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# Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་པའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བལྟས་སོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

30 September 2014

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As usual we can spend some time in meditation

[meditation]

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

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

The sixth chapter, which we are about to start, explains the antidote to anger, beginning with:

## 1.1. The faults of anger

### 1.1.1. The unobservable faults

#### 1.1.1.1. ANGER DESTROYS ONE'S ROOTS OF VIRTUE

Generally, understanding the relevance of practising patience is said to be developed when one contemplates the disadvantages of anger. So the more we contemplate the disadvantages of anger, the more we will see the need to practise patience. I have presented the definition of anger previously, so I need not go into it again as you can refer to that earlier explanation.<sup>1</sup> It may also be presented later in the chapter.

*Anger destroys the roots of virtue* is to be understood as explaining that basically, anger obstructs that which brings about a pleasant result, which is virtue.

The first verse of the chapter reads:

1. *All the wholesome actions  
Of generosity and offerings to the tathagatas,  
Built up over a thousand eons,  
Are destroyed by anger.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads as follows:

Since anger is the ultimate obstacle to the generation and abiding of virtuous dharmas in one's continuum, one should initially meditate on the faults of anger, and then consequently strive to abandon anger.

One instance of anger at a bodhisattva destroys from the root all the virtues arising from generosity accumulated over one hundred and one thousand eons, as well as all the wholesome actions of having made offerings to the Three Jewels such as the tathagatas, wholesome actions of meditating and morality.

As presented here, *anger is the ultimate obstacle to the generation and abiding of virtuous dharmas in one's continuum*. This is a significant point. The ultimate obstacle for the initial generation of virtue is anger, which means that when anger arises it obstructs the ability to actually generate virtue. Moreover, if one has already accumulated some virtue, then anger will prevent that virtue from abiding and remaining in our mental continuum. So anger is really the main obstacle to both accumulating and retaining virtue. We need to regard these significant points as a personal instruction.

Indeed, no-one is happy when they are angry. The more anger someone has in their mind, the less peace they will experience. So the more we reflect on the disadvantages of anger, the more likely it is that we will be able to prevent anger from taking root in our mind. In the event that we do become angry, then reflecting on the disadvantages of anger will help to reduce the intensity of that anger. So the advice presented here is really great personal advice for us.

The commentary then explains that *one should initially meditate on the faults of anger, and strive to abandon anger*. This means contemplating again and again the faults of anger. From our own experience we know that from the moment anger arises in our mind we feel unhappy and unsettled. We really need to reflect on these experiences and understand how anger actually affects us.

As further explained in the commentary, *one instance of anger at a bodhisattva destroys all virtues*. It is explained in other teachings that this relates mainly to an intense form of anger. Thus, even an instant of such intense anger *will destroy all the virtues arising from generosity accumulated over one hundred and one thousand eons, as well as the wholesome actions of having made offerings to the Three Jewels, such as tathagatas*. This means that whatever virtues one has accumulated from wholesome actions of offerings to the Three Jewels, or from taking refuge in the Three Jewels and so forth, as well as the *wholesome actions of meditating and practising morality*, is destroyed in a moment of intense anger. Thus the virtues that arise from these three main actions of positive deeds such as making offerings, meditating and morality, will be destroyed in an instant of intense anger. When the commentary refers to destroying virtue from its *root*, it is to be understood that this does not mean that anger completely destroys the actual root of virtue itself. Rather, it significantly postpones the pleasant results of virtue, which will be experienced much later in the future. This is explained in other teachings.

Then Gyaltsab Je goes on to say:

Not only this, but in a quote used by the Sarvastivadin<sup>2</sup>, and which is cited in the *Compendium of Trainings*, it says that if a fully ordained monk humiliates a companion in the pure trainings, then he has destroyed the merit equalling the merit of being reborn as a thousandfold wheel-turning king for as many times as the particles one covers, down to the golden wheel, with one's body when prostrating. This merit is accumulated when one makes a prostration to a stupa that contains the hair or nails of the Buddha.

As explained in the commentary, the merits that one accumulates from prostrations is *to be reborn as a thousandfold wheel-turning king for as many times as the particles one covers, down to the golden wheel, with one's body when prostrating*. This is a description of the depth and breadth, from the surface down, of the particles that are covered when one prostrates. As explained in the treatises, the golden wheel marks the end of the earth. Of course, that is something that cannot be seen or proven scientifically.

But then again, have there not been cases in recent times showing that not being seen, even with scientific means, doesn't necessarily mean that there is nothing there? We can take the recent example of the disappearance of the Malaysian Airlines plane. Despite all the searching by so many countries they were not able to find the plane or debris anywhere. But not being able to find it doesn't mean that it

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example the teaching of 27 February 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Those That Assert That All Exists—a school of Buddhism.

doesn't exist. Despite all the modern instruments it has not yet been found, so it seems that scientists are not able to find everything that exists.

In any case, the main point here is that the merit one obtains from doing prostrations is that one will create the cause to be reborn as a thousandfold wheel-turning king—a universal monarch—as many times as the particles that one's body covers when prostrating. However this merit can be destroyed when one humiliates, criticises or becomes angry with *a companion in the pure training*. A companion in pure training doesn't necessarily have to be a bodhisattva, so becoming angry with pure practitioners can also destroy one's accumulated virtues.

What we can derive here as a personal instruction is that even though we put an effort into accumulating virtues with practices such as prostrations and meditating, that merit can be destroyed in a moment of anger. There are those who have commented that while they can adopt a seemingly calm and composed mind during meditation, the moment they go out into the world again they soon become upset and angry once more. That is the point being addressed here: we need to be very mindful and careful to ensure that we don't destroy the merit from our positive deeds by becoming angry.

At this point we can also recall the great benefits of dedication. As explained in the teachings, if, after we have accumulated a certain amount of virtue, we immediately dedicate it to the ultimate goal of enlightenment, then that will protect one's virtues from being destroyed by anger. The analogy that is presented to illustrate this is that when a drop of water falls into an ocean it merges with that ocean, and we cannot say that it has evaporated until the whole ocean has evaporated. Similarly, when one dedicates one's virtues to the ultimate goal of enlightenment for the benefit of other sentient beings, then that merit will not be exhausted. It is also explained that one can partake of the benefits of that virtue. The more we experience the positive virtues, the more we will continue to experience their positive benefits. I have explained this in detail previously. So dedicating one's virtues is also another means of protection.

Also, as presented previously, one of the most powerful antidotes for anger is, of course, meditating on emptiness. The realisation of emptiness is the ultimate antidote that protects one from anger.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

It is taught that the anger that destroys the virtue of one hundred or one thousand eons has to be directed at a bodhisattva, which is also taught in the *Introduction to the Middle Way*. The statement in the beginning of the chapter on the four resting places in the *Great Commentary on the Vinaya*, says that anger destroys one's vows, clearly refers to the fact that strong anger destroys one's roots of virtue.

This is quite clear. The commentary then states:

Further, since it is also stated in the *Blaze of Reasoning* that wrong views and harmful intent destroy one's roots of virtue, one should strive, among other things, to contain one's anger.

*Blaze of Reasoning*, composed by Bhavaviveka, states that it is not only anger that destroys one's root of virtue, but wrong views can do the same. Holding onto wrong views can also destroy one's roots of virtue. This is explained very clearly in that treatise.

The main point here is that one should strive to contain or control one's anger for these reasons. Of course more detailed explanations about the faults of anger and benefits of patience and so forth can be found in the Lam Rim teachings. So you can also refer to those explanations.

### 1.1.1.2. DISCERNING THE FAULTS OF ANGER AND THE BENEFITS OF PATIENCE, MAKE AN EFFORT TO MEDITATE ON PATIENCE

As presented here, the supreme means to overcome anger is to discern the faults of anger and contemplate the benefits of patience.

The sequence of this presentation is really very practical because without seeing its faults there will be no initiative to overcome anger. Furthermore, if one does not see the benefit of practising patience, then there will be no impetus to develop patience. So discerning the faults of anger and meditating on patience are crucial.

The verse relating to this outline is:

2. *There is no negativity like hatred,  
There is no austerity like patience,  
Therefore meditate on patience  
In earnest in various ways!*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

There is no negativity like anger for obstructing the generation of the path and destroying virtue, and there is no austerity like patience for destroying the painful heat of the afflictions. Therefore meditate on patience in earnest in a variety of ways and methods!

This presentation is similar to that in the Lam Rim. In saying, *There is no negativity like anger for obstructing the generation of the path and destroying virtue*, the commentary is indicating that anger has two fundamental disadvantages.

The first is that it will hinder the ripening of the positive consequences of virtue. We all want to experience the positive consequences of the virtue that we have accumulated, and anger prevents the actualisation of those positive consequence.

The second is that the moment anger arises, it generates the causes to experience negative ripened consequences, such as being reborn in the hell realm, or one of the other unfortunate realms. Just as we want to experience happiness, we don't want to experience any kind of negative consequences. However, the moment anger arises it establishes the causes for unwanted experiences.

When we contemplate these two disadvantages then we can begin to get a sense of the gravity of the consequences of anger. Of course, there are many different kinds of negativities, but there is no greater negativity than hatred or anger.

Further, as explained in the commentary, *there is no austerity like patience for destroying the painful heat of the afflictions*. Here the misery of the afflictions is likened to the physical pain of experiencing extreme heat. This analogy illustrates the extent of the mental misery and anguish that one experiences from the afflictions.

This misery is overcome by the practice of patience, and as the commentary states, there is no austerity like patience. This is a very significant point. As you will recall, patience is classified into the patience of willingly enduring difficulties and hardships, and the patience of not retaliating when harm is inflicted by others. Hardships can arise from external problems and difficulties, and more particularly

from one's practices. So willingly enduring and accepting hardships and harm is indeed a great practice of austerity.

Therefore, as the commentary states, *meditate on patience* as a prelude to all the different methods of applying patience that will be presented later on in this chapter using logical reasons and so forth. So having contemplated these points one must strive to meditate in earnest to practise patience. *Earnest in a variety of ways and methods* includes the different classifications of patience mentioned earlier, as well as the various techniques and reasons and so forth.

### 1.1.2. The observable faults

Having considered the unobservable faults of anger, we now turn to the observable faults of anger. These are faults which we can immediately relate to, as we can see them in our life right now.

Observable faults are subdivided into two:

1.1.2.1. Anger takes away the opportunity for physical and mental wellbeing

1.1.2.2. It turns away friends and so forth

We have all experienced the effects of intense anger on our physical health and mental wellbeing, and we also know how anger turns away friends and so forth.

#### 1.1.2.1. ANGER TAKES AWAY THE OPPORTUNITY FOR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING

Basically this heading is stating that anger robs us of opportunity for either physical or mental wellbeing. The verse relating to this outline reads:

3. *If one holds the painful mind of hatred  
Then one's mind will not experience peace.  
One will not attain joy or bliss,  
Sleep will be elusive and there will be no stability.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

Since it generates intense suffering, if one holds the pain-like mind of anger, one cannot experience the joy of having pacified mental suffering. One will also not attain mental joy or physical bliss, sleep will be elusive and the stability of a mind abiding in its natural state will be non-existent.

*Pain-like mind of anger* indicates that while anger does not produce actual physical suffering, the mental anguish generated by anger is equated to intense physical suffering. So, *if one holds the pain-like mind of anger one cannot experience the joy of having pacified mental suffering*. Because of the anguish of anger, one cannot experience the joy of having overcome mental suffering.

As indicated earlier, anger robs us of any sense of joy or happiness, meaning that we will not have the opportunity to have a mind that has pacified mental suffering. This means that when we experience mental anguish and suffering there is a lack of joy and happiness in our mind. As a consequence, *one will also not attain mental joy or physical bliss*. The point here is that because of the lack of mental happiness, one will not experience any physical wellbeing as well, and thus *sleep and so forth will be elusive*.

Furthermore, *the stability of the mind abiding in its natural state will be non-existent*.

#### 1.1.2.2. IT TURNS AWAY FRIENDS AND SO FORTH

This heading refers to the fact that intense anger turns away friends and so forth, and is covered in the next one and a half verses.

4. *Even those who became dependent on  
The offerings of wealth and honour  
Will rise up and kill  
The malevolent lord.*

- 5ab. *Friends will get disgusted,  
Even those gathered with generosity will leave.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of these verses thus:

Even those that have become dependent on the extended offerings of wealth and honour will rise up and kill the malevolent lord. Anger will also exasperate friends and cause them to be disgusted. It will also disrupt the affection of those who were gathered with generosity. Therefore one should abandon anger.

The commentary explains that even *those dependent on the extended offerings of wealth and honour will rise up and kill a lord* who is infested with hatred or anger. Those who are dependent on a lord or master who provides them with all their basic needs will, in the event that the master or lord harbours ill-will and anger, rise up and kill him. The kindness of the lord towards his subjects in some cases could be similar to that of parents who meet all the needs of their children, who are completely dependent on their parents to feed and clothe them. Even though the subjects have similarly depended on and received benefits from their lord, it is possible that they will rise up and kill him if he treats them with a negative mind of anger.

Even these days we see so much destruction caused through anger, even between very close relations. There are those who kill their employer, and in the worst case, we even see children killing their own parents and parents taking the life of their own child, or a wife killing her husband, or a husband killing his wife and so forth. We can see so many destructive behaviours that are all initiated out of anger.

As explained in the commentary, *anger will also exasperate friends and cause them to be disgusted*. If a subject can kill their own lord or master out of anger, there is no need to mention that friends and so forth will be exasperated and disgusted by anger. This point is definitely relevant. We can see so many situations where it only takes a frown, or some unpleasant remark to separate good friends. We can become really disgusted with others out of anger. How often do we hear remarks such as, 'Oh, I will never go out with them again'? Inappropriate gestures expressed with anger, such as foul remarks, a frowning face and so forth can definitely destroy relationships.

The main point is that anger turns away friends, relatives or partners and so forth. We can definitely relate to this significant point, and we need to be really mindful of it. One can also understand that if anger disrupts relationships of all kinds, then the opposite of anger, which is patience, will bring one closer to others, and lead to more harmonious relationships. So this contrast between anger and patience needs to be understood.

Furthermore, *anger will also disrupt the affection of those gathered with generosity*. Some may have gathered friends or subjects and so forth through being generous. While on one hand being generous brings people closer to you, on the other hand anger will destroy that relationship.

Thus the conclusion is that having contemplated these obvious disadvantages and faults of anger *one should abandon anger*. The way to contemplate this point is to reflect upon how anger can lead to forgetting the kindness of others, and

actually turn them against us. Anger can also create a distance between otherwise close friends or companions. This is how one needs to contemplate again and again the many great faults of anger.

### 1.1.3. A summary of the faults

The next four lines of verse summarise the faults of anger.

- 5cd. *In short, there is nobody  
That abides in happiness through anger.*
- 6ab. *The enemy that is anger creates suffering  
In the here and the thereafter.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

In short, due to anger there is no abiding in happiness. The enemy of anger is the supreme cause for the shortcomings explained earlier, such as suffering in the present and later.

As the commentary explains, *due to anger there is no abiding in happiness*, which relates to the very pertinent point that when anger is present in the mind there is no opportunity for the mind to abide in happiness and peace. So it is anger that causes the lack of a sense of joy and happiness in the mind. His Holiness the Dalai Lama also stresses this point and mentions it often in his teachings. He says that you can't find anyone who says that they are happy because they are angry! Anger gives no opportunity for any sense of joy or happiness in one's mind. That, in brief, is the main disadvantage of anger.

The commentary concludes, *therefore, the enemy of anger is the supreme cause for the shortcomings explained earlier, such as suffering in the present and later*, i.e. future lives.

### 1.2. The benefits of patience

I have, of course, presented this topic many times in the past. The relevant lines of verse read:

- 6cd. *Those who destroyed anger by focusing,  
Will be happy here and thereafter.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Should a person, after having contemplated well the shortcomings of anger, focus their mind and destroy anger, then this will be the cause for their very happiness in this life and future lives.

As clearly explained in the commentary, when one has seen and fully acknowledged the faults of anger through contemplating and meditating, and taken the initiative to cultivate patience, then that *act of destroying anger will be the cause for happiness* to be experienced *in this life* right now, as well as *in future lives*.

This point was also explained by Lama Tsong Khapa. When the cause of the mental anguish that arises from anger has been removed, then what remains is happiness. What obstructs happiness is mental anguish and once that unhappiness has been removed, we find happiness. So, as Lama Tsong Khapa points out, when one takes the initiative to destroy anger, one will experience continuous happiness in this life. The happiness we experience now in this life will, as explained here, also be a cause for further happiness, as it will be a cause to obtain the high status of being reborn as a human or in the god realms, and ultimately to become a cause for definite goodness.

When one obtains such high status, it will be with perfect conditions, e.g. a human body with all the perfect conditions intact. That too causes happiness in future lives. Then the commentary continues:

Therefore one should strive in abandoning anger. If one does not abandon anger, then there are very great shortcomings, as explained in the *Sutra of the Great Play of Manjushri*.

On one hand one should contemplate the great advantages of abandoning anger, and on the other hand one should contemplate the great disadvantages of not abandoning anger. Even though it is not specified in the outline, what we can also understand here is that there can also be unobserved future benefits of practising patience, as well as the observable practical benefits we will experience in this life, where we will abide continuously in joy and happiness. So we can extract this further meaning from this section of the text.

## 2. BRINGING TO MIND THE METHOD TO ESTABLISH PATIENCE

This has two sub-divisions:

- 2.1. Eliminating the cause of anger
- 2.2. Meditating on the benefits of patience

### 2.1. Eliminating the cause of anger

Here there are four sub-headings:

- 2.1.1. The nature of the cause, including the shortcomings
- 2.1.2. Advice to strive in the method to oppose anger
- 2.1.3. The actual method to oppose anger
- 2.1.4. Striving in abandoning anger after having analysed the cause for anger in detail

We can conclude here for this evening.

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

7 October 2014

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As usual, we will spend some time in our meditation practice. [meditation]

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

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

## 2.1. Eliminating the cause for anger

### 2.1.1. The nature of the cause, including the shortcomings

This is a presentation of the nature of the cause of anger, as well as its shortcomings. The relevant verse reads:

7. *Finding the nourishment of mental unhappiness,  
Which arises from the undesired and  
From obstructions to the desired,  
Hatred grows stronger and destroys self.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary opens with a hypothetical query:

Query: How does anger generate suffering?

Answer: Mental unhappiness, which comes either from that which causes the undesired or obstructs that which is desired by the self and that which is close to the self, is the nourishment which increases anger. Having found the nourishment of mental unhappiness, the body of hatred grows stronger and destroys self in this life and future lives.

This is a presentation of how anger arises within us. On a personal level, this understanding is really very helpful as it enables us to detect what causes us to feel angry in the first place. Recognising this process can help us to prevent anger from spiralling out of control.

How does anger generate suffering? The commentary begins by explaining that *mental unhappiness comes either from that which causes the undesired or obstructs that which is desired by the self and that which is close to the self*, i.e. relatives and so forth. As presented here, mental unhappiness arises due to undesired events affecting either oneself or those close to one, or an obstruction to what one desires. It is that mental unhappiness that is the *nourishment* or fuel for anger.

When we relate this to ourselves, we can see how true it is that we become really unhappy when we get what we don't want to experience, or when there is an obstruction to what we do desire to experience for ourselves and our close ones. As soon as our mind becomes unhappy we are prone to becoming angry. That is because, as presented here, mental unhappiness serves as a fuel to anger. Unhappiness nourishes and sustains anger just like food nourishes and sustains the body as it develops and

matures. Using this analogy the commentary says that, *having found the nourishment of mental unhappiness, the body of hatred grows stronger, and thus destroys our happiness in this life and in future lives*. These are really significant points about the underlying cause of anger.

We need to see the relationship between unhappiness and anger. We become unhappy when our desires are thwarted, or if we have to experience what we don't want. Then, because of that unhappiness, we focus on what we think has caused us pain and unhappiness, and anger arises. If it is an individual then our anger is directed at that person, and the more we think about how they have obstructed us, or caused us to experience something that we don't want, the more our anger increases. That is when we begin to regard the other person as an arch enemy.

We really need to understand how the process unfolds within our mind. We generate anger because we are unhappy. When we don't investigate thoroughly, we immediately blame the person who we consider has caused our unhappiness. However, if we investigate carefully, then we have to acknowledge that it is our own unhappiness that has caused the anger and which is creating so much mental agony and pain. When we use this sort of analysis we come to understand that it is that anger which is the real enemy, not the person.

Normally of course, we don't do that investigation, so we perceive external causes, such as a person or a particular situation, as the cause of our pain and unhappiness. When our mind is unhappy then, as presented here, that unhappiness fuels anger and nourishes it. As will be explained later, joy is the opposite of unhappiness, so being joyful will prevent unhappiness, which in turn prevents anger from arising. So, for example, if someone hits us with a stick, we start to feel unhappy as soon as we feel pain, and then, in a flash, we become angry with the person who inflicted that pain. But if we are not fazed by that one hit of a stick, and actually remain joyful, then there is no place for anger to arise.

The point made in the commentary is that as anger becomes stronger and stronger it destroys our happiness in this life and in future lives. Thus the exhortation, even though it is not mentioned specifically here, is that we must assiduously overcome anger.

When we consider the logic of the process by which we become angry we realise there is a state of mind between the event and the emotion of anger, which is our feeling of unhappiness. We are the owners of that unhappiness, so if we don't generate unhappiness then we will prevent the generation of anger. These are significant points that we really need to consider.

When we really embody this approach then we are practising the real meaning of patience. Many people comment on how amazing it is that His Holiness the Dalai Lama is so patient with the Communist Chinese. That is because His Holiness embodies this practice of patience so that what seems to be unimaginable becomes possible. If we really think about these significant points we will gain a very deep understanding. More details about this will be presented later on.

## 2.1.2. Advice to strive in the method to oppose anger

8. *Therefore I need to destroy the food  
Of this enemy of mine,  
An enemy who has no other function  
Aside from harming me.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Therefore I should destroy mental unhappiness, the nourishment of this enemy of mine. There is nothing that harms me more than this enemy of anger, and I should strive in destroying this arch enemy of mine.

As has just been explained, our mental unhappiness serves as a fuel for anger, *therefore I should destroy mental unhappiness which is nourishment of this enemy of mine*, i.e. anger. Furthermore, because *there is nothing that harms me more than this enemy of anger I should strive in destroying this enemy of mine*. In other words, one needs to make an effort to overcome the real enemy that causes distress and agony. This is another significant point. When anger arises it not only harms others, but it also harms oneself. When one recognises that anger has no other function than to harm oneself, then one can recognise it as being the real enemy that needs to be overcome. Anger has no redeeming features. From our own experience we know that the moment anger arises we immediately feel unsettled and uncomfortable. Not only does it cause mental agony now, but anger also affects future lives as well.

The virtues of patience were presented earlier. The direct opposites of the virtues of patience are the faults of anger. Recognising that, we need to really embrace this on a personal level and do our best to overcome anger. Of course, our ultimate goal is to completely abandon anger. Meanwhile, we should, as much as possible, try to resort to these reasons and think about the disadvantages of anger when it does arise. This will help to lessen the intensity of our anger and prevent it from escalating. So we can definitely take measures now to prevent anger from taking root and increasing in intensity.

As personal practice, we need to put the most effort into protecting our own mind from anger, rather than finding excuses, like thinking, 'Oh well, they're angry so I have the right to get angry too'. If one uses that as a reason then there will be no end to one's anger. Even if one cannot stop the other person from becoming angry, one can at least make an attempt to control one's own mind and prevent anger from arising. To that extent it will benefit oneself, as well as defusing the conflict with the other.

Indeed, it is fuelling anger that causes more and more trouble in any situation. There are so many wars going on, and when we look at the situation we can see that those who are rising up are so fuelled up and angry, for whatever reason, that they will do anything to fight back. If, rather than trying to appease that anger and settle them down, one adds further causes for them to become upset, they will naturally rise up and fight with an even more intense anger. With these kinds of situations how can there really be world peace? We can never expect world peace when more fuel is added to already tense situations, with people who are already feeling unsettled.

In fact the patience practised by the stronger towards the weak is, as the teachings explain, the most supreme

practice of patience. The *Thirty-seven Practices of a Bodhisattva* mentions that the practice of patience by the mighty against those who are weaker is a really supreme practice. As the mighty can very easily crush those who are less powerful, they have no need to practise patience. In contrast, the weaker have no choice at all. They often have to take whatever harm is inflicted on them because they don't dare to fight back with someone who is mightier. So practising patience in those circumstances is said to be not as great as the powerful being patient with the weaker. At a global level, a mightier nation should be able to tolerate those who are causing some disturbance and so forth. Then peace will be possible. However, I suppose that mighty nations would not find that reasonable.

When animosity or anger between two nations or groups of people is appeased, then there is room for negotiation and peace is possible, and when anger is not appeased, there is no possibility for negotiation and peace and so forth. That is really how it is. At a personal level it is exactly the same—when there is anger there is conflict.

In fact, when a really powerful enemy crushes you, you are so afraid that there is really no time to be angry. That was my response when the Chinese came into Tibet. Someone once asked me, 'When you had to flee, did you feel any anger towards the Chinese' and my response was, 'I didn't even have time to feel angry as I was so afraid. The only thing that came to my mind at that time was that my life was in danger, and so I had to flee'. When there are guns being fired, and heavy artillery being used, the constant fear leaves no time to feel angry.

The point is that when the stronger overpower the weaker, then the weaker ones have to accept that. We can see this also with parents and their children; if parents scold or spank a young child then, of course, the child cannot do anything in return as it is so small. So when the powerful practise patience, and do not inflict harm on the weaker ones, then that is indeed a supreme act of patience.

The current conflict in Syria and Iraq is a case in point. Syria is a small country, and it seems very easy for America and Australia to decide to go there. I'm not sure about that. America has a very big population. Australia is smaller so Australia has to be very careful, otherwise the conflict will come closer to home.

In the fourth chapter Shantideva used the example of an external enemy to show the danger of befriending the delusions. When you befriend an external foe it is possible that they will turn around and become your friend if you are kind to them. In contrast, if you are kind and nice to the delusions within, they will just become more powerful and cause you more harm. These are all significant points.

Another significant verse concerning overcoming the real enemy within explained that it is easier to cover one's feet to protect them against sharp objects than trying to cover the whole earth with leather.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, overcoming the inner enemy of the delusions is equivalent to overcoming

<sup>1</sup> *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, chapter 5 verse 13.

all enemies. Some have confided in me that they have found this advice gives their practice real meaning and purpose. When we really contemplate these points they give us every reason to practise patience.

As we are inclined to engage in Dharma practice we need to derive the real essence of what is being presented here, and try to put it into practice. As presented in the teachings, we need to regard our internal afflictions and delusions as our real enemy, and use all our energy to combat and overcome them. Conversely, we need to practise love for our external enemies. So, in short, extend love towards external enemies, and don't be patient with internal enemies. Try to use every means to overcome those inner delusions. That is, in essence, the practice we need to adopt if we are to consider ourselves Dharma practitioners.

### **2.1.3. The actual method to oppose anger**

Once again we can take note of the sequence of outlines, although, of course, Gyalsab Je's commentary only reflects what is presented in the actual text. We have just covered the reasons why it is necessary to apply the method to oppose anger. Now we are presented with the actual methods that oppose anger. Gyalsab Je's meticulous outlines really bring out the logical presentation of Shantideva's text, and it is good for us to really relate to this text in a systemic way, as a way of integrating it in our practice. Rather than just thinking, 'Oh, this is just an outline', we can see that the outlines, just by themselves, have great purpose.

The actual method to oppose anger is subdivided into two:

2.1.3.1. It is unsuitable to generate mental unhappiness

2.1.3.2. The reason for that

#### **2.1.3.1. IT IS UNSUITABLE TO GENERATE MENTAL UNHAPPINESS**

The commentary on the verse begins this query:

Query: How then does one abandon mental unhappiness?

Here we can see the elegant simplicity of the presentation. The verse that relates to this reads:

9. *Whatever happens, I should never  
Let this mind of joy be disturbed.  
Though disliking, one will not attain one's  
desire,  
And virtue will degenerate.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary goes on to explain:

Having contemplated the benefits of accepting suffering think: "I shall under no circumstances let my mental joy be disturbed." Contemplate this point well.

Mental joy is the antidote to mental unhappiness. Therefore, if one generates dislike upon meeting something undesired, then, though one generates dislike, one will not achieve one's wishes, and the virtue that bestows the desired result degenerates. In this way all sufferings are generated.

*Having contemplated the benefits of accepting suffering*, refers to the benefits of willingly accepting suffering, which will be presented in more detail later on in the text. The point here is that suffering does have some advantages and should not be viewed in a completely negative light. There are in fact many *benefits* in *accepting suffering*, and

contemplating this one should think, '*I shall under no circumstances let my mental joy be disturbed*'. This is a point I also make in my own teachings. I often remind people that preserving and protecting one's joy is of the utmost importance for one's wellbeing.

Having contemplated this point thoroughly, we need to make the personal commitment, 'Regardless of whether the circumstances are good or bad, and especially when things are not going well, I will not allow my sense of joy to be disturbed or diminished', and in that way maintain that feeling of joy and happiness.

As presented in the commentary, joy is the antidote to mental unhappiness. *If upon meeting something that is undesired*, e.g. being harmed, *one generates dislike*, however that dislike *will not achieve one's wishes*. In other words, developing a dislike for someone who harms us won't affect that person at all. Furthermore, rather than accomplishing one's wishes, developing dislike actually destroys the virtue within oneself, obstructing the desired result of happiness.

In summary, as the commentary states, *In this way all sufferings are generated*. The point here is that whatever the unfavourable circumstance, generating dislike will not help to accomplish our wish for our own wellbeing. Indeed, rather than accomplishing anything, generating dislike actually harms our future experience of joy and happiness, because it results in the degeneration of the virtue within us. Because it is a negativity, the moment anger is generated it destroys the virtue that we have accumulated, which is the cause of our future happiness. That is how, as explained in the commentary, all sufferings are generated.

#### **2.1.3.2. THE REASON FOR THAT**

This refers to the reason why it is unsuitable to generate unhappiness. The verse in relation to this outline is one that many have found to be extremely useful and beneficial. It is a verse that is often quoted, and you will all have come across it many times.

10. *If one can do something  
What is there to dislike?  
If one can do nothing,  
What use is dislike?*

Gyalsab Je explains the meaning of the verse thus:

If one can do something about the object that generates mental unhappiness, then what reason is there to generate dislike? Right away one acts and the mental unhappiness vanishes. In case one cannot do something then what is the use to generate unhappiness? One can dislike that space lacks obstructions, but what is the benefit in that?

As so clearly presented here, *if one can do something about an object that generates mental unhappiness then what reason is there to generate dislike?* To take a contemporary example, if a car breaks down and the problem can be fixed then taking it to a mechanic to be fixed will solve the problem. There is no real need for dislike or an unhappy state of mind, because it is fixable. In the event that it can't be fixed and has to be written off then, again, there is no purpose in generating dislike. If it can be fixed then there is no need to worry; if it cannot be fixed then there is no purpose in worrying about that either. We can

use other examples such as someone dropping a ceramic cup. If it is cracked it can be fixed, so you fix it and then you can use it again. So there is no need to generate dislike and an unhappy mind. Whereas if it is broken into pieces and cannot be fixed, then generating dislike and worrying about it will not help to solve the situation. It will just cause more mental distress.

This advice is particularly relevant with physical illnesses. When we are ill and there is a remedy or cure then there is no need to really worry and generate a mind of dislike, as it can be cured. In the event that it is a disease that is difficult to cure then one has to accept that. The mental anguish generated from worrying will just add mental suffering to our physical suffering.

As the commentary states, if it can be fixed, *then right away one acts and the mental unhappiness vanishes. In the case one cannot do something then what is the use to generate unhappiness?* So again we are being reminded that if a situation cannot be remedied, or cannot be fixed, then there is no use in generating unhappiness. A further analogy presented in the commentary is that *one can dislike that space lacks obstruction but what is the benefit in that?* If someone were to be really upset with space because it lacks obstruction, saying, 'Oh, this space is useless. It's empty and doesn't have any function', then what purpose would that serve? None at all.

#### **2.1.4. Striving in abandoning anger after having analysed the cause for anger in detail**

This has three subdivisions:

2.1.4.1. Showing the general division of objects for generating anger

2.1.4.2. Stopping anger at undesired actions

2.1.4.3. Stopping anger at obstructions to one's wishes

##### **2.1.4.1. SHOWING THE GENERAL DIVISION OF OBJECTS FOR GENERATING ANGER**

Here we are being presented with the different kinds of objects or situations that generate anger. Some use these same objects as objects for generating patience. In fact the objects of anger and the objects of patience are basically the same, aren't they? The objects of our anger are the very objects with which one needs to generate patience with.

Here Gyaltsab Je uses these objects in the context of anger. The relevant verse reads:

11. *I do not wish for myself or my friends  
Suffering, criticism, harsh words  
And unpleasant talk.  
For the enemy it is the opposite*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

For myself and my friends I do not want these four: feelings of suffering, criticism, harsh words spoken to one's face and the spreading of unpleasant derogatory rumours. These I do not wish for, and wish to reverse them, but in relation to the enemy these likes and dislikes are the opposite. In short, they are the eight worldly dharmas.

In relation to ourselves and those closest to us we don't want to experience any kind of *feelings of suffering*, any kind of *criticism*, or *harsh words* spoken directly to us, or *the spreading of any unpleasant or derogatory rumours*.

In fact we wish to experience their *reverse*, meaning that we want to experience the opposite of what we don't want. We do not want to feel any suffering and we want to feel happiness; we do not wish for criticism and we wish for praise; we do not wish for harsh words but wish only for pleasant words to be spoken to us; and we do not wish for unpleasant or derogatory rumours to be spread about us, but wish to have a good reputation.

But in relation to our enemies we wish the opposite. We want them to feel suffering and be the object of criticism, harsh words and unpleasant, derogatory rumours. Meanwhile we don't want them to experience the opposite of these negative experiences.

Basically, with these eight worldly concerns we want to experience the positives, but don't want to experience the negatives, whereas we want enemies to experience the negatives and not the positives. When we see how true this is for ourselves, we can see how these objects are the basis for all anger. When we are experiencing the negative side anger arises, and we also feel anger when the enemy experiences the positive side. So basically these eight worldly concerns or dharmas serve as the basis of so many unwholesome actions and non-virtuous states of mind.

Maybe we can go into a little bit more detail about these eight worldly dharmas in our next session. In the meantime it would be good for you to really look into these and understand how you actually experience them: the four that I do not wish for, and their opposites which I do wish for, whilst for my enemies I wish the reverse.

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

14 October 2014

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As usual we can devote some time to our meditation practice.

[meditation]

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

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

## 2.1.4.1. SHOWING THE GENERAL DIVISION OF OBJECTS FOR GENERATING ANGER (CONT.)

In short, one should refrain from the eight worldly dharmas, which are the causes of anger. As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

For myself and my friends I do not want these four: feelings of suffering, criticism, harsh words spoken to one's face and the spreading of unpleasant derogatory rumours.

When we, or our close and dear ones, experience these four unpleasant situations, then anger arises. Conversely we wish for their opposites: wanting to experience happiness rather than suffering; wanting to experience praise rather than criticism; wanting to hear pleasant words rather than harsh words; and wanting to have fame rather than experience derogatory rumours. We don't want to experience the four unpleasant situations and we do want to experience the four pleasant ones.

It is the complete opposite for our enemies—we are happy when they experience suffering, but unhappy and angry when they experience happiness. We don't want them to receive any praise, and are happy when they are criticised; we are unhappy when they have pleasant words spoken to them, but glad when harsh words are used towards them. If our enemies have fame, then that makes us uncomfortable and unhappy, and thus angry, and when there are unpleasant rumours about them, we are glad.

Those, in brief, are the eight worldly concerns: one wishes to avoid four unfavourable conditions, but wishes them upon one's enemies; one wishes to enjoy four favourable conditions, but hopes one's enemies will not encounter them. As I have said, it's important for us to really look into how we get caught up in the eight worldly concerns.

In short, we basically want to experience the happiness of the contaminated samsaric pleasures. Of course, there is nothing wrong with wishing to have a higher level of happiness, but here we are talking about a strong clinging and attachment to the happiness derived from samsaric pleasures, and an aversion to any unpleasant experiences. We want to be praised and not criticised. We cling to worldly fame, and are unhappy if we are the object of any

derogatory rumours. Fame itself is not a bad thing if it is based on actual good qualities. For example, amongst sentient beings no-one could be more famous than a bodhisattva. Bodhisattvas are renowned for their deeds of benefiting other sentient beings, so a bodhisattva's fame only enables them to further benefit sentient beings, rather than being a source of harm to themselves. Thus, as the term itself indicates, we need to understand that the eight worldly dharmas refer to worldly concerns.

I have explained the means to counteract the eight worldly dharmas in detail previously, however as it is important to have a good understanding of them, I will go over it again now. So, as explained earlier, one wishes for the happiness that is derived from being attached to the contaminated worldly pleasures, and it is this happiness derived from worldly pleasures, fame, praise and pleasant remarks which are related to worldly views that we need to overcome. Whereas the happiness that one would experience from obtaining liberation or ultimate enlightenment is a happiness that we need to pursue, for it is a worthy goal. Wishing for the happiness of liberation or enlightenment will inspire us to achieve that great goal.

As explained in Nagarjuna's *Letter to the King*, as well as in the Lam Rim teachings, one needs to equalise the eight worldly concerns or dharmas. This means we need to adopt an attitude which is the opposite of our normal attitudes. Instead of wishing for happiness, one willingly wishes to endure suffering and hardship, and so forth. The way to understand this in its proper context is that the experience of even temporary happiness is the result of good karma, or the virtue that one has accumulated in the past. Thus, when we experience that wellbeing and happiness, we are actually using up our good karma. When we reflect upon this fact, then we won't feel too keen about wishing to experience samsaric pleasures, because we know that we will be using up our own good karma.

Suffering, on the other hand is the result of negative karma, and whenever one experiences suffering it is exhausting the negative karma that one has accumulated in the past. By contemplating in this way we realise that since suffering exhausts our negative karma, it is actually good for us, and the sooner our negative karma is expended, the better it is for us. By thinking in this way, we realise that it is quite reasonable to change our attitude from wishing to experience happiness and avoid suffering, to one of willingly wishing to experience suffering, and being very wary of experiencing the happiness arising from worldly pleasures. By adopting this attitude, one will not be daunted by suffering, because of the knowledge that it is expending one's negative karma. With this attitude one will also be practising the patience of willingly tolerating sufferings.

Another way to look at the significance of the practice of equalising the eight worldly dharmas is that by not engaging in this equalising practice and exchanging our attitudes, we are, in effect, longing to experience the happiness of worldly samsaric pleasures. Such a longing will increase our attachment, which will then hinder our practice. When our attachment to the happiness of samsaric pleasures increases, it further intensifies our

anger when we experience its opposite, which is suffering.

Furthermore, when we anticipate the joy of experiencing samsaric pleasures, we are ignorant of the fact that such happiness is in the nature of contaminated pleasure, rather than long-lasting happiness. Holding onto this view increases our ignorance. Thus the three poisons are increased if one does not practise equalising the eight worldly concerns.

Taking up this practice of equalising the eight worldly concerns will strengthen our *tong len* (giving and taking) practice, which we attempt to practise in our regular meditation. As I have mentioned previously, someone who doesn't wish to experience happiness, and who willingly wishes to experience suffering, can really take the *tong len* practice to heart. If one does not want to experience suffering and wants to experience only happiness, it wouldn't be possible to even think of taking on the suffering of other sentient beings. Furthermore if one is really attached to happiness, one would not want to be parted from it, so giving one's happiness away to other sentient beings would not be possible. As I have mentioned previously, the *tong len* practice would be an appropriate practice for those who have taken up the practice of equalising the eight worldly dharmas.

To summarise the main points, the 'taking' part of the *tong len* practice is when one willingly wishes to take the suffering of others upon oneself. When one is wary about experiencing happiness, one will easily be able to give it to other sentient beings, which covers the 'giving' part of the practice. As mentioned previously, being able to practise the patience of enduring suffering will prevent anger from arising when one experiences hardships and difficulties. Rather than being unhappy when our enemies experience happiness, we will be glad about that, which will also prevent anger from arising when we see our enemies experiencing good conditions. This is really a great and profound practice, so it shouldn't be taken lightly. Indeed this practice has great meaning and purpose. This should be apparent when one sees the extent to which it transforms our mind. Further details about this will be presented later on.

#### 2.1.4.2. STOPPING ANGER AT UNDESIRED ACTIONS

This section covers how to prevent anger from arising. There are three subdivisions:

2.1.4.1.1. Stopping anger at wrongdoings directed at oneself

2.1.4.1.2. Stopping anger at wrongdoings directed at one's friends

2.1.4.1.3. Stopping anger at those who benefit one's enemies

We can see how these three types of anger definitely relate to our immediate experiences in everyday life. The moment one experiences some wrongdoing directed at oneself or one's friends, one immediately becomes upset and angry. How wonderful it would be if we could actually prevent anger from arising when we face such situations! How gentle and calm our mind would be!

## STOPPING ANGER AT WRONGDOINGS DIRECTED AT ONESELF<sup>1</sup>

This has two main sections:

1. Tolerating the generation of suffering
2. Being patient with contempt and so forth

### 1. TOLERATING THE GENERATION OF SUFFERING

This section is subdivided into three:

- 1.1. Meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering
- 1.2. Meditating on the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma
- 1.3. Meditating on the patience that does not think anything of harm.

This is where the three divisions of patience are presented:

- Meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering
- Meditating on the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma
- Meditating on the patience that does not think of anything of harm.

As presented many times, the definition of patience is a mind that does not become disturbed in the face of harm and suffering. So this means if our mind is not disturbed when we experience harm from external conditions, or from our own experiences of suffering, then we are practising patience.

The opposite of patience is anger. The Lam Rim teachings specifically mention an opposite to each of the three types of patience listed here. However, in general, anger is the opposite of patience. The definition of anger is the malicious mind that intends to harm, which is focused on the three objects that cause one suffering.

The patience of willingly tolerating suffering is really a paramount practice for everyday life. Anger is mostly related to lacking the patience to tolerate suffering. So whenever we experience suffering we can contemplate, 'This is the result of my non-virtuous actions in the past, and therefore it is befitting that I experience this now, as a way to eradicate the results of my past negativities'. By contemplating in this way, suffering becomes more acceptable, and we will not become despondent when we experience it.

As I said earlier, the Lam Rim explains the opposites of these three kinds of patience. As I recall, the opposite to the patience of *meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering*, is a despondent mind that feels weighed down and worthless. The opposite to *meditating on the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma*, is a lack of interest in the Dharma, and no aspiration to practise it. The opposite of *meditating on the patience that does not think of anything of harm*, is basically anger. You can check the Lam Rim as well, but these are, as I recall, the opposite of the three kinds of patience.

#### 1.1. Meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering

This is subdivided into five:

- 1.1.1. Contemplating that one is not beyond the nature of contaminated suffering

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<sup>1</sup> To keep them manageable the heading numbers and styles start again at this point.

1.1.2. Contemplating the benefits of meditating on suffering

1.1.3. Contemplating how they are not difficult once habituated

1.1.4. The benefits of striving to abandoning afflictions

1.1.5. Extensive explanation of the benefits of suffering

### **1.1.1. Contemplating that one is not beyond the nature of contaminated suffering**

*One is not beyond the nature of contaminated suffering* means that one definitely has to experience contaminated sufferings. Because one is still in samsara, one still has a samsaric nature.

The relevant lines of verse from the root text read:

*12ab. Causes for happiness come adventitiously,  
Causes for suffering abound.*

In his commentary on these two lines Gyaltsab Je explains:

In cyclic existence the causes for happiness arise only occasionally and the causes for suffering abound. Since one is not beyond the nature of cyclic existence it is appropriate to tolerate sufferings.

As explained in the commentary, *in cyclic existence the causes for happiness arise only occasionally*. One needs to understand that the cause for happiness is virtue. Thus, for example, if you were to reflect upon whether you have accumulated virtue or non-virtue today, it may be quite evident that you have created more non-virtuous deeds than virtuous ones. If that is the case, you would have been creating more causes for suffering than causes for happiness. So, as indicated in the commentary, when the causes to experience happiness are generated only occasionally, then naturally, the result of happiness is also only occasional, and instead of happiness, one experiences more suffering. This can also relate to the fact that the immediate causes for our happiness are also scarce. Even on a daily basis there are far more occasions where things go wrong, which cause us suffering, than conditions for happiness.

*Since one is not beyond the nature of cyclic existence the causes for suffering abound*, relates to non-virtuous activities or negativities. If the delusions are prevalent in our mind, then it is more likely that we will be creating more non-virtues or negativities on a regular basis. If we find that this is true for ourselves now, then it would also have to have been true in past lives. Through having created abundant causes for suffering in the past, one naturally experiences more suffering now. Likewise, if we failed to create the cause of happiness, which is virtue, in previous lives, we will naturally experience the result of a lack of happiness now.

These are really significant points about karma. When one creates non-virtuous deeds and negativity, the result will be suffering. Whereas if one creates virtuous deeds, the result will be happiness. As the great Kadampa masters advised, on a regular basis one should, at the end of the day, count up how many deeds were influenced by the delusions, and were thus negative deeds, and how much virtue was accrued during the day. The results of this analysis show us our progress. Then we can slowly transform our lives by creating more virtues and shunning more negativities. This is a personal instruction

on how to adopt virtue and abandon negativity. If we do that then we will then secure a better life right now, as well as preparing for our experiences in future lifetimes. This is very succinct advice that is being presented here.

In very simple terms, if we wish to experience real happiness in life, then we need to accumulate virtue. If you want to experience real happiness, then you must accumulate the causes for that, which is virtue. If you do not wish to experience suffering, then you need to abandon negativity which will eradicate the causes for suffering. One becomes a real practitioner when one abides by this code of training. When we really contemplate and think about how our experiences now are related to specific causes and conditions that were created in the past, we generate a real confidence in the importance of adopting virtue and abandoning negativity. We really need to take this on board.

### **1.1.2. Contemplating the benefits of meditating on suffering**

One should understand that we don't need to be completely afraid of suffering, as there are actually benefits in experiencing it.

The following six lines explain this:

*12cd. Without suffering there is no renunciation  
Therefore, mind be firm!*

*13. If the faithful of Durga and the Kanapa  
Tolerate the meaningless feelings of  
Being burned and cut, then why  
Do I not have courage for liberation?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on these lines reads as follows:

It is appropriate to contemplate cyclic existence to be in the nature of suffering because without contemplating the suffering of samsara the mind definitely wishing to be free from samsara will not arise. Hence, "Mind be firm!"

It is appropriate to tolerate suffering. The faithful of the goddess Uma, in order to reverse and lessen the austerities of Ishvara, on the ninth of the middle month of autumn, fast and cut and burn themselves for one or three days in order to please her.

The people of Kanapa and so forth in the south, in order to compete with each other, endure the sufferings of cutting their bodies and the like. If one can tolerate sufferings for such meaningless purposes, then why do I fear the experiences of suffering for the great purpose of liberating all sentient beings from their sufferings? It is appropriate to tolerate them.

As explained here in the commentary, *it is appropriate to contemplate cyclic existence to be in the nature of suffering, otherwise the mind wishing to definitely be free from samsara will not arise*. As one of the great lamas, Drakha Rinpoche, who was from the same area in Tibet where I come from mentioned, there are no accounts of practitioners entering the path and gaining realisations by experiencing pleasures.

How this previously unknown booklet by Drakha Rinpoche came to be published was that there was an occasion when His Holiness the Dalai Lama was delayed in Patna for some time. In order to pass the time he said, "I'd like to check out what's in the library here, as I've heard it holds some rare texts in its collection". So

Dzongsar Khyabse Rinpoche went to the Patna Library and found a collection of Drakha Rinpoche's works. When this was brought to His Holiness' attention, His Holiness was interested and wanted to see them. When he came across this particular text he was so impressed that he said "Oh, this should be made more available!" That was when this booklet was published. Apparently there is also a collection of Drakha Rinpoche's works in a library in America. It is quite amazing to think that a library in Patna and a library in America had held copies of his works, but this was not widely known.

After this text was published it remained relatively unknown until His Holiness the Dalai Lama mentioned in a teaching how he had found the advice given by Drakha Rinpoche to have been very beneficial for his own mind. The booklet was being distributed freely during a teaching, and so people quickly rushed to acquire a copy for themselves! Having gained access to this book, we can see its great significance.

Of course if we had ample time I would be referring to some of the appropriate passages in this book, along with the Lam Rim teachings. But because we don't have much time, we won't do that. In his text, Drakha Rinpoche says that there are many accounts of delusions increasing and negativities not being purified, as a result of enjoying the pleasures and happiness of samsara, and no accounts of practitioners who have lessened their delusions and purified their negativities through the experience of pleasures. However there are many accounts of practitioners who, having contemplated suffering, have lessened their delusions, purified their negativities, and accumulated extensive merit.

Then he quotes the great Kadampa master Chen-ngawa, who says one should cherish suffering, for it is through sufferings and hardships that the lamas and Sangha perform their great virtuous deeds. The great extensive deeds of the lamas are indeed the result of enduring a great amount of suffering and hardship in their practice. The sangha also endure the hardships of practising morality, and endure discomforts whilst engaging in virtues of the three doors of body, speech and mind. Thus, by willingly experiencing sufferings they are able to purify extensive negativities and accumulate very extensive merit to achieve the higher realisations of liberation and enlightenment. This is why, as explained, it is appropriate to cherish suffering.

The great lama Drakha Rinpoche was also known, amongst those who revered him, as a manifestation of Chenrezig. On a personal note, I had a classmate who came from the same town as Drakha Rinpoche. So he had an unequivocal faith in Drakha Rinpoche and he used to say to me, "Oh, there's really no lama like Drakha Rinpoche. He's a really incredible practitioner and a great being".

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains that *it is appropriate to contemplate cyclic existence to be in the nature of suffering*. As mentioned before, without contemplating the nature of samsara the wish to definitely be free from samsara will not arise. When one sees the great benefits from contemplating suffering, one will see the appropriateness of enduring suffering.

Furthermore, as explained in the commentary *it is appropriate to tolerate suffering*. Examples of such suffering include *the faithful of the goddess Uma, who, in order to reverse and lessen the austerities of Ishvara, on the ninth of the middle month of autumn, fast and cut and burn themselves for one or three days in order to please her*. So just to please this goddess, the devotees of Uma endure extreme pain and suffering.

Furthermore, *the people of Kanapa and so forth in the south, in order to compete with each other, endure the sufferings of cutting their bodies and the like. If one can tolerate sufferings for such meaningless purposes, then why do I fear the experiences of suffering for the great purpose of liberating all sentient beings from their sufferings?* So in comparison to such meaningless sufferings without much purpose, one's own sufferings, which arise from engaging in practices for the purpose of liberating all sentient beings from their sufferings, are worthwhile. By contemplating this we will not fear suffering. The implication here is that, as explained in the commentary, it is appropriate to tolerate suffering. More extensive benefits will be explained later.

There are many accounts of people enduring extremely painful acts such as putting fire on their heads and inflicting harm on their body in various other ways, for meaningless reasons.

### **1.1.3. Contemplating how they are not difficult once habituated**

As indicated, tolerating suffering will not be difficult once one becomes acquainted with it.

That is subdivided into two:

1.1.3.1. Extensive explanation

1.1.3.2. Summary

#### **1.1.3.1. EXTENSIVE EXPLANATION**

This has four subdivisions:

1.1.3.1.1. It becomes easier with familiarisation

1.1.3.1.2. Establishing this with an example

1.1.3.1.3. The object to tolerate

1.1.3.1.4. Example of how, through familiarity the strength of patience increases

We can go over these in our next session. The main thing for you to do is to familiarise yourselves with the explanations, and try to understand them in relation to your own practice. As one of our real enemies is anger, finding ways of how to oppose this enemy is really worthwhile.

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

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*Edited Version*

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# *Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་པོ་འཇམ་དཔལ་གྱི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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As usual we can spend some time in our meditation practice.

*[meditation]*

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

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

## **1.1. Meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering (cont.)**

### **1.1.3. Contemplating how they are not difficult once habituated**

#### **1.1.3.1. EXTENSIVE EXPLANATION**

##### *1.1.3.1.1. It becomes easier with familiarisation*

This section of the text shows how, through becoming familiar with suffering, we are able to endure things that we may not have been able to endure previously. For example, suffering due to relatively minor ailments might be hard to endure initially, but if we familiarise ourselves with them, we will actually be able to tolerate them later on. Likewise, we may initially view harms inflicted upon us as unbearable or intolerable, but through familiarity with them we will come to tolerate them. The verse under this heading is a verse that is often cited to show that one of the characteristics of our mind is that it is possible to train it to manage things that we might previously have been unable to do. This is what *it becomes easier with familiarisation* means.

We really need to contemplate this point in relation to every aspect of our life. For example, even mundane tasks like work, or engaging in any kind of training, require some effort. If we don't develop the mind of being able to bear hardships and difficulties then we might easily give up because we think, "Oh this is too hard". All too often we see people give up their assignments, training and even their studies, saying, "Oh, this is too difficult". Thinking in that way can easily become a habit, leading some to give up as soon as there is some difficulty or hardship.

Developing a courageous mind that willingly accepts difficulties and hardships is part of the patience of willingly accepting hardship, as well as the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma. The patience of willingly tolerating harm is related to the harm that others may inflict upon us, whereas the patience of definitely relying on the Dharma can be applied to a range of different circumstances.

As the definition of patience suggests, a mind that does not become disturbed in the face of adversity or harm is definitely a calm and stable mind that is not prone to

agitation. When the mind is not disturbed then that prevents anger from arising. That is how we need to see patience as being a direct opponent to anger. When the mind is not disturbed we will be able to accomplish whatever we need to accomplish. Conversely, when the mind is disturbed then it hinders whatever one is trying to achieve, and creates many negativities as well. When we really think about what patience really means, its benefits and how it is essential for our wellbeing, then we come to the natural conclusion, "I must definitely develop patience—I cannot afford to be without it".

Just as developing patience is essential for one's own wellbeing and relationships with others, it is also true for all the practices of the six perfections. Each one of the six perfections is essential for both our personal development and as a means of benefitting others. That is why the six perfections are the core practices of the bodhisattvas. As they practise the six perfections, bodhisattvas willingly undergo hardships and difficulties with joy, rather than any sense of suffering. That is how we need to understand the significance of these practices.

The practice of patience also strengthens the capacity of the mind to face hardships and difficulties. Whenever there is an occasion where harm is inflicted, practising patience will further increase the level of our tolerance. So the harm actually becomes an impetus to further develop patience, and make it even stronger. So, once one is committed to practise patience, experiencing harm only helps to increase and further strengthen our patience, rather than decreasing it.

The verse relating to this section of the text reads:

14. *There is nothing that does not become Easier through familiarisation. Therefore, by meditating on small harm One will be able to tolerate great harm.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this oft-quoted verse begins with:

If one meditates on patience, then one will also tolerate suffering. All ways of apprehending arise through familiarisation, and therefore there is no object of the mind that does not become easier through familiarisation.

As the commentary explains, *if one meditates on patience then one will also tolerate suffering*. This is very succinctly pointing out that if one practises patience, then that will naturally enable one to also tolerate suffering. Conversely, one is unable to tolerate any kind of suffering when one lacks patience. These are very important points because as ordinary beings we are bound to experience some form of suffering or hardship at different times in our life. So if we don't develop a mind of being patient and tolerating suffering our minds will constantly be in a disturbed and agitated state. Then there will be no room in our minds to actually practise anything in depth. Indeed it is almost impossible to accomplish anything of significance when our mind is constantly in an agitated and disturbed state.

When we think about this we will come to the conclusion that patience is essential, and that we cannot function effectively without it. As the heading itself suggests, it is not beyond our capacity to practise patience because it is a matter of familiarising our mind with accepting and

tolerating suffering and harm. As we train our mind in this way it becomes possible for us to tolerate even greater hardship and suffering, because the nature of the mind is such that there is nothing that cannot be developed through familiarisation.

The commentary explains that *if one meditates on patience then one will be able to tolerate suffering*, because *all ways of apprehending arise through familiarisation*. The very basis of the mind is that whatever is apprehended by the mind is based on familiarity with it. So whatever the mind apprehends now is possible due to that familiarisation. For that reason, *there is no object of the mind that does not become easier through familiarisation*. The very basis, and hence potential of the mind is that it knows and apprehends things through familiarisation. This implies that, through familiarisation with an object, it becomes easier and easier for the mind to apprehend that object. This point supports the earlier reasons.

The main point can be summarised in this way: If one were to ask whether an ordinary mind has faults, then of course the answer is that yes, an ordinary mind does have various faults. But it also carries the inborn ability to familiarise itself with good qualities, and is thus able to develop those good qualities. In other words, while the mind possesses many faults, it also possesses the ability to develop qualities, and thus carries the ability to remove those faults.

These are essential points. We often feel despondent, thinking, "Oh, I am riddled with faults, and therefore I cannot achieve anything; I am good for nothing". All too often we just focus on our faults and feel despondent and discouraged. We give up things easily and don't really consider going further to improve ourselves. When we experience these feelings, we need to remind ourselves, "Yes, we might have faults as ordinary beings. But the very nature of the mind is that it naturally carries the potential to develop qualities, and that is done through familiarisation".

Then Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

For this reason, having meditated on tolerating small harms such as hot or cold, or harsh speech by others and so forth, know that one can also be patient with great harms such as the fires of the hell realms.

The commentary indicates that because one can learn to tolerate *small harms such as hot and cold, or harsh speech by others and so forth*, one is therefore able to train one's mind to tolerate greater sufferings. Before we can even attempt to think of tolerating greater suffering, we need to train our mind in being able to tolerate small suffering. Compared to the sufferings of hell realms, the suffering of feeling hot and cold, or being the recipient of harsh speech—which, as mere words, do not physically harm us—is really quite insignificant. However if we don't train our mind to tolerate minor suffering such as feeling a bit hot or cold, and hearing harsh words, then the mind becomes habituated with not being able to tolerate any kind of suffering, no matter how small. Whereas if we can train our mind to tolerate natural suffering like being a bit hot, or a bit cold, or occasionally hearing some unpleasant words, then it is possible to be patient with greater harms, specifically the sufferings of fire in hell realms.

This explanation is, of course, in the context of the great deeds of bodhisattvas. There are many accounts of bodhisattvas willingly accepting great sufferings - even going to the hell realms - in order to benefit sentient beings. This shows the great courage of the bodhisattvas and the extent to which they have developed their tolerance and patience in order to benefit sentient beings. They initially developed that level of patience and tolerance through familiarisation with smaller sufferings. So the point here is that if we familiarise ourselves with tolerating small harms such as heat and cold and harsh words and so forth, then it is possible for us to slowly, slowly be able to tolerate greater harms.

The main point is that developing the practice of patience is a matter of going through stages from being able to tolerate and endure small sufferings, and then slowly, slowly increasing the level of our tolerance and patience so that we are able to endure great sufferings. As mentioned here, if it is possible for bodhisattvas to endure the sufferings of the hell realms, then it is possible for us as well.

As a way to back this up, the commentary quotes from the sutra called the *Sutra of the Meeting of Father and Son*. This sutra is an account of the Buddha's life, and *meeting the father* is a symbolic expression that indicates reaching enlightenment. The quote reads:

The Bhagavan possesses the concentration called *All Phenomena Become Happiness*. Whoever attains this concentration will experience all objects of bodhisattvas only as happiness and will not experience suffering ... should they receive the harm of the hell beings they will still abide in the recognition of happiness.

The sutra is quite clear, so we don't need to explain it much more. The point is that *should they receive the harm of the hell realms, bodhisattvas will still abide in happiness*. As the sutra clearly states, due to practising patience, bodhisattvas are not troubled when they encounter suffering. Rather than experiencing suffering and unhappiness, they experience joy and happiness.

#### 1.1.3.1.2. *Establishing this with an example*

This section presents an example of how patience becomes easier through familiarisation.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins with a hypothetical qualm.

Qualm: If we meditate on small sufferings, the patience will not have power.

This hypothetical qualm is to remove any doubt that the patience developed through meditating on small sufferings will not have much power. In response to that, the next verse is presented.

15. *Snakes and insects,  
The feelings of hunger and thirst,  
Rashes and so forth,  
Who has not seen it with these meaningless  
sufferings?*

The commentary goes on to say:

Answer: Why do you not see that if one meditates on patience for small and absolutely meaningless sufferings, such as the feelings of hunger and thirst, skin diseases, rashes and the like, that they then

become tolerable, and if one does not meditate, they become difficult to bear. This is directly observable and it is therefore appropriate to meditate on patience.

This explanation is quite clear. The main point is *why would you not see that if one meditates on patience for small and absolutely meaningless sufferings, that they will become tolerable*. The commentary says that being hungry or thirsty or having rashes and the like are quite small inconveniences. They become tolerable if one practises patience, and they become difficult to bear if one does not practise patience. We can see how true this statement is from our own experience. If, when we are confronted with being hungry or a bit too hot, we allow our mind to become obsessed by that, and see that as a problem, then we start to become more and more uncomfortable. Whereas the moment we accept the discomfort and think, "Oh well, it's OK, I will tolerate it, and just deal with it", then it doesn't appear to be a big problem anymore. This reminds me that when we first went to India there were some who complained about the heat all the time. Other monks would say, "If you keep complaining about the heat, it will only get worse. Just forget about it. It is there anyway and you won't make it go away by complaining about it. Better to just accept it". When you accept something you don't think too much about it, and it doesn't bother you so much.

The main point is that if we develop a mind of accepting everyday difficulties and problems, and practise patience with them, then they become tolerable and not so much of a problem. Whereas if we don't practise the patience of tolerating them, then they always appear as problems, and the discomfort will become greater and greater. Think about today, which was a bit warm. If we have allowed our mind to accept it, then it will actually be quite pleasant. There are some who actually like the heat and don't see it as a problem. If we have accepted a warm day today and another warm day comes up tomorrow, then it will not be too difficult to bear, because you have already accepted it today. Whereas if you haven't accepted it today, and tomorrow is also a hot day, it will seem to be an even greater problem. We can definitely understand this from our own experience.

If we train our mind to accept a bit of heat, then, through that familiarisation, we will be able to tolerate heat, and it will not be a hindrance as we carry on with our lives. We will be able to do whatever we need to do, because we have trained our mind to accept it. Likewise, if we accept the cold then, through that familiarity, we will not be hindered when it is continuously cold. We will be able to carry on doing whatever we need to do. When we train our mind to accept things, then external conditions will not be a hindrance or an obstruction to our activities.

This reminds me of one time when I went to New Zealand. When I come out of the plane, the hostesses seemed very concerned that one of my arms was bare, but that's normal for me. It comes back to the practice of patience, particularly the patience of willingly accepting hardship. When one willingly accepts hardship, then through familiarity with accepting that hardship, it becomes easier to tolerate, and we will not experience any

mental suffering. So we need to reflect the great benefit of tolerating suffering.

### 1.3.1.3. THE OBJECT TO TOLERATE

This basically refers to the object of patience that is to be tolerated, and the relevant verse is:

16. *I should not be impatient with  
Heat, cold, rain, wind and so forth,  
Sickness, bondage and beatings,  
If I do so the harm will increase.*

Here Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning of the verse as:

One should not be impatient with heat or cold, rain and wind, sickness, being bound by ropes or being beaten with a stick and so forth, because if one is impatient with small harms, this will only further increase the harm, as patience decreases.

We often experience heat, cold, rain, and wind, and there are definitely occasions where we feel too hot or too cold, and times when there is torrential rain or strong winds. And, of course, to different degrees we all have experienced some ailments and felt physical discomfort. Of course most of us would not have experienced being bound by a rope or beaten, but that does happen to others. These are some examples of the sufferings that occur on a regular basis.

It is because they occur so regularly that we should be patient with these relatively small discomforts. If we are not patient with them then our suffering will only increase. It won't be because the intensity of the actual harm increases, but because our mind does not accept it, and does not apply any patience or tolerance to the suffering. Then the suffering actually increases, by virtue of the sheer fact that our patience itself decreases. As we become less patient with the suffering, our discomfort seems to increase in our mind. Indeed, if we don't begin to practise patience with the small harms that we encounter regularly, then what else are we planning to be patient with? How else are we going to practise patience if we can't be patient with the regular suffering that we experience in our daily lives? We need to begin to develop a mind of tolerance and patience towards the regular discomforts we experience, which will then prevent our mind from becoming impatient with greater sufferings later on.

Of course there are many stories of how, through familiarity, things which may otherwise have been completely intolerable, are tolerated and accepted.

Recently I heard of a monk from the same province in Tibet that I come from, who was recently imprisoned because he had recited the *Prayer for the Long Life of the Dalai Lama*. While in prison he started to recite it even more, for which he earned more beatings. But the more they beat him the louder he shouted the long life prayer. It came to the point where the guards themselves were nonplussed. Rather than struggling and screaming, and begging the guards to stop the beatings, he increased the volume of his recitation of the verses of the prayer. The guards were amazed and came to a point where they didn't know what to do with him!

Willingly tolerating hardship and suffering is indispensable to our practice and wellbeing. If we don't tolerate them, it is as if the hardships and sufferings

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become our master and we, like slaves, are dominated by them. Once we willingly accept the hardships and difficulties, then we become the master rather than the slave. These are important points for us to consider.

#### 1.3.1.4. AN EXAMPLE OF HOW, THROUGH FAMILIARITY, THE STRENGTH OF PATIENCE INCREASES

The relevant lines of verse are:

17. *For some, seeing their own blood,  
Will increase their steadfastness and courage.  
Some, when seeing the blood of others,  
Faint and become unconscious.*

18ab. *This comes about due to natural  
Firmness of the mind and fear.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads

For some brave person, seeing their own blood upon being injured by a weapon will only increase their steadfastness and courage. Some cowards will faint and become unconscious even when they see the blood of someone else. This does not come about through the force of the external object, whether it is large or small, nor does it come about due to a soft or hard body. It comes about solely through the mind being either firm or timid.

Therefore, one should strive in meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering.

*Some brave people, even seeing their own blood upon being injured by a weapon will only increase their steadfastness and courage.* When, out of bravery, people go into combat and see blood, then that further intensifies their eagerness to overcome their foe. Rather than becoming discouraged, seeing blood actually gives them even more courage. There are also some cowards who, let alone not being able to tolerate the sight of their own blood, become despondent and lose courage and actually faint when they see the blood of others.

You might also have come across people who faint when they see blood, because they have a mind that is not able to tolerate that. As explained in the commentary, this is not dependent on external conditions and objects. For some, blood makes their mind even more courageous, while others become discouraged, and faint. The difference is solely in the mind that interprets the situation. *Therefore*, as the commentary explains, *one should strive in meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering.* As the illustrations in the verse and commentary indicate, the benefit of tolerating suffering is that it makes the mind much more courageous.

As illustrated in the commentary, bravery is very much related to the intensity of the mind wishing to go into combat. This reminds me of an account that was related to me by someone from my home town. When the Red Guards came in, one man, who was known for his bravery, showed great courage. Using his simple gun he tried to fight the Chinese. At one point he was shot and fatally wounded, but he didn't drop dead right away. He kept on trying, unsuccessfully, to stand up and face the Chinese. Those around him saw his condition, and knew that he couldn't do anything, but they could also see his determination to try to overcome the person who shot him. After a while they were able to tell him that the

person who shot him had been killed. Only then did the wounded man relax and pass on.

This story really shows the power of the mind. With intense determination it can even prevent immediate death and hold on to life. However, the moment someone lets go of such a mind then they pass on.

Then there is the situation of extreme fear. I heard another account of someone who was normally quite a skilled horseman, but in the face of the enemy coming, was so afraid that he was not even able to get onto his horse properly. In his haste, rather than putting his foot in the stirrup, he was trying to mount his horse by putting his knee into the stirrup! So, being really fearful can be a real disadvantage!

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

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

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As usual, let us spend some time in meditation.

[meditation]

As we have just attempted in our short meditation, it is definitely highly worthwhile to familiarise yourself with the practice of *tong len*, i.e. giving and taking.

This should not be restricted just to this short session of meditation but is something you need to train yourself in in your everyday life, at every occasion and in any circumstance you find yourself in. In particular, this relates to any happiness you may experience in your daily activities e.g. the joys of eating and drinking etc. As soon as you experience these normal enjoyments, remind yourself to give that joy and happiness to other sentient beings. Then, whenever you encounter some difficulties or hardships, in whatever form, the moment you feel discomfort at any level, immediately try and use that as a way of taking the suffering of other sentient beings upon yourself. Remind yourself: "Since I'm experiencing this hardship now, may it become a means to take the suffering of other sentient beings upon myself." When you train yourself in this way you become more familiar with the actual practice of *tong len*. Then due to that regular familiarity, your meditation practice will become more profound.

The practical benefit you get from this practice is that it helps to reduce the negativity of generating attachment and anger when facing everyday life situations. When you experience joys and pleasures, if you are not mindful, these can cause increased attachment. But if you give that joy and happiness away to other sentient beings, there will be less attachment involved, which will reduce attachment to the pleasures and joys regularly experienced. Likewise, when you experience difficulties, willingly taking on the suffering of other sentient beings prevents anger from arising in your mind. In this way, *tong len* is a highly significant practice.

In this way we can see and relate to the effect of this practice outside of the formal meditation session. It would be a little strange if the practice is restricted to a few minutes of sitting in some formal meditation. If that were the case, then when you come out of the meditation, it may appear that the practice is not relevant and unnecessary. But that shouldn't be the case—that is the complete opposite of the significance of that practice. Whatever practice you attempt to do in a formal sitting, you need to ensure that the effects of it are carried through to your everyday lives, and then the real benefits of the practice will be felt. You will then have a constant 'guide' with you, reminding you of what is appropriate to engage in, and what is inappropriate and to be avoided.

Now you may set your motivation for receiving the teachings. As usual, generate the motivation along these lines: For the sake of all mother sentient beings, I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will engage in the teaching and put it into practice well.

## 1.1. Meditating on the patience that tolerates suffering

### 1.1.3. Contemplating how they are not different once habituated (cont.)

#### 1.1.3.2. SUMMARY

The verse reads:

18cd. *Therefore one should disregard harms  
And not be influenced by sufferings.*

19ab. *The skilled, although receiving sufferings,  
Remain with the clarity of their mind  
unpolluted.*

The commentary then reads:

Therefore one should make one's mind stable, disregard any harm received and not be influenced by the suffering. Those who are skilled in meditating on the Mahayana path, although receiving sufferings, through meditating on patience remain with their mind clear and not polluted by anger.

Based on the reasons presented earlier, relating to the need to tolerate the sufferings etc. one should make one's mind stable or firm. 'Firm' in this context means not allowing the mind to become agitated or troubled, particularly in the face of harm or suffering that one may experience.

In *disregard any harm received and not be influenced by the suffering*, 'disregarding harm' means that while one may experience the difficulties of the harm, do not allow this to disturb one's mind and become influenced by the sufferings one experiences. What is particularly highlighted here is the way one needs to be able to willingly accept and tolerate the sufferings, which is the real mark of practising patience. As explained further on, those *who are skilled in meditating on the Mahayana path, although receiving sufferings, through meditating on patience remain with their mind clear and not polluted by anger*. This sentence explains that those who earnestly follow the Mahayana path are the ones who voluntarily accept the sufferings. Those *who are skilled* particularly refers to the bodhisattvas who are engaging in the Mahayana path. And while they experience suffering, by meditating on patience their minds remain clear and unpolluted by the faults of anger.

In summary, what is being presented here is that if one engages in the practice of willingly accepting suffering, then the mind will not be affected and become unhappy. Then, if the mind is not unhappy, there is no room for the pollution of anger to take effect. This is how one protects one's mind from the pollution of anger. In this way (with a clear state of mind) one's mind is undisturbed and protected from the negativity of anger. We need to understand that these are highly profound levels of practice, see their significance, and incorporate this approach into our lives now. If you relate to these passages and think, 'Oh it does make sense!', but then regularly leave it aside, you will never benefit from it. Whereas if you implement it into your daily life, you will see the real benefit and significance. These verses are actually speaking to us personally—they are a personal instruction. This is how we need to derive the benefit.

### 1.1.4. The benefits of striving to abandon afflictions

The relevant verses here are the second two lines of the previous verse:

19cd. *One wages war with the afflictions  
And while waging war there is much harm.*

20. *Disregard all sufferings  
And destroy the enemies of anger and so forth.  
They who win thus are heroes,  
The rest kill corpses.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary clearly presents the meaning of these verses:

The objects of abandonment, such as the affliction of anger, and their antidotes are at war, and during the time of waging war many sufferings arise. If in worldly terms someone who disregards the harm inflicted by weapons and kills the enemy is called a hero, then someone who disregards all physical and mental sufferings, destroys the enemy of anger and conquers the afflictions, should be definitely called a hero. The rest kill the ones who die anyway by themselves, which is just like killing corpses. They should not be called heroes.

As the commentary explains, *the objects of abandonment, such as the affliction of anger, and their antidotes are at war*. Using some examples, the antidote for attachment would be meditating on the imperfections of the objects of attachment. Therefore within one's mind, meditating on the imperfections of the object would be like a war (or battle) between the antidote and the affliction. Likewise, a mind meditating on the various categories of phenomena, and ultimately emptiness, would be at war with ignorance.

It is useful to use the analogy of an external battle to illustrate the internal battle of the antidotes overcoming the afflictions. Just as a lot of suffering (wounds and even death) is experienced with external wars, internal conflict also brings difficulties and hardships. What is being presented here is that it is worthwhile to endure those sufferings and difficulties when combating the inner enemies of the afflictions.

A further analogy given here is that *in worldly terms someone who disregards the harm inflicted by weapons and kills the enemy is called a hero*. This illustrates that if someone goes to war and vanquishes the enemy, they will be honoured as a hero upon their return, as they have willingly endured pain and suffering during the war. We can see for ourselves that elderly war veterans are proud to wear their medals! Using my own experience, I know that even when there is some suffering, it is easily disregarded during the time of conflict or fighting. When I was young and got into fights with another young monk, even when I had wounds on my head and was bleeding, I was still able to go forward and fight with him. So I can definitely say that it is true that one is able to disregard wounds and pain when fiercely attempting to overcome the enemy.

You need to derive an understanding of how this illustration fits the meaning of what is being explained. When ordinary beings go to war to overcome an enemy, there is a lot of hardship and harm inflicted upon them, but this is endured because of the willingness to do so. If one does not willingly accept the harms, one cannot go forth and overcome the enemy (and later be renowned as a hero). Being known as a hero is due to having endured the hardships and harms inflicted during combat. So it is not in spite of, but despite of the harms that one is later renowned as a hero. If it is the case that one who disregards the harm inflicted by weapons and kills the enemy should definitely be called a hero, then someone *who disregards all physical and mental sufferings, destroys the enemy of anger and conquers the afflictions, should definitely be called a hero*.

What is being explained here is that when in combat with the inner enemies i.e. the afflictions, applying antidotes such as meditating on imperfections to overcome attachment, and meditating on compassion to overcome anger, and meditating on emptiness to overcome ignorance, all require

repeated meditation, again and again. It is not something that is quick and easy to apply. One cannot meditate once on the imperfections of attachment, and then attachment is suddenly overcome! In fact, sometimes the more we try to overcome attachment, the stronger it seems to become, and the more difficult it is to deal with.

In a worldly sense, someone can destroy the enemy and return from combat as a hero. The commentary states that this is similar to *killing corpses* as the external enemies will die naturally anyway, even without being killed. However inner afflictions are the complete opposite. If you leave inner afflictions and don't do anything about overcoming them, they will only become stronger and stronger. For example, if you don't apply antidotes to overcome attachment, and allow it to remain in your mind, indulging it, it only becomes stronger, even to the point of becoming seemingly impossible to overcome. This is also true for anger, ignorance and all other afflictions. So, unlike the external enemies, the inner enemies of the afflictions will only become stronger.

If ordinary beings who destroy external enemies are regarded as heroes, then someone engaged in the combat of overcoming the inner enemy of the afflictions should definitely be worthy of being called a real hero, as it is much more difficult to overcome the inner enemies. The commentary concludes by saying those who destroy their external foes *should not be called heroes*.

To reiterate the main point: having recognised the inner afflictions as the real enemies that destroy one's happiness and peace, one must destroy the afflictions by engaging in combat, which means applying the antidotes. Without this the afflictions cannot be naturally overcome. In addressing the afflictions one will be faced with hardships, but the hardships are worthwhile, because one has applied the antidotes, and so will definitely be able to overcome them. Once overcome, one will be a hero in the true sense, and worthy of veneration.

#### **1.1.5. Extensive explanation of the benefits of suffering**

The literal translation 'the benefits of suffering' may seem awkward so it can be understood as 'the benefits of seeing the *faults* of the suffering.'

21. *Further, the qualities of suffering are:  
Through despondence it destroys pride,  
It generates compassion for those circling in  
samsara,  
Fearing negativities and joy for virtue.*

Four benefits which are defined. The commentary reads:

Further, meditating on suffering is a great summary of the key points of practice. As the benefits of contemplating the shortcomings of sufferings are:

Seeing that one is controlled by suffering one becomes disheartened, which destroys the haughtiness of pride and arrogance.

Seeing that others are under the control of suffering one generates the compassion that thinks: How wonderful it would be if sentient beings were free from suffering.

Seeing that the suffering is the result of non-virtue and since one does not want suffering, one refrains from negativity.

Since one does not wish suffering and desires happiness, and seeing happiness to be the result of virtue one generates joy in virtue.

As Gyaltsab Je mentions in the opening line, *Further meditating on suffering is a great summary of the key points of practice*. Earlier I related that meditating, thinking, contemplating on the sufferings, really embracing them and seeing their benefits as a way to overcome them, is actually the main point of the practice. It really is a highly significant practice.

Then Gyaltsab Je elaborates on benefits of contemplating the shortcomings of sufferings.

As one experiences the sufferings one will be able to reflect upon the reality that one is still under their control and not completely free. Because of this one *becomes disheartened* and experiences a little sadness due to the suffering, and by being confronted with the fact that one is still controlled by the sufferings. That in itself helps to destroy any sense of *haughtiness* or sense that everything is fine for oneself; also pride and arrogance can be overcome.

*Seeing others suffering* refers to other ordinary beings who are still under the control of suffering. So seeing those in a pitiful state, one generates compassion thinking, "How wonderful it would be if they were free from suffering."

Understanding *suffering as the result of non-virtue*, and seeing that *one does not want suffering*, one will refrain from non-virtue. This, again, is a highly significant point in relation to our own practice. When one experiences suffering, one should immediately try and see that, "the suffering I am experiencing now is none other than the results of the non-virtue that I have created in the past." Since one does not wish for any kind of suffering, seeing it as a result of one's non-virtue can become an impetus to refrain from creating more negativity. In this way, experiencing suffering can help to prevent one from creating negativities such as killing and stealing etc. Thus, one refrains from the ten non-virtuous deeds.

The significant point here is that for those of us who already have a conviction in karma—this will not really make much sense if one doesn't already believe in karma—one can immediately relate to the unpleasant experience of suffering as being the results of non-virtue. One can take the suffering itself as caution not to create further non-virtues, shunning negativity and non-virtue, because one does not wish to prolong the unpleasant experience of suffering in the future. This then becomes the impetus. Since one does not wish for suffering, but desires happiness, and seeing happiness as the result of virtue, one will aim to generate virtue. The commentary specifically mentions how all are equal in wanting happiness and not wanting any kind of suffering: *since one does not wish suffering and desires happiness, and seeing that happiness then is to be the result of virtue one generates joy or enthusiasm in creating virtue*. So from the presentation here we can incorporate an understanding of karma as well as refuge. By contemplating this one has a way to overcome the sufferings.

These few lines really carry great depth in meaning and are an impetus for practice. The words *one does not wish suffering and desires happiness* are simple words. When we contemplate them and incorporate them into a broad understanding of the teachings, then because one does not wish for suffering, one thinks "I need to avoid non-virtues and stop creating negativity", and because one desires happiness one thinks "I must create virtue" and so adopt virtues to create positive karma. Take the line *one does not wish for suffering and desired happiness* as an impetus for your own personal practice. Shun non-virtue and adopt virtue. It also becomes a strong motivator to generate compassion for others. When one sees

others experiencing suffering and deprived of happiness, this becomes a reason to generate strong compassion for them.

Thus one reflects, "just as I do not wish for any suffering and wish for every kind of happiness, it is exactly the same for others as well". When others are experiencing great suffering, one relates to that as being really unfortunate, and wishes that they experience happiness. When others are deprived of happiness, wishing them happiness becomes a strong motivator. So begin with yourself, relating to your personal experience, and then you can relate that to others. We can all immediately relate to the truth of these factors. Because of the great points presented in these few lines of verse Gyaltsab Je mentions they are *a great summary of the key points of the practice*.

As mentioned in recent sessions, there are many accounts of practitioners who, by having contemplated on suffering, and by experiencing it, have accumulated great amounts of merit and engaged in great practices of purification to achieve great goals. However there are no accounts of practitioners who have achieved these goals, or even engaged in these practices, by experiencing pleasures. When considering the benefits of contemplating sufferings, taken in the context of the entire path, it is definitely the case that practitioners of all three scopes—small, medium and great—experience significant results through not wanting to experience suffering due to seeing its disadvantages and faults. Therefore contemplating the faults of samsara is what leads you to liberation. Conversely, if one seeks the pleasures of samsara, then this is what keeps one in samsara, rather than being freed from it. If one voluntarily and intentionally seeks the pleasures of samsara, there is no way that one will be free from it. How can one possibly achieve liberation if one intentionally seeks the means to remain in samsara?

This is how we need to think in a broader sense: contemplating the sufferings is a highly significant impetus for the practices. If one can see that this is a way to ultimately become free from suffering, one can willingly take it on as a practice. Sometimes there are comments about people who feel a bit overwhelmed hearing about suffering again and again, who say "There is too much focus on suffering. I don't want to hear about suffering." This occurs when one does not see the benefits, or cannot relate to the purpose and real reason for meditating on suffering. While it may seem that hearing about suffering is unpleasant, when one thoroughly contemplates the disadvantages of suffering, such as remaining in samsara to experience birth, sickness, ageing and death, then one contemplates reality. That becomes the impetus to really generate a strong wish to be free from samsara, and then suffering has served its purpose. So if one does not want to think about the sufferings of samsara, and only seeks the pleasures of samsara, then the wish to be free from it will never arise in one's mind. If we don't see the benefits of being free from samsara then why do people long to be free? And why would we want to develop an aspiration for liberation?

This is how we need to understand the significance of meditating on the various types of suffering in samsara, as presented in the teachings in great detail. At the moment we may not immediately be able to relate to the various types of sufferings in different realms. But if we take the initiative to meditate on them, imagining we are experiencing those sufferings, then, through familiarity we can gain a real sense of what the sufferings would be like, even though we are not experiencing them now. One can imagine what it would be

like, how unbearable it would be, if one were to actually experience such suffering. When one reaches that level in one's meditation it has become a personal experience. In time, a strong longing to be free from such suffering, and to be free from samsara, will definitely arise. One does not just feel the conviction to be free from the suffering of samsara in theory.

While it is true that without experience, it is hard for us to immediately relate to the sufferings, with familiarity we can gain that experience. This reminds me of a remark made by a lama some time ago. He was an ordained monk and a good student for many years, but later disrobed. Then he led a normal life, had a relationship, got engaged and went through the normal ups and downs of life. Later on, he related to some of his students, "Now I can understand what your suffering is all about". So he was able to relate the sufferings of relationships and so forth through his own personal experience.

Another account that I have mentioned previously is about a German lady who received teachings from Geshe Ngawang Dhargey when he was at Atisha Centre. She related to me that it was very meaningful, and that she got a lot out of teaching, but she confessed, "He talked a lot about suffering, and I am not too sure about all of that, but nevertheless, the teachings were very meaningful." She wasn't refuting the validity of those sufferings, but said "I am not too sure about that". Then, a couple of years later, when I met her again, she said, "Now I can definitely relate to the sufferings and I totally understand the significance of them. That is exactly true." Just as Geshe Ngawang Dhargey had related, she found it to be true for herself. This shows that when we have some experience or a deeper understanding, then we will gain a real conviction.

The significance of contemplating on the various types of sufferings, particularly thinking of death and impermanence, is that with a certain amount of familiarity it will become an integral part of one's practice. Furthermore, one will be able to maintain a constant impetus to be consistent with one's practice. In particular, meditating on the certainty of death, and the uncertainty of the time of death, one reaches the point where one recognises the truth in this. When one has a personal experience of it, rather than it just being a theory, it generates a conviction in one's mind and one will always be mindful of what one is doing—whether eating, walking or sitting. Whatever we may be engaged with, one will always try to incorporate that activity into one's practice, knowing that death can happen at any time, and that one should not waste time with meaningless activities. To that extent, the practice becomes authentic and one's purpose becomes that of a real practitioner. Without this sort of personal experience and conviction, it is very hard to claim to be a true practitioner. It is hard to regularly implement the practice in one's daily life, so we need to strive to generate some conviction in whatever practice it may be. Even if it is only a few points, to try to make an attempt to generate that conviction, whatever the practice may be.

Even though it might seem as though I am side-tracking from the actual topic, these are really important points for your practice, particularly in relation to recalling death and impermanence, which is really essential for one's practice to become more pure. Without familiarity with meditating on death and impermanence, cherishing this life and grasping at it will arise very easily. Then, whatever practice we do while clinging to this life will be mostly a worldly dharma.

Even if we meditated, the practice would only be a worldly concern rather than a real practice.

## **1.2. Meditating on the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma**

This is subdivided into two:

1.2.1. Extensive

1.2.2. Summary

Maybe we can cover this in our next session. So you can prepare yourselves by familiarising yourselves with the commentary, and also refer to the Lam Rim teachings.

Also it might be a little bit hard to read it all, and I don't know if you have access to it, but the *Compendium of Practices* by Shantideva himself is also a very good text to study. The chapter on patience also has a lot of information, and there are a lot of quotations from the sutras as a way to show the source of these teachings.

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

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*Edited Version*  
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# *Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

བྱང་ལྷན་པའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

4 November 2014

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As usual let us spend some time in our meditation practice.

## *Meditation*

We can set our motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

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

Indeed, generating the bodhicitta motivation is of utmost importance. We have already established the basis of bodhicitta in our mind through our understanding of how to generate bodhicitta with either the seven-point cause and effect sequence, or the exchanging self with other technique. We need to further develop that basis by familiarising our mind with the bodhicitta motivation in every Dharma activity in which we engage. As mentioned regularly, the process of developing bodhicitta involves first generating the bodhicitta mind which has not yet been generated; once generated, to firmly establish it; and then further increase it to higher and higher levels. This is how we need to accustom our mind with bodhicitta at all levels of our practice.

Bodhicitta is the essence of the Mahayana teachings, with which we already have some familiarity. If we don't work on developing what we have already understood, and grasp on to some other form of practice, then we have entirely missed the point! Until we achieve enlightenment, we need to be continuously developing and perfecting the bodhicitta attitude, beginning with generating a contrived bodhicitta motivation, through to actually generating bodhicitta, and then engaging in the practice of the six perfections.

Although we have not yet actually generated bodhicitta, we can definitely generate a contrived bodhicitta attitude, which we can then further develop on the basis of that positive motivation. Furthermore, even though we are not yet able to practise the perfection of generosity we can definitely practise a similitude of that in the form of engaging in charitable activities. By familiarising ourselves with similitudes of both bodhicitta and the practices of the six perfections, we will gradually develop them within our mental continuum until we reach enlightenment.

## **1.2. Meditating on the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma**

This section shows us how to meditate on the patience that definitely relies on Dharma, which is one the three types of patience.

The previous section of the text explained how to rely on the patience that tolerates the suffering that we experience. As mentioned previously, this is the core practice that allows us to engage in the practice of the Dharma itself. This tolerance of suffering is developed by contemplating the benefits of suffering, rather than seeing it as an obstacle. As mentioned previously, it was only by enduring hardships and difficulties that the great practitioners of the past were able to engage in their practices. In fact, becoming a real practitioner can only be achieved by enduring hardships and difficulties—there is no other way to become a real Dharma practitioner. I could be wrong, but this is what I personally understand from these explanations.

Meditating on the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma relate to the core Dharma of contemplating the two selflessnesses. Understanding selflessness and emptiness requires a lot of study, investigation and contemplation, and thus it involves hardship and difficulties. Although Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti elucidated the two selflessnesses very clearly, we still have difficulty in gaining a really good understanding of selflessness and emptiness. Thus we need to develop the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma.

The two subdivisions of this section of the text are:

1.2.1. Extensive

1.2.2. Summary

### **1.2.1. Extensive**

The extensive explanation has three parts:

1.2.1.1. Anger and those getting angry depend on causes, and therefore lack independence

1.2.1.2. Refuting the existence of independent causes

1.2.1.3. The need for reversing anger

#### **1.2.1.1. ANGER AND THOSE GETTING ANGRY DEPEND ON CAUSES, AND THEREFORE LACK INDEPENDENCE**

This outline indicates that anger and the angry person are not independent; basically because things are dependent on causes and conditions. So what is presented here, in essence, is the dependent arising nature of all phenomena. Since everything is dependent on causes and conditions, neither anger nor the angry person can be independent.

If the angry person were to be independent, then it would not be possible for them to transform. It is because the angry person does not exist independently that it is possible for them to change and become a less angry person. Likewise, anger itself is also not an independent entity but arises due to causes and conditions. Therefore, by causing the cessation of the causes of anger, it is possible to overcome anger. We really need to understand this very profound point. In simple terms, what I derive from the explanation here is that we don't need to be slaves of anger, rather we need to be in control over our own mind, and abandon anger.

This section has two subdivisions:

1.2.1.1.1. Anger and the angry person are not independent

1.2.1.1.2. Their causes and conditions are not independent

### 1.2.1.1.1. Anger and the angry person are not independent

This in turn is subdivided into three:

1.2.1.1.1.1. The reason why it is unsuitable to be angry at an afflicted person

1.2.1.1.1.2. Anger is not generated volitionally

1.2.1.1.1.3. Since all faults are generated in dependence on conditions, they lack independence.

#### 1.2.1.1.1.1. The reason why it is unsuitable to be angry at an afflicted person

This is a significant point that we really need to understand.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins with a hypothetical argument.

Argument: Since the other person harms me, it is suitable to get angry at them.

The point of this hypothetical argument is that it is suitable to be angry with any person who harms us. The reasoning here is that the cause of anger is the person who inflicts the harm, and not the actual harm itself. Even though the actual cause of the pain is the harm, one does not use that as a reason to generate anger. Rather, the anger is directed at the person who inflicts the harm.

In answer to that hypothetical argument, these three lines of verse are presented.

*22abc. If one is not angry at bile disease and  
Other great sources of suffering,  
Then why be angry at the ones with mind,*

As an explanation of these lines, the commentary begins with a response to the original hypothetical argument.

Answer: It is unsuitable.

Then the commentary explains the reason:

One does not get angry at bile disease and the like, which are a great source for the suffering of the disturbance of imbalance. Why would one then get angry at a sentient being, i.e. a being with mind?

Basically, when we experience great suffering from diseases such as bile and so forth, we do not consider becoming angry with the disease that is the cause for that suffering. So why then does one find it reasonable to become angry with an individual being who has a mind, and consider them to be the cause of our suffering?

The irrationality of our response is that while we don't become angry with a disease, for example, we find reason to become angry with an individual, when in fact, as we perceive it, both have equally caused us suffering.

Then Gyaltsab Je presents another hypothetical argument:

Argument: Since bile disease and so forth arise without control one does not get angry at them.

In answer to that a counter argument is presented:

Answer: Then it follows it is also unsuitable to be angry at the person ...

Then the following lines from the root text are presented:

*22d. Which are also all induced by conditions.  
23. For example, although one does not desire it,  
The sickness arises anyway.  
Similarly, although one does not desire it,  
The afflictions are generated powerfully.*

One needs to relate this to our understanding of interdependence and emptiness. If there is no cause of suffering, then there cannot be a result. So suffering cannot be experienced as an independent result, because the cause lacks independent existence, and is, itself, dependent on causes and conditions. Therefore the results are also interdependent, as they only arise when the causes and conditions are intact.

When one relates this understanding of interdependent origination to the lack of independent existence, then that really contributes to an understanding of how everything is empty of independent existence. We should apply our understanding of interdependence and emptiness to derive a more profound understanding of why it is unsuitable to be angry with an afflicted person. Then one can really make progress.

The commentary concludes with:

... because afflicted beings are ordered around by the condition of their afflictions and hence do not have control of their actions.

For example, similar to this sickness arising against one's wish when the conditions are complete, this person does not desire to be angry, but due to the cause of mental unhappiness and the like, the afflictions arise strongly. Therefore, if one were to get angry, then one should get angry at the afflictions and not at the person.

As presented here, *because afflicted beings are ordered around by the condition of the afflictions they do not have control of their actions.* Everything is dependent on its own particular causes and conditions. Being under the control of the delusions, beings do not have control over their actions, and are compelled to engage in actions that cause harm. And these delusions are themselves also dependent on many causes and conditions.

So the individual who causes us harm is not really an appropriate object for our anger, because they are not engaging in those harmful actions voluntarily. Rather, they are engaging in harmful actions because they are under the control of the delusions.

As mentioned previously, people engage in harmful actions because their mind is unhappy. When the mind is afflicted by delusions it is not a happy mind. We know from our personal experience that when our mind is affected by any of the delusions it is in a state of turmoil, and it is a troubled, unhappy mind. And, as we have seen, an unhappy mind is the basis for anger.

When one contemplates these points then, rather than finding reason to become angry at the individual causing harm, one feels compassion. That is because they are completely under the control of delusions that are causing them agony and unhappiness, which is the cause of their harmful actions. Therefore they are actually an object of compassion, rather than an object of anger.

Then the commentary goes on to present the analogy that the delusions are *similar to this sickness arising against one's wish when the conditions are complete.* The analogy is that when all the causes and conditions for sickness are intact, then the inevitable effect is sickness. As presented in other texts, when all the causes and conditions are intact then there is nothing that can avert the consequences. So

when all the conditions for sickness are present then the result of illness will definitely be experienced.

When the commentary says, *this person does not desire to be angry, but due to the cause of mental unhappiness and the like the afflictions arise strongly*, it is indicating that although people don't want to be angry, because they know that is not a desirable state to be in, anger will nevertheless arise when all the causes and conditions, particularly the cause of mental unhappiness and the like, are intact. Because of their unhappiness the afflictions arise strongly, resulting in harmful actions.

So the individual person is not really to blame. Being completely under the control of the delusions, they become angry when the causes and conditions are intact, and are compelled to engage in harmful actions. So the cause of their behaviour is ultimately the afflictions. If one is to become angry, then one should be angry with the afflictions and not the person. This is really the crux of the presentation: if one is to become upset, then it should be with the afflictions themselves, which are harboured within one's own mind.

On a personal level we can understand that just as afflictions cause other people to become angry and create harmful actions, our own afflictions cause us to become upset and angry. 'Just as those who cause me harm are affected by the afflictions, I too am afflicted by the delusions, so that is what I need to target, not the individual person.' By contemplating this point, one develops patience with other people through understanding how they are affected by causes and conditions.

However, we should not be patient with the afflictions themselves because that will only cause us further harm. So one applies measures to completely overcome and destroy the afflictions.

#### 1.2.1.1.2. Anger is not generated volitionally

Gyaltsab Je begins his commentary on this section with another hypothetical argument:

Argument: Since the other person thinks 'I shall harm', it is not the same as with the afflictions.

We will be familiar with this hypothetical argument. We might reason that although the afflictions don't have an intention to harm us, the person definitely does. Using that reasoning, one might think it reasonable to become upset with the person.

The next verse presents the means to overcome such doubts:

24. *Although not thinking, 'I should get angry',  
Beings become angry naturally.  
Although not thinking, 'I shall generate',  
Anger generates likewise.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of this verse in the following manner:

Answer: Although the causes do not think 'I shall generate anger', when the conditions are complete then beings generate anger without any choice. Although afflictions do not think 'I shall generate', anger is generated likewise. They do not have any freedom of action.

Otherwise, the first half can be related to the person and the second to the condition of the afflictions.

When anger arises due to *causes and conditions*, it is not as though the *causes* themselves think, 'I shall generate anger', and then generate anger. Rather, when the conditions are complete, beings generate anger without any choice. So it is not a voluntary act, where the causes think, 'Now I will cause anger'. Rather, when all the conditions are complete, then, even without a prior intention, one becomes angry. In that very instant, without even thinking about the conditions being intact, anger is generated spontaneously, without any choice.

*Although afflictions do not think, 'I shall generate', anger generates likewise*, indicates that it is not as if the afflictions themselves are demanding that anger should arise. Rather, the anger just naturally arises when the conditions are intact. Therefore there is no freedom of action.

In saying, *Otherwise, the first half can be related to the person and the second to the condition of the afflictions*, Gyaltsab Je is indicating how on a practical level we may adopt the understanding that both the person and the afflictions have some role in the generation of anger. This explanation may sound a bit fairer to us.

#### 1.2.1.1.3. Since all faults are dependent on conditions, they lack independence

25. *All the faults that are found,  
And the variety of negativities,  
They all arise through the force of condition,  
They do not have independence.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

All the faults of afflictions that are found, and the variety of negativities that arise from them, also arise through the force of conditions, and do not have independence. Similar to it not being suitable to get angry at water flowing downhill, thinking about these reasons stops anger.

*All the faults of afflictions that are found, and the variety of negativities that arise from them, also arise through the force of conditions, and do not have independence*, refers to the fact that while we do not wish to be influenced by the afflictions and create negativities, it is as if we have no control over them. When the conditions for the afflictions to arise are intact, then one does not have any control. This is also true for others. By contemplating this reality, particularly in relation to those who inflict harm, we will understand that they are completely under the control of the afflictions, and therefore have no control over their own actions.

The analogy—*it is similar to not becoming angry about water flowing downhill*—uses an illustration from the reasoning of nature, which is one of the four types of reasonings.<sup>1</sup> One would not become upset and angry about water flowing downhill, because that is its nature. Likewise, when others have the conditions for afflictions to arise, then the natural consequence is that they will engage in harm. Thus we should not become angry with them, but instead blame the afflictions.

<sup>1</sup> There are six different modes of research or investigation, and the sixth is the research of reasoning, which in turn is subdivided into four: 1. The reasoning of dependence, 2. the reasoning of the performance of function, 3. The reasoning of nature 4. The reasoning of valid establishment.

Source: *The Dalai Lama at Harvard*, Snow Lion publications

### 1.2.1.1.2. *Their causes and conditions are not independent*

Here we should take note of the meticulous presentation of the teaching, which is designed to rule out the possibility of any independent existence.

First of all, to overcome any notion that the faults and afflictions are independent, the faults were presented as being dependent on causes and conditions. Thus they lack independence.

One may then wonder whether the causes and conditions themselves are independent. So, to rule out that possibility, this presentation shows that the causes and conditions themselves are also not independent.

In our system, no matter how far you take it back, you cannot come to a point where you can find an entity that is an independent cause for other things to be produced. When other traditions trace the causes back, they come to the point where they have no choice but to accept an independent creator who is the primordial cause of all existence. These views will be presented in the next few verses.

What is being refuted under the heading Anger and the Angry Person Are Not Independent, is that an independent cause can produce other dependent phenomena. This will be presented in more detail later on.

The verse that is presented under this heading reads:

26. *The accumulation of conditions also  
Does not have the thought 'I shall generate'.  
That generated by them also does not  
Possess the thought 'Why was I generated?'*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

Also the accumulation of conditions that generates the sufferings does not have the thought 'I shall generate these sufferings', and the generated sufferings also do not possess the thought, 'I was generated by them'.

Therefore it is unsuitable to be angry at the other person based on the reason that the other person thinks 'I shall inflict harm'.

The commentary quite clearly explains that it is not as though the accumulated conditions themselves have the voluntary thought, 'I will generate these sufferings'. Nor do the sufferings themselves have the thought, 'I was generated by them'. So therefore, it is unsuitable to be angry at the other person based on the faulty reasoning that the other person thinks 'I shall inflict harm'.

The afflictions themselves, and that which causes anger to arise, are all dependent on many other factors, i.e. the causes and conditions. In other words, they are not generated independently or voluntarily. Therefore one should not find reason to be angry with the person, thinking that they were actually in control, and saying, 'I shall inflict harm'.

### 1.2.1.2. REFUTING THE EXISTENCE OF INDEPENDENT CAUSES

Here there are three subdivisions.

1.2.1.2.1. Refuting the independent self and primary principle of the Enumerators

1.2.1.2.2. Refuting the independent self of the Logicians

1.2.1.2.3. It is unsuitable to become angry upon understanding all beings to be like an emanation.

### 1.2.1.2.1. *Refuting the independent self and primary principle of the Enumerators*

This is further subdivided into:

1.2.1.2.1.1. Refuting the generation of independent expressions by the principle

1.2.1.2.1.2. Refuting that the knowledge-being engages objects independently

The Enumerators are also known as the Samkhya school, which presents five characteristics of the self. We went over this in detail when we studied the *Madhyamaka* text.<sup>2</sup> In brief, the Samkhya school assert a permanent, unitary and independent self. They say that because the self is not momentary it is permanent; because the self lacks parts it is unitary; and because the self does not depend on causes and conditions it is independent. However this is all refuted in our system.

Next Tuesday there will be a teaching, the following Tuesday will be the discussion, followed by the exam, and there will be two more teachings in December. Tuesday, December 16, will be the Lama Tsong Khapa puja, which will conclude the sessions for the year.

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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<sup>2</sup> See teachings of 22 April 2003, and 29 April 2003



# Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

11 November 2014

As usual let us spend some time in our meditation practice.  
[meditation]

We can now set the 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 engage in the activity of listening to the teachings and put them into practice well.

The key factor of our motivation is the purpose of doing the activity, and the ultimate purpose here is that 'I must benefit other sentient beings'. So one has to put that at the forefront of one's aim in life and engage in virtuous activity for that purpose. Then our life becomes most meaningful.

## 1.2.1.2.1. Refuting the existence of independent causes

### 1.2.1.2.1.1. Refuting the generation of independent expressions by the principle

It was explained previously that the Samkhya school assert an independent entity called 'principle', or 'nature'. This is an entity which, while in itself is independent, causes other phenomena to arise from it.

The verses read:

27. *Whatever is accepted as that called principle,  
And any imputation that is called self,  
They do not arise volitionally, thinking  
"I shall arise."*

28ab. *If the non-generated does not exist  
How can one then posit generation?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of this verse in the form of a syllogism.

Consider the dual subject—'The primary principle possessing five characteristics, which is an equilibrium of particle, darkness and courage<sup>1</sup>, as well as the harms that are contained in its expressions' and 'the self that is imputed on the knowledge person'—it follows it is unsuitable to say that they are generated independently—because this very principle is like the horns of a rabbit that cannot perform actions. It does not arise volitionally thinking, "I shall arise to generate an independent expression" or "an independent experience of the object".

It follows it is unsuitable to assert that at the time of the generation of the result, a result is generated from the principle—because the principle itself is not generated. There is a pervasion because—if oneself is not generated, then one cannot generate a result. There is then a pervasion that one cannot generate a result.

So what is being presented here is the assertion of the primary principle (also known as nature or expression) by the Enumerators (the Samkhya non-Buddhist school), which possesses five characteristics that are the equilibrium of the

three qualities: particle, darkness and courage. The five characteristics are:

1. It is the creator of all actions and so forth.
2. Since it is unproduced it is permanent.
3. Being partless it is a single entity
4. As it lacks consciousness it is merely an object.
5. It pervades the entire environment and all beings.

Some other texts present six characteristics, by combining the three qualities of particle, darkness and courage into one, and adding that to the five characteristics.

Some texts present the meaning of particle, or motility, as suffering, darkness as ignorance, and courage or lightness as happiness.

Detailed explanations have been presented numerous times in previous teachings, such as when we studied the *Madhyamakavatara* text<sup>2</sup> and also when we studied the ninth chapter of *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*<sup>3</sup>. It has also come up in the *400 Verses* teaching<sup>4</sup>, in Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland*<sup>5</sup> and of course in *Tenets* which I have taught twice. So when we come to a topic which presents these subjects it is good for you to refer back to those teachings, where I explained it in detail, as way to refresh your mind, and become more familiar with it. By referring to the texts again and again, eventually it will be implanted into our memory so that we won't forget it. This is what is meant by really putting an effort into understanding the Dharma texts and teachings.

According to Samkhya school, the primary principle possessing the five characteristics, which is equilibrium of the qualities of particle, darkness and courage, as well as all harms contained in its expression, arise independently. We need to reflect on whether this holds true. Is this explanation in accordance with the reality of how things exist? Do things exist independently as an expression of the primary principle? Would it be reasonable to accept that? This is how you need to reflect on their presentation.

The Samkhyas assert that what they call a knowledge-being, or conscious principle, is an independent entity. They consider the primary principle itself (with its five characteristics) as arising independently. They assert this, because they believe that the experiences of suffering and happiness arise independently. Thus, because feelings arise independently, the knowledge-being (or self), who experiences these feelings, also has to be independent. This is their assertion. By understanding this we will know what is being refuted. They believe the knowledge-being or self is a solitary, independent entity, which has only one consciousness, but which functions through the five senses. For example, if there is a person looking out of five different windows in a building, they assert that it is the same consciousness that functions through the five different senses. This is how they assert a single consciousness that functions through the five senses.

The *Madhyamakavatara* text presents the Samkhya's assertion of a self in this verse:

A self that is a consumer, permanent, not a creator,  
Lacking qualities and activity is imputed by the Forders.  
In dependence on very slight distinctions of that;  
There are the different systems of the Forders.

<sup>2</sup> See the teachings of 22 April 2003, 29 April 2003, and 18 May 2004.

<sup>3</sup> See the teachings 31 May 2005 (which contains a complete list of the twenty-five categories of objects asserted by the Samkhyas, 23 August 2005, and 13 September).

<sup>4</sup> See the teaching of 9 September 2007.

<sup>5</sup> See the teaching of 6 July 2010.

<sup>1</sup> Jeffery Hopkins translates these terms as motility, darkness and lightness

So, according to the Forders or the Samkhyas, there are five characteristics of the self:

1. It is a consumer of pleasant and unpleasant objects.
2. It is a functional permanent phenomena.
3. It is not a creator.
4. It lacks qualities.
5. It lacks activity.

When we understand their assertion of the self, and what the five characteristics are, then we can assess whether such a self is reasonable or not. With some slight variations, all the non-Buddhist schools, in general, assert a self as being a single, permanent, and independent entity. It is this self that is being refuted here.

As the commentary explains, the principle itself cannot be generated independently to begin with, as it is non-existent like the horns of a rabbit. So it follows that the result cannot be generated independently. The absurdity, which is highlighted here, is that if the cause itself is not generated, then how can the result be generated? So the syllogism used here refutes the assertion of a primary principle that is the cause of all existence.

What is being refuted here is the manifestation of a primary principle. When that is refuted, then the next step is to refute the knowledge-being (or conscious principle) that experiences objects independently, by showing that this cannot be independently existent either.

#### 1.2.1.2.1.2. Refuting that the knowledge-being engages objects independently

The next two lines of the verse read:

*28cd. Since it would always be distracted by objects  
It will also not cease.*

While you have some understanding of the basis of what is being presented here, it is good to know how the actual logic works. Once you understand this, you can then relate it to all other instances using the same line of logic, using syllogisms and so forth. To summarise the sequence: first the generation of independent expression by the principle is refuted, and then the individual being (the conscious principle or knowledge-being), who engages with the objects that they have caused, is refuted.

The commentary explains the meaning of these two lines:

Does the knowledge-person cease when it does not engage objects? It follows it does not because it is accepted to be a permanent functionality and if it is that, then it will always be distracted by objects, because there will be no time when it is not apprehending objects.

This refutation is based on pointing out the absurdity of a knowledge-being with this rhetorical question, *Does a knowledge-being cease when it does not engage objects?* According to this assertion, the absurdity is that engagement with an object is by a self that is a permanent functionality. As such it would perpetually apprehend objects. A simple example to illustrate this absurdity is that when a self is engaged in, for example, hearing sound, it would be perpetually engaged in apprehending sound. The same would apply for the other four senses: taste, sight, tactile sensations and smell. It would be difficult for the Samkhyas to accept this, as it goes beyond the bounds of obvious reality. So the refutation is based on the absurdity of their assertion.

#### 1.2.1.2.2. Refuting the independent self of the Logicians

This has three subdivisions:

- 1.2.1.2.2.1. It is impossible for something permanent to produce a result
- 1.2.1.2.2.2. It is impossible for such a self to depend on conditions
- 1.2.1.2.2.3. Such a self cannot be related to conditions

The assertions of another non-Buddhist school are being presented here. It is similar to the earlier one, but with slight variations, which is why it is included separately.

#### 1.2.1.2.2.1. It is impossible for something permanent to produce a result

The non-Buddhist Naiyayika school asserts a self that is by nature a permanent entity, but which temporarily becomes impermanent due to certain conditions.

The commentary first presents their assertion:

The Naiyayika assert a self that has form and is a permanent functionality, and they say it creates harm.

The next verse reads:

*29ab. It is clear that if the self is permanent  
Then, like space, it cannot act*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary then refutes their assertion:

However, it is very clear that if such a self is a permanent functionality then, similar to non-compounded space, it cannot produce a result.

The commentary presents a refutation that points out the absurdity of their assertion. *It is very clear that if such a self is a permanent functionality then, it will be similar to a non-compounded space.* This means that like empty space the self is a permanent phenomenon, and so cannot produce anything. Like space, such a self cannot produce a result. This should be clear.

#### 1.2.1.2.2.2. It is impossible for such a self to depend on conditions

Next they say that the self depends on conditions, but it is impossible for such a self to depend on conditions.

First, their argument is presented:

Argument: Although its nature is permanent, if this self meets with conditions then it can produce a result.

The lines that serve as an answer to the assertion read:

*29cd Although conditions meet  
How can they affect the unchanging?  
30ab. If it is like before during the action  
What did the action do to it?*

As an answer the commentary states:

It is impossible for a permanent phenomenon to meet with conditions. Although the conditions of striving and so forth meet with other conditions, how could these conditions affect the self?

What is being highlighted here is that as they have already asserted the nature of the self as permanent, how then could it possibly change when it meets certain conditions? How can conditions affect the self so it can be temporarily impermanent, when its very nature is permanent? The very definition of permanent indicates that it does not change. This again points out the absurdity of the assertion.

The non-Buddhist schools such as the Samkhyas and the Naiyayika (or Logicians) assert a permanent self, based on their acceptance of past and future lives. According to their reasoning the self has to be permanent in order to have come

from a past life to this life, and to be able to go from this life to the next life. They think that if the self was impermanent then it could not come from a past life to this, and from this life to the next? So while they accept past lives and future lives, and understand that some effects arise due to the past causes etc., the self, they say, has to be permanent, because if it changes or degenerates, then what would be left to go on to the next life? This is the reason for their assertion that the self is permanent.

We can readily relate to their limited reasoning, because we are not able to see the subtle momentary changes that occur in functional phenomena ourselves. The actual definition of impermanence implies that change occurs from moment to moment, and it is this momentary nature of change that we do not readily perceive. Thus we carry the perception of ourselves as being more or less the same self as yesterday, or the day before, etc.

Actually, the real understanding, and thus the realisation of impermanence, is actually quite difficult to obtain. While selflessness or emptiness are more profound than impermanence, and thus more difficult to realise, it seems that it is easier to understand the meaning of emptiness, rather than the subtle changes that occur from moment to moment. I definitely feel that understanding impermanence in terms of the momentariness of the existence is not easy to grasp. When we talk about impermanence it is usually in relation to the gross impermanence of phenomena, such as when a glass breaks. Because we see it break, we feel the impermanence of the glass is presented. In this way we can perceive and relate to the gross level of impermanence, whereas the actual impermanence of functional phenomena, the change which occurs from moment to moment, is subtle and difficult for us to realise.

While some of the non-Buddhist schools like the Samkhyas and the Naiyayika assert past and future lives, others do not. The self asserted by the non-Buddhist schools who don't believe in past and future lives is a self related to the body, i.e. the physical aggregate. Therefore, when the physical aggregate disintegrates, the self, which is dependent on that, also disintegrates. The analogy they use is that it is like drawings on a wall. When the wall falls down, the drawings that are dependent on the wall also disintegrate, because their very support has disintegrated.

The Christian faith, for example, does not assert past and future lives, or more specifically, reincarnation, but they do accept an individual being, which, in essence, seems to be called the soul, which doesn't disintegrate at the time of death. There is a continuity of the soul, as they present it. So, this is accepted in their religion.

His Holiness compares the Christian soul with what we call the self that goes on from past life to future lives. The common ground here is that both traditions posit a continuity that goes from the past to the future.

It is interesting to note that although there are differences between religions, there are also similarities. For example, when His Holiness speaks to other religions, he relates to them on the basis of commonality. That is something for us to also consider.

#### 2.1.2.2.3. Such a self cannot be related to conditions

The commentary first presents the Naiyayika argument:

Argument: Although the self does not facilitate an action due to its own nature, actions are performed in relation to other factors.

30cd "These are its actions," you say.  
How do they become related?

What they are saying is basically that, although the self itself does not facilitate an action by its own nature, it does perform actions in relation to other factors. So, this is what is being refuted here. The commentary presents:

Answer: This is also not valid—because if one says that the action which creates the result of this self is of a different entity, then how does it become related to the self? It could not be related to the self by nature or cause.

The assertion being refuted here is that of a self, which is permanent, but which can perform actions, and produce results in relation to other factors. What the commentary highlights is how these other factors are related to the self. If it is not related to the self by nature, or by cause (i.e. as a cause and effect), then there is no third option, and no other way to relate them. An example of something that is related through nature would be function and impermanence. Wherever there is a function, it is naturally related to impermanence through nature. Everything that functions is by nature also impermanent; so that is the relationship. Whereas the relationship between smoke and fire is that of cause and effect; fire being the cause and smoke the effect. If you assert that there is an independent, permanent self which produces some result, then there would have to be some relationship there. Any relationship has to have a relation either by nature, or by cause and effect. But that is not tenable here.

#### 1.2.1.2.3. Understanding all beings to resemble emanations, anger is unsuitable

We can clearly see that interdependent origination is really the basis of the presentation here.

The verse reads:

31. Thus, everything is other-powered,  
Through the power of this they are powerless.  
Having understood this, do not become angry  
At emanation-like phenomena.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Thus, all actions that produce a result are other-powered, and these conditions are again powered by earlier causes and conditions. Therefore, the result does not have any say in whether it arises or not, and hence is like an illusion or emanation.

When one understands that all functionalities perform actions while being empty of existence from their own side, one does not become angry at these emanation-like functionalities. Therefore one should train in realising the dependent arising that is the lack of existence from its own side, which destroys the seed of the afflictions.

The commentary presents the meaning of this verse. *All actions that produce a result are other-powered* implies that an action doesn't have control over itself, therefore actions are other-powered, meaning they are dependent on their previous causes and conditions. The point here is that *the result does not have any say in whether it arises or not, and hence is like an illusion or emanation.*

The commentary further explains that *When one understands all functionalities perform actions while being empty of existence from their own side, one does not become angry at these emanations like functionalities. Therefore one should train in realising the dependent arising that is the lack of existence from its own side, which destroys the seed of afflictions.*

The crux of the Prasangika view is presented here: that all things lack independent and inherent existence; that things are empty of inherent existence or they do not exist from their own side. If one understands these key points, then one really destroys the seed of the afflictions.

The very definition of illusion, or emanation, is something that is unreal or untrue, like a trick conjured up by a magician, and one should understand that phenomena arise like this, completely empty of existing from their own side. When one incorporates that understanding in one's perception of phenomena, then there is no room for one to become angry, because the very object which appears to exist from its own side as an independent entity harming us, does not actually exist in that way. Therefore there is no room for one to become angry towards it. Basically this is the crux of the explanation.

As I have presented many times before, when strong afflictions such as anger arise, it is because we relate to the object that is causing us harm, as if it were an independent object, completely arising from its own side. This is how it appears to us, so anger arises, and we feel justified in becoming angry. When one trains oneself to see that this appearance is false, that it is beyond reality, that the object one perceives is not inherently and independently existent, then that definitely helps to reduce the afflictions that arise in relation to the object of anger etc. This is hard for us initially, because we are habituated to perceiving things as independent and inherently existent. So overcoming that seemingly natural perception is not an easy task. However, to reduce the intensity of the negativities in one's mind, and eventually overcome the seeds of afflictions, we need to understand these points, and train our mind so that we can gain that realisation.

Having refuted some of the non-Buddhist schools in earlier verses, this verse is refuting the views held by all the Buddhist schools below the Prasangika, which assert inherent existence.

When one understands that all functionalities perform actions while being empty of existence from their own side, one does not become angry at these emanation-like functionalities. Therefore one should train in realising the dependent arising that is the lack of existence from its own side, which destroys the seed of the afflictions

The commentary implies the lack of inherent existence, which is the main point of the Prasangika presentation, and this refutes the earlier Buddhist schools.

### 1.2.1.3. THE NEED FOR REVERSING ANGER

The verse reads:

32. *If it is said: What is supposed to oppose what? Also, opposing is unsuitable. There is nothing unsuitable about asserting That in dependence on that the continuity of suffering is severed.*

Argument: If there is not even the slightest particle of inherent existence, then what antidote is supposed to oppose what object of abandonment? Since action and activity are invalid, even the action of opposing is unsuitable.

The argument is presented in the first two lines of the verse: *If it is said: What is supposed to oppose what? Also, opposing is unsuitable.* Then the counter argument, or answer, is presented in the next two lines *There is nothing unsuitable*

*about asserting that in dependence on that the continuity of suffering is severed.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary expands upon the meaning:

There is nothing unsuitable about the lack of inherent existence of the conception that grasps at the two truths as mutually exclusive, and due to which one cannot posit action and activity of something that lacks inherent existence; i.e., there is nothing unsuitable about the lack of inherent existence of the object of abandonment and the antidote.

It follows it is like that—because in dependence on realising the lack of inherent existence of the object of abandonment, and the antidote all afflictions of anger and so forth become extinct and the continuum of suffering is severed.

What is being presented here is the validity of the realisation of the lack of inherent existence. Thus, gaining the understanding that inherent existence is the object of abandonment, and its antidote is the realisation of emptiness, is valid. That is so because by abandoning the grasping at inherent existence, one will overcome all afflictions, as this is the very root of samsara. So when grasping at a truly and inherently existent self is completely abandoned, the consequence of afflictions such as anger and so forth, will also be completely severed. Thus the continuum of one's suffering is completely severed, and samsara will cease.

### 1.2.2. Summary

33. *Therefore, whether it is friend or enemy, If one sees them acting unsuitably, Say 'it came due to those conditions'. Keeping this in mind be firm in happiness.*

Under the first verse the commentary explains that:

For those reasons, if one sees someone, whether it is friend or enemy, doing something unsuitable that harms, think "this person has only become like this due to their afflictions. They do not have any freedom". Keeping this in mind, stop anger and make your mental happiness firm by not letting it degenerate. Be patient in such a way.

What is being presented here, in relation to one's practice, is that you will reach a point where, whenever you see someone—be it friend or enemy—engaging in an activity which seems inappropriate or harmful, you will immediately recognise they are doing this only due to the afflictions in their own minds. They do not have control over their own mind, and thus do not have control or real freedom over their actions, because they are dominated by the afflictions. When you hold this in your mind at all times, you will naturally not immediately react with anger. It will stop the anger and you will maintain your mental happiness. Because you are not getting angry, your mental happiness will not degenerate, and will be maintained. This is the way you tolerate harm and engage in the practice of patience. Within the different categories of patience this relates more to the patience of willingly accepting harm and suffering from others.

The main point here is that in order to protect the happiness in one's mind, the practice of patience is indispensable—one cannot do without it. As we all wish to have a happy state of mind—no-one voluntarily wants to have a sad or despondent state of mind—protecting it, by engaging in the practice of patience, becomes essential.

You need to take these points on board, and practise them regularly in your everyday life, particularly with close relations, associates or companions. As you have daily contact with them, you are prone to becoming upset or angry with them. Rather than immediately reacting, you can recognise that they don't have control over what they are doing and saying, because they are under the control of the afflictions, and that they are not in a happy state of mind themselves.

Use your own experience as a basis to understand how others act. When you are affected by the afflictions, and when you get upset and angry, you are not in a happy state of mind. In that sense, rather than taking it personally and retaliating, this approach gives you the distance to not react immediately, and allows your anger to subside.

An analogy I have given previously, demonstrating how those afflicted by afflictions do not have control over their own mind and actions, is when a car bumps your car from behind. When you look back, your immediate reaction might be to become upset with the car behind you. But when you see that the car behind you had no control, because it was pushed by the car behind it, then you realise there is no point getting upset with the car behind you, because they had no control at all about running into you. The afflictions are the one behind you, and they, themselves are also dependent on causes and conditions. If we understand that there is no independent entity that is voluntarily causing us harm, then our reasons for becoming angry will definitely subside.

These illustrations are effective in relation to our mind. Using the car example, we are in the first car, the one in the car behind is the individual that we perceive to be harming us. Whether it is our friend or companion or enemy, the only reason they would harm us is because they themselves are affected by delusions such as anger. Therefore the afflictions are like the third car. Just as we don't blame the person who crashes into us, we cannot blame the person who harms us, because they are affected by their afflictions. Therefore it is the afflictions which we need to overcome. This is how we protect our mind.

These ways of reasoning are supreme methods to protect our own mind so that our happiness does not degenerate. If we react with our normal perceptions and reasoning we will find every reason to become upset and angry in response to those who perpetrate harm. Blaming them only causes our own mind to become agitated and disturbed. When we become angry, the happiness in our mind completely degenerates, and we actually allow the conditions for our own happiness to degenerate, and our mind to become despondent and agitated etc. So the optimum protection is using these methods and reasoning as the way to actually protect oneself from harm.

Some make comments like, 'I could not give up the Buddhist principles or path because it is based on reasoning that gives me the freedom to use my own intelligence and reasoning. Why would I want to give up that? It gives me the freedom to rule my own life with reasoning and logic, rather than being completely dominated by others. Why would I want to give that up? I could never give it up.' These are actually very good points.

As you are aware, the next session is the discussion night. I have confidence that you will do the discussions well. Keep in mind that what is being discussed is a form of revision to make the topics we have covered a little clearer. Doing the exam fulfils the same purpose. Studying serves the purpose

of revision, and discussion needs to be done with the same approach.

If one sees someone, be it friend or enemy, acting in an unsuitable way, think along the lines of the points of the teaching tonight. Who could disagree with them? No-one in a rational state of mind would disagree that practising in this way is beneficial.

One needs to understand from these presentations that the very reason that one is applying these protective measures is because not doing so is uncomfortable. We do not like to experience harm and we find ways to prevent ourselves from being affected by it. If it is our experience that the harms, inappropriate gestures etc. inflicted by others are uncomfortable, then we need to find the ways and means to protect ourselves. Applying these principles will do that. As much as they protect oneself from the harms of others, they are also a means of protecting oneself from harming others. That is how we need to understand it. These are really profound ways to understand the main points being presented here.

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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## ***Discussion***

**Block: 3 Week: 15**

**Assigned: 18/11/14**

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

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Week: 1 (12 August 2014)

**1. Think about a person who you are physically attracted to. What are some of the natural imperfections of his or her body? How does using this kind of reasoning separate your superficial attraction from a more genuine fondness for the person?**

Week : 2 (19/08/2014)

**2. In what ways is your body like a boat and what are you trying to transform it into?**

Week: 3 (26 August 2014)

**3. Why would you want to make other people happy and how does it benefit you?**

Week: 4 (2 September 2014)

**4. Verse 81 describes practising generosity to the special field of offering. Outline the when, what and why of this practice explained in Gyalsab Je's commentary and clarified by Geshe Doga.**

Week: 5 (9 September 2014)

**5. Why does a bodhisattva, who understands ultimate truth, see the body as an enemy? And why does the bodhisattva protect his or her body despite this view?**

Week: 6 (16 September 2014)

**6. How do you engage in the practice of sleeping and why would you do it?**

Week: 7 (23 September 2014)

**7. Gyalsab Je recommends Shantideva's Compendium of Trainings as the text to study when training in dependence on the commentaries. What are the thirty-two aspects Shantideva outlined in this commentary on how to train and practice?**

Week: 8 (30 September 2014)

**8. Why is anger the ultimate obstacle to accumulating and retaining virtue?**

Week: 9 (7 October 2014)

**9. What is the underlying cause of hatred?**

Week: 10 (14 October 2014)

**10. What do we exchange and equalise and why?**

Week: 11 (21 October 2014)

**11.a) If it is possible for bodhisattvas to endure the sufferings of the hell realms, then it is possible for us as well. How could this be possible?**

**b) When you accept something you don't think too much about it, and it doesn't bother you so much. Give an everyday example of how this way of thinking might work.**

Week: 12 (28 October 2014)

**12. 'The words one does not wish suffering and desires happiness are simple words..... Because of the great points presented these few lines of verse, Gyaltsab Je mentions they are a great summary of the key points of the practice.' Explain why.**

Week: 13 (4 November 2014)

**13. a) How does one develop patience with other people?**

**b) Does this mean we should be patient with the afflictions?**

Week: 14 (11 November 2014)

**14. Memorise Verse 33:**

*33. Therefore, whether it is friend or enemy,  
If one sees them acting unsuitably,  
Say 'it came due to those conditions'.  
Keeping this in mind be firm in happiness.*

What will happen if you hold this in your mind at all times?

***Discussion***

**Block: 3 Week: 16**

Name: -----

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**1. Think about a person who you are physically attracted to. What are some of the natural imperfections of his or her body? How does using this kind of reasoning separate your superficial attraction from a more genuine fondness for the person?**

**2. In what ways is your body like a boat and what are you trying to transform it into?**

**3. Why would you want to make other people happy and how does it benefit you?**



**4. Verse 81 describes practising generosity to the special field of offering. Outline the when, what and why of this practice explained in Gyaltsab Je's commentary and clarified by Geshe Doga.**

When:

What:

Why:

- **5. Why does a bodhisattva, who understands ultimate truth, see the body as an enemy? And why does the bodhisattva protect his or her body despite this view?**

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