and taken out  
again,  
Even the ground becomes impure and dirty.*

Here the commentary explains:

When pleasant medicines like camphor or cooked rice and vegetables are put into one's mouth and taken out again, then even the ground where they are discarded is impure and dirty. Hence, it is unsuitable to have attachment.

This is another example of how, when pure substances such as fragrances and aromas and delicious food are chewed and then spat out, the place where they are discarded is immediately considered as being filthy. One would not wish to come into contact with such filth. Yet what is considered as being filthy now is none other than

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the delicious substances with beautiful aromas and so forth. By virtue of just being chewed and then spat out it becomes filthy. This is proof that the body itself is the source of filth.

As with the earlier point, the fact that anything that comes out of the body is impure is, in itself, proof that the body is impure.

**2.2.1.2.2.4.2. If one is attached to it, then it is suitable to be also attached to the body in the cemetery**

**63. If one has doubt even though  
Such impurity is obvious  
One should look at other  
Impure bodies discarded at the cemetery.**

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

If one has doubts and thinks this body may be pure even though it is manifestly impure, then one should look at other bodies that have been discarded at the cemetery. Although one knows that once the body's skin is open it is very frightening, one continues to repeatedly take delight in one's own and women's bodies. This is unsuitable. One should abandon attachment by viewing one's body as equal to the corpse in the cemetery.

When one sees, for example, a dead body being dissected then it is very repulsive. There is no sense of attachment to a dead body whose skin has been opened. Even though that is quite obvious, one continues to take delight in the body—for men that is one's own male form as well as the bodies of women, for women that is one's own female body as well as the bodies of men.

It is obvious that there is nothing attractive when the skin of a body in the cemetery is opened up and the body is dissected.

By contemplating in this way one overcomes attachment to one's own body and the body of others. If one contemplates in the way that has been presented here, it will definitely have an effect of overcoming strong desire or attachment to the body.

### **2.2.1.2.2.3. Hence, stop grasping at the pure**

2.2.1.2.2.3.1. The body cannot be cleansed by effortful means

2.2.1.2.2.3.2. The body is not beyond the nature of being frightening

2.2.1.2.2.3.3. Contemplating it as an object of disillusionment

2.2.1.2.2.3.1. *The body cannot be cleansed by effortful means*

This is subdivided into two:

2.2.1.2.2.3.1.1. The impure body cannot be made pure by scents such as sandal

2.2.1.2.2.3.1.2. There is no reason to be attached to an unrelated smell

We can start this section in the next session.

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

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