

Nagarjuna's Precious Garland

ཨོམ་རིན་ཆེན་ཕྱིད་བ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

15 February 2011

As usual, we will begin by spending some time in meditation.

[meditation]

If you found this short meditation session useful and beneficial, then it would be of even greater benefit to incorporate it in your daily life. There have been a few comments that the practice is very good and meaningful, so I have to assume that this is true.

First of all I would like to express my great joy and appreciation that we are gathering here again after our short break. We are all Dharma friends here, and for that reason we have a genuine connection with each other. So for us to gather together again is a really joyful occasion.

The very purpose of our gathering indicates that we want to achieve something—otherwise there is no purpose for coming together! This is something that we need to be aware of. One of the main reasons that we gather here, and what makes it really meaningful, is that we are here with a genuine attitude of wishing to share and learn from each other.

So it is important to try to develop a genuine attitude of kindness towards each other, seeing the qualities in each other rather than finding fault. Each person has got qualities, so try to recognise and acknowledge them whatever they are. Have a kind attitude, even with your gestures. When you communicate with each other try to communicate with a happy, joyful and smiling face. So in this way the gathering, in itself, becomes very meaningful.

The positive outcome of establishing a gathering with these qualities is that we acknowledge the instinctive, spontaneous wish for happiness and to not experience any suffering, which we all have. Based on an awareness of this natural inclination, coming together like this will promote a sense of genuine happiness and well-being for us all. Thus it contributes to our ultimate wish and goal. So having a gathering, with the attributes that were mentioned earlier, is definitely a specific cause for a happy life and a state of well-being. We really need to recognise and understand that.

When we begin to acknowledge that those attributes are a very special and unique cause for our happiness, we will experience a sense of joy and happiness with the fact that we are gathered together like this. Then our sense of well-being increases. We will then be able to recognise that our happiness is very much dependent on our attitudes. Cultivating genuinely kind, considerate, and positive attitudes within oneself will definitely contribute towards a happy and joyful state of mind. Whereas harbouring negative attitudes mixed with delusions will contribute to feeling down, uncomfortable and unhappy.

This clearly indicates that our happiness and suffering are very much related to our own inner attitudes. Seeing how a happy or unhappy state of mind is based on an attitude within our own mind shows the truth of this statement in the sutras: 'happiness or suffering is dependent on the state of ones mind'. The sutras, which are the Buddha's teachings, clearly indicate that happiness and suffering are entirely dependent on the state of one's mind. Furthermore, the Buddha said that 'one can be one's own friend' and 'one can be one's own enemy'. This indicates that we have the potential to create our own happiness and suffering.

When we clearly recognise and understand this, we will see that we are responsible for our own happiness. Based on the truth of the statement 'happiness or suffering is dependent on the state of ones mind', it becomes appropriate to periodically check and investigate one's own state of mind. Doing so means being aware of the current state of mind—seeing whether one is harbouring negative and harmful thoughts or having positive thoughts. Negative thoughts are classified as the superstitious thoughts, unnecessary distractions in the mind, whereas the positive thoughts are those that contribute to our own well-being.

The way to investigate ourselves is to check on our own state of mind, and examine the way particular types of thoughts lead to particular types of actions. How do negative thoughts, for example, affect our speech with others? How do they affect our physical behaviour towards others? We can clearly see that the influence of negative thoughts contributes to unkind behaviours that are displayed in our physical actions and speech. And how does a positive thought affect us? It influences us to do good things, to behave with good physical gestures, speech and so forth. When we begin to really investigate and look into ourselves, we will notice that certain types of negative thoughts definitely contribute to inappropriate behaviour and speech, whereas positive thoughts contribute to appropriate speech and behaviour. It is good to be able to identify and recognise that.

When we notice a negative thought, we need to try to recognise it for what it is, and remind ourselves, 'If I allow myself to harbour these negative thoughts, the outcome will only be harmful to myself and others, so I must try to overcome them'. When we have a positive thought we can rejoice in the fact that we are having such a thought and feel happy about that. We should then try to encourage ourselves to maintain and further increase our positive state of mind.

In this way the onus is on us to take responsibility for our own speech and actions when relating to others, and thus responsibility for our own well-being. This sense of personal responsibility is actually the practice of Dharma. What we call the practice of Dharma is the voluntarily investigation of one's own state of mind, promoting the good and positive aspects, and overcoming the negative states. This is basically putting the Dharma into practice, which is what makes it so meaningful and appropriate.

This self-analysis and investigation can be carried out by contemplating how to be a good person and a happy person. We all naturally like to be considered as a 'good person'. We all wish for a happy mind and we also have a

natural inclination to help others. Since we have such an inclination, it is worthwhile and appropriate that we ask ourselves, 'How can I be a good person? How can I have a happy state of mind? How can I be of benefit to others?'

A happy state of mind and being a good person bears no relationship to material wealth. Having a certain amount of wealth is not really a criterion for being a good and happy person, or even being able to benefit others. So what is it then, that really contributes to being a good and happy person? When we really investigate and look into the actual causes, we will be able to detect that it is, as mentioned previously, the positive attitudes in one's mind that are the cause for a good and happy person.

By investigating and acknowledging these facts, we will really contribute to benefitting others. It may not be on a large scale but it will, at the very least, enable us to have a good relationship with our partner, friends, work colleagues and associates in daily life. Whoever it may be, we will be able to have a good relationship with them. We will be able to see for ourselves that when we have a kind attitude towards them it leads to a good and genuine relationship, which results in a harmonious and peaceful state of well-being. Whereas when we harbour anger in our mind, the moment we utter words or respond, we can immediately see the ill-effects. We can see how the expression of anger instantly causes an uneasy feeling within ourselves, to say nothing of our family and friends and all those who are close to us.

With respect to relationships, we all know for a fact that anger or resentment is one of the main causes that harms and destroys any relationship. If, instead of harbouring angry thoughts and negative states of mind, we work towards cultivating a genuine sense of kindness and concern for others then that will be a true basis for maintaining a good relationship with others. On a practical level, we can begin with our closer friends and associates and then slowly expand it to others.

Something to bear in mind is that the very basis of the Dharma is love and compassion. Without love and compassion, then no matter what we do, it will not produce good results. We may be impressed by someone who seems to be nice and kind and who appears to be a good person, but if they lack genuine love and compassion in their heart, their good impression will not last. That is because their behaviour is not based on a genuine sense of love and compassion. Anything that comes from a deep sense of love and compassion can endure and withstand. That is something we really need to pay attention to.

A crucial point to recognise is that Buddhist teachings are based on non-violence. Therefore if love and compassion are lacking and one harbours harmful intentions towards others, then in reality it is not a true practice of Dharma. The Buddha stated very clearly that 'those who engage in violence are not following my path and advice'. Conversely, those who adopt a life of non-violence and inflict no harm on others are following the Buddha's advice.

Furthermore, when we avoid harmfulness and violence towards others, it actually prevents us from being harmed. So when one voluntarily commits not to harm

others, one is, in effect, protecting oneself against harm, which is a very practical benefit. In contrast, when someone actually goes out of their way to harm others, they are in fact causing harm to themselves. This shows how practical the Buddha's advice is.

It is said that the Buddha's teachings are in accordance with worldly convention. They are not 'far fetched' or difficult to fathom, rather they are based on worldly convention, which means that they are accepted as common sense. No-one wants to be harmed, so if one does not wish for harm, the ultimate way to prevent it is to not voluntarily harm others. Then, by default, one will be protected from harm. As no-one wishes to be harmed, the best way to protect oneself is by not harming others. This shows the very practical nature of the Buddha's teachings.

The essential practice of non-harmfulness based on refuge in the Three Jewels, is what distinguishes Buddhists from non-Buddhists. Based on the advice of not harming others, one who has taken refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha is considered to be a Buddhist. Therefore as a Buddhist, one has the commitment to ensure one does not harm others, and to avoid inflicting any suffering on other beings. Furthermore, in accordance to the Buddha's advice if, when investigating one's state of mind, one detects negativity, then one should try to do everything possible to eradicate that negativity. In addition, as a Buddhist one should enhance the good qualities of one's mind such as love and compassion. When this essential Buddhist practice is practised it is appreciated by everyone. Both Buddhists and non-Buddhists can perceive the positive outcome.

I have related this story before, but once when I was in a restaurant, there was an elderly man who kept smiling at me. Then he came over to speak to me—three times. He obviously recognised that I am a Buddhist, and wanted to show his appreciation for what I have adopted. He said 'I don't follow any particular religion, but if I were to choose a faith and follow a religion, I would be Buddhist!' He went on to say 'You know the reason is because the Buddha was a human being, just like me! Therefore what the Buddha practised and the advice that he gave must have been based on his own experiences. So he has shown us something that is possible for all of us as humans'.

This man had really thought it through in a very logical way. It is of course very true that the Buddha's advice is based on what is possible for anyone. The fact that the Buddha manifested as a human being, shows that he experienced all of the good and bad experiences and faults that we experience, and he applied the practice of Dharma to overcome these faults. We can apply his example to the thoughts and struggles and difficulties that we face.

Even though the man in the restaurant didn't give too many other reasons as why he would choose Buddhism, his statement 'because the Buddha was a person and a human being just like myself' made me think that it was very logical way of validating Buddhism. And the more I thought about it the more it made sense to me, because of his use of logic and reasoning. As mentioned previously,

being a human means that the Buddha would have also experienced all the shortcomings that we experience. Likewise all of the good and positive things that we aspire to, were the basis of the Buddha's own experience.

It is commonly accepted that experience is one of the best teachers. Even in a worldly sense, when a person is looking for work, they are asked 'Have you got any experience in this line of work?' It seems that experience is held in high esteem and is greatly valued even in the worldly sense. So experience in spiritual matters and practice is even more valuable. The more I think about that man's comments, the more profound they become.

To review the main points I have made:

- ∞ The Buddha's teaching (the Dharma) is structured around non-violence. And this is something that we really need to pay attention to.
- ∞ Furthermore we need to understand how the concept of non-violence comes from our mind. One makes a commitment to non-violence by developing love and compassion in one's heart, so therefore non-violence is based on having developed love and compassion. One needs to clearly recognise the fact that harmful intentions tend to come about when we lack love and compassion. If we wish to harm someone, it is because we lack a sense of true love and compassion towards them. That is how harmful intentions arise. Therefore by developing love and compassion, we will also naturally practise non-violence. This is an essential practice.
- ∞ Whatever practice we engage in, for example meditation, we need to ensure that it is based on developing love and compassion. If we neglect or ignore love and compassion, then our practice becomes very dry. We might study something and get an intellectual understanding, but it wouldn't really move our heart; studying in that way doesn't carry much weight or essence. In contrast, if we work at developing love and compassion in our mind, then whatever study or practice we do becomes very meaningful and carries great weight! I'm not suggesting that I have developed love and compassion to any great extent, but I can truly say that I have a strong aspiration for it. I have a conviction that for a practice to be worthwhile and meaningful, it has to be based on love and compassion.
- ∞ Another point that we raised this evening was that one's own happiness and suffering is related to one's own mind.
- ∞ Recognising that happiness and suffering are related to our mind, we then investigate and check the state of our mind to ensure that we have positive attitudes. If we find there are negativities in our mind, then we must work towards overcoming and eliminating them. Through this process we can secure a positive state of mind, which will bring about real happiness.

On a daily basis it is really worthwhile and meaningful to invest some time and energy just investigating our own state of mind to ensure that we are improving the quality of happiness in our mind. We naturally seem to be drawn to improving our financial status and wealth, and spend a

lot of time to improve that! But spending all of our time and energy on improving our wealth doesn't seem to secure genuine well-being and happiness. We can clearly see that having great wealth does not guarantee happiness. Therefore investing some time and energy to cultivating the positive states of mind that contribute to happiness is a very worthwhile undertaking.

Just spend some time investigating yourself and work towards cultivating a positive attitude – we all have this capacity. Sometimes we may find that without any apparent reason, we will be unhappy and a bit depressed. But if we give into that and allow it to escalate, it will only get worse. So when we detect, for example, that we are feeling a little unhappy or down in the morning (for whatever reason), we should remind ourselves not to dwell on it, and try to come out of it by adopting a positive state of mind. Then towards the afternoon or evening we will find our mind to be a little happier. Even though the morning wasn't so happy, things will become happier later on in the day and, to that extent, we have gained a benefit. We all have that ability. So on a daily basis it is really good to ensure that we are in a happy state of mind.

Furthermore we also notice how the Buddha's teachings often emphasise that there are certain things we need to adopt and certain things we need to discard. The Buddha's teachings can be summarised into these two points: adopt good qualities and discard negativities.

Adopting good qualities and discarding negativities is not of a material nature but it is a state of mind. Therefore adopting good qualities and discarding negativities is dependent on the mind, which is something that we can see for ourselves. Noticing that will also help to cultivate analytical wisdom in our mind. Analytical wisdom is a particular type of intelligence that is able to distinguish between what is beneficial and what is harmful for oneself, thus enabling one to adopt what is useful and discard what is harmful. This analytical wisdom can slowly increase through the practice of self-analysis.

With respect to the text we are in the second chapter of *Precious Garland*.

B. CAUSE AND EFFECT OF HIGH STATUS

2. ACTUAL EXPLANATION OF THE CAUSE AND EFFECT OF HIGH STATUS (CONT.)

2.2. Forsaking the causes of bad transmigrations¹

2.2.2. Extensive explanation

This is further sub-divided into four categories:

2.2.2.1. Stopping attachment to intoxicants

2.2.2.2. Stopping attachment to gambling

2.2.2.3. Stopping attachment to women

2.2.2.4. Stopping hunting

The Tibetan word that is translated here as hunting, has a connotation of capturing, as in setting traps for capturing animals such as rats or mice. It could also be implying the act of hunting as well, which is a sport that kings engaged in.

¹ The structure of each chapter can be found on pages 269 to 280 of the text. The headings for this part of the text are found on page 273.

2.2.2.1 STOPPING ATTACHMENT TO INTOXICANTS

Nagarjuna is explaining to the king that it is advisable to abandon attachment to intoxicants, because there are many ill-effects and faults that arise from intoxicants such as alcohol.

In relation to this outline, the verse from the root text is:

146. *Intoxicants lead to worldly scorn,
Your affairs are ruined, wealth is wasted,
The unsuitable is done from delusion,
Therefore always avoid intoxicants.*

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

From the very beginning when intoxicants (alcohol) are consumed, it will lead to *worldly scorn, your affairs are ruined, and your wealth is wasted.*

Gyaltsab Je is indicating that ruin will occur *from the very beginning*, not later on or sometime down the line. If one consumes intoxicants, for example too much alcohol, there will be adverse effects from the very start. When one first consumes alcohol one may not immediately feel the effects, but when the alcohol influences one's ability to discern right from wrong, then one's *affairs* will be *ruined*, because one will be unable to think clearly and effectively.

The third fault, which is your *wealth* will be *wasted*, is something that we can also see clearly, especially in relation to our contemporary world. These days there are many people whose wealth is ruined due to their intoxication. Even 'just having a drink' could be quite expensive. I have heard that some wines can cost up to \$1,000 a bottle. When you think about it, paying so much money for just one bottle of wine is ridiculously extravagant.

There are extreme examples of how intoxicants (specifically alcohol) can lead to ruin. There are people, like those I have known in Nepal, such as a father of a young family who, having become an alcoholic, spends all his wages on alcohol. Therefore the family – the wife and children – directly suffer. They are adversely affected by his actions because none of their wealth stays at home. The father is using all the money to purchase alcohol, and as a result they all go downhill. These are really important points for us to consider.

Gyaltsab Je further explains:

Also because of the lack of conscientiousness, the *unsuitable is done from delusion*. Therefore because of these four faults, *always avoid intoxicants*.

The conscientious mind is a state of mind or intelligence that is able to think clearly, and able to avoid things that are harmful to oneself and others. Due to the lack of *conscientiousness* when one is completely under the influence alcohol, one's conscientious mind is adversely affected, and therefore *the unsuitable is done from delusions*. Under the influence of delusions, one will engage in many unsuitable actions or harmful deeds.

As presented here, the four faults of consuming intoxicants are: it leads to worldly scorn; one's affairs will be ruined; one's wealth will be wasted; and one will lack conscientiousness. *Therefore because of these four faults, always avoid intoxicants.*

These are points that we need to consider. My practical advice (usually to students who I relate to) is that it is best if one can avoid alcohol. then At the very least, it is really important to try to minimise or limit one's intake of alcohol. Some claim that a bit of alcohol can be good for one's health, which may be true to a certain extent, particularly if one feels a little bit down or low in energy. Apparently just having a sip of alcohol might help in those circumstances. There is even a Tibetan saying 'when you're suffering from *lung* (which is equivalent to feeling depressed or a bit down), then having a little alcohol can be grounding'. However in saying this I have to remind you that there is no excuse for drinking excessively and without limit. All of the faults mentioned here occur when one goes over the limit, and beyond what is helpful.

Going over the limit will mean that all of these faults will become apparent. I feel that while alcohol may have some helpful properties, there is no benefit or virtue in smoking. Some may disagree saying that they have reasons to say why smoking can be good for them. But I have too many stories and personal experiences with others to accept that. There are very clear signs that smoking is really harmful for one's health.

There are those who say 'If I have a drink or smoke I'll be happy', 'If I don't have a drink or smoke then I can't possibly be happy and that is my weakness. So I have to do that'. It is very difficult for us to try to advise those who are determined and who have confirmed their need for an intoxicant to overcome their habit. If you bluntly tell them 'you shouldn't drink' or 'you shouldn't smoke' it will not be helpful. They will be unable to break the habit solely on the basis of just being told to stop.

Rather we should find the ways and means to slowly discourage them from their habit. With respect to both alcohol and smoking, if it is a habit and you are addicted, then giving up is very difficult, and I understand that the addiction is not easy to overcome. But for us who are concerned about others there are ways to try and help them, but it needs to be a very gradual process implemented with skilful means.

Rather than imparting one-on-one advice which might be hard for them to accept, I have advised those who have a problem with either alcohol or smoking drugs to join a support group, like Alcoholics Anonymous. Such groups are really beneficial. Because its a group, you are with like-minded people and somehow you may see things from a different perspective, and may become more accepting. So group support seems to be useful. That is the advice I have given to others, some have followed that advice, and I have seen that it has helped them.

2.2.2.2. STOPPING ATTACHMENT TO GAMBLING

The verse relating to this is reads:

147. *Gambling causes avarice,
Unpleasantness, hatred, deception, cheating,
Wildness, lying, senseless talk, and harsh
speech,
Therefore always avoid gambling.*

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

There are nine faults that are caused by gambling, therefore always avoid gambling. ...

Here the advice to stop attachment to gambling is given by presenting the disadvantages or harmful effects that result. These disadvantages make us reconsider whether gambling is good or not, because if we see the disadvantages it prompts us to consider avoiding gambling. For example, if someone doesn't know that fire burns, then nothing will stop them from poking their finger into a fire. But as soon as they experience being burnt by fire, they will never attempt to put their finger into a fire again, as a result of their personal experience of being burnt. Likewise with gambling, when the disadvantages of gambling become apparent, one will tend to avoid engaging in such activity.

The nine faults as presented in the commentary are:

The nine faults are: *avarice* towards other's wealth,...

The word *avarice* means attachment to the wealth of others. The very fact of gambling means that you have an attachment to the wealth of others. You gamble in order to win other peoples' money. That's why you place your own bets!

The second fault as presented in the commentary:

... the *unpleasantness* of wondering whether one will win or not,...

This is also very true. After you place your bet, you will be anxious about 'will I win or not?' until an outcome is reached. The nagging doubt about whether one will win or not brings about *unpleasantness* in the mind.

The other faults are:

... hatred, deception, cheating, lying, senseless talk, and harsh speech².

Next is *hatred*, which definitely arises when someone else wins the bet— one tends to feel upset with them.

Deception followed by *cheating* would occur when one is playing with others in some types of games. If one is desperate to win, one might resort to cheating by trying to deceive them. What is translated as 'cheating' relates to using dishonest methods to win one's bet.

The other faults are lying, senseless talk and harsh speech. When one is completely obsessed with winning, one might resort to *lying*. If the king was found to be lying, then that would be a huge disgrace. It would be one of the worst things that a king could do, because it could destroy his reputation.

Senseless talk refers to talking all sorts of nonsense, basically gossip and so forth. Using *harsh speech* can also be used to intimidate others during gambling.

All of these faults arise as a result of being attached to gambling. Therefore Nagarjuna's advice to the king is to avoid gambling.

Further faults may arise when the loser may experience great frustration and anger, and start a fight or exchange blows, resulting in bleeding and so forth.

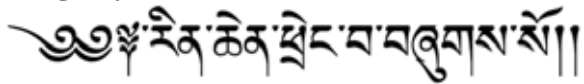
In addition to these faults that occur during the actual gambling session, if one comes out as a loser, one might also resort to lying and deceiving one's partner. There

will be a sense of unease at home afterwards, because one has to find ways and means to try and deceive one's partner. And if the partner finds out, that will be a cause for high anxiety and unease. So the resultant problems are not confined to the place of gambling, but can spread to one's home life.

Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
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² Wildness is not included in the commentary.
Chapter 2

Nagarjuna's Precious Garland



Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

22 February 2011

Based on the motivation generated in accordance with the Refuge and Bodhichitta prayer that we have just recited, we can now do some meditation for a few minutes. [meditation]

The motivation for receiving the teachings can be along these lines: 'In order to liberate all sentient beings from suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well'.

Having a good, sound and clear motivation is essential. Always bear in mind that the purpose for listening to the teaching and studying this text is to be of service and benefit to other sentient beings. Generating a positive intention for listening to the teaching also helps to subdue the mind, and when we make an attempt to subdue the mind, then it will benefit both our present and future lives. That is the essence of the practice of Dharma, which is that it has some immediate affect on our lives now, as well as on our future lives. Of course that applies to those who accept that there is a future life, but even if you don't accept there is a future life, there will be, at very least, a positive effect in this lifetime.

The real significance of generating a positive state of mind, in this case a motivation, is that it serves as a means to help subdue the mind. And subduing the delusions and negative states of mind is the main cause for happiness. If we neglect to work at transforming our state of mind and constantly look for happiness from external sources, we may become like those who, although they have plenty of material resources, are unhappy and feel that there is something missing in their lives. That is why we need to reflect upon the necessity of subduing our own mind.

2.2.2. Extensive explanation

We have covered the first two of the four headings of this division which are:

2.2.2.1 Stopping attachment to intoxicants

2.2.2.2 Stopping attachment to gambling

2.2.2.3. STOPPING ATTACHMENT TO WOMEN

One needs to bear in mind that the main recipient of this advice was the king, who is being advised to be mindful and to abandon strong attachment to women. However, we also need take it as personal advice for ourselves, and relate it to our own personal need to avoid attachment.

Keep in mind that this advice to overcome attachment was given to the king with the appropriate (to him) example of a woman's body. However when we apply this advice to our own practice, we need to understand that if you are a man you apply it to a woman's body and if you are a woman you apply it to a man's body. You

relate these passages to the object to which you are attached, depending on your gender. As the text will mention later, just as we need to overcome attachment to the bodies of others we also need to overcome attachment to our own body. So the faults of another's body also apply to one's own body.

If we don't understand this advice in its proper context, and take the passages literally, it would be easy to assume that the advice is denigrating the bodies of women. However that is not the case at all. We need to bear in mind that criticising women is breaking one of the root vows, which is a heavy negative karma; this true both in sutra and tantric teachings. So it would be unimaginable for Nagarjuna, a great Buddhist master, scholar and practitioner, to even think of criticising a woman. Therefore we need to understand this advice in its proper context, which is that the advice applies to both genders, and is not solely directed towards seeing the faults of a woman's body.

In fact, other than some minor differences, men and women are physiologically very similar. Of course, there are some hormonal differences but with respect to breasts, for example, some males seem to develop breasts, and quite big ones too! [loud laughter] This indicates that the biological make-up of that part of the body is actually quite similar. Thus, as there is hardly any biological difference between male and female bodies, the advice being given here would naturally apply to both men and women. It is a fact that a man can change into a woman (even before a sex change). There have been cases where a man's body has been transformed into a female one, and vice versa. This goes to show that physically there is not really that much difference between men and women.

The main point here is that the direct recipient of Nagarjuna's advice is the king. Talking about the natural substances of the body as faults is a way to overcome attachment to the body. So what seems to be presented as a fault is an actually a method for overcoming attachment to the body. This meticulous presentation of a sequence of meditations on the faults of the body is reflected in the headings.

This topic is sub-divided into three:

2.2.2.3.1. General refutation of the cleanliness of a woman's body

2.2.2.3.2. Specific refutation of the cleanliness of a woman's body

2.2.2.3.3. Effect of meditating on uncleanliness

In relation to the similarities in the male and female bodies, I have heard that within the male body there is the basis of a womb. I used to have difficulty in understanding what that really meant. But not too long ago there was a report of how a man in the United States became pregnant. So this goes to show that there is the basis of a womb in male bodies. Some sources say that there is the basis of all the female features in the male body, and it is matter of whether they are manifest or not.

2.2.2.3.1. General refutation of the cleanliness of a woman's body

In order to overcome attachment to a woman's body, the first misconception to be dealt with is that a woman's body is clean. Therefore the king is advised to first of all

overcome that misconception. Here 'cleanliness' specifically relates to 'attractiveness'.

When we see how this technique of overcoming attachment, in this case to a body, is presented, we can also relate that to how attachment to any object develops. If you analyse our state of mind of when and how attachment actually develops, the first instance of attachment is when you see the object as being attractive. Based on the attractive attributes of the object, longing for that object is developed. As the longing to possess or to own an object develops, strong attachment starts to emerge. This is how the gradual process of attachment develops—it is initially based on the attractiveness of the object.

The question is, does attractiveness actually exist as an attribute? We can't go to the extreme of saying that attractiveness doesn't exist—of course it does. Being attractive is relative to the attribute of being unattractive, and being unattractive is relative to being attractive. So therefore attractiveness does exist.

With respect to what I have presented to you previously, this question will be a test of the memory of the older students. Does attachment perceive the attractiveness of the object or not?

Student: It is being attracted to an over-embellishment of the qualities of attractiveness.

Does the mind of attachment apprehend or perceive attractiveness? That is the question. It is definitely appropriate for us to investigate in this way. Once this might have been considered to be a specifically Buddhist investigation, but as His Holiness the Dalai Lama has reminded us on many occasions, scientists are becoming very interested in looking at how all of the perceptions and states of mind actually work. As Buddhists, our study is based on the psychology of how the mind works and so forth. So, what would be the fault if attachment perceives attractiveness, and why?

Student: Because attractiveness does exist.

If attractiveness exists why doesn't attachment perceive it? What is the implication?

Student: Because attachment is an incorrect state of mind.

Yes, that is correct, that is getting to the point. Attachment is classified as a wrong consciousness, and the implication of a wrong consciousness is that the object that is perceived by the wrong consciousness does not exist. That is why attachment is classified as a wrong consciousness, because it is mistaken in relation to the object that it perceives.

With the question of whether or not attractiveness exists, then the answer is that yes, attractiveness does exist. Now in relation to attachment, does the attractiveness that appears to the attachment actually exist? The answer is no. That is because the attachment perceives an attractiveness that is superimposed by an incorrectly assuming conception. Because it is superimposed by an incorrect attention, the apprehended object itself is an exaggeration and thus not the actual natural attractiveness. In other words, when attachment perceives the attractiveness of an object, it is not perceiving the actual reality of the object, or it's existent

attractiveness, but rather it is perceiving an exaggerated attractiveness that is superimposed by the incorrectly assuming conception. That is the conclusion that we need to understand.

As explained in the teachings, *the definition of attachment is that it is a mental factor that focuses on the exaggerated attractiveness of a contaminated object.* There is a further implication in the two syllables that make up the Tibetan word for attachment: *do* and *chak*. *Do* has the connotation of having a longing or desire for the object, while *chak* has the connotation of clinging to the object. Together both syllables mean 'clinging desire', which is the literal connotation of the Tibetan word for 'attachment'.

It is worthwhile to really pay attention to how the commentary presents Nagarjuna's root text. The author of the commentary, Gyaltsab Rinpoche, who was a great and renowned scholar, presents the material in a very logical and systematic way. He categorised the first of the verses in this part of the text as a general refutation of the cleanliness of a woman's body.

Here 'general refutation' refers to a refutation of the cleanliness of bodies in general. When we apply it in that way, it does not have to be someone else's body, more specifically a woman's body. Sometimes we may have the notion 'his (or her) body is really clean and very attractive, but my body is not so clean or attractive'. As mentioned previously, cleanliness in relation to attractiveness refers to the fact that the bodies of others, as well as one's own body, are equally unattractive, or of an unclean nature. That is a point to be understood.

The first verse that relates to this outline is:

*148 Lust for a woman mostly comes
From thinking that her body is clean,
But there is nothing clean
In a woman's body in fact.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains and expands the meaning of the verse in this way:

Lust for a woman mostly comes from, even though unclean, thinking that her body is clean. But, in reality, there is nothing clean in a woman's body in fact. Thus it is not appropriate to have attachment.

When one actually investigates attractiveness, and really searches for an attractive aspect of a woman's body (or any body for that matter), one will find no attractive attribute existing in reality. Thus, Gyaltsab Je is emphasising that when an attractive body is viewed superficially, it may seem beautiful in shape and colour and so forth, but if one scrutinises and further investigates, then where is that beauty or attractiveness?

One will then establish that the perceived attractiveness or so-called beauty is imaginary and not really there. If it were to be there, then one would have to find it, but after investigation it cannot be found. Therefore, as I have mentioned in previous teachings, when we investigate our own body from the soles of our feet to the crest of our head, or go beyond the skin and look inside, we will quickly notice there is nothing that can be attributed as being attractive or really beautiful. It actually becomes quite clear that the substances that constitute the body are repulsive, and that the colour and shape and so forth of

the external appearance are just a façade. That is the point that is being made.

Of course, some might then be tempted to ask, 'Are you implying there are no beautiful women?' As there are definitely beautiful women I'm not denying that there are beautiful women! In accordance with worldly convention, we accept that there are both beautiful men and beautiful women. However if we only perceive beautiful men and women at the level of conventional reality and don't go beyond that, then we will never really overcome attachment to either beautiful men or women.

The whole point of the teaching is to present a technique to overcome attachment, i.e. to deal with one's attachment, lust or excessive desire and to transform that. The technique presented here is to go beyond the mere appearance of beauty and investigate it by focussing on the reality of the unattractive, or unclean attributes of the object, in this case the human body. After spending some time meditating on the unattractive attributes of the body, one will notice that attachment subsides. So the main purpose for engaging in this meditation on the uncleanliness of the body is to overcome the obsessive mind of attachment.

One needs to understand that a superficial focus on an object will not suffice to overcome attachment. We might focus on some of the unattractive attributes periodically or intellectually, and think 'oh yes there are some unattractive aspects of the body', but deep down one still holds onto the belief that a beautiful body really is beautiful. As long as one holds onto such a misconception deep within one's mind there is no way to completely overcome attachment. The meditation might work temporarily, but as soon as the meditation is over and one comes out of it, the same lust or attachment towards the body will again be manifest, even quite strongly. The implication here is that we really need to work on overcoming that deep seated misconception in our mind about the attractiveness of the body. Then that attachment can gradually be overcome.

That completes the general refutation of the cleanliness of a woman's body.

2.2.2.3.2. Specific refutation of the cleanliness of a woman's body

Later on the text will explain how attachment is overcome gradually, and that one cannot expect to overcome attachment straight away. As we learn about the technique one needs to bear in mind that it is a gradual process. There are three sub-divisions:

2.2.2.3.2.1. Refuting that a woman's parts are beautiful

2.2.2.3.2.2. Refuting that the whole body is beautiful

2.2.2.3.2.3. Refuting that attachment to a woman is a cause of happiness.

2.2.2.3.2.1. Refuting that a woman's parts are beautiful

This heading has four sub-divisions:

2.2.2.3.2.1.1. Unsuitability of attachment to a woman's body because of its only having a nature of the unclean

2.2.2.3.2.1.2. Example

2.2.2.3.2.1.3. Absence of the state of desirelessness if attached to women

2.2.2.3.2.1.4. Though a woman's body is unclean, the stupid call it a cause of pleasure

2.2.2.3.2.1.1. *Unsuitability of attachment to a woman's body because of its only having a nature of the unclean*

Again, we need to remember that this applies to both the male and female body. If the object of attachment is a male body, then the advice will apply to a woman, and if the object of attachment is a female body, then the advice will apply to a man. When the unclean nature of the body is explained, it will be clear that it applies to everybody.

The root text reads as follows:

*149 The mouth is a vessel of foul saliva
And scum between the teeth,
The nose a vessel of snot, slime, and mucus,
The eyes are vessels of tears and other
excretions*

In his commentary Gyaltab Je says:

It is not appropriate to have attachment for *the mouth*, because it is *a vessel of foul saliva and scum between the teeth*. Likewise, *the nose is a vessel of snot, slime, and mucus, and the eyes are vessels of tears and other excretions*.

We need to understand the truth of this. We might, out of a state of attachment, and without any investigation, find someone's mouth attractive. Here, the text examines different aspects of the body to show that in reality, there is nothing clean about it. Saliva is found in the mouth, and if the mouth were to be very beautiful and clean, then the saliva would also be considered a pure and clean substance. But if someone is drooling, we normally think 'yuck!', and won't see that as being attractive in any sense. However if one was attached to someone, then one might lick the saliva! That is very possible!! Of course I don't have any experience with this [*very loud laughter*], but you might have!

Whether this is an exaggeration or not is something for you to decide. What I have come to understand is when someone is overcome by lust, their mind is influenced by the very strong misconception called 'incorrectly assuming conception' (which is how it is literally translated). In such a somewhat insane state of the mind things that are normally considered to be unclean or disgusting are viewed as being very clean, and thus one longs for them. That loss of reason is due to the crazed mind of attachment.

When people talk about the beauty of others, it is quite common to hear comments about a particular part, 'oh that person's eyes are exquisitely beautiful', or 'there is something about the mouth which is very beautiful' or the ears! There is an identification of specific attributes denoting a person as an object of beauty. So here, the teaching goes into the reality of each part. If the mouth is perceived as very attractive, then investigate what comes out of the mouth and what is inside of the mouth, the saliva. In one's right state of mind, i.e. without attachment, would one see that as being attractive? If one doesn't brush one's teeth, one will notice a foul smell emanating from the mouth even after just one day. You see people removing scum from their teeth, which is quite disgusting. This is the reality, yet the crazed mind

of attachment could consider that being very attractive and very beautiful.

The commentary further describes the uncleanliness of the nose. The nose is just a vessel of snot and there is nothing really attractive about it. If you consider the nose to be very beautiful, do you consider the snot as being attractive and beautiful? So the nose is nothing more than a vessel of snot. These are really important points for us to consider.

This presentation opposes the exaggerated and crazed mind of attachment that superimposes attractiveness on the body. Even though it's not from actual experience on my part, it seems to be the case that with a very strong mind of attachment, there is a lot of superimposing of attributes onto the object or objects. The more the mind superimposes these attributes of beauty, the more the attractiveness of the object is enhanced, and so attachment continues to increase. It seems quite peculiar, to say the least, that in a crazed mind of attachment there are all sorts of fantasies that are conjured by the mind as a means of developing even more attraction to the object. I suppose it may mean that one will generate a greater temporary satisfaction as attachment to the object increases. Like fantasy, it seems to increase some sort of temporary pleasure. I don't know, but I suppose that is how the mind works. It seems that there are many peculiar and strange ways in which the mind fantasises about the beauty and attractiveness of an object, to further enhance one's attachment to it.

By investigating in this way, taking the instance of a crazed state of mind where we might fantasise about an extremely exaggerated projection of the object, when we see it from a normal perspective we will see that our perception is exaggerated. That is an example that we can begin to understand. In fact, attachment to any object is a state of mind that exaggerates the qualities of that object.

The commentary then further describes the eyes as vessels of tears and other excretions. This relates to overcoming the attachment to the eyes, in particular. If one focuses on natural excretions from the eye such as tears and gunk, the reality of the uncleanliness of the eyes becomes apparent, and then one can overcome strong attachment to the eyes. In this way, as the text presents, when one examines each attribute of an object to which one may be otherwise attracted, such as the mouth, nose, or eyes, and contemplates the reality of what it produces, or what it is a vessel for, then the exaggerated view of the attractiveness of that particular object will be overcome. Thus attachment is reduced. As some masters have indicated, it's not too hard to notice the uncleanliness of the body!

One very practical way to understand the uncleanliness of the body is to consider the mere fact that once a clean substance goes into the body, it becomes foul. For example, after ingesting a beautiful and fragrant fruit, it immediately becomes foul. If you chew on the fruit and spit it out of your mouth, it is disgusting. No-one would want to eat that! It is not attractive at all! To elaborate further, when we swallow a piece of beautiful fruit, and it exits from the lower part of the body as excrement, the very smell is foul, the colour and the shape are unattractive and there is absolutely nothing attractive

about it! If the body was a clean vessel, then what goes into it would have to come out clean as well. But the fact that clean and attractive substances are taken into the body and come out as very unattractive and unclean, shows how the body itself is unclean.

Is there any difference between a male and female body in this respect? Are there any differences at all? In fact all the faults that have been explained here are exactly the same for both male and female – there is no difference.

The next verse (which relates to the same outline) reads:

150 *The abdomen and chest is a vessel
Of faeces, urine, lungs, liver, and so forth.
Those who through obscuration do not see
A woman this way, lust for her body.*

Gyaltsab Je says:

The abdomen and chest is a vessel of faeces, urine, lungs, liver, and so forth. Those who through obscuration do not see a woman to be unclean in this way, lust for her body.

Basically, the root text is very clear thus the commentary doesn't give much further explanation. Having earlier related to particular attributes of the head, the focus is directed to the lower parts of the body, the abdomen and chest. If one were to see the abdomen or the chest as an object of attachment, then one needs to consider how each of these is a vessel for unclean substances. The abdomen, for example, is a vessel for faeces, urine and so forth. As the substances within these vessels are not attractive in the slightest, one will not be excessively attracted to those parts. That being the case, one begins to overcome lust for a body.

2.2.2.3.2.1.2. Example

The verse relating to this is:

151 *Just as some fools desire
An ornamented pot filled with what is unclean,
So ignorant, obscured
Worldly beings desire women.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je presents the meaning of this verse:

Just as some fools desire an ornamented pot, embellished with jewels but filled with what is unclean, so ignorant, obscured worldly beings desire women.

The analogy here is a pot or a vase that is externally embellished with jewels, but filled with a foul substance, such as excrement or something very unclean and smelly. At a distance, a fool might be attached to the pot because of its external appearance.

One would never consider touching or even approaching a vessel that is filled with an unclean and repulsive substance. If the vessel is nicely decorated and aesthetically appealing, then only fools who are ignorant of its contents would become attached to it. An object of attachment such as a woman's body, for instance, may have beautiful hair and make-up, and she may be wearing beautiful jewels and colourful clothing. This is analogous to the pot embellished with jewels, in that the woman's body is filled with faeces and unattractive parts such as the liver, lungs, the intestines and so forth. Just like being attracted to the jewelled pot, fools will be attracted to the external beautified aspects of the woman's body. That is how this analogy works. By

focussing on what is inside the body, all attraction to the body will be entirely overcome.

Many of the older students here will recall a similar presentation in the text *Four Hundred Verses*, where three different perceptions of a woman's body were presented.

- ∞ To a yogi meditating on the unattractive attributes and faults of the body, a woman's body, for example, would appear as nothing more than a corpse.
- ∞ To a wild beast the woman's body, would appear as food.
- ∞ To a person who is lustfully attached to a woman's body, the perception of the woman's body (or any other body) is an object of pleasure.

So there are three different perceptions of the same object.

The technique being presented is a means to overcome attachment to the body by contemplating its unattractiveness in all of its natural aspects. It is advised that in order to overcome attachment we need to develop the perception of a yogi or meditator.

2.2.2.3.2.1.3. *Absence of the state of desirelessness if attached to women*

For as long as one is attached to a woman's body, there is no way to overcome desire. As the root text says:

*152 If the world is greatly attached
Even to this ever-so-smelly body
Which should cause loss of attachment,
How can it be led to freedom from desire?*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning of this verse:

If the world is greatly attached even to this ever-so-smelly body, which should be the ultimate cause for loss of attachment, then by what other means, can they be led to freedom from desire? There would be no other means to free them from desire.

To clarify further, what is being presented with a rhetorical question is, if the naturally unclean state of the body is not sufficient reason to overcome attachment to the body, then by what other means could one possibly overcome attachment? There is no other way. So, the implication is that the naturally unclean attributes of the body should be a sufficient reason to overcome any attachment to the body.

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
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Nagarjuna's Precious Garland

འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷན་པའི་བཀའ་བཀའ་ལྟོས་པའི་སྐུ་ལོ་།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

1 March 2010

We can spend some time in meditation. [meditation]

While maintaining an inward focus that is free from external distractions, we can now generate this motivation: 'For the sake of all sentient beings, in order to liberate them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of enlightenment, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well'.

Earlier there was a verse in the Tibetan text that was not considered to be part of the root text, and thus not assigned a number, but which was included as a numbered verse in the English translation. Thus, although according to the Tibetan text we are up to verse 152, in the English translation we are now at verse 153.

2.2.2.3. STOPPING ATTACHMENT TO WOMEN

2.2.2.3.2. Specific refutation of the cleanliness of a woman's body

2.2.2.3.2.1. Refuting that a woman's parts are beautiful (cont.)

2.2.2.3.2.1.4. Though a woman's body is unclean, the stupid call it a cause of pleasure

This heading shows how to overcome the misconception of ordinary beings that the body is an object of pleasure, which is a foolish perception.

The corresponding verse reads:

153 *Just as pigs are greatly attached
To a site of excrement, urine, and vomit,
So some lustful ones desire
A site of excrement, urine, and vomit.*

As the root text is quite clear, Gyaltsab Je does not elaborate much when explaining the meaning of the verses, thus the commentary's explanations on these verses are brief:

For example, *just as pigs are greatly attached to a site of excrement, urine and vomit, so some lustful ones, like pigs that desire a site of excrement, urine and vomit, are greatly attached to women.*

Generally speaking, pigs roll around in the filth of their sty and are actually attached to the place. Using that as an analogy, those who lust after a woman's body are oblivious to its faults and become attached to her body. The next verse relates to the same point:

154 *This city of a body with protruding holes
From which impurities emerge
Is called an object of pleasure
By beings who are stupid.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

This body which internally is a city of worms and with protruding holes from which impurities emerge, is called an object of pleasure by beings who are stupid.

Thus understanding that this is mistaken awareness one overcomes attachment to women.

First of all, one should understand that the faults that are presented here are clearly the faults of the body in general. However because this advice is specifically directed to the king, a woman's body is used as an example. The description of the impurities of the body applies to equally to male and female bodies, and it is just a matter of interchanging the advice according to gender. A man needing to overcome attachment to a woman's body would think of the faults of a woman's body, while a woman trying to overcome attachment to a man would use a male body.

The commentary first of all explains how, *internally*, the body is a city of worms. It has been scientifically proven that there are billions and billions of living organisms, or bacteria in one's body, which can be seen under a microscope. Then, of course, there are worms and other parasites in our body. So in that way, we can think of the body as being analogous to a city of worms or parasites. Just as a city refers to a place where many people dwell there, a body is like a city for many organisms living together. Furthermore, from the *protruding holes* of this body, impure substances emerge.

Despite this, the body is still perceived as an object of pleasure by those *who are stupid*, because they have not overcome their mistaken awareness. As the commentary explains, *by understanding it is a mistaken awareness, one overcomes attachment to women.*

A *mistaken awareness* is a faulty perception that does not see things as they exist in reality. When things are perceived in a way that is contrary to how they really exist, then that is a mistaken awareness. Whereas a *correct awareness* perceives things as they really are. It is a mistaken awareness to see the body as being clean and an object of pleasure, when in reality it is filled with impurities.

This presentation shows us a very practical way to overcome lust and attachment to the bodies of others. It is not based on speculation but on fact and reality, and that's why it isn't far-fetched to meditate on these faults. So it's a matter of really thinking about and contemplating these facts, bringing them to mind more vividly in one's meditation.

As explained here, the body is filled with various worms or bacteria and in that sense we can imagine the body being full of living organisms. Anyone who likes meat would instantly lose any sense of attachment to a piece of meat that is covered by maggots. This is really true isn't it? Likewise, it is as if our body is infested with maggots, in the sense of being filled with different types of worms, parasites and bacteria. When we think about it in this way, then the strong sense of lust and attachment arising from the misconception of the body being pure and attractive is reduced, and hence strong attachment and lust is overcome. This is true for both men and women.

We can all see the faults of attachment at play in the world. There is so much trouble and angst caused by strong attachment to someone else. A man strongly attached to a woman, for example, might go to extreme measures and acts of stupidity, which result in harm to

himself and to others. A troubled mind and anger are a result of attachment. Of course the same sort of faults apply to a woman who is very strongly attached to a man.

We can see how so much trouble and angst is due to attachment. So it is essential that we try to overcome strong attachment. Therefore we need to contemplate these points. Even though Nagarjuna's advice was explicitly directed to the king, we need to take this advice as a personal instruction, and try to apply it in our own practice by using it in our meditation. Even though it may not serve to entirely overcome our attachment, it will definitely help to reduce attachment. When the intensity of lust and attachment is gradually reduced in our mind, then we will eventually be able to completely overcome it. This is how we need to put it into practice.

In order to apply this practice, we need to begin by acknowledging that attachment is a vice, a negative state of mind. If we are not able to do that, then we will not see the relevance of these practices. As mentioned earlier, when we contemplate examples of the disadvantages of attachment, seeing how so many faults and vices occur as a result, we will develop the urge to overcome attachment. If we understand that attachment is a negative and faulty state of mind, a wrong consciousness, then the wish to overcome it will arise.

Thus, we will see the relevance of the practices that are presented here. If we apply this practice, it will help us deal with our attachment. Later on there will be further explanations on the disadvantages of attachment and the need to apply the means to overcome it. Rather than assuming that the advice on overcoming attachment is for others, one should take it as a personal advice and really work on it.

2.2.2.3.2.2. Refuting that the whole body is beautiful

This is sub-divided into four:

2.2.2.3.2.2.1. Stopping attachment to a woman's body in general

2.2.2.3.2.2.2. Stopping attachment to its colour and shape

2.2.2.3.2.2.3. Consequent unsuitability of attachment to a woman's body

2.2.2.3.2.2.4. Chiding persons who praise women

Even though the fourth sub-heading will be explained later, it is good to understand its proper context and implications. Here *chiding persons who praise women*, refers to those who praise the physical beauty of women and thus beautify a woman's body. There are treatises that focus on the beautiful attributes or features of a woman's body, which are intended to increase lustfulness. In order to increase attachment they are written in a poetic way, using metaphors to describe features of a woman's body such as her face being like the moon, her voice being very sweet and so forth. Through reading such treatises, one will be naturally drawn towards the object of one's pleasures and attachment and lust will increase. Such treatises are wrong, and those who read (and write) them should be chided.

2.2.2.3.2.2.1. *Stopping attachment to a woman's body in general*

The verse relating to this is:

155 *Once you yourself have seen the impurities
Of excrement, urine, and so forth,
How could you be attracted
To a body composed of those?*

This is not very difficult to understand. Gyaltsab Je's commentary adds just a few points:

Once you yourself have seen the impurities of a woman's excrement, urine and so forth. How could you be attracted to a body composed of those impurities?

This rhetorical question implies that having actually seen the impurities (in this case, of a woman's body) such as *excrement, urine and so forth*, any one in their right mind should be able to overcome attachment or attraction to a body that is composed of those impurities.

The next verse, which also relates to this sub-heading, explains how when a cause is comprised of impure substances, then the effect can rightly be assumed to also be impure.

156 *Why should you lust desirously for this
While recognizing it as an unclean form
Produced by a seed whose essence is impure,
A mixture of blood and semen?*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je further explains the meaning of this verse:

As its cause and nature is inferior, because of being produced by a seed whose essence is impure, a mixture of blood and semen; why should you lust desirously for this, while recognizing it as an unclean form?

As explained here, the very cause of the body that is the object of desire is *produced by a seed whose essence is impure*. According to the explanation in both teachings and Tibetan medical texts, the essence of our body is essentially blood and semen. It is the initial mixing of semen and blood that served as the basis to produce this body. It is also explained in the Tibetan medical texts, that if one has healthy blood it serves as an ultimate immunity that prevents various diseases. It seems to be true that clean and healthy blood prevent different kinds of diseases.

We can also relate this to the essence of nutritious food. The nutrients extracted from the food that we eat helps to promote the health of the blood and semen in our body. That is another way to gain an understanding of those Tibetan medical explanations.

In any case, the blood and semen would not naturally be considered as being pure or clean substances. We can feel quite repulsed by the very sight of blood or semen. So, when the body is produced by these repulsive substances why, in a right state of mind, would we lust desirously for a body that is the result of those substances? In other words, it is not appropriate or suitable to develop lust for such a body.

The next verse included under this sub-heading is:

157 *One who lies on this impure mass
Covered by skin moistened
With those fluids, merely lies
On top of a woman's bladder.*

As Gyaltsab Je further explains in his commentary:

*An impure body is naturally filled with impurities.
One who lies on this impure mass covered by skin,*

moistened with those fluids, merely lies on top of a woman's bladder [stomach].

Both male and female bodies are naturally filled with different types of fluids. In fact, it has been explained that 80% of our body mass is actually fluid. There are different kinds of fluids that can ooze out, some having a watery consistency, and others being yellowish in colour. When the body has some sort of swelling, or cyst, for example, the fluids excreted from them are repulsive in both smell and colour. Apparently our body is mostly filled with these kinds of fluids, which our skin prevents us from seeing. So the reality of the body is that it is mass of fluid that is covered up with skin.

This is further explained using the example of a woman's body: *One who lies on this impure mass covered by skin, moistened with those fluids, is merely lying on top of a woman's bladder which, in itself, is not very attractive.*

2.2.2.3.2.2.2. Stopping attachment to its colour and shape

This heading is sub-divided into three categories:

2.2.2.3.2.2.2.1. Stopping attachment to the colour and shape of a woman's body in general

2.2.2.3.2.2.2.2. Stopping attachment to a beautiful body

2.2.2.3.2.2.2.3. Thinking that one's own body, like a woman's, is unclean

As mentioned previously, the third sub-heading is one of the main points. Regardless of whether one is a man or woman, one's own body is as unclean as a body that is the object of attachment.

2.2.2.3.2.2.2.1. Stopping attachment to the colour and shape of a woman's body in general

As mentioned previously there are certain kinds of treatises that beautify the female body and talk favourably of its attributes. By applying beautiful metaphors referring to the colour or complexion or the shape of a woman's body, whoever reads it will actually start to feel desire and attachment. This section of the text refutes the idea that although the inside of the body is unclean and is made up of impure and unclean substances, there may be something to the outside beauty of colour and shape. In order to overcome such a misconception, the text specifically talks about overcoming attachment in relation to colour and shape. We can also see here how the text is a meticulous and tactful presentation on how to overcome all the different misconceptions of attachment. The verse relating to this sub-heading is as follows:

158 *If whether beautiful or ugly,
Whether old or young,
All female bodies are unclean,
From what attribute does your lust arise?*

Gyaltsab Je expands on the meaning of the verse:

If whether a woman's body is beautiful or ugly, whether old or young, all female bodies are unclean, from what attribute does your lust arise? For there is no basis for attachment.

Keep in mind that this refers to the body of both genders. As I have mentioned previously, the text doesn't deny that there are beautiful women. From a general perception there are definitely conventionally beautiful as well as ugly women, as well as those with young bodies

and those with old bodies. However, even though there are these conventional distinctions, both beautiful and ugly bodies are both equally impure—it's not as if the beautiful body is pure and the ugly body is impure. Likewise the bodies of the young and the old are equally impure in nature—this is the reality.

When the commentary asks, *from what attribute does your lust arise?* And responds, *there is no basis for attachment*, it is emphasising this approach as a way to overcome lust.

2.2.2.3.2.2.2.2. Stopping attachment to a beautiful body

This is sub-divided into two:

2.2.2.3.2.2.2.2.1. Unsuitability of attachment

2.2.2.3.2.2.2.2.2. Suitability of disgust

2.2.2.3.2.2.2.2.1. Unsuitability of attachment

This section is explained in three verses.

159 *Just as it is not fit to desire
Filth although it has a good colour,
Is very fresh, and has a nice shape,
So is it with a woman's body.*

The commentary further adds to the meaning:

Just as it is not fit to desire a mass of filth although it has good colour, is very fresh, and has a nice shape. So is it with the example of a woman's body. It is not appropriate to have attachment at any time.

One is aware in a conventional sense that *a mass of filth*, even though it may appear clean and *fresh* and having *nice shape* and *colour*, we know that, because it is a mass of filth, it is *not appropriate* to desire it. There is no reason for anyone in their right mind to desire such a mass of filth. It is exactly the same with a woman's body, thus it is not appropriate to be attached to it.

160 *How could the nature of this putrid corpse,
A rotten mass covered outside by skin,
Not be seen when it looks
So very horrible?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary adds:

How could the nature of this putrid corpse, a rotten mass covered outside by skin, not be seen when it looks so very repulsive and horrible?

This is again quite easily understood. The nature of the body is likened to a corpse because the substances inside the body are like *rotten mass*. There are repulsive things inside the body that are merely covered by the skin. If we think about its nature, which is very *repulsive and horrible*, then how could we not see the body in that way, and thus overcome attachment. This rhetorical question in the commentary implies that it is appropriate to think in this way.

The next verse reads:

161 *"The skin is not foul,
It is like a garment."
Like a hide over a mass of impurities
How could it be clean?*

We can see how the text has worked from the inside of the body out to the surface. We will all agree that even though it is not externally apparent, when the inside of the body is exposed it is quite repulsive. Using things that are conventionally considered as being repulsive can show how to overcome attachment to the body, which is

filled with such substances. Having gone through all of the internal parts, and being left with the bare skin, one may feel 'well the skin is beautiful, which is a sufficient reason to be attached to the body'. This verse shows us how to overcome that misconception.

In his commentary Gyaltsab je comments:

If you think; 'the skin is not foul, because it is like a garment', as it is like a hide over a mass of impurities, how could it be clean?

Here the skin is described as being *like a hide over a mass of impurities*. A flayed skin is clearly not attractive or beautiful at all. Basically our skin is just like a hide that is concealing the impurities within the body. The very fact that you need to beautify it means that the skin is unclean in its very nature; if the skin was naturally beautiful, then one would not need to spend money beautifying it.

2.2.2.3.2.2.2.2. Suitability of disgust

This section addresses any lingering doubts about why the body is suitable to be called an object of disgust.

The root text reads:

162 *A pot though beautiful outside,
Is reviled when filled with impurities.
Why is the body, filled with impurities
And foul by nature, not reviled?*

163 *If you revile against impurities,
Why not against this body
Which befouls clean scents,
Garlands, food, and drink?*

Gyaltsab Je expands a bit on this in his commentary:

A pot though beautiful outside, is commonly reviled when filled with impurities. Likewise, why is the body, filled with impurities and foul by nature, not reviled? It is suitable to be reviled and not suitable to be attached to.

If you revile against externally expelled impurities, why not against this body, which befouls clean scents, garlands, food and drink? It is suitable to be reviled and not praised.

I have touched on this point earlier. Whatever pure and clean food we eat, it becomes impure, disgusting and unclean as soon as the food enters the mouth and is chewed. So if one reviles the impure substances expelled from the body, then why is the body itself not also unclean? After all, it is the body that actually transforms pure substances into impure and unclean ones.

2.2.2.3.2.2.2.3. Thinking that one's own body, like a woman's, is unclean

The verses relating to this sub-division are:

164 *Just as one's own or others'
Impurities are reviled,
Why not revile against one's own
And others' unclean bodies?*

165 *Since your own body is
As unclean as a woman's,*

The main point being presented here is that although this advice on how to overcome lust for a woman's body is being presented to the king, we should also contemplate the nature and impurities of our own body in our personal practice of meditation. As I regularly emphasise, we can scrutinise and really investigate our own body

from the bottom of our soles to the crown of our head, and then understand that there is nothing pure about our body. When we come to the conclusion that it is in the nature of the body to be impure and unclean, then we can apply that to other bodies that we may be attached to. Knowing how their bodies, which seem so attractive and beautiful are exactly the same as our own body might also be a more appropriate way to do a meditation to overcome attachment to the bodies of others.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary adds a point to clarify the meaning of the verses:

Just as one's own or others' impurities are reviled, likewise why not revile one's own and others' unclean bodies, since your own body is as unclean as a woman's?

One's own body can be used as a basis to see the impurities and unclean substances of the body in general, which can then be applied to the bodies of others. The conclusion is that there is no difference whatsoever between the impurities of one's own body and the impurities of the bodies of others. Both are equally unsuitable as objects of attraction and attachment.

From this presentation we can see how it helps the mind when we do not discriminate between our body and the bodies of others. Sometimes we might praise the body of another and criticise our own body. Or there might be times when we praise our own body thinking we are very beautiful, and criticise others who are not so beautiful.

What is being presented here are ways to acknowledge how, regardless of appearance, one's own body and the bodies of others are in the same nature of being impure and unclean. This will then eventually lead to the elimination of attachment.

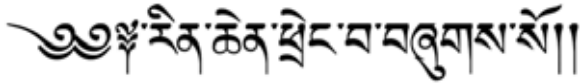
It is good to use these passages as a means to overcome other delusions as well. Although this presentation is a particular antidote for overcoming strong lust and attachment to the bodies of others, as well as one's own body, we can use these very same reasons to overcome pride, and a critical or judgemental state of mind about the bodies of others. With respect to pride, we might feel 'I'm really beautiful; there is no one else who is more beautiful than me'. At this point one might develop a heightened feeling about our own beauty, where there will be a instinctive state of mind that will be condescending and critical of the bodies of others and so forth.

As a means of overcoming pride in our own body, we can use the same reasons that are used to overcome attachment, in order to reduce any critical and judgemental attitudes towards the bodies of others. In this way we can see how this technique really works to overcome the many different levels of negativity or delusions in the mind.

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

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Nagarjuna's Precious Garland



Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

8 March 2011

As usual, sitting in an comfortable posture and generating the appropriate motivation, we can engage in the meditation practice. [meditation]

The meditation practice that we are doing is called *tong-len*, the practice giving and taking, and is a very beneficial practice. Thus, it is really worthwhile to acquaint ourselves with it. The more we familiarise ourselves with this meditation practice the more we will be able to actually engage in the practice, which is essentially to benefit and assist others on the basis of compassion. Without acquainting ourselves with compassion, it will be very difficult to spontaneously generate the wish to help other living beings. So the purpose of the *tong-len* practice is to generate a sound basis on which to benefit other sentient beings.

This practice is primarily a means to increase love and compassion for other sentient beings. What prevents the development of love and compassion is the chronic disease of self-cherishing. So the *tong-len* practice is a powerful means to destroy self-cherishing and replace it with the mind of cherishing other living beings with love and compassion.

Given the right conditions for engaging in the practice of developing love and compassion, it would be foolish or even insane not to take advantage of those conditions. We actually do have the perfect conditions of having access to the practice and to the teachers who present the unmistakable Mahayana teachings. With such perfect conditions it would be really foolish not to seize the opportunity and make use of it. As we are fortunate enough to have those conditions right now, we must take the initiative to engage in the practice.

As we consider ourselves to be Mahayana practitioners, we must think of love and compassion as being the essence of the Mahayana practice. That being the case it would be a mistake to neglect developing love and compassion in favour of other practices. It might be presumptuous of me, but I can safely say that to leave out an essential practice, and engage in some other kind of practice is a completely wrong approach. It is indicated clearly in Lama Tsong Khapa's *Great Treatise of the Stages on the Path to Enlightenment* (the *Lam Rim Chen Mo*), as well as his *Concise Lam Rim* teachings, that the indication of an effective practice of meditation is the reduction of one's delusions. It is a clear sign that the meditation practice is going well when the mind has become more subdued, and one develops a greater aspiration towards enlightenment and a stronger faith in the Three Jewels.

2.2.2.3.2.2.2.3. Thinking that one's own body, like a woman's, is unclean

Again, we can reflect upon the great skill in the way the material is being presented. Having used a woman's body as an example to illustrate the faults and uncleanliness of the body (keeping in mind that the advice was directed to the king), the text now comes to the point of showing how one's own body is exactly the same.

According to the English translation we are up to verse 164 and the first half of verse 165. As mentioned in our last session, there is a discrepancy between the verse numbers in the Tibetan text and the English translation. In his commentary Gyaltsab Je does not comment on an earlier verse that was not, at that time, listed as part of the root text. This also happens further on in the text. These verses are actually part of the root text, but because the commentary does not give specific explanation of these verses, they are left as separate un-numbered verses in the Tibetan text.¹

The corresponding verses for this heading are:

164 *Just as one's own or others'
Impurities are reviled,
Why not revile against one's own
And others' unclean bodies?*

165ab *Since your own body is
As unclean as a woman's*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

*Just as one's own or others' impurities are reviled,
likewise why not revile against one's own and others'
unclean bodies, since your own body is as unclean as a
woman's?*

Even from a worldly perspective any kind of impurity is considered to be an object of disgust, and is thus reviled. Since conventionally accepted impurities are reviled, likewise, why not revile one's own and others' unclean bodies? Here we can see the very sound logic of this presentation. If commonly or conventionally accepted impurities and unclean things are reviled, then it is logical to also revile the body because it is naturally unclean and impure. The first two lines of verse 165, *Since your own body is as unclean as a woman's*, explicitly states this point.

The main point being emphasised here is that there is no difference whatsoever between the impure bodies of others and one's own impure body – the uncleanliness is exactly the same. This point is a very good basis on which to counteract the way we normally focus on the uncleanliness of others, and discriminate against them. Normally, it is easier for us to project uncleanliness onto someone else's body, while unconsciously thinking that our own body is very pure and clean. The point being raised here is that if you see any impurity in the bodies of others, then that should remind you that your own body is equally as unclean and impure.

¹ Ed: This happens because the student is expected to have memorised the text before receiving a commentary. Thus there is no need to print the root text in the commentary, which therefore contains just a reference to the verse number. Although the commentary usually refers to all verses it does not do so in all cases, which leads to difficulties in the preparation of English translations of commentaries.

For example, there are some people who are very judgemental about the dirt on someone's face; they immediately point their finger and say 'you look very dirty and filthy'. Even though it might only relate to external filth or looking a little unkempt, we immediately develop a critical mind about them being filthy. However the filth of some else's body, of their face or hair for example, can be cleaned and washed away. So being critical of another's temporary external impurities implies a lack of concern about one's whole body also being impure. Understanding that the fact that the filth on someone's face or hair is only temporary, while one's own body is impure, will help one to not be critical of others.

Reflecting upon these very logical points presented by the great master Nagarjuna will help to sharpen one's intelligence and, most importantly, develop honesty about one's perceptions. Reflecting in this way will help to prevent a discriminative mind that criticises others, which implicitly implies that one is clean and pure whilst others are dirty.

As mentioned previously, this analysis goes beyond the surface. Conventionally speaking, we don't deny the prevalence of beautiful and ugly attributes. However this very sound and logical reasoning shows us that if we look deeper, beyond the conventional appearance(s) of beauty and ugliness, and consider the very substance of the body, then we will perceive the actual reality of the body as being impure and unclean. This really gives us a very sound, intelligent, and honest view of our mistaken perceptions

2.2.2.3.2.2.3. Consequent unsuitability of attachment to a woman's body

This heading is covered in the second half of verse 165 and verse 166 which read:

165cd *Is it not suitable to part
From desire for self and other?*

166 *If you yourself wash this body,
Dripping from the nine wounds
And still do not think it unclean,
What use is [religious] instruction for you?*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

Since the body is unclean, *is it not suitable to part from desire for the bodies of self and others? If you actually see yourself wash this body daily, dripping from the nine wounds of uncleanliness, and still do not think it unclean; what use O King is the instruction for meditating on faults for you?* There would be no use whatsoever if you do not conceive uncleanliness.

Here Gyaltsab Je begins with a rhetorical question, implying that since the body is equally unclean as others it is appropriate to part from desire for the bodies of oneself and others alike.

He goes on to say that *if you actually see yourself wash this body daily, dripping from the nine wounds of uncleanliness, and still do not think it unclean; what use O King is the instruction for meditating on faults for you?* There would be no use whatsoever if you do not conceive uncleanliness. This clearly reminds us, at a very obvious level, that we wash our body on a daily basis to clean the parts that drip from

the nine wounds. This is a poetic way of referring the nine orifices of humans—our eyes, ears, mouth, nose and the lower parts. Quite clearly, unclean substances drip from these orifices. In the morning we have to wash our face to clear the accumulation of sleep around the eyes; we all know that what comes out of the nose is not very pleasant, indeed it is quite disgusting. If your ears are not cleaned for a while there will be an accumulation of wax, which again is not very pleasant or very clean. Likewise with the saliva that drips from our mouth, it is not pleasant. Most obviously, the substances that emanate from the lower parts are not considered clean by anyone. If our body was so clean then why would all of these unclean substances drip from its orifices?

Here the king is being advised that even though the uncleanliness and impurity of the body is obvious, if you are unable to meditate on those faults and cannot follow these instructions, then what use would these instructions serve? They would serve no purpose if you fail to acknowledge the obvious impurities and faults of the body. That is the meaning of the rhetorical question.

If what emanates from the nine orifices of our body is of an unclean nature, then that in itself proves that the source of those unclean substances must also be unclean and impure. That is how the logic works. If the source itself was pure and clean, then anything excreted from any of the orifices would also have to be clean. But on the contrary, we see what comes out of the nine orifices and as being obviously unclean and impure which, in itself, is proof that the source of those substances—our body—is also of an unclean and impure nature. This is the point that needs to be understood.

Superficially, and from a distance we may perceive a body as being not only pure and clean, but beautiful or attractive. As a result of that perception, attachment arises. Such a perception is due to our lack of investigation into what we are perceiving. If we look further and really think about it logically, then it will become obvious that a body that appears to be very beautiful, clean and pure is, in fact, not pure in nature, and is thus unclean and impure.

To use an analogy, when you pour clean water into a clean vase, and then pour it out, the water will naturally be clean because the vase itself is clean. But if the vase was filthy inside to begin with, then whatever pure substance you put into it will come out filthy and unclean. This is a good analogy to use with respect to the make-up of our own body.

2.2.2.3.2.2.4 Chiding persons who praise women

The root text reads:

167 *Whoever composes poetry
With metaphors elevating this body—
O how shameless! O how stupid!
How embarrassing before [wise] beings!*

168 *Moreover, these sentient beings—
Obscured by the darkness of ignorance
Quarrel most over what they desire,
Like dogs for the sake of some dirty thing.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab further adds to the meaning of these verses:

Whoever composes poetry with metaphors, such as features of the body being like a lotus or moon, elevating and exaggerating the qualities of this woman's body in such ways. O how shameless! O how stupid! How embarrassing it is before [wise] beings. Moreover, these sentient beings – obscured by the darkness of ignorance – quarrel with teachers, students, friends and the like, most over what they desire, thus are like dogs [who quarrel] for the sake of some dirty thing.

As mentioned in the previous session, there are treatises, books and so forth that describe and praise the beauty of a woman's body in exaggerated ways, using poetic terms like 'your face is like a lotus' or 'your face is like the moon' and so forth. As an aside, you need to be careful when people praise you in that way, because they may be using the praise to deceive you into believing that they really like you. So when someone starts to praise you in an exaggerated manner, you need to be a bit wary. That is because the qualities are being described out of strong attachment rather than through any genuine fondness.

As mentioned previously, these texts are meant to generate and increase lust and desire, in this case for a woman's body. Therefore, as mentioned in the root text itself, it is really shameful to compose such material in the presence of the wise beings who can see the reality of things. That is because the material is not based on reality, but just another form of deception for oneself as well as others. It is *shameless, stupid and embarrassing* in the presence of the wise beings. Those who go out of their way to excessively praise and exaggerate the qualities of women, are *obscured by the darkness of ignorance* and will thus *quarrel with teachers, students, friends and the like*, out of attachment and desire. When this occurs, it is no different from *dogs quarrelling over something as unclean as faeces*, which some dogs are known to eat.

2.2.2.3.2.3. Refuting that attachment to a woman is a cause of happiness

This is another important point to consider. There are many who believe that without attachment there can be no enjoyment or pleasure. Even some monks have said to me 'you know, attachment seems to really contribute to some pleasure and enjoyment'. This wrong conception is quite deep-rooted in the minds of ordinary beings. It is definitely a wrong conception to say that without attachment there can be no pleasure or happiness. Here, the text is specifically tackling this wrong conception by refuting that attachment to a woman, for example, is a cause for happiness.

The corresponding verse of the root text reads:

169 *There is pleasure when a sore is scratched,
But to be without sores is more pleasurable still.
Just so, there are pleasures in worldly desires,
But to be without desires is more pleasurable still.*

Gyaltsab Je explains the verse thus:

There is pleasure is perceived when a leper's sore is scratched because of the slight relief they experience, but to be without sores is more pleasurable still. Just so, there are pleasures perceived when

engrossed in the five objects of worldly desires, but to be without desires is more pleasurable still.

Nagarjuna's analogy is very clearly based on our own experiences. The Tibetan word for *leper's sore* also has the connotation of any kind of itchy skin rash, which is something we have all experienced. We know that when we initially scratch the rash we will gain some relief from the itching. However, skin diseases flare up when scratched, and only get worse. So although there is some temporary pleasure to be gained from scratching the sore, in the long-run it actually creates more discomfort.

Here Nagarjuna is using an analogy that is based on our own experience, to explain the apparent pleasure that we feel from engaging with an object of desire. It seems that there is some temporary satisfaction, particularly in relation to lust and desire, but immediately after satisfying one's desire(s) one feels low in energy, and the body feels heavy and so forth. This shows how, just like scratching a sore, engaging with objects of desire can ultimately lead to many more problems.

Even though there is some temporary pleasure from scratching the sore, it would be even more pleasurable to not have had the rash and itching to begin with. It is the same with the perceived pleasures of *the five objects of worldly desires*. The object of desire of the eye consciousness is form, sounds are the object of desire of the ear faculty, and likewise with smell, taste and tactile sensations. Engaging in any of these five objects of worldly pleasure is exactly the same as the analogy. Although we may experience some temporary pleasure or satisfaction it will actually lead to more dissatisfaction in the long-run. The pleasure we believe we experience is based on our faulty perception of worldly pleasures and so, in reality, they are not real pleasures. The conclusion being presented here is that life without desires is even more pleasurable still. If there is no real pleasure to be gained from engaging in the five worldly sense objects, then lacking any desire in the first place would be a far more pleasurable and happy state.

When we think about it, our whole life seems to be driven by desire for the five sense objects. Taking some particular examples, some people are really attached to nice sounds – as soon as you hear that sound you become very excited and you can't rest. You have to follow it and saturate yourself with that pleasant sound, and so you are driven towards the sense object. It is the same with pleasant sights, where we spend so much time and energy trying to appease the visual pleasures to be gained from visual objects. Similarly with taste there are those who are very attached to certain kinds of foods – the mere sight or smell of the food will excite them to want the food even more, even though they are not hungry. The force of these objects of desire of worldly pleasure drives us to them.

To take this explanation a little bit further, our tainted and faulty perception draws us in, and occupies our time and energy with the object(s) of desire, and there are different levels of engagement with the object of desire. Using the example of an object of desire of sight, when we first see a beautiful object, our first contact with that object is made through our eye consciousness. Through our eyes, our eye consciousness perceives the object, and

we exaggerate its beautiful or attractive qualities. At a later stage our mental consciousness contributes to our infatuation with the object. It is our mental consciousness, or our mental conception of an object, which brings an image of that object to mind. It seems that we are constantly preoccupied with the image of that object in our mind.

Even when it's dark and we cannot see anything, the image of that object is still clear in our mind. Thus we preoccupy ourselves by constantly bringing the image of that object to mind. It is our mental consciousness that is perceiving that mental image of the object. That is how we preoccupy ourselves with the object of desire, in this instance an object of sight. Understanding this brings to light the distinction between the eye consciousness, which is a sense consciousness, and mental consciousness. For those who have studied mind and mental factors, it is good to also incorporate that understanding into how it relates to our obsession with an object of desire.

2.2.2.3.3. *Effect of meditating on uncleanness*

Having described in detail how to meditate on the uncleanness of the body, the text goes on to explain the positive effects that one will experience as a result of such meditation.

The relevant verse reads:

170 *If you analyse thus, even though
You do not achieve freedom from desire,
Because your desire has lessened
You will not lust for women.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

If you analyse the natural uncleanness of the body thus, even though you do not achieve freedom from desire right from the start, because your desire has lessened, you will not lust for women.

Analysing the nature of the body, and realising it has the nature being unclean, may not be sufficient to completely overcome deep-rooted lust or desire. However through the acquaintance with this meditation on seeing the faults of the body, desire will be lessened and so naturally lust for another will diminish, to the point that there will be no more lust in general. This advice does not suggest that we have to walk around with our eyes closed or not look at any objects. Rather, when we see things then because of our acquaintance with the practice of analysing the reality of the nature of the body, and focussing on its uncleanness, our desire for the object will naturally be reduced. Then the strong lust one may have previously had for one's object of desire (for example, a member of the opposite sex), will definitely be reduced, and one will no longer have that lust. Even though one may be seeing an object that one has seen previously, through acquaintance with the meditation practice, one's attitude towards that object will be different. Seeing the object again will not cause lust to arise; to that effect one has experienced a positive result from the meditation.

It seems a little warm and humid tonight, so we can conclude the evening at this point. Maybe the Queensland weather has started to come down here.

Regular students would be aware that next Tuesday night will be the discussion night, followed by the exam on the following week. I request you to engage in a meaningful way, discussing the points that we have covered over the last four sessions. Specifically this means dealing with the instructions on how to meditate on seeing the faults of the body as a means to overcome the excessive desire and lust. As mentioned previously, even though the primary example is the lust for a woman's body, one needs to understand that the faults relate to both the male and female body. There is no difference whatsoever in the faults of the body itself. So go beyond that sort of distinction, and see how the advice applies in all instances of desire and lust.

Then go further and discuss why we need to overcome lust. What is the purpose of trying to overcome desire and lust? Your discussion will lead to looking further into the faults of excessive attachment and desire, and how the faults of excessive desire seem to be a cause a loss of direction in life, leading to quarrelling with others and promiscuous. A lot of problems and difficulties arise in the world because of uncontrolled desire and lust. Using that as an example, discuss the need to overcome desire and lust.

The exam in the following week is based on the homework questions and discussion, and it is good to write down your answers well.

We will now recite the eight verses of mind training, and dedicate it to our Dharma friend Cynthia's late mother, who passed away recently. While reciting this prayer the appropriate visualisation is of the Buddha Amitabha in the space above. The compassion of the Amitabha Buddha manifests as rays like a hook coming out from his heart, which draws up the consciousness of Cynthia's late mother, bringing her up to the pure land of Amitabha. It will be good to do this visualisation as we do the recitation.

That is the best way to offer your condolences, which has the connotation of helping to uplift one's mind. In the western world you give flowers to do the same thing.

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

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Discussion (15.03.2011)

Week: 1 (15 February 2011)

1. Buddha taught that happiness and suffering are entirely depend on the state of one's mind
 - a) Explain how that is so.

 - b) How should one go about to gain a happy mind? Summarize the main points of Geshe la's advice.
2. List four faults of attachment to intoxicants.
3. List nine faults of attachment to gambling.

Week: 2 (22 February 2011)

4. The text talks about stopping attachment to a woman's body by pointing out many faults of a woman's body
 - a) Give reasons why mentioning these faults was not meant to denigrate women, but in fact equally apply to men.

 - b) What is the purpose of these teachings?
5. a) Give the definition of attachment.

b) Why is attachment a 'wrong consciousness' and what does 'wrong consciousness' imply?
6. a) *"Lust for a woman comes from thinking her body is clean, but there is nothing clean in a woman's body in fact."*
What is meant by the body not being clean?

b) Think of a person for whom you have some attachment. Nominate an attractive feature of that person's face – eye ear, nose, mouth, hair, etc. - and give reasons why that feature is not in fact clean.

c) What is the benefit of this type of investigation?

Week: 3 (1 March 2011)

7. Explain the difference between a 'mistaken awareness' and a 'correct awareness'. Show this with the example of the body.
8. In order to apply this practice what do we need to begin by doing? Elaborate a little.
9. What is the reply to thinking 'the skin is not foul because it is like a garment'?

Week: 4 (8 March 2011)

10. a) What does the 'nine wounds' refer to?

b) When talking about the unclean substances that drip from these 'nine wounds' what is the point that is to be understood?
11. Using the example of an object of desire of sight, show the different levels of engagement with the object of desire.

Exam

Name: _____

Mark: _____

Block 1

Week 6: (22 March 2011)

1. Buddha taught that happiness and suffering entirely depend on the state of one's mind.

a) Explain how that is so.

b) How should one go about to gain a happy mind? Summarize the main points of Geshe la's advice.

2. List four faults of attachment to intoxicants.

3. List nine faults of attachment to gambling.

4. The text talks about stopping attachment to a woman's body by pointing out many faults of a woman's body
a) Give reasons why mentioning these faults was not meant to denigrate women, but in fact equally apply to men.

b) What is the purpose of these teachings?

5. a) Give the definition of attachment.

b) Why is attachment a 'wrong consciousness' and what does 'wrong consciousness' imply?

6. a) *"Lust for a woman comes from thinking her body is clean, but there is nothing clean in a woman's body in fact."*
What is meant by the body not being clean?

b) Think of a person for whom you have some attachment. Nominate an attractive feature of that person's face – eye ear, nose, mouth, hair, etc. - and give reasons why that feature is not in fact clean.

c) What is the benefit of this type of investigation?

7. Explain the difference between a 'mistaken awareness' and a 'correct awareness'. Show this with the example of the body.

8. In order to apply this practice what do we need to begin by doing? Elaborate a little.

9. What is the reply to thinking 'the skin is not foul because it is like a garment'?

10. a) What does the 'nine wounds' refer to?

b) When talking about the unclean substances that drip from these 'nine wounds' what is the point that is to be understood? [2]

11. Using the example of an object of desire of sight, show the different levels of engagement with the object of desire. [3]