

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

24 May 2016

Based on the motivation we generated during the Refuge and Bodhicitta prayer, we can now engage in the meditation practice without being distracted.

[meditation]

We can generate the motivation for receiving the teachings based on the bodhicitta attitude, which in essence is to engage in the teaching for the sole benefit of other sentient beings.

3.2.1.2.2.1.2. The way of practising after the meditation

This part of the commentary follows earlier explanations that identified the kind of thoughts that constitute jealousy, competitiveness and pride etc. to show how a bodhisattva uses the exchange of self with other to apply antidotes to these thoughts when they arise. We need to take this as personal instruction, as harbouring negative states when associating with others and feeling jealous or competitive or proud, which is feeling contempt for others, makes oneself unhappy and others uncomfortable. Therefore, since there are no redeeming qualities in such negative states of mind, we definitely need to find a way to overcome them. The methods presented here are not difficult to understand, or even to adopt, as a way to counteract negative states of mind. When the teachings present the way to counteract such negative states of mind so simply and clearly, if we don't apply them how else will we ever overcome these negative states of mind? What other methods can we hope to find?

We need to take heed of this advice to find the means to counteract negative states of mind because of the distress they cause to oneself and others. When negative states of mind have been clearly identified within oneself it is a matter of applying the antidotes to overcome them. For example, jealousy is a mind unhappy with others' success; competitiveness is a mind unhappy when others do well with the wish to compete with them, and pride is a mind where one feels one is better than others and condemns them. It makes us uncomfortable when others harbour such negative feelings towards us, so we need to take the initiative to overcome our negative feelings as a way for others not to feel uncomfortable around us. It clearly causes discomfort in one's immediate surroundings and with one's associates. In a community or a workplace, there are many who lament that they feel uncomfortable because a colleague is jealous of them or is competing with them. When others act out of jealousy towards us, it means that they are unhappy with our status or whatever good deeds we may be engaged in. They are jealous because they are unhappy with our success, and a sense of competitiveness also arises. Those who complain that they feel uncomfortable when others express such feelings or attitudes should check whether they themselves have such sentiments towards others. When we ourselves think that others are making us feel uncomfortable, it is good to actually check within ourselves: Am I holding such negative attitudes or not?

We need to understand that putting this advice into practice is a way to avoid causing trouble for others, or hurting others. On top of that, if one can benefit them, then it becomes a practice in line with the deeds of a bodhisattva. So while these are presented as practices for bodhisattvas, if one engages in positive deeds with the attitude of benefiting others, combined with bodhicitta - the mind of enlightenment - then a practice such as generosity becomes a deed of a bodhisattva similitude. When one practises morality combined with the bodhicitta attitude, it becomes a similitude of a bodhisattva deed. Likewise, even reciting a mantra such as OM MANI PADME HUM, combined with the attitude of bodhicitta, becomes a similitude of a bodhisattva deed. The deeds of a bodhisattva have been explained extensively in the earlier part of the text. In summary, it is positive deeds such as practising the six perfections combined with the attitude of the awakening mind. Thus, we need to understand that to be inspired to engage in a bodhisattva's deeds, one needs to secure the bodhicitta attitude in one's mind.

When others express negative attitudes toward us, such as jealousy, we should see the faults and not be affected by it, and also take the initiative to overcome it within ourselves. We clearly need to recognise the faults of jealousy and how jealousy affects us, knowing that from beginningless time this attitude has created negative deeds that have propelled us into cyclic existence again and again. When others express such negative attitudes towards us, having clearly seen it as a fault within us, we should find the antidote within ourselves.

This becomes the means to understand that the other is also blinded by the fact of not recognising the faults of jealousy, and how jealousy harms their own mind. When one sees that, rather than their jealous mind harming oneself, one feels compassion for the other knowing that harbouring such negative attitudes only harms themselves. Thus, rather than retaliating and being upset, one can feel compassion for them. This is how we need to engage in the practice in order to derive the real benefit. As mentioned earlier, these are not obscure practices but something which is really possible, and which changes one's attitude. I personally find these practices meaningful. They are very positive states of mind that I try to make part of my normal way of thinking to counteract negative states of mind. It definitely benefits my mind. I find that practising in such ways lessens negative states of mind within myself, and brings a great sense of joy and happiness within my mind. I don't feel any urge or need to go out of my way to cause others trouble. So while it benefits me, it also prevents me from hurting and causing trouble for others, so there is benefit all round. As the great master Atisha mentioned, the best quality is to benefit others. Thus, benefiting others is the best quality that one could ever have. This is very succinct and profound advice; indeed when one engages in any ways or means to benefit others, one is practising true Dharma. This is good to keep in mind.

The first two lines in the verse read:

144ab. Ethics, view and faults

Are out of our control as they are powered by the afflictions.

I emphasised in our last session that we can apply this knowledge to the very crucial points being presented here - how not to see one's faults as a condemnation but rather arising due to the afflictions within oneself - to others' faults as well. These are meticulously explained.

Keep these points in mind when the mind is entangled with self-loathing and self-guilt. All this can be overcome by recognising that it is the delusions that are at fault, not oneself as an individual person. This is really profound advice on how to feel courageous, as a way to combat the delusions and not to see oneself as the enemy and beating oneself up. One must understand the crucial point of what causes the real trouble and identify these afflictions. As the teachings state, these are *out of our control as they are powered afflictions*: when we are dominated by them it is as if we have temporarily lost control over our own mind; and this is indeed the case. The Buddha said that, *'an uncontrolled mind is an unhappy mind'* the reverse of which is, *a controlled mind is a happy mind*. When one has control over one's own mind, specifically control over the afflictions, they don't dominate one's mind and thinking, so one definitely has a happy state of mind. This is meticulous advice and something we need to try and apply in our own life. That is what I am encouraging you to do.

This is the second year we have been studying the very profound text *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life* from the beginning. This has such great, profound advice for you who have been coming regularly, paying attention, and working hard to try and understand the teachings. I am not saying that I am really skilled in presenting the material, but I have shared whatever understanding I have with the best motivation. With our combined efforts we have definitely worked hard in covering and studying this text. So now if we were to apply some of this advice and put it into practice then that would have made it really worthwhile. Of course, just coming along, listening to the teachings and studying the text itself has been incredibly virtuous. Understanding this is a great way to implant positive imprints in our mind, so it is definitely a deed to rejoice in. But, the main thing is to try and put it into practice, as this is how we derive the real benefit from the teachings. What I am also saying is that I rejoice in your great attentiveness in listening to the teachings.

This is a way to confirm with you that I only rejoice and feel great joy for all the understanding you may have gained. I need to say this, lest there be occasions where one might wonder if the teacher is starting to feel jealous of the understanding one has gained. As a teacher, there is danger for such feelings to occur, so it is important to guard one's own mind. I can definitely assure you that I don't feel any jealousy at all for your understanding, I only feel great joy and happiness. The more you gain understanding and are able to practice, the more joy and happiness it gives me.

3.2.1.2.2.1.2. *The way of practise after the meditation*

[*Familiarity* would be a more specific term in this case.] So far the focus has been on how to familiarise your mind with overcoming negative states such as jealousy, competitiveness and pride. The text next explains how to practise after that familiarisation.

The last two lines of the earlier verse and the next verse are presented:

144cd. *I need to be restored as much as possible,
And I also need to accept harm.*

145. *However, I am not helped by him,
So why does he criticise me?
What are his qualities doing for me?
And he has qualities!*

The commentary clearly explains the meaning:

'Bodhisattva Devadatta, if you have compassion, then you have to work as much as possible to repair my faults and I need to accept the harm of the austerities to establishing qualities, then why does he even criticise us? What are the qualities of that bodhisattva doing for me? Even though the bodhisattva Devadatta himself has qualities, they have no benefit for us sentient beings.

As a way to further familiarise oneself, using the example of a bodhisattva called Devadatta who places himself as other, the commentary explains *if you have compassion, then you have to work as much as possible to repair my faults*. The faults refer to the degeneration of ethics or the degeneration of views. *If you have compassion*, implies that rather than merely criticising, you should be working to repair the faults of degenerate ethics and views within me. Likewise, if out of compassion you make genuine attempts to repair my faults, from my side I will accept the harm or difficulties of the austere practices to establish the qualities. For example, there might be occasions where you have to reprimand a person with scolding to prevent them from doing something negative. This is an example of harm or difficult austere practices to repair those faults. What is presented here is that, when out of compassion, certain means and methods are used to point out one's faults, one should make the promise to willingly accept them, because if one does not there will be no way to correct one's faults. This sheds light on how a teacher would guide a student, showing the means by which it is done out of compassion. When a student is willing to accept and learn through stern measures, they see the hardships as a way to get rid of faults and gain more positive personal qualities; there has to be mutual effort put in. From the teacher's side there is genuine effort out of compassion, but the student must bear some difficulties and hardships to acquire the qualities. Nothing can be acquired without putting in some effort. This is another point to understand.

Engaging in the practice this way becomes the means to achieve enduring patience of definitely thinking about the Dharma. This type of patience is required when engaging in austere Dharma practices where one encounters hardships and difficulties. In willingly accepting and enduring those difficulties, understanding that they are only for one's betterment, one generates the mind of patience.

As the commentary further explains, *If we sentient beings do not come into the benefit of having our faults repaired by Devadatta*, then why does he even criticise us? This is saying that if his qualities are not used to benefit us then what use are they?

In other words, if your qualities and compassion are not used to benefit us, then why even criticise us? This implies that if words are not said out of compassion, as a means to benefit, then it may just as well be critical remarks. In summary, the essence of the practice is that if we cannot benefit others then at least we should not harm them. The commentary goes on with, *what are the qualities of a bodhisattva doing for me*, implying that if they are not applied as a means to benefit one, then what use are those qualities? *Even though the bodhisattva Devadatta himself has qualities, they have no benefit for us sentient beings* implies that when there are actual good qualities, then they should be used to benefit others in the best possible way, rather than feeling contempt for others and so forth.

The next verse reads:

146. *He that does not have compassion*

*For migrators abiding in poisonous bad migrations,
Purposely wishes to outdo those proficient
Out of exaggerated qualities.*

The commentary explains:

Further, this Devadatta, who has no compassion for the migrators in the lower realms, who are like being held in the mouth of poisonous snakes and ferocious animals, due to degenerated ethics and views, not only does he not benefit us sentient beings, but he purposely wishes to outdo us proficient sentient beings out of his exaggerated view of his own qualities. It is inappropriate to exaggerate and criticise.

Having placed the mind on sentient beings and taken oneself, the bodhisattva, as others, contemplate that it is unsuitable for him to harm oneself.

Again relating to Devadatta as another, the commentary explains the need of compassion for migrators in the lower realms, *who are like being held in the mouth of poisonous snakes and ferocious animals*. The plight of samsara is illustrated with the grave situation where the danger of perishing from either a poisonous bite or being eaten by ferocious animals is prominent. At any moment one could be captured by their fangs of death. If beings are in the lower realms this is all due to degenerated ethics and views, so by understanding that, when Devadatta (oneself as another) does not benefit us, and criticises us and tries to outdo us with his own exaggerated view of his own qualities, that is totally inappropriate. The point being emphasised is that if one exaggerates one's own qualities and feels contempt for others and criticises them, then there is no worth whatsoever in those qualities.

To summarise this point, Gyaltshab Je concludes:

Having placed the mind on sentient beings and taken oneself, the bodhisattva, as others, contemplate that it is unsuitable for him to harm oneself.

He is emphasising here that having engaged in the practice of exchanging self with other, placing oneself as other and others as oneself, then harming others would be like harming oneself, which is unsuitable. When one places oneself as another, then one could not initiate harm to the other, for that would be like harming oneself.

3.2.1.2.2.2. The way of meditating on competitiveness for the equal

This is subdivided into four:

3.2.1.2.2.2.1. Competing for gain and praise

3.2.1.2.2.2.2. Competing for renown of qualities

3.2.1.2.2.2.3. Competing for the number of qualities

3.2.1.2.2.2.4. Being happy about bringing harm to others

3.2.1.2.2.2.1. *Competing for gain and praise*

This again is another common fault. What needs to be clarified here is that while a sense of competitiveness is seen as a negative attitude, looking up to others as a role model is a virtue. Here in Australia there is emphasis on the need to have a good role model to inspire oneself. From the Dharma point of view, the Sangha Jewel would be the role models we'd see as exemplary, and also who we'd wish to follow in terms of study and practice etc. Using a contemporary context like academic study, the role models would be those who have gone through all the stages of study and reached proficiency, and who may have good academic careers. These people would be role models in their area of study for those trying to attain a similar sort of achievement.

Another illustration would be if one has a good friend who is doing very well in their studies, and one started to feel like one should put more time and energy into one's own study, just like one's friend, then this is not an instance of feeling competitive, it is using the friend as a role model.

Competitiveness arises when one feels one should be better than one's equals on the same level. This sort of attitude, of wanting to do better than the other, is a sense of competitiveness, which is the non-virtue being presented here.

The main point is to differentiate between seeing others as a role model - and a way to inspire one's study and practice, which is fine - and competitiveness, which is the sense of wanting to be better than them.

The verse reads:

*147. Looking at those equal to me,
To be superior
I thoroughly establish
Our gain and praise, even through dispute.*

The commentary explains it in this way:

We shall compete with the bodhisattva Devadatta, who is equal to us in being a sentient being, for status and the like. So that we sentient beings are superior in gain, praise and the like to the bodhisattva Devadatta, we establish our praise and gain even through dispute with the bodhisattva.

When saying, *we shall compete with the bodhisattva Devadatta, who is equal to us in being a sentient being*, the connotation of *equal* here shows that we don't have a sense of competitiveness with someone known to be superior to us, rather it is with those we consider equal to ourselves. Thus it relates to those who surround us, like fellow Dharma students, colleagues, classmates, siblings etc.

For someone one considers an equal, the commentary says, *we shall compete... for status and the like*. So that we sentient beings [oneself] becomes superior in gain, praise and the like to the bodhisattva Devadatta, we establish our praise and gain even through dispute with the bodhisattva. This indicates that in order to excel, one may do whatever is necessary, such as dispute, to compete with the other to become superior to them. Apply this practice as a way to overcome such attitudes.

3.2.1.2.2.2.2. Competing for renown of qualities

The verse reads:

*148. I shall make my qualities clear
By any means to all the transitory worlds,
And I shall take care
That nobody hears about his qualities.*

The commentary explains the meaning as follows:

I shall proclaim and make clear our qualities by any means to all the transitory worlds and further I shall take care that nobody hears about the qualities of this bodhisattva.

Again, having exchanged oneself with the other, in relation to others one should proclaim their qualities and hide their faults; and in relation to oneself, one should proclaim one's faults and hide one's qualities. This practice highlights that as ordinary beings, we make our qualities clear to the whole world, whilst doing everything possible to hide our faults. But when bodhisattvas exchange themselves with the other, they proclaim their own faults and hide their qualities.

The practice of proclaiming others' faults whilst hiding one's qualities and proclaiming one's own qualities whilst hiding

one's faults, seems a common practice in Australian politics. We can see that even if the opposition has a good project it is not mentioned, but criticised in every way.

We can see that the practice of ruining another's reputation or proclaiming their faults, especially in politics, becomes a real cause for dispute and confusion. We can see it really confuses people's minds because they are left not knowing who to believe anymore. In Australia we are very fortunate that people are generally good-natured and quite intelligent, so it doesn't bring much chaos. However there are many instances in other countries where this behaviour can cause chaos; not only confusion but chaos, because people get really upset and angry. When they hear about the faults of the opposition they believe it is all true, and this causes a lot of angst, which can cause protests or retaliation etc. So we can see this is a malevolent practice that can cause distress in people's minds.

3.2.1.2.2.2.3. *Competing for the number of qualities*

This verse relates to the point I mentioned earlier and reads:

**149. *I shall hide my faults,
I shall be made offerings to and he not
I am obtaining today much gain and
I shall be praised, but he should not have these.***

The commentary starts by explaining:

I shall hide our, i.e. sentient beings' faults, but clearly proclaim his faults and in this way we the sentient beings become an object of offering for others and he will not.

Here we can see how, if we engage in bringing out the faults of others and hiding our own faults, the others will not receive offerings, because they will not be regarded as worthy, while we, who have hidden our faults, will receive offerings.

The commentary continues:

I shall strive in this way. I am obtaining today much good food, clothing and the like, and others should praise me, but he shall not receive these benefits.

I shall strive in this way indicates how a competitive mind arises by constantly trying to proclaim others' faults when they have qualities, and proclaiming one's own qualities while hiding one's faults. This is how the negative state of mind works. The competitive mind says, *I am obtaining today much good food, clothing and the like, and others should praise me, but he shall not receive these benefits.* Normally one would like this out of a sense of competitiveness with others. But here it is used as a way to counteract this approach by placing oneself in the other's position then applying this to oneself i.e. exchanging oneself with the other.

3.2.1.2.2.2.4. *Being happy about bringing harm to others*

When actually practiced in this way, we can see how all modes of competitiveness with others, and wishing them harm, is what actually brings misfortune, dispute and distress in the world.

The verse reads:

**150. *I shall watch joyously for a long time
How he is being treated inappropriately,
I shall take care that he is the laughing stock
Of all migrators and that they abuse each other.***

The commentary explains:

I shall watch joyously for a long time how this bodhisattva Devadatta is being treated inappropriately and is being crushed. I shall take care

that this bodhisattva is a laughing stock for all migrators and they abuse each other by criticising each other's faults.

Having exchanged self and other one thus praises sentient beings and stops to exaggerate one's qualities.

The mind explained here, *I shall watch joyously for a long time how this bodhisattva Devadatta is being treated inappropriately and is being crushed* is indeed a negative state of mind. Feeling joyous when something bad happens to someone you don't like, or when they are suffering in some way, is not good. Furthermore the commentary says *I shall take care this bodhisattva is a laughing stock for all migrators and they abuse each other by criticising others' faults*, so again, when this negative mind arises it harbours an attitude towards others where one feels contempt, or a sense of competitiveness. A way to overcome that is this practice presented by Gyaltshab Rinpoche who summarises the point as *having exchanged self and other one thus praises sentient beings and stops to exaggerate one's qualities.*

3.2.1.2.2.3. **The way of meditating on pride for the lower**

This has four subdivisions:

3.2.1.2.2.3.1. The aspect of meditating on pride

3.2.1.2.2.3.2. The benefits of meditating on it

3.2.1.2.2.3.3. The way of acting upon having done the meditation

3.2.1.2.2.3.4. Contemplating the disadvantages of lacking such a pride

We will continue with this next time.

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

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Edited Version

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

31 May 2016

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

It would be good to adopt this meditation practice as part of our regular daily practice.

Now let us generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

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

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

3.2.1.2.2.3. The way of meditating on pride for the lower

3.2.1.2.2.3.1. The aspect of meditating on pride

The verse is preceded with this statement:

A bodhisattva should meditate on pride by holding someone with superior qualities to themselves as self.

Then the verse reads:

151. *This afflicted one is known
To compete with me;
How could he equal me
In hearing, wisdom, body, caste and wealth?*

The commentary explains:

If this inferior afflicted bodhisattva Devadatta proclaims that he wants to compete with us sentient beings, then: 'How could he equal me in hearing, wisdom, body, caste and wealth? He does not equal us in any way.' Meditate thus on pride.

This is a presentation on how to overcome pride, which is, as explained earlier, a conceited mind that looks down with a sense of contempt on those who one considers to be inferior. Pride is a faulty state of mind that needs to be overcome and, as the self-cherishing mind is the basis for pride, this presentation is ultimately about overcoming the self-cherishing mind.

As presented in earlier sessions, when exchanging oneself with someone who is superior, one imagines what it would be like to be superior, and that the superior person holds the lower position of oneself. When one exchanges oneself with someone of lesser wisdom etc., then one places oneself in the inferior's place and places the inferior as oneself. With equals there is a sense of competitiveness, and again one places oneself as the other, and the other as oneself. These are ways to counteract the faulty states of mind of jealousy, pride, and competitiveness respectively.

The presentation here shows how the faulty state of mind of pride arises, and the kinds of sentiments it brings up. As the commentary states, *If this inferior afflicted*

bodhisattva Devadatta proclaims that he wants to compete with us sentient beings, then: 'How could he equal me in hearing, wisdom, body, caste and wealth?' Pride is generated by thinking that one is superior to others either in having more knowledge than others, or having more wisdom or understanding than others, or having a better body and physique than others, or by being of higher caste or status, or by having more wealth than others. Through contemplating these characteristics one generates a sense of pride that one is better than the other.

This shows clearly how the mind of pride arises in relation to the status one believes one has. When one contemplates the fault of pride by seeing how such a conceited mind is generated, then *he does not equal us in any way. Meditate thus on pride*, means meditating on pride in this manner as a way to overcome pride.

Thus pride arises as a result of seeing oneself as superior to those who are inferior or disadvantaged in some way.

3.2.1.2.2.3.2. The benefits of meditating on pride

This is presented with the following verse:

152. *Having thus heard of my qualities,
Well known by all,
Enjoy the bliss and happiness
That makes one's hair stand on end in joy.*

The commentary explains:

As I say, 'As they are unequal, enjoy the bliss and joy that makes one's pore's hair stand on end, derived from hearing about my qualities that are far superior to the well-renowned Devadatta.

When others hear of the great qualities of a bodhisattva, such as their vast understanding of the teachings, having great wisdom and so forth, this causes such great admiration that one's hairs *stand on end*. This is an indication of how just hearing about these great qualities can move one's mind to the point where it causes a physical reaction.

This is a concise explanation of the way the great qualities of a bodhisattva bring such great joy to the minds of others.

3.2.1.2.2.3.3. The way of acting upon having done the meditation

The verse relating to this reads:

153. *However much gain he has,
When I engage in the action
I shall give him only enough to live by,
And take the remainder by force.*

The commentary explains:

Although he has gain of food and clothing, if I engage in benefiting sentient beings today I shall give him just enough food and clothing to survive on, and the remainder I shall take by force.

As explained clearly, *although he has gain of food and clothing, if I engage in benefiting sentient beings today I shall give him just enough food and clothing to survive on and the remainder I shall take by force*. Through pride one may engage in acts of giving others only as much as they need, and taking away by force anything that remains. This is another example of the fault of pride, which is being used as a way to encourage us to use whatever we have as a way to benefit sentient beings. If whatever gain one may

have is used to benefit sentient beings, then that gain is worthwhile and well used.

3.2.1.2.2.3.4. *Contemplating the disadvantages of lacking such a pride*

This section explains contemplating the disadvantages of lacking pride. The following two lines relate to this:

*154ab. I shall take him away from happiness
And continuously expose him to my harm*

The commentary explains:

I shall take this bodhisattva away from his bliss of leisure and order him to carry my suffering. I shall continuously expose him to the harm of eliminating the suffering of sentient beings.

This is a further example of the fault of pride. As explained clearly, *I shall take this bodhisattva away from his bliss of leisure and order him to carry my suffering. I shall continuously expose him to the harm of eliminating the suffering of sentient beings.*

3.2.1.2.2.4. The result of the meditation

This section is divided into four:

3.2.1.2.2.4.1. Contemplating the faults of cherishing self

3.2.1.2.2.4.2. The source for understanding the infinite benefits of cherishing others

3.2.1.2.2.4.3. Explaining that it is only beneficial

3.2.1.2.2.4.4. Advice to strive in cherishing others

3.2.1.2.2.4.1. *Contemplating the faults of cherishing self*

This heading is presented in the following six lines:

*154cd. It causes me harm in all of the
Hundreds of cyclic existences.*

*155. 'Mind, because you wish to act for self,
Although hundreds of eons pass,
With this great hardship
You will only accomplish suffering.'*

The commentary explains:

The cherishing of self that wishes oneself to have perfection causes the harm of the hells and other lower realms while circling in cyclic existence in all of the hundreds of lifetimes. 'Mind, you have caused me great hardship that is meaningless even if hundreds of eons pass. You have caused me thus only the suffering of cyclic existence.' The bodhisattva Devadatta should regard himself in such a way.

This explanation in the commentary relating to the faults of self-cherishing is quite clear so there is no need for much elaboration. As explained previously, the self-cherishing mind is a mind that thinks about only having the best for oneself, with everything going one's way for one's own personal benefit. When the commentary states, *the bodhisattva Devadatta should regard himself in such a way*, the connotation is that the bodhisattva called Devadatta needs to think about how the fault of self-cherishing arises in this way.

Devadatta should reprimand his mind thus: *Mind, you have caused me great hardship that is meaningless even if hundreds of eons pass.* That mind of course is the self-cherishing mind, and 'all you have done is cause me great hardship that is meaningless'. The sufferings that we encounter as a result of trivial worldly activities and gains are, as explained here, meaningless. Any hardship or difficulties that one has endured would not have

brought any real happiness. Therefore they have been meaningless, and even after hundreds of eons they have brought no lasting joy. And, as mentioned further, *you have caused me thus only the suffering of cyclic existence.*

Of course if the suffering experienced is from enduring hardships and difficulties for the practise of the Dharma, then that would be meaningful. Enduring hardships for the Dharma would serve a great purpose and definitely have great meaning. However hardship and difficulties experienced merely for the sake of worldly pleasures and so forth are not a cause for true happiness, but a cause for even more suffering in the cyclic existence.

As a way to reprimand oneself, the commentary begins with *mind, you*. It is good to reprimand oneself on a personal level as part of one's own practice, and it is appropriate to use your own name. 'You [my name], look at what you have done so far with your self-cherishing mind. Whilst I wish for happiness, you have only brought me unimaginable sufferings in cyclic existence. Now it is time you brought me benefit'. When the mind is in a positive state it will be a mind that benefits oneself. Referring to the mind in this way differentiates one's self-cherishing mind from oneself.

3.2.1.2.2.4.2. *The source for understanding the infinite benefits of cherishing others*

The verse relating to this reads:

*156. Therefore, engage intensively
In the purpose of others,
And, as the words of the Able One are infallible
You will see the benefits later on.*

The commentary explains:

Thus one engages intensively into accomplishing the benefit of others upon cherishing others. Since the words of the Buddha are infallible with regards to their subject, one will see later on the result of enlightenment, a quality of cherishing others, based on viewing cherishing of self as the enemy.

Having presented the faults of cherishing oneself, the benefits of cherishing others are now presented. Again, this is a very reasonable and logically sequenced presentation.

Having contemplated the great disadvantages of cherishing oneself, *one engages intensively in accomplishing the benefit of others upon cherishing others*. The explanation of the benefits begins with the statement, *since the words of the Buddha are infallible with regards to their subject*. As the Buddha's teachings are true to their words and are infallible, they cannot be contradicted. Therefore, as the Buddha explained, *one will see later on the results of enlightenment, which is a quality obtained by cherishing others, based on viewing cherishing oneself as the enemy*.

3.2.1.2.2.4.3. *Explaining that it is only beneficial*

The verse relating to this heading is preceded with this hypothetical argument:

Argument: Although one has worked for the welfare of others for a long time one has not seen such a benefit.

If one has not seen any benefit from some kind of work or practice, then doubting its value is a very significant doubt. The following verse shows the way to overcome such a doubt.

157. *If one had earlier
Carried out these actions,
It would be impossible to have an occasion
Without the happiness of complete
enlightenment.*

The commentary explains answer to the doubt:

Answer: If you had earlier carried out the action of exchanging self and others then it would be impossible to experience occasions of suffering, without the happiness of enlightenment complete with the two purposes. Regretting having passed time with meaningless actions one should strive in meditating on the mind of enlightenment.

The commentary clearly explains that *if you had earlier carried out the action of exchanging self and others then it would be impossible to experience occasions of suffering*. In other words, if one had carried out the practices of exchanging self with other, and thus cherishing others, one would not be suffering now. *Without the happiness of enlightenment complete with the two purposes* indicates that the ultimate result of cherishing others is perfecting the purposes of oneself as well as the purpose of others. If one is experiencing suffering now, then that is a clear sign that one has not engaged in the practice of exchanging self with others.

Having contemplated this one develops great regret about *having passed time with meaningless actions*, so *one should strive in meditating on the mind of enlightenment*. In essence, one regrets having wasted such time in the past by not engaging in the practices.

3.2.1.2.2.4.4. *Advice to strive in cherishing others*

Again this is introduced with a hypothetical argument:

Argument: If you say, 'I am not able to habituate myself by meditating on exchanging self and other.'

The verse to indicate the explanation of that is:

158. *Hence, meditate on others
Just as you hold as mine
The drop of semen and blood,
Which belongs to others.*

The commentary explains:

Answer: Since the welfare of others has such benefits one should meditate on cherishing other sentient beings by holding them as self, just as one has familiarised oneself with holding this body as mine, which is established out of the impure semen and blood of father and mother, who are other. By meditating in such a way complete the meditation of exchanging self and other.

The hypothetical doubt says *I am not able to habituate myself by meditating on exchanging self and other*. While one may see the benefits that have been explained earlier, one may still feel: 'How could I ever meditate in such a way? How could I actually engage in the practice of exchanging self with others? It's hard to familiarise oneself with exchanging self and other, and thus I'm not able to familiarise myself with such practice'.

As a response to that, the commentary says, *since the welfare of others has such benefits, one should meditate on cherishing other sentient beings by holding them as self*. This can be accomplished through familiarisation. For example, although our bodies came from others we hold

this body as mine, it is established out of the impure semen and blood of father and mother. Although we have no qualms about cherishing this body as mine, it is actually a body that has been produced by substances received from others, i.e. one's father and mother. Through familiarisation one holds this body as being mine, even though it is produced from substances from others. Thus it is possible to adopt this way of thinking through familiarisation.

By meditating in such a way complete the meditation of exchanging self and other.

3.2.1.3. THE WAY OF FOLLOWING UP IN ACTION

This is subdivided into two:

3.2.1.3.1. Actual

3.2.1.3.2. One should take control of one's mind when following up the exchange of self and other in action

3.2.1.3.1. Actual

This has three subdivisions:

3.2.1.3.1.1. Giving one's perfections to others

3.2.1.3.1.2. Sincerely accepting oneself to be lower for the purpose of others

3.2.1.3.1.3. A summary of how to practise

3.2.1.3.1.1. Giving one's perfections to others

This is further subdivided into two:

3.2.1.3.1.1.1. Actual

3.2.1.3.1.1.2. It is suitable to be jealous of oneself

3.2.1.3.1.1.1. Actual

The verse presented under this heading is:

159. *Having given others great consideration,
Whatever you observe on your body,
Having snatched it away,
Put it to use for others.*

The commentary explains:

Having familiarised one's mind in this way 'I shall give the welfare of others great practical consideration' and having trained in this motivation, bodhisattvas advise themselves: 'Having considered whether one is harming others or not, whatever desired objects one observes on one's body, having snatched them away, give up the grasping at mine and put them to use for others.'

What is being explained here is that one first needs to familiarise one's mind with the practice of exchanging self with other. As presented earlier, that is done by thinking of the faults of cherishing oneself in many ways, and thinking about the benefits of cherishing others in many ways. Then, having familiarised one's mind with these thoughts over a long time, one needs to put them into practice. One cannot possibly put anything into practice without first having familiarised one's mind with the practice, and that is the point that is being presented here.

As explained further, the way to engage in the practice is to recall how the *bodhisattvas advise themselves*, as a way of checking their state of mind. What one checks is *whether one is harming others or not*. This means checking 'Am I harming others or am I benefitting them?', and then constantly maintaining that awareness of how one is conducting oneself.

As a way of putting that into practice, one snatches away *whatever desired objects one observes on one's body*. This indicates that one snatches away from oneself one's possessions, clothing and food, and uses them to benefit other sentient beings. In other words, not feeding and clothing one's body just to maintain oneself, but rather using it for the purpose of others. Furthermore, one gives up *grasping at mine and puts them to use for others*. When one has a strong self-cherishing mind, then one considers possessions such as food and so forth as mine. Giving away these possessions means giving up strong self-cherishing, and using these possessions for the purpose of benefitting others.

3.2.1.3.1.1.2. *It is suitable to be jealous of oneself*

This is another technique to change one's attitude. As a way to overcome the self-cherishing mind one develops a sense of jealousy towards oneself.

The verse that relates to this is:

160. *'I am happy, others not,
I am high, others low
I receive benefit, others not,'
Why are you not jealous of self?*

The commentary explains:

Further, one should also meditate on jealousy: 'I am happy but other sentient beings are not happy, I am superior from the point of view of enjoyments and the like but others are inferior in this way. I practise virtue that benefits me but others do not and therefore I am blissful and others are not. What is the use of that?' Why is one not jealous towards myself who is higher? It is suitable to be jealous.

As the commentary quite clearly explains the meaning of this verse, there is no need to further elaborate on it.

When one acknowledges that one is happy and one has a high status, receives benefits, and so forth, then self-cherishing may arise. Reprimanding oneself if there is any self-cherishing will be an impetus to use these qualities to benefit others. If one actually instils more compassion for those who one sees as being deprived of the qualities that one has, such as happiness, high status, and so forth, then rather than feeling conceit over these qualities, they become even more reason to benefit others.

For those with strong self-cherishing, one's qualities only lead to conceit and pride, but they are a means to benefit others for those who overcome the self-cherishing mind.

We can use the remaining time to recite the dedication or tenth chapter of the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*.

Of course our dedication can be focussed on those who are experiencing sickness and other difficulties and problems in general. We can also dedicate it to the welfare of all sentient beings, particularly those with whom one has a direct relationship, such as one's parents. For those whose parents who are still with you, dedicate it for their wellbeing so that they are free of extreme sufferings, illness and so forth, and that they have a happy state of mind. Those whose parents have passed away you can dedicate the recitation for their wellbeing wherever they've been reborn, and for them to continuously experience good conditions. As we have a

strong connection with our parents, dedicating our practice in this way will definitely bring them benefit.

When one takes refuge, for example, one envisions all sentient beings around oneself, with one's parents on either side. That is because of the connection that we have with them.

It is good to keep the specific meaning and purpose of the practice in mind. The direct biological connection we have with our parents is not just some hypothetical connection. Because of the biological connection, when we make prayers and aspirations for our parents and siblings, it definitely has a benefit.

The concise motivation that we generate is: I will engage in this recitation to bring benefit for all sentient beings, bringing them happiness and relieving them from all suffering.

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 June 2016

Based on the motivation that we generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our regular meditation practice.

(Pause for 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, so for that purpose I will engage in and listen to the teachings'. Generating this motivation is also a reminder of the goal that we're seeking to achieve, which is Buddhahood – thus it refreshes our mind to reflect on what Buddhahood actually entails.

As we attempted in our short meditation practice, we must try to incorporate the *giving and taking* practice in our daily lives, as way to transform and subdue our minds. If we don't use these profound practices and techniques as a means to subdue our mind, then we won't find any other methods – there are no other means.

Following on from where we left off in our last session, we are now on the third sub-heading, which is:

3.2.1.3. THE WAY OF FOLLOWING UP IN ACTION

3.2.1.3.1. Actual (cont.)

3.2.1.3.1.2. Sincerely accepting oneself to be lower for the purpose of others

Here there are three subdivisions:

3.2.1.3.1.2.1. Analysing one's faults

3.2.1.3.1.2.2. Confessing having harmed sentient beings

3.2.1.3.1.2.2. Diligently take the lower place

It is good to derive an understanding from the outline itself. As presented, it is very reasonable to accept oneself to be lower than others, for if we can't practise taking a lower position, then there's no way that we can actually benefit others.

When we engage in reading a Dharma text, it is good to try to derive an understanding from every angle of the presentation, such as from the outline itself. Indeed we can derive the text's essential meaning just from the outline, which is intended to summarise the main point being presented. Here, the main point is accepting oneself to be lower for the purpose of benefiting others. Contemplating this point for a while can move our mind, and thus one derives more benefit from what is being presented in the text.

3.2.1.3.1.2.1. Analysing one's faults

161. *I shall separate from my happiness
And attach the suffering of others to me.
Say, 'Why do you act like this at any time?'
Investigate your own faults.*

I shall separate myself from all my happiness such as food, clothing and so forth, and give them to others. I shall attach the sufferings of others to myself and

accept them. Bodhisattvas should investigate their faults by asking themselves from time to time, 'Why did I do this?'

The first two lines refer to the practice of giving and taking, the meditation practice we attempted to engage in earlier. Essentially the point of the practice, as it says here, is to *separate myself from all my happiness such as food, clothing and so forth*, meaning one will not cherish these things and instead give them to others. In the practice of giving and taking, this is the practice of giving: giving all of the goodness one has. Then *I shall attach the sufferings of others to myself* – this is the taking part. These are the two immaculate presentations of the giving and taking practice.

Next, the text explains that *bodhisattvas should investigate their faults by asking themselves from time to time 'Why did I do this?'* In other words, those training as bodhisattvas should investigate their minds by regularly asking themselves about the intentions behind their thoughts and actions. The main point of this practice is to detect any faults that may arise in the trainee's mind.

We need to take this as a personal instruction; we need to be familiar with the practice of checking our mind for any faults that may arise. Even just reading these words and contemplating them for a few moments, and then investigating the mind can be an essential meditation practice.

Occasionally one may feel a bit down, unhappy and so forth. At that time, rather than letting our unhappy, depressed mind carry on unchecked, it would be far better to take some time to read a text like this. We can first make strong supplications to Shantideva, seeking the blessing to be able to gain the understanding and realisation of these essential points. Spending a few moments contemplating these words would really help the mind to become more settled, to experience a sense of happiness and peace.

When we apply this technique and contemplate the meaning of the text, it will definitely stop negative states of mind, such as feeling melancholic or feeling down. When this positive effect takes place, we will begin to notice a great difference in our present way of thinking and attitude, compared to before we met the Dharma. We will notice how, previously, we succumbed to negative states of mind, feeling as if there was no way out of our depressed state. But now, having met with the teachings and having contemplated them, we can see that a shift has taken place, and that our mind has become more expansive. This is the benefit of having access to the teachings and the Dharma. But if we don't put this advice into practice, we will not get much benefit from it.

Initially, there is the fault of not knowing the Dharma. But once we know the Dharma and understand it, the next fault we need to overcome is not putting it into practice. We need to overcome both these faults in order to derive benefit from the teachings.

3.2.1.3.1.2.2. Confessing having harmed sentient beings

We should pay attention here to the meticulous presentation of the subject matter. Having taken the advice to investigate one's mind, one checks whether there are any faults or not. In summary, the faults would

be in relation to whether one has harmed sentient beings. If we detect any faults, we need to do what is presented here next – confess to having harmed sentient beings. As soon as we detect that we have engaged in some negative mind or actions that have harmed sentient beings, we need to immediately confess that as a way to purify it.

162. *Although others have created wrongs,
I shall make them my faults.
Although I have committed a small fault,
I shall make it known to many beings.*

163ab. *By proclaiming the renown of others
I will play down my own renown.*

Although others commit faults such as harming one, bodhisattvas should make these their own faults and carry the burden of experiencing the results themselves. Although one has committed small faults with regards to sentient beings, one should make them known to many beings and accept one's faults.

If I hear of the fame of others and hear that they are being talked about pleasantly, I will praise them even more and play down my own renown.

As explained in the first part of the commentary, *although others commit faults such as harming one, bodhisattvas should make these their own faults and carry the burden of experiencing the results themselves*. This is a profound way of implementing the understanding of karma. If one experiences harm from anyone, that harm is none other than the result of one's own previous karma. If we had not created the karma to experience harm, then no one would be able to harm us. If one implements that understanding of karma, then one can see harm from others as being one's own fault: that is, if someone harms us, it is basically the ripening of our own previously created negative karma.

We can also implement our understanding of the practice of patience here, particularly the patience of not retaliating. When others harm us, normally the intention to retaliate arises: we feel that this harm is unjust, that the other is harming us without any particular cause or reason from our side. But again, if we implement our understanding of karma – that the harm we experience from others is the result of the ripening of karma that we have created previously – then this can prevent us from immediately seeing the other as being at fault, and thus prevent us from generating the wish to retaliate and become angry with them. We should take the initiative to put this into practice, as it is the optimum way to protect one's mind. In the event that others cause us harm, even if it's just hurtful words, then our mind will not be disturbed and will remain peaceful if we employ the practice of patience of not retaliating. That is how we get the benefit.

We can also relate to a good analogy presented in Geshe Chekawa's Seven-Point Mind Training teachings, which I think we did in a course last year, of an arrow hitting a target. As explained in the analogy, if there were no target set up, there would be no way for the arrow to hit the target, so the arrow hitting the target is based on the fact that a target was set up. It's as if it is the target's fault that the arrow hit it, because if the target hadn't been set up, the arrow wouldn't have been able to hit it. So this analogy shows how we experience the results of karma ourselves – if we hadn't created the karma, we wouldn't

experience the harm. When we create the karma of harming others in the past, we 'set up the target', and the harm we now experience from the other is like the arrow hitting the target. Contemplating in this way, one takes the initiative to carry the burden of experiencing the results oneself.

The commentary continues, *although one has committed small faults with regards to sentient beings, one should make them known to many beings and accept one's faults*. This is again presenting the practice of proclaiming one's faults, even though they are minor. Rather than finding excuses or trying to hide our faults, we should proclaim them and make them known. This protects one from concealing these faults and creating more negativity and incurring more faults in future. These are very profound practices, so we should put them into practice.

In a confession ceremony for the ordained, there is a part where the abbot asks: 'Have you seen the faults as faults?' to which the response is, 'Yes, I have'. This is followed by, 'will you commit to refrain from the faults again in the future?', and again the intended response is 'Yes, I will'.

The commentary further explains:

If one hears of the fame of others and hears that they are being talked about pleasantly one praises them even more and plays down one's own renown.

Here again, it is profoundly explained that when bodhisattvas hear of others' qualities, they will take the initiative to even further expand on those qualities, and play down their own. A perfect example is His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who always says, 'I am just an ordinary human being and I don't have many qualities' – taking a lower position from his side, while praising others to great extent. Indeed he goes to great lengths to praise the goodness of others, such as their respective faiths and good deeds. This is a clear sign that His Holiness is putting the bodhisattva deeds into practice.

In relation to the earlier point, even if one's own faults are small, a bodhisattva will take the initiative to proclaim those faults and make them known to all, rather than conceal them, so that others are not misled and deceived. And if others have some renowned qualities, the bodhisattva will make that even more widely known.

If we can incorporate these practices to some extent into our own lives, it will bring great solace to the mind. If we can make it a habit to praise others' qualities, and when others' qualities are talked about, to agree with that, it will help one's own mind be free of negative attitudes such as jealousy, and will bring much more peace to one's mind.

In fact, we need to be very mindful when others' qualities are mentioned, because how are we to know who is, or is not, a bodhisattva? A bodhisattva may be anywhere at any time. We need to be very careful on this point.

3.2.1.3.1.2.2. *Diligently take the lower place*

163cd. *I shall order myself to achieve
Every purpose, like the lowest of servants.*

164. *Since his nature is faulty,
Do not praise partial adventitious qualities,
Just as nobody knows, although they are
there,
Any of their qualities.*

I shall order myself to achieve every purpose of sentient beings without pride, like the lowest of servants that is ordered to carry the greatest of burdens.

Think of yourself as being in the nature of having faults and if the thought arises to praise oneself for at least some small partial qualities of listening and so forth, think: Just as nobody can see the qualities of the bodhisattvas they look at, I shall not praise even a partial adventitious quality. I shall not proclaim my qualities.

What is being explained here is that, for the purpose of benefiting sentient beings, one needs to relinquish any sense of pride when engaging in activities to serve them. When doing activities that may be considered lowly, such as taking care of the elderly or sick, there might be occasions where one has to clean them after they have defecated, for example. If one generates the mind, 'I can't do that. It is not my job. I am not the sort of person who would do this sort of thing', that sense of pride will prevent one from engaging in that service. So, if one is in a position of caring for the elderly or one's own parents, one carries out any task to serve them without any sense of pride, not hesitating to clean up a mess, or clean dirty sheets. One will be willing and glad to do that. This is an example of how, when one takes this teaching to heart and does not hold a sense of pride, one is able to engage in any activity without thinking it too lowly. If one has a sense of pride, it will prevent one from engaging in practical ways of benefiting others according to their needs. It can really prevent a lot of beneficial deeds and acts that we can do for others.

The commentary then says *think of yourself as being in the nature of having faults*. This is again a means of overcoming pride. As soon as one thinks, 'I am someone who has faults', it will lessen any contempt for others or pompous feelings about oneself. If the thought arises to praise oneself, or that others should praise one for smallest partial quality of listening, or the small good deeds one has done, or the partial good qualities one has, then one should think, 'Just as nobody can see the qualities of the bodhisattvas they look at, I shall not praise even a partial adventitious quality of mine. I shall not proclaim my qualities.' This is the practice one needs to adopt.

3.2.1.3.1.3. A summary of how to practise

**165. In short, whatever harm you inflicted on others,
For the purpose of self,
May that harm fall upon me
For the purpose of sentient beings.**

In short, mind, whatever harm you have inflicted on sentient beings since beginningless time for my purpose, may that harm fall upon me in order to accomplish the purpose of sentient beings.

Here, the commentary explains that one reprimands one's own mind, saying that since beginningless time one has inflicted so much harm upon others. Keeping this in mind one makes the aspiration, *may that harm fall on me, in order to accomplish the purpose of sentient beings*. This is implementing the earlier practice of giving and taking, where one takes the suffering upon oneself. It is another way of seeing the appropriateness of taking the harm of sentient beings upon oneself.

The next verse is prefaced by the hypothetical query, *one may think: 'I cannot carry the burden of others' suffering.'* The verse which serves as an answer to that is:

**166. One should not make it aggressive
And wrathful
But bashful, shy and controlled
Like a young bride.**

One may think: 'I cannot carry the burden of others' suffering.'

Answer: 'The bodhisattva should not make their mind aggressive and wrathful but bashful, shy and controlled like a young bride.'

Query: How then should the mind abide?

Answer: Like a new bride it should be bashful, afraid of the criticism of others and of controlled behaviour. In the *Great Commentary* it is translated as *rough*.

The commentary's presentation of this hypothetical doubt is reasonable, because earlier it was advised that one should take the harm of all sentient beings upon oneself for the purpose of benefiting them. However one may then think, 'How can I carry that burden of others' suffering?' and feel overwhelmed. Thus the text explains that, *The bodhisattva should not make their mind aggressive and wrathful but bashful, shy and controlled like a young bride*.

I don't know if it's the tradition here in the west, but in Tibet, when a new bride is brought out of the house to meet the groom, she is very shy and bashful. This example illustrates how one should be timid when it comes to faults, always being mindful to maintain the quality of shyness, knowing that if one were to engage in a fault, it would be really shameful. As the commentary further explains, *like a new bride it should be bashful, afraid of the criticism of others and of controlled behaviour*.

All eyes look upon a new bride, seeing every minor mishap or mistake, so in order to prevent that, she would have a controlled demeanour. Likewise, to prevent one from engaging in faults, one should engage in the practice of what is called shame and embarrassment. Shame is felt in relation to one's own mistakes. If one knows about one's faults, it would be a really shameful admission, so one practises shame. Whereas embarrassment - some translations use the term consideration for others - relates to one not bringing about disgrace to others. Practising refraining from faults ensures that we do not embarrass others.

The earlier point that one should be like a new bride 'bashful, afraid of criticism of others and having controlled behaviour' incorporates the two points just mentioned: practising shame and embarrassment. In fact, without incorporating these two aspects of shame and embarrassment, there is no way one could properly avoid incurring faults.

To further illustrate this point, as explained in the *Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*, both shame and embarrassment are essential to protecting one's commitments and vows and not incurring faults. Consider how it is not befitting for oneself to break the vows and commitments one has taken. One reminds oneself, 'I should not engage in this great misdeed'. By having shame for one's misdeeds, one avoids creating negativity. Further, when one thinks about all the gurus, buddhas and bodhisattvas being witnesses, engaging in

this negativity would be inappropriate in the presence of these great beings, who always know what one is doing. By thinking about how this misdeed would be a disgrace to all one's gurus, buddhas and bodhisattvas, one will avoid it – this would then be practising what is called embarrassment.

Of course, this is why, when we take vows and commitments, we envision all the buddhas and bodhisattvas being present, as a way to remind oneself in the future that all buddhas and bodhisattvas have been witness to one taking those commitments and vows. So if one were to breach these commitments and vows, it would be a disgrace to all those buddhas and bodhisattvas. Contemplating this helps us to refrain from misdeeds and negativities; if we have engaged in negativities, this reminds us to practise confession.

It is good to bring that awareness of the presence of the buddhas and bodhisattvas at all times when engaging in practices, such as offering water bowls, when we visualise that these great beings are actually present, and offer them the offering substance. I personally feel a bit uncomfortable when I offer cold water in the winter, so I try to make it a little bit warm! This is mentioned in some of the practices, where in very hot weather, one imagines that the *argham* or drinking water is cooling; then, when it is cold, imagine that the water – or the substance one transforms into nectar – is warm. Otherwise, we will just go through the rituals, saying *argham*, *padyam*, and so on, but not really have much feeling for what we are doing, and not derive real benefit from it. Of course, it won't make much difference to the objects of our offerings, the buddhas and bodhisattvas, but from one's own side it is a good way to take the initiative and make offerings that would be appropriate at the time. Some who may not be aware of why this practice is done might be critical saying, 'How come you are offering warm or hot water in the water bowls?'

3.2.1.3.2. One should take control of one's mind when following up the exchange of self and other in action

Here again, the commentary outline is meticulously presented. When engaging in the practice of exchanging self and others, one should be mindful of having control over one's state of mind.

This is subdivided into four.

3.2.1.3.2.1. How to subjugate abiding with excitement

3.2.1.3.2.2. The faults of working only for one's own purpose

3.2.1.3.2.3. Investigating the faults of the body

3.2.1.3.2.4. Taking control of one's mind

3.2.1.3.2.1. How to subjugate abiding with excitement

167. Do this and abide like this.

Do not act like that

Take control of it like that

If it transgresses then subjugate it.

One should think about the benefit of others and abide with one's actions accordingly. Like taming a horse, make yourself suitable to practise virtue. 'Mind, if you do not desire to act in this way, then I shall take control of you with mindfulness and introspection.' If the mind transgresses these antidotes then subjugate and subdue the mind.

The analogy here likens making oneself *suitable to practise virtue* to the task of taming a wild horse: when an untamed horse is finally tamed, it becomes really serviceable. You can then put that horse to any task and it can perform the task well. This analogy shows us how to control the mind and make it serviceable through the technique of developing calm abiding.

When we engage in the practice of focusing the mind, we will eventually reach a state where the mind becomes serviceable. At this point, you can put the mind to the task of maintaining a single-pointed focus on an object. This is what is being mentioned here. If the unruly mind starts to misbehave and refuses to listen to one's commands, one should reprimand it by saying, '*Mind, if you do not desire to act in this way then I shall take control of you with mindfulness and introspection*'. The two mental factors presented here as the most essential tools for taming the mind are mindfulness and introspection. Earlier, the text presented shame and embarrassment as the two essential tools that provide the means for us to conduct proper physical behaviour. As presented in many other teachings, mindfulness and introspection are the two most essential tools we require to control the mind.

I regularly emphasise these two states of mind, mindfulness and introspection, as most essential for maintaining the integrity of one's positive thoughts and a virtuous frame of mind. As explained in the teachings there is no way that one can have adequate control over one's mind without these two essential tools.

As I have presented many times previously, mindfulness is the state of mind that maintains a constant awareness of the object and does not forget it. Introspection is the state of mind that maintains vigilance over whether the mind is maintaining that focus or not. If it is found that the focus on the object is not maintained, it will bring the focus back. That is the function of introspection. These are the two essential tools to be incorporated within our practice in meditation and outside of it. The commentary concludes here, *if the mind transgresses, then apply the antidotes and subdue and subjugate the mind*.

The next verse relating to this heading is:

168. Mind, if you do not act like this,

Despite having been advised,

Then all faults arise from you.

Hence you need to subjugate it.

'Mind, if, despite advising yourself in this manner, you do not act accordingly with the excuse that you are under the control of the afflictions, you need to subjugate it, because the self-cherishing mind becomes the basis upon which all present and future faults rely upon.'

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse quite clearly: as a way to reprimand one's mind, one engages in a dialogue with it. I have previously shared my opinions and advice on how talking to oneself is a way to be mindful. Here my advice is being backed up by this presentation, which advises one to reprimand one's mind by saying, '*Mind, if, despite advising yourself in this manner, you do not act accordingly with the excuses that you are under the control of the afflictions, you need to subjugate it...*'.

Often we might think, 'Yes, I do agree I need to control my mind, I have no qualms about that, I see the value of it, but my mind is influenced by attachment and anger and there is nothing I can do about it'. So sometimes one uses the afflictions as an excuse not to subdue the mind.

The advice being presented here is that when the self-cherishing mind acts cunningly like that, using excuses, saying 'Oh well, the afflictions are too strong and powerful so I can't do anything about it', 'I cannot help feeling angry and attached', then at that point you need to become even sterner with your self-cherishing mind. The meaning of subjugate here is of being stern. First, we need to try to talk to the mind kindly, but if that doesn't work, then we may have to take stronger measures and be stern with it. That is how the advice to be stern is being presented.

What is clarified in the text is that the referent mind is the self-cherishing mind, as it reads - *because the self-cherishing mind becomes the basis upon which all present and future faults rely upon* - so it is the self-cherishing mind that needs to be tamed and subjugated. We try to tame it gently first with nice words and try to appease it, but if the self-cherishing mind is still reluctant and tries to put up a fight, finding excuses to go on causing you trouble, you have to subjugate it.

The ways of subjugating it are presented next; not allowing it to find excuses and using other logic presented in the next verse, which will be covered in the next session. The essence of this is that one says to oneself: 'Previously, I did not recognise you as being a devious, faulty state of mind, and you had complete control over me. You did whatever you wanted and brought me only trouble. But now I have seen you for what you are. You are a troublemaker! You can't fool me anymore, and I am going to now take control over you. I am not going to allow you to control me any longer and destroy me as you did in the past. In the past, I did not know any better, but now I am a different person. Now I know how you have been devious and have cunningly harmed me.'

So in this form of dialogue, just as we would have with someone else when we argue with or admonish them. It is quite common, in a conflict, for people to start off by trying to talk and negotiate. Occasionally, however, one might say, 'OK, I've reached the point where there are no more words or explanations left to be said, and I cannot reason with you anymore'. That is when that person might start using force, being stern. This is the approach to apply to overcome one's faulty, self-cherishing mind.

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

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Edited Version*

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Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

14 June 2016

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

The practice we've engaged in is incredibly worthwhile, so we should familiarise ourselves with it again and again. The teachings present that initially the way to engage in the practice of the ton-glen is to familiarise oneself with the words. Thus we recite the verse and contemplate the meaning. It is essential to engage in this practice as much as possible as it serves as an optimum means to overcome negative states of mind that cause so much turmoil.

3.2.1.3.2. One should take control of one's mind when following up the exchange of self and other in action

3.2.1.3.2.1. How to subjugate abiding with excitement (cont.)

Verse 168 highlights the need to subjugate the self-cherishing mind. By reading these words, and reflecting on the meaning, the way to take personal instruction from it is to acknowledge the fault of one's own self-cherishing mind.

The suggestion here is to look within oneself to pinpoint the faults caused by one's own self-cherishing mind; not to find fault in others. Faults include afflictive minds such as anger, attachment, jealousy, pride and competition. The self-cherishing mind is the cause for all of these negative minds to arise. When one takes the initiative to look within, and acknowledge the self-cherishing mind as the actual cause of all one's mishaps, one begins to really embrace the reality of this. That's when our mind begins to shift and a real transformation takes place.

3.2.1.3.2.2. The faults of working only for one's own purpose

This is subdivided into three:

3.2.1.3.2.2.1. Giving up establishing only one's own purpose after understanding the faults

3.2.1.3.2.2.2. Putting it to work for the purpose of others

3.2.1.3.2.2.3. Short summarising explanation

3.2.1.3.2.2.1. Giving up establishing only one's own purpose after understanding the faults

The next verse and a half read:

169. *The time when you destroyed me
Is past; it was another time.
Now that I see, wherever you go
I shall destroy your arrogance.*

170ab. *I will destroy the thought of:
'I still do have my own purpose.'*

The commentary explains:

The time when I did not see that you—my self-cherishing—are the root of my problems and when you destroyed me, is past and another time. It was when I

did not understand this. Now that I see you as the root of all faults, you will be powerless in generating faults as I shall destroy your arrogance wherever you go.

If there is the thought 'I still have the power to achieve only my own purpose', I shall destroy and completely eradicate that thought.

This passage shows that the way to subjugate the self-cherishing mind is by having a dialogue with it: *the time when I did not see that you – my self-cherishing – are the root of my problems and when you destroyed me, is past and another time.* What is being explained here is that up until now one has experienced continuous difficulties and problems by not having recognised the self-cherishing mind as the root cause of all faults. It goes on, *it was when I did not understand this*, meaning that when I did not previously see the self-cherishing mind at fault I was influenced by it and became a victim to it. This created many negativities, the consequences of which I had to experience.

Now that I see you as the root of all faults implies that through the aid of the Mahayana teachings in general, and in particular through this incredible text by Shantideva, I now clearly see self-cherishing as the root of all faults. Without relying on such a text as this it would be very difficult to recognise the self-cherishing mind as a fault. As such, studying and contemplating this text is a most powerful way to reveal the self-cherishing mind as the main cause of all faults. The commentary concludes thus, *you will be powerless in generating faults as I shall destroy your arrogance wherever you go.*

To re-emphasise the point I made earlier, when it indicates *now that I see you as the root of all faults*, the referent 'I' here is oneself, not others. It is not suggesting that we lecture others saying 'you need to recognise self-cherishing as the root of all your faults', rather it is directed to oneself, seeing one's own self-cherishing as the root of all faults. Having accepted the self-cherishing mind as the cause of all faults, the commentary recommends a stern affirmation dealing with it: *you will be powerless*, 'you', meaning the self-cherishing mind, will not have power over me. 'You' will not dominate me anymore and be a cause for more faults because *I shall destroy your arrogance wherever you go.* This means that having seen 'you' as a fault, I am not going to give you power anymore, and I'll completely destroy you. This is the way to subjugate the self-cherishing mind.

To ensure the self-cherishing mind is made powerless, the commentary further emphasises, *If there is the thought 'I still have the power to achieve only my own purpose'.* Here we can see that the dialogue with the self-cherishing mind is presented very meticulously as if you were dealing with someone you're attempting to overpower. 'If you still think you've got some power over me to achieve your own purpose *I shall destroy and completely eradicate this thought'.* One takes a strong stance in not giving the slightest chance for the self-cherishing mind to become dominant.

When we contemplate these points, we see that it is through the dominance of the self-cherishing mind that we have engaged in so many misdeeds and pursued actions with only our own self-interest in mind. It has

prevented one from engaging in benefitting others because the self-cherishing mind only seeks to engage in activities which benefit one's own self interests. Thus, recognising that, one takes a stance to completely eradicate it.

It is good to take note that the faults of the self-cherishing mind are presented here in a similar way to the faults of grasping to the self. While there is a distinction between them, the faults that incur from these two states of mind are actually the same. This analogy can help us to understand the distinction between self-grasping and the self-cherishing mind; self-grasping is like a king, whereas the self-cherishing mind is like the minister who carries out every command of the king. The incurred faults are the same because they ultimately come from the same source. The Lam Rim confirms this presentation.

3.2.1.3.2.2.2. Putting it to work for the purpose of others

The next six lines of the two verses read:

- 170cd. *I shall sell you to others and thus
Offer my ability without any mind of regret.*
171. *If, due to lack of conscientiousness,
I do not offer you to others
You will definitely hand me over
To the guardians of hell.*

The commentary explains:

Know that I have sold you to others and thus offer without any mind of regret my ability to sentient beings in any way they desire. If I do not offer you to sentient beings due to lack of conscientiousness and think of my own purpose alone, then you will definitely hand me over to the guardians of hell through the karma of negative actions. Hence, my dear self-cherishing, I will destroy you.

The opening line says, *know that I have sold you to others*. Again, in dialogue-form, you tell the self-cherishing mind, *know that I have sold you* - meaning that one has given oneself completely up for the benefit of other sentient beings. I offer myself *without any mind of regret my ability to sentient beings in any way they desire*, is saying that having engaged in the practices of exchanging self with other, one has completely given oneself to others. Having exchanged oneself with others, one takes others' benefit into account rather than one's own self-centred needs.

The next part of the explanation explains further and refers to the consequences of not offering oneself to other sentient beings, *if I do not offer you to sentient beings due to lack of conscientiousness and think of my own purpose alone, then you, (the self-cherishing mind), will definitely hand me over to the guardians of hell through the karma of negative actions*.

This dialogue with the self-cherishing mind is effectively saying that 'if you claim that you have concern for my welfare then it is best to offer me to sentient beings, because if you don't, then due to a lack of conscientiousness, and starting to think only of one's own purpose again, you (self-cherishing) will actually be handing me over to the guardians of hell where I'll experience extreme sufferings. The best option therefore is to offer myself to other sentient beings. Hence, my dear

self-cherishing, having seen the faults I will destroy you. This again emphasises the main point.

3.2.1.3.2.2.3. Short summarising explanation

This is presented with two verses, and the first reads:

172. *Therefore, because you offered me thus,
I suffered for a long time.
By remembering the past with vengeance,
Destroy the thought of only self-purpose.*

The commentary explains:

Therefore, since previously you offered me to the hell guardians, in this way I experienced suffering for a long time. Now I remember my previous grief and with the thought of reaping vengeance I will destroy you, the thought of sole self-purpose, which is the root of all faults.

The explanation here is quite clear; it is from the faults of the self-cherishing that one has to experience the ill effects of the sufferings of being reborn in the hells etc. for a long time. In recalling that, one takes a stance and resolves, 'having seen the faults that you have created in the past, I will completely destroy you'. Once you have reached the point of recognising self-cherishing as the root of all one's problems, then the explanation given here will be very clear.

The next verse reads:

173. *Hence, if one desires joy
One should not make oneself happy.
Hence, if one wishes to protect oneself
One should always protect others.*

The commentary explains:

Hence, if you desire to have perfect joy and happiness for a long time, then you should not make yourself happy on the basis of cherishing self. Hence, if you wish to protect yourself from suffering, you should always protect other sentient beings on the basis of cherishing them.

This means that if for all the logical reasons presented earlier, if you desire perfect joy and happiness for a long time, then you should not make yourself happy on the basis of cherishing the self, as this approach only leads to experiencing the opposite - unhappiness and faults. Therefore, if you desire to have real joy and happiness, you need to avoid engaging in your own purpose with the self-cherishing mind.

Accepting, with all the logical reasons presented previously, that one wishes to protect oneself from suffering, the text further exhorts, *if you wish to be protected from suffering, then you should always protect other sentient beings on the basis of cherishing them*. This is the succinct summary of the disadvantages of cherishing oneself and the advantages of cherishing other sentient beings.

Again the dialogue is meticulously presented in a similar manner to resolving a conflict with an unreasonable and irrational person. When it states, *hence, if 'you' desire to have perfect joy*, it is saying to the self-cherishing mind that if it really wants to make oneself happy, *experiencing perfect joy and happiness, then it should not be on the basis of cherishing self*.

Furthermore, *if it wishes to protect one from suffering*, then one should always protect other sentient beings on the basis of cherishing them.

The way that we relate to the self-cherishing mind, is that it appears as though it is actually protecting us, by taking care of one's needs and fulfilling one's desires. Thus, we believe in, and are completely submissive to, the demands of the self-cherishing mind. As such we are not to blame for blindly following it without question.

However having now seen the disadvantages and faults of self-cherishing, one needs to take a stance and not allow it to dominate and control oneself.

It would be very useful if we can remember this dialogue whenever we feel the self-cherishing mind starting to take over and dominate us. The way to overcome negative states of mind is to adopt the opposite positive state of mind, which serves as an antidote to overpower it. For example, the mind of grasping at the self is overcome by understanding selflessness. For other manifest levels of delusions, for example miserliness, one should think about the disadvantages of miserliness and the advantages of generosity, the mind of giving. When we start thinking about the advantages of generosity, then miserliness will naturally reduce.

Likewise when a mind of anger manifests, we need to think about the virtues of patience. The combination of thinking about the disadvantages of anger and the advantages of patience makes one begin to see the real value of patience and the faults of anger, and then the mind of anger naturally subsides. Similarly, to overcome the mind of harmfulness, we need to think about the advantages of morality, refraining from harming others, then the mind of harmfulness will be overpowered. When the faulty mind of laziness occurs, one needs to overcome it by contemplating the virtues of enthusiasm or joyous effort. In thinking about the benefits of joyous effort, the mind of laziness starts to decrease and one naturally starts to feel enthusiastic again. The teachings indicate that the fault of laziness is that whoever is consumed by it will not accomplish whatever they set out to do; laziness prevents one from achieving one's goal. Similarly they will not attain any results in Dharma. Thus, by applying joyous effort one overcomes laziness.

Likewise if one is consumed by corrupt wisdom one needs to apply the correct wisdom or intelligence as a way to overcome it. If one is consumed by distractions, one needs to practise concentration, which will help to overcome the distracted mind.

Thus, when one thinks about the benefits of these virtuous states of mind they become specific antidotes for overcoming the opposite faulty state of mind, and one naturally becomes encouraged. By thinking in this way and applying it to the best of our ability, we get the benefit. If we were not presented with these means from the teachings, then we cannot resort to doing anything about it and will continue to be at the mercy of the negative states of mind.

The way to deal with the afflictions that arise in our mind is succinctly explained in the *Eight Verses of the Mind Training*, where it reads: "as soon as afflictions arise, endangering myself and others, may I firmly face and avert them".

The great masters of the past advise us to protect ourselves from the destruction caused by the afflictions

by nipping them in the bud. So as soon as an affliction arises, one should immediately recognise it and apply the antidote.

Previous masters have presented the ways and means of engaging in practices to overcome faulty states of mind, from their own experience. Having applied the antidotes and seen the results clearly, they have found them to be great means to overcome the afflictions. As such we need to try to apply this ourselves and find the means to overcome the afflictions in our own mind.

3.2.1.3.2.3. Investigating the faults of the body

This is subdivided into three:

3.2.1.3.2.3.1. The fault of not knowing contentment

3.2.1.3.2.3.2. The fault of being motionless

3.2.1.3.2.3.3. The fault of being deluded

3.2.1.3.2.3.1. *The fault of not knowing contentment*

This is further subdivided into two:

3.2.1.3.2.3.1.1. The faults of craving the body

3.2.1.3.2.3.1.2. Thus, it is appropriate to meditate on non-attachment for the body

3.2.1.3.2.3.1.1. The faults of craving the body

The commentary starts with a hypothetical argument:

Argument: Since one wishes to work for others one should support the body on the basis of craving.

The verse reads:

174. *However much we work
At supporting this body,
That much it falls
Into a state of extreme fragility.*

The commentary explains the meaning of the verse by providing an answer to the hypothetical question:

Answer: This is unsuitable. However much we work at supporting this body with food and such, on the basis of cherishing it that much through craving, while not achieving the slightest of one's wishes, one will in fact receive great suffering. It will be very hard to support it because one falls into the very stage of extreme fragility that makes it hard for it to bear even small sufferings.

This hypothetical argument is a continuation of the dialogue with the self-cherishing mind. Here the self-cherishing mind is saying that *since one wishes to work for others one should support the body on the basis of craving*. In other words, it is saying that craving and providing ones self with beautiful clothes, nice food, and taking care of one's every need is good, because it supports one in benefitting others.

This is a strategic move from the self-cherishing in saying 'oh, I'm being considerate. There's a reason why I'm craving these good things, such as nice food and clothing etc. - it is to help others.' This perspective does occur to us. We may start thinking that if it's for the benefit of others then it must be fine to crave good things.

The answer of course is that it is *unsuitable* to crave things in order to take care of the body. The commentary explains that it is unsuitable because *we work at supporting this body with food and such, on the basis of cherishing it*. This means that we will strive to support the body with the most pleasant food we can possibly acquire - the most tasty, the most nicely presented, nice smelling, nice

tasting and with clothing that looks nice, and feels soft and pleasant on one's body - while all the time the mind of craving just wants the best for the sake of gratification.

So *while not achieving the slightest of one's wishes, one will in fact receive great suffering*. The point here is that when the mind of craving desires the best of everything (food, clothing, dwelling etc.), whilst it does not achieve even the slightest of its wishes, one will instead experience great suffering. This is the point emphasised here. It is very true that through the mind of craving we are so used to wanting the best for ourselves that when the slightest thing goes wrong, it causes so much discomfort and unhappiness in the mind.

To further emphasise the point the commentary explains that *it will be very hard to support it*, meaning support the body with craving, because one *falls into the very stage of extreme fragility that makes it hard for it to bear even small sufferings*. So as a consequence of craving the best for oneself, when the slightest thing goes wrong, we immediately cannot bear it and so experience great suffering. Then, when something goes well, we feel elated. So we go through these extremes of either elation or disappointment and unhappiness. The state of going through these extremes comes from the strong craving we have for sustaining ourselves.

The next verse reads:

175. *If the desires of
That fallen thus cannot be fulfilled
By all the whole world,
Then who can fulfil its wishes?*

As the heading indicated, these are the faults arising out of craving for the body.

The commentary again explains the meaning with a hypothetical question:

Question: If asked, how will it be then?

The meaning of the verse is presented in the answer:

Answer: Having increased the craving of that fallen thus, even all the enjoyments on this earth cannot fulfil their desires. If that is so, then who can fulfil the desires of this craving? There is no satisfaction in craving sense objects. For example, the King Mandhata had use of the four continents and half of Indra's seat, yet he was not satisfied.

The commentary's question queries how would it feel in that fallen state of not being able to be satisfied and feeling fragile. How would it be when one falls into that state of fragility?

The commentary explains, *having increased the craving of that fallen thus, even all the enjoyments on this earth cannot fulfil their desires*. It explains that there is no way to fulfil the desires. If by experiencing sensual desires one could be satiated and feel content, then it may be reasonable. But the fact being explained here is that those desires cannot be fulfilled.

The passage, *if that is so, then who can fulfil the desires of this craving?* implies that there is no-one or nothing that can fulfil the desires of craving. To illustrate this point it explains, *for example, the King Mandhata had use of the four continents and half of Indra's seat, yet he was not satisfied*.

This shows how a king, with access to much wealth, could still not be satisfied. A point to be emphasised in

the next verses is that if one doesn't practice contentment there'll be no end to one's desires and no amount of wealth etc. would make one feel satisfied.

The next two lines from the verse read:

176ab. *One cannot, yet desire generates afflictions
And degenerated thoughts.*

The commentary explains:

One cannot fulfil desire, yet by craving desire objects the afflictions such as anger and attachment are generated, thoughts belonging to the virtuous side degenerate and only mental unhappiness is produced.

A hypothetical question asks, who can fulfil these wishes or desires? And the response explains, *that one cannot fulfil desire, yet by craving desire objects the afflictions such as anger and attachment are generated*. So while the desires cannot be fulfilled, in craving for them, afflictions such as anger and attachment are generated. All the faulty states of mind are generated, and while afflictions are generated, positive thoughts on *the virtuous side degenerate and only mental unhappiness is produced*. This is the consequence of craving.

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

21 June 2016

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

Now let us generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines; For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, and so for that purpose I will engage in listening to the teachings, and put them into practice well.

In our meditation session we attempted to familiarise our mind with love and compassion, which is essential if we are to fully develop these attitudes. Indeed these very positive states of mind are essential assets for personal wellbeing. Acknowledging this, we need to ensure that we are never separated from love and compassion, which of course is done by familiarising our mind with them again and again. To remind you, love is a state of mind that cannot bear to see others being deprived of happiness, and wishing them to be endowed in happiness; compassion is the state of mind of not being able to bear seeing others suffering, and thus wholeheartedly and sincerely wishing them to be free from every type of suffering.

When we understand this spontaneous wish for others to be happy and free from suffering, we can see that is the basis for a genuine concern for others, which contributes to their wellbeing. We know the value of love and compassion when others express genuine concern for us, wanting us to be happy and free from suffering. From our own experience we know that when we feel this great affection from others we respond in a very positive way; it makes us feel appreciated and very comfortable and trusting. If it brings such wellbeing to us, then we can understand that it will be the same for others as well. So when we really think about the value of love and compassion, we can see its essential value as the best companion that one could ever have.

The way to really familiarise our mind with love and compassion is by constantly investigating how best to further develop these states of mind. How does it develop and how is it expressed? How does love increase? How can compassion increase? Investigating in this way, we need to find the best conditions to increase the mind of love and compassion within ourselves. How is it received by others? How does it make oneself feel? The more we investigate along these lines, the more we will see the core value of love and compassion, and the more we will be inclined to embrace and develop it further.

The reason why I emphasise these points again and again is so that we can all see the value of love and compassion. However the most important thing is to actually put it into practice. Indeed, for us who consider ourselves practitioners, there is no more important practice than

developing love and compassion, not to mention it being the essence of the Mahayana practice. If one wishes to subdue one's mind, there is no greater practice than acquainting one's mind with love and compassion. If one wishes to overcome delusions, to purify negativities and accumulate merit, there is no greater practice than developing love and compassion.

If you want your Dharma studies to serve as a means to subdue your own mind, then it essential to embrace the importance of developing love and compassion and treat it as your core practice. But if you treat the Dharma like a normal academic study for grades and qualifications, as a means to further increase pride, and a sense of competitiveness with others, to increase anger, jealousy, attachment and so forth, then you need not develop love and compassion. If one's Dharma study becomes a means to further increase the delusions, then rather than overcoming them, it completely defeats the real purpose of that Dharma study.

We need to really understand the crucial benefits of love and compassion – if there was no-one with love and compassion, then there would be no-one to provide help in times of real difficulty and strife. Indeed, the only person who does come to one's aid is someone who has a genuine concern for one's wellbeing, and thus genuine love and compassion. Those who lack love and compassion will not come to one's aid. So we can see how love and compassion serve as the basis for the wellbeing of all.

Of course I am not implying that you are not making any effort to develop love and compassion; I am just emphasising these points as a way to further encourage you, based on my own meagre attempts of putting this into practice myself. I am not claiming that I have developed any great realisation of love and compassion, but nevertheless I take it as the essence of my practice. On a daily basis, I spend significant time trying to develop these states of mind. For example, when doing the prayer of the Four Immeasurables in any practice, I spend some time thinking about each of these points, followed by developing a mind of superior intention, and then I try to really focus on that for a while.

I try to do my best to put these noble intentions into practice on a daily basis, and I see a definite benefit even from my meagre attempts. I find that it can really move my mind, which brings me great solace. I feel it is worthwhile to share this experience with you as a reminder. As someone who is getting on in years I am sharing the experiences and value I have gained from my practices over the years; although you might already be quite advanced and more skilled than me. It may well be the case where the students are more advanced than the teacher!

There are people who come up to me and say, "Oh, I want to be like you". These are just ordinary people who I don't normally associate with or are even people I know. I'd like to respond by saying, 'If you really want to be like me then you could try doing the practices that I do'.

The practice of love and compassion is not unique to Buddhism; indeed it is common to all religions and

universally embraced as being an essential quality. Every religion has the message of serving others, being good to others, and bringing benefit to others. All religions commend serving others, being kind, acting morally and so forth, in order to benefit others, make them happy, and release them from fear and suffering. While I am not sure if they would extend that notion to all living beings, it definitely applies to all humankind. Without love and compassion how could one ever bring about happiness for others, and generate the wish to remove their suffering? Because of their intention to benefit others, to bring them happiness and remove their suffering, we can see that love and compassion is definitely expressed and practised in other religions. As Lama Tsong Khapa mentioned, if one wishes to benefit others, one has to have the wish for others to be happy and free from suffering. So he is effectively saying that without wishing other's to be happy and be free from suffering, there is no way that one will generate the intention to benefit others. Thus, there is no way that one can truly benefit other sentient beings without generating unconditional love and compassion.

Therefore developing the mind of love and compassion is essential for benefiting others. In essence, we need to recognise that our most valuable inner asset is the basis for developing love and compassion. If one's love and compassion increases then one can be sure that one's practice is hitting the mark, and that one is deriving the essence from one's practice. As Lama Tsong Khapa also mentioned, the true sign of one's practice taking effect is when one notices that love and compassion is increasing in one's heart. Then delusions will decrease, and the mind becomes more subdued, and one generates stronger faith in the deities, one's guru and the buddhas, and thus the mind becomes more attuned to the Dharma. These are all clear signs of one's practice taking real effect.

3.2.1.3.2.3. Investigating the faults of the body

3.2.1.3.2.3.1. *The fault of not knowing contentment (cont.)*

3.2.1.3.2.3.1.2. *It is appropriate to meditate on non-attachment for the body.*

We can see that the advice given here specifically applies to the ordained community. Indeed, when Shantideva first gave this teaching it was to an assembly of ordained Sangha. So the very profound advice presented here is for ordained Sangha to put it into practice. The relevant lines of verse begin with:

*176cd. They who are independent from everything
Do not experience a cessation of their
perfection.*

The commentary on these two lines explains:

A person with less desire and with knowledge of contentment, who is independent from everything such as body or possessions, will not experience the cessation of the qualities of their perfections. It is impossible for them to lack the necessities of life.

This emphasises that when one practises less desire and has an understanding of contentment, then one actually experiences an unceasing abundance of the qualities of the perfections, wealth and so forth. By implication, those with strong desire and a lack of contentment will be deprived of real wellbeing, specifically they will be

deprived of a happy state of mind. This is really very direct advice.

If desire and attachment and a lack of contentment were to bring about an abundance of things, and wellbeing and enjoyment and a happy state of mind, then we would have to be the perfect example of that. But are we contented? Do we lack for nothing? Do we have an abundance of happiness and joy and perfections? In fact we are not experiencing any great sense of joy or happiness at all.

Indeed, as explained in the teachings, the more we crave, the more we want. The analogy presented in some teachings is it is like trying to scratch an itch; the more you scratch, the more you feel the itch. Likewise, when one lacks contentment and has a lot of desires, then that only brings more turmoil and dissatisfaction. The point being presented here is that those who have less desire and who practise contentment are much happier and joyous.

We can see that this is really relevant for ordained communities of monks and nuns. We can see that those who practise sincerely, such as Christian monks and nuns, definitely have less desire and a great deal of contentment. Apparently monks and nuns in some Christian orders have no personal belongings at all, not even a bank account, and they rely upon whatever the community has. They live a very simple life. I personally know a nun who used to live here.¹ She is a bit older than me and I used to see her in the past, although I haven't seen her for a while. She told me that she became a nun when she was seventeen years old, and then dedicated her life to service for others and caring for them. I was very inspired, and told her, 'You can feel totally confident that you have led a very, very good and admirable life'. We can see that when you put being contented and having less desire into practice, it does indeed bring a great sense of joy.

The Kadampa Mind Training teachings give these specific instructions. 'There are four conditions for arya beings to practise simplicity: less desire, knowing contentment, easy sustenance, and easy fulfilment'.

'The first is not to desire abundant and nice things for one's livelihood, and to abandon all wants.' This implies not having strong craving for, or attachment to, things in general, and one's belongings in particular. Again, this advice is being specifically directed to ordained Sangha.

'The second is to be content with bare necessities.' Knowing contentment means being content with the bare necessities.

'The third is to be sustained by meagre robes, bedding and food.' This refers to being happy with meagre belongings such as one's robes, begging bowl and other things of poor quality, and with what is just enough to sustain oneself.

'The fourth is to be satisfied with meagre alms, material gain and respected service.' The three previous points referred to sustenance in relation to actual things, like belongings and so forth. This specifically refers to being content with offerings and praise and service.

¹ Sr. Maeve O'Brien

This is a description by the Kadampa masters of how to be content with meagre belongings, and meagre sustenance, such as food and alms and service. The lay community can also learn from this advice. Through being content with the basic requirements for sustenance, life becomes much easier, and there are fewer disturbances in life. We can see that the more we need, the more hectic our life becomes, and that is because we are not content with just meagre sustenance. We want more and more things, and that brings more and more turmoil. These are very important points.

If one does not apply the antidote for overcoming desire, then the consequence is that desires will just increase more and more, to the point where they cannot be satiated. When one allows desire to run rampant then there is no fulfilment. The only outcome is to desire more and more, and thus one never finds an opportunity to feel contented and happy. So although these instructions are specifically for ordained Sangha, they can also be applied to the lay community.

The main advice is to practise contentment with one's life. Although you may not be able to practise to the extent of ordained Sangha, you can generate the mind 'I am quite content, and I am happy with what I have', and not aim for more than meeting one's basic needs. By practising in that way, even just a bit, one begins to feel quite grateful and content with what one has, or what one is earning. That brings a sense of ease and can reduce a lot of stress and anxiety. So this is a very worthwhile practice to implement.

The next verse under this heading reads:

177. *Therefore one should not give
The physical desires a chance to increase.
Not apprehending anything attractive
Is a wholesome phenomenon.*

As the commentary explains

Therefore, since the desire that craves enjoyment for the sake of the body increases further and further if one does not rely on the antidote, one should not give craving for sense objects a chance. The non-apprehension of an attractive object to which the mind would be attached to is a wholesome phenomenon that is the supreme wealth.

This is similar to the advice in the Kadampa text, which mentions that the best wealth is to be content with what one has. Really, the essence of what is being presented here is that the very purpose of wealth is to be satisfied with it. Contentment is the supreme wealth. That is the point.

3.2.1.3.2.3.2. *The fault of being motionless*

The verses under this heading are:

178. *Its final conclusion is to separate,
It is motionless but moves through the force of
others.
The impure body is terrible,
Why hold on to it as your own?*

179. *Irrespective of whether one is alive or dead,
What does this illusory machine do for me?
What difference between it and a heap of earth?
Alas, you do not eliminate pride.*

The commentary explains:

This body will reach the final conclusion of becoming ashes, at which point it ceases. It cannot move by itself but has to move through another, i.e., the thoughts. Since the physical aggregate of impure flesh, blood and so forth is the source for many terrible frightful dangers, why do you hold on to it as your own?

Since one even needs to experience the sufferings of the lower realms if one holds on to it as one's own, irrespective of whether one is dead or alive, what does this illusory machine of a body do for one? It does not have the slightest use. What difference is there between an immovable heap of earth and this body? Oh dear, since you cannot bear craving for the body, alas, why do you not eliminate the pride that is a smug mind arising in relation to the body? Abandon pride in all its aspects!

The body will reach the final conclusion of becoming ashes refers to the disintegration of the body into ashes when it is cremated, which is a reminder of death and impermanence. *It cannot move by itself but has to move through others*, refers to the importance of thoughts or the mind. Indeed the body cannot function without the mind.

Furthermore, *the physical aggregate of impure flesh, blood and so forth are the source of many terrible frightful dangers*. Pointing out the faults of the body like this reduces strong attachment to the body. So if this body is nothing more than just a combination of flesh and bone and so forth, and is the source of frightful sufferings, *why hold on to, or grasp at it?*

Since one needs to experience the sufferings of the lower realms if one grasps on to it as one's own refers to the fact that when one grasps at the body strongly, then that produces the sufferings of the lower realms. The implication of *whether one is dead or alive, what does this illusory machine of a body do for one?* is that ultimately the body is of no use. So *what difference is there between an immovable heap of earth and this body?*

Then as words of lamentation, the commentary says, *Oh dear, since you cannot bear craving for the body, alas, why do you not eliminate the pride that is a smug mind arising in relation to the body? Abandon pride in all its aspects!*

3.2.1.3.2.3.3. *The fault of being deluded*

This is subdivided into four

3.2.1.3.2.3.3.1. Deluded with regard to what is good and what is harmful

3.2.1.3.2.3.3.2. Deluded with regard to what is high and what is low

3.2.1.3.2.3.3.3. Refuting arguments in this regard

3.2.1.3.2.3.3.4. Although craving for the body is the source for many faults, it needs to be protected to take the essence of the freedoms and endowments

3.2.1.3.2.3.3.1. *Deluded with regard to what is good and what is harmful*

The verse relating to this reads:

180. *By following the advice of the body
One accumulated needless suffering
And generated attachment and anger.
What to do with that which is like a piece of
wood?*

The commentary explains:

Mind, by following the body's advice for admiration and praise, you accumulated many needless

sufferings. Although supporting the body that generates much attachment and anger in relation to benefit and harm, since this body is like a piece of wood that cannot repay the kindness, what use is attachment to it? It is unsuitable.

The explanation in the commentary is presented as a dialogue with the mind. Saying that you – mind – put so much time and effort into sustaining and caring for this body but a lot of attachment and anger arises as a result. There is attachment to what seems conducive for the body, and anger or aversion to that which is not conducive. So in the process of trying to care for this body one engages in actions influenced by strong attachment and aversion or anger. Therefore, in caring for one's body one has accumulated a lot of negativities. But *the body itself is like a piece of wood*, meaning that having put so much effort into sustaining the body, what do we get in return?

This explanation is not hard to understand; the main point is for us to try to put it into practice.

Then the commentary explains:

Although one has supported it with enjoyments, it is suitable to be even the food for vultures and the like. Since it has no attachment or anger towards the benefit or harm it receives, why does one have attachment for it? It is unsuitable.

As clearly explained here, *although one has supported it with enjoyments* i.e. various types of sensual pleasures, in the end *it is only suitable as food fit for the vultures and the like*. This means that at the end, one's dead body is fit only for food for animals. Furthermore *it has no attachment or anger towards the benefit or harm*. The body itself does not express any attachment or aversion; it has no sentiments when it receives benefit or harm. So 'Mind, why do you have attachment and aversion? If the body has no sentiments when it is benefited or harmed why, mind, do you respond in that way?' This is a logical rhetorical dialogue with the mind to reduce attachment and desire.

When we actually contemplate these points and see their logic and reasoning then it can definitely help to reduce any strong attachment we have to our body. That is the significance of this point.

With the remaining time we will read Chapter 10 of *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life* dedicating it to our friend Catherine Waters' mother, who passed away recently, and to others who have requested prayers.

We often pray for the kin of those associated with Tara Institute. Even though they don't come along themselves, parents of students are often very appreciative of the changes they see in their children since they have become Buddhists.

In the past I have given an elaborate explanation of how to visualise benefit for all sentient beings in general, and one's parents in particular. There are many whose parents may not be with us at this time, but there is definitely significant benefit in dedicating this practice to one's parents, and others who have requested prayers. Basically, to dedicate means to develop a strong wish for whatever aspirations one has to actually become true. So

the simplest way for us to generate the most positive aspirations is to recite the tenth chapter, and strongly wish for all these aspirations to be fulfilled exactly as intended.

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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Block	Week	Teaching Date	Assigned
2	11	21 June 2016	28 June 2016

1.a What is the way to familiarise one’s mind with love and compassion.

The way to really familiarise our mind with love and compassion is by constantly investigating how best to further develop these states of mind. How does it develop and how is it expressed? How does love increase? How can compassion increase? Investigating in this way, we need to find the best conditions to increase the mind of love and compassion within ourselves. How is it received by others? How does it make oneself feel? The more we investigate along these lines, the more we will see the core value of love and compassion, and the more we will be inclined to embrace and develop it further.

1.b What is the value or importance of developing love and compassion.

The reason why I emphasise these points again and again is so that we can all see the value of love and compassion. However the most important thing is to actually put it into practice. Indeed, for us who consider ourselves practitioners, there is no more important practice than developing love and compassion, not to mention it being the essence of the Mahayana practice. If one wishes to subdue one’s mind there is no greater practice than acquainting one’s mind with love and compassion. If one wishes to overcome delusions, to purify negativities and accumulate merit, there is no greater practice than developing love and compassion.

If you wish want for the your Dharma studies to serve as a means to subdue your own mind, then it essential to embrace the importance of developing love and compassion and treat it as your core practice. But if you treat the Dharma like a normal academic study for grades and qualifications, as a means to further increase pride, and a sense of competitiveness with others, to increase anger, jealousy, attachment and so forth, then you need not develop love and compassion. If one’s Dharma study becomes a means to further increase the delusions, then rather than overcoming them, then it completely defeats the real purpose of that Dharma study.

We need to really understand the crucial benefits of love and compassion – if there was no one with love and compassion, then there would be no one to provide help in times of real difficulty and strife. Indeed the only person who does come to one’s aid is someone who has a genuine concern for one’s wellbeing, and thus genuine love and compassion. Those who lacked love and compassion will not come to one’s aid. So we can see how love and compassion serves as the basis for the wellbeing of all.

2.a In the Kadampa Mind Training teachings, what are the four conditions for arya beings to practise simplicity?

The Kadampa Mind Training teachings give these specific instructions. ‘There are four conditions for arya beings to practise simplicity: less desire, knowing contentment, easy sustenance, and easy fulfilment’.

‘The first is not to desire abundant and nice things for one’s livelihood, and to abandon all wants.’ This implies not having strong craving for, or attachment to, things in general, and one’s belongings in particular. Again, this advice is being specifically directed to ordained sangha.

‘The second is to be content with bare necessities. Knowing contentment means being content with the bare necessities.

‘The third is to be sustained by meagre robes, bedding and food.’, This refers to being happy with meagre belongings such as one’s robes, begging bowl and other things of poor quality, and with what is just enough to sustain oneself.

‘The fourth is to be satisfied with meagre alms, material gain and respected service. The three previous point referred to sustenance in relation to actual things, like belongings and so forth. This specifically refers to being content with offerings and praise and service.

2.b What can the lay community learn from this advice

This is a description by the Kadampa masters of how to be content with meagre belongings, and meagre sustenance, such as food and alms and service. The lay community can also learn from this advice.

Through being content with the basic requirements for sustenance, life becomes much easier, and there are fewer disturbances in life. We can see that the more we need, the more hectic our life becomes, and that is because we are not content with just meagre sustenance. We want more and more things, and that brings more and turmoil. These are very important points.

If one does not apply the antidote for overcoming desire, then the consequence is that desires will just increase more and more, to the point where they cannot be satiated. When one allows desire to run rampant then there is no fulfilment. The only outcome is to desires more and more, and thus one never finds an opportunity to feel contented and happy. So, although these instructions are specifically for ordained Sangha, they can also be applied to the lay community.

3. How are we deluded with regard to what is good and what is harmful

Deluded with regard to what is good and what is harmful

The verse relating to this reads:

Verse 180.

*By following the advice of the body
One accumulated needless suffering
And generated attachment and anger.
What to do with that which is like a piece of wood?*

The commentary explains:

Mind, by following the body's advice for admiration and praise, you accumulated many needless sufferings. Although supporting the body that generates much attachment and anger in relation to benefit and harm, since this body is like a piece of wood that cannot repay the kindness, what use is attachment to it? It is unsuitable.

The explanation in the commentary is presented as a dialogue with the mind. Saying that you – mind, put so much time and effort into sustaining and caring for this body but a lot of attachment and anger arises as a result. There is attachment to what seems conducive for the body, and anger or aversion to that which is not conducive. So in the process of trying to care of this body one engages in actions influenced by strong attachment and aversion or anger. Therefore, in caring for one's body one has accumulated a lot of negativities. But the body itself is like a piece of wood, meaning – that having put so much effort into sustaining the body what do we get in return from it?

This explanation is not hard to understand – the main point is for us to try to put it into practice. Then the commentary explains:

Although one has supported it with enjoyments, it is suitable to be even the food for vultures and the like. Since it has no attachment or anger towards the benefit or harm it receives, why does one have attachment for it? It is unsuitable.

As clearly explained here, although one has supported it with enjoyments i.e. various types of sensual pleasures, in the end it is only suitable as food fit for the vultures and the like. This means that at the end, when one's becomes a dead body it is fit only for food for animals. Furthermore it has no attachment or anger towards the benefit or harm. The body itself does not express any attachment or aversion; it has no sentiments when it receives benefit or harm. So 'Mind, why do you have attachment and aversion? If the body has no sentiments when it is benefited or harmed why, mind, do you respond in that way?' This is a logical rhetorical dialogue with the mind to reduce attachment and desire.

When we actually contemplate these points and see their logic and reasoning then it can definitely help to reduce any strong attachments we have to one's our body. That is the significance of this point.