

bug from drowning and so forth. It is good to keep this in mind and incorporate it into our daily lives, as that is how we can slowly increase our virtuous deeds and improve ourselves.

The act of generosity, first with material aid, is said to be one of the supreme ways for others to get close to you, as others will naturally appreciate you as a person. For example, when you are generous with material things such as food and drink, others naturally appreciate that and feel close to you. This is very evident also with those who care for animals. The appreciation of pets such as dogs and cats is very clear. When you are kind to other animals and feed them, they also really appreciate that. It is known that animals do not forget, even up to twenty years later some animals will remember an act of kindness. Conversely we know of some humans who completely forget someone who has been kind to them even for many years; they may even consider that person as an enemy. It is important to note that even animals appreciate a practical act of kindness.

This reminds me of a TV show that I saw just yesterday. I didn't see the whole show, only part of it, but in the part that I saw were two animals of different species becoming very good friends. A young elephant calf and a sheep had become really good friends, roaming about together, and playing together. At some point the young elephant seems to have become sick, and was not able to eat. As it became weaker, the sheep was so distressed that it also stopped eating. It kept looking at the elephant, trying to go near to console it. The person who was caring for the elephant also seemed to be very distressed, and crying because the young elephant was so ill.

Last week the program showed a dog and a goat who were also very good companions. Like the earlier case, when the dog became ill and had to be taken to the vet, the goat stopped grazing. It was very distressed. Then, when the dog went home, the goat excitedly looked into van the dog was travelling in. Then when the dog came out, the goat immediately recognised it, and in a great sign of joy it began jumping around. These are very clear examples of great affection, even between animals of different species. This is something really worth taking note of.

These are clear examples of the value of genuine concern and affection. As I regularly mention, genuine concern, affection and love is invaluable. This can be seen clearly even with animals. As I often mention, genuine affection and love for others fosters genuine trust. Again, this is shown with animals, where different species can get along and become really close, and trust comes along with that because of the kindness and affection they feel for each other. In another example from that show, I saw a bear and a tiger who had become friends and companions. I think that it is quite extraordinary and amazing to see the affection expressed between different species of animals. Normally we wouldn't think that this is possible, but the fact that this occurs shows that there are no boundaries when it comes to expressing genuine affection and love.

The main point here is the value of genuine affection and love, and how that brings about strong bonds and mutual trust. If that is experienced within the animal realm then there is no need to mention how true that is for humans too. When genuine concern, love and affection is expressed for another then whatever they do together is meaningful, whether it be eating a meal, going out, or working together. Whatever they do together gives rise to really genuine joy. If, on the other hand, there is a lack of affection, then even if it

seems on the surface and you are merry and having good time, there is no sense of deep joy inside. That is because a genuine sense of affection and love is missing.

In summary the main point is that when an act of generosity is done with the sole intention of benefitting the other, without any ulterior motive, then that is definitely appreciated. It is definitely a way to bring others closer to you, along with the trust and so forth that comes with that. When we think about the earlier examples, then we can see how acts of generosity are really the optimum way to bring about a sense of real happiness and joy.

The **twenty-first** branch of wisdom is

*272cd. Bear suffering alone
And share your pleasures with beggars*

In his commentary Gyaltzab Je explains the meaning of these two lines as follows:

Twenty-first: When others cause one suffering, *bear the suffering alone and share your pleasures* such as meals, *with beggars*.

When others cause one suffering, refers to any discomfort that one may experience as a consequence of the actions of others. *Bear the suffering* has the connotation of being tolerant and patient with the suffering that others cause. The real connotation to *bear suffering alone* is to cultivate patience within oneself. However what one can share whatever means of *pleasure* and happiness one has, such as food, clothing, shelter and so forth with others, such as *beggars* and so forth.

As explained briefly in the commentary, when others serve as a cause for personal suffering then that is the time to apply whatever practice of patience one is inclined to practice. *Bear the suffering* doesn't mean just enduring the pain regardless of the effect, rather it means that if we actively implement the practice of patience, then it becomes enduring, and does not become a cause for even more suffering. That is why practising patience here is relevant.

Another thing we can derive from this explanation is that suffering is not something that can be shared with others. Rather, we have to experience it ourselves. However, with the right motivation and attitude suffering can become more tolerable and not a heavy burden. Likewise, we cannot really share our happiness with others; it is not as though we can give our own happy state of mind to others. However through the act of sharing food and drink and giving what others need, we can actually serve as a condition for others to be happy. Even though we cannot actually share our experience of happiness, we can provide means for others to become happy. This is the way we can derive a deeper understanding of these two lines. We could go further in elaborating this point, but that might be sufficient for now.

The main point is that we should take this as a personal instruction and implement it in our daily lives. It is good to remind ourselves of the great virtue of generosity, even in terms of the practical benefits for the other. Whenever possible, with whatever means we have, it is good for us to practise generosity. We shouldn't feel that we have to be incredibly rich to be generous, as we can practise generosity in small ways, by giving a bit of money to beggars or buskers on the street. Apart from beggars or others who are asking for money, we can be generous by offering to pay for the tea or coffee for a friend, or a companion, or relative.

Furthermore we can also be generous by giving time to others when they are distressed, consoling them with a few gentle words, and spending a little time with them. When a

friend, companion or relative is distressed, you could offer to take them out for a walk. Spending some time with them in this way is also an act of generosity. So we can see that the act of generosity is not limited to giving material things, but can also include giving time and affection. That is a really meaningful and worthwhile, and an active way of benefiting others.

Now we come to the **twenty-second** of the twenty-five categories. The relevant verse reads:

**273. Do not be inflated
Even by the prosperity of gods.
Do not be depressed
Even by the poverty of hungry ghosts.**

This is really very practical and invaluable advice when we think about it. As Gyaltsab Je says in his commentary:

Twenty-second: Not to mention slight gain or loss, *do not be inflated even by the prosperity of gods*. Likewise, *do not be depressed even by the poverty of the hungry ghosts*.

This is explaining very clearly is that we should not feel pompous and superior with a slight gain, or feel completely depressed with a slight loss, which is how we normally react. When something goes well, we might feel elated and excited, and when the slightest thing goes wrong we immediately become very, very depressed. The advice of this teaching is that slight gains, let alone riches equal to the gods, are not a reason to be pompous and proud. And it is the same with knowledge: even we have the knowledge that equals the gods, we should not feel pompous and proud. Likewise experiencing even the extreme poverty of the hungry ghosts should not be cause to feel completely depressed and develop low self-esteem.

We really need to pay heed to this advice. We may feel that we don't have much reason to be over-excited about a lot of wealth, but we might often feel we have reason to be depressed when things are not going well. According to the advice here, we need to really be mindful that if we can adopt the right attitude, then even when things don't go well, and there are difficulties and problems, we can still maintain some integrity and dignity. We really need to keep that in mind. And I can definitely say that I have had great experience with things not going well, and having difficulties and problems in my life.

The verse that relates to the **twenty-third** branch of wisdom is:

**274. For your sake always speak the truth.
Even should it cause your death
Or ruin your governance,
Do not speak in any other way.**

As Gyaltsab Je' commentary reads:

Twenty-third: *For your own sake, even should it cause your death or ruin your governance, always speak the truth to benefit others*. If it is false and harms others, should it even grant you life and governance, *do not speak in any other way*.

Here the king, as the direct recipient of the advice, is being advised never to waiver from speaking the truth at any cost, and to never to forsake any promise he makes. As it explains here, even if it were to cause our own *death*, or *ruin* our *governance*, we should still uphold the value of truth and not forsake it by uttering false words. Even if uttering false words, that cause harm to others, was to grant a great life, majesty and governance, one should forsake that, and thus forsake those benefits of majesty of life and governance and

so forth. The main point, of course, is to protect the truth, and not utter false words.

The **twenty-fourth** branch is:

**275. Always observe the discipline
Of actions just as it has been explained.
In that way, O glorious one, you will become
The best of authoritative beings upon the earth**

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Twenty-fourth: *Always observe the discipline of actions just as it has been explained* and as you have promised. *In that way, O glorious one, you will become the best of authoritative valid beings upon the earth*. Thus be sure to keep the promises that you have made.

The main point here is to maintain the integrity of keeping one's commitments. *Always observe the discipline of actions just as it has been explained* refers to always maintaining the positive or virtuous actions that you have promised to keep. As the king advised, if he acts in that way then being the *glorious one*, the king will *become the best of authoritative and valid beings upon the earth*. This means that the natural consequence of abiding by virtuous actions and the promises you have made, will be that you will have a natural authority. Others will naturally do whatever you ask, and in that way you will become known as a valid or truthful being, who others will naturally trust. So, as the commentary explains, be sure to keep the promises that you make. Even though this advice was given to the king, we need to take it as personal advice and put it into practice, as it is most excellent advice.

The verse relating to the **twenty-fifth**, and final, branch of the collection of wisdom is:

**276. You should always analyse well
Everything before you act,
And through seeing things correctly as they are
Do not put full reliance on others**

Gyaltsab Je gives this explanation of the meaning of this verse:

Twenty-fifth: What need is there to say much, O King. *You should always analyse well everything* in regard to what ought to be adopted and what ought to be discarded *before you act, and through seeing things correctly as they are*, i.e. the distinction between what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded there will be no need to ask others. So *do not put full reliance on others*.

This again is very relevant personal advice, which is also emphasised in Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*. It indicates the great importance of *analysing* things before one engages in any action. If, after having thoroughly analysed the action, one sees clearly that there is a benefit in engaging in that action, then one should *adopt* it. If, after investigation and analysis, one finds that the action is not in accordance with virtue and the Dharma, then one needs to *discard* it.

This applies to every action that we do in everyday life. It is invaluable to really analyse the situation before engaging in any action. When one adopts this practice and only engages in action after seeing the benefit, then there is no need to rely on others. That is because one has used one's own intelligence, and discriminative wisdom to discern what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded. Then, as it says here, one need *not put full reliance up others*.

If we resort to listening to others, and rely solely up their advice before we engage in any action, then we can never be really sure whether the action is going to be useful or not.

Some may say one thing while others may have a different opinion, so we can never be totally be sure. Therefore it is very important to use our own intelligence and wisdom to discern whether an action is positive or not. We can see so many people who have many regrets about the great mistakes they have made in their life, all because they have not analysed and thought it through before engaging in some action.

That completes the twenty-five branches of the collection of wisdom.

F. BENEFITS ARISING TO ONE WHO AMASSES MERIT

The next question which may arise is, what kind of benefits are experienced by one who actually collects merit? The answer is given in two subdivisions.

1. Arising of five common good qualities
2. Arising of twenty-five particular good qualities

1. ARISING OF THE FIVE COMMON QUALITIES

1. The first of the five common qualities is

277a. Through these practices your realm will be happy

Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

Through engaging in these Dharma practices your realm will be happy.

That is quite clear: if one engages in the practice then naturally one's own existence will be happy.

2. The second common quality is:

*277bcd. A broad canopy of fame
Will rise in all directions,
And your officials will respect you fully.*

As Gyaltsab Je explains in his commentary:

By proclaiming that you have done such and such deeds for Buddhadharmā, a broad canopy of fame will rise in all directions

Here the king is being told, 'If you engage in Dharma activities, then it will be proclaimed that you have done such and such deeds for Buddhadharmā. As a result there will be a canopy of fame, which will rise in all the directions of the earth.

3. The third common quality is covered in the last line of verse 277, and two more verses:

*277d. Your officials will respect you fully.
278. The causes of death are many,
Those of staying alive are few,
These too can become causes of death,
Therefore always perform the practices.*

Gyaltsab Je's explanation of these lines is:

The sole means to gather devout followers is through the Dharma, and because you have adopted the practices, your officials will respect you fully. To further exhort the king to swiftly put the Dharma into practice, the text explains that the causes of death, even within one's own body, are many. Those of staying alive are few ...

Having explained to the king how to practise the Dharma, Nagarjuna is now exhorting the king to actually put it into practice immediately, because there are many causes for death, which can happen at any time, and also because the causes of staying alive are few.

The commentary continues:

Those of staying alive are few, and these too can become causes of death such as being cheated by loved ones,

dwelling, such as houses, that fall apart, and indigestion and so forth.

These are examples of conditions that usually sustain life, such as loved ones, and houses that are meant to protect us from elements and so forth, and the food that we consume to sustain ourselves. But even that which sustains us can end up as a cause of death. It is very clear that loved ones can betray one and even to the point of murder and so forth; houses cave in, crushing people to death; and food, as we all know, can become a cause of death through indigestion and food poisoning and so forth.

*279. If you always perform thus the practices,
The mental happiness which arises
In the world and in yourself
Is most favourable.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

Therefore, since there are numerous causes of death, always perform the practices. If you always perform thus the practices, the mental happiness which arises as the experiential sign of development in the world and in yourself, is most favourable. Thus it is appropriate to engage in the practice of Dharma.

As clearly explained here, the natural consequence of sincerely engaging in the practice of Dharma is that one will have a happy state of mind, and external conditions will be favourable but, most importantly, the mind will be in a happy state. That is the ultimate result of the practice of Dharma: when someone sincerely and whole heartedly engages in the practice of Dharma, they will experience the natural consequence of a happy mind. Then, as mentioned here, the world and yourself will be most favourable – there are no disadvantages and only advantages in practising Dharma. So, as Gyaltsab Je exhorts us, it is appropriate to engage in the practice of Dharma.

We need to really pay heed to this advice. If we want a happy state of mind, and if we want good conditions, then the practice of Dharma is the most beneficial way to gain what we want. Alternatively if we are experiencing a chaotic, scattered and quite hectic environment, full of mental turmoil, then that is because we have not implemented the Dharma into our life.

As the great master Nagarjuna, and other masters, emphasised, the true sign of having practised the Dharma is when the mind becomes gentler and calmer. Specifically, when mental delusions begin to lessen then that is a true mark that the practice of Dharma has had an effect, i.e. there is a mental transformation as a result of practising the Dharma. When the delusions in one's mind lessen, then negative states of mind lessen, and they are naturally replaced by a calmer, more gentle and more compassionate state of mind, as oppose to a chaotic and neurotically busy state of mind.

Then, as a result of the transformation taking place, we naturally develop more faith and respect for the teachings and so forth. So generating more faith is also to be said one of the signs of the practice of Dharma.

*Transcribed by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute

Nagarjuna's Precious Garland

འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷན་པའི་བཀའ་བློན་པོ་ལྷན་པའི་སྐུ་མཆོག་གི་སྐུ་མཆོག་།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

23 August 2011

As usual we will spend some time in meditation. (*meditation*)
We need to set the bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teaching, such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings by liberating them from all suffering and leading them to ultimate happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put its meaning into practice well'.

F. BENEFITS ARISING TO ONE WHO AMASSES MERIT 1. ARISING OF FIVE COMMON GOOD QUALITIES

4. We are up to the fourth of the five common good qualities.

The relevant lines of the root text read:

*280ab. Through the practices you will sleep happily
And will awaken happily*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary gives this explanation:

(4) If you harm others you will not sleep well and even while you are awake you will not be happy. If, however, you refrain from harming others, you will not fear enemies, thus *through the practices you will sleep happily and will awaken happily*.

The point being emphasised here, which is really quite straightforward is that *if you harm others you will not be able to sleep in comfort, out of fear that others might harm you, and even when you are awake you will not be happy. So if you refrain from harming others, you will not fear enemies, thus through the practices you will sleep happily and will awaken happily*. For those who are quite influential or well known, there is always the fear of that they might be attacked by enemies. This is particularly so for those who have the power to inflict harm on others, as that harm naturally causes enemies, and if one has enemies then there is cause to be fearful at all times. Whereas those with a compassionate attitude towards others, and who engage in positive actions, don't create any enemies. So they have no fear of enemies and are able to rest quite happily. Although this advice is given to the king, we definitely need to relate this advice to our personal life and practice.

The main point being raised here is that anyone who engages in the Dharma practice of engaging collecting merit and wisdom will naturally enjoy a life of ease and happiness during the day, and will be able to sleep soundly at night. That is an immediate result of engaging in the practices of collecting merit and wisdom.

As long as we lack a sufficient collection of merit and wisdom we will experience inner disturbances. Some will actually experience harm, so there are external conditions that make one feel uncomfortable and unhappy. Yet there are others who, even though there are no external harmful conditions, find that their mind is not really joyful and happy and they feel agitated and disturbed. That is because they lack a sufficient collection of merit and wisdom, which is why it is essential that we endeavour to accumulate merit, and engage in purification practices and so forth.

As virtue is the direct cause of a happy state of mind and a sense of well-being, we need to accumulate virtue. Whereas engaging in non-virtue or having a negative state of mind is the cause of an unhappy mind. We can see for ourselves that if we have become agitated during the day through conflict with others, or some dispute or argument and so forth, then we don't feel very settled before going to bed, which in turn disturbs our sleep. When we wake up the next day, there will be the unease of not feeling settled. So if you wish to enjoy a calm state of mind during sleep and when you wake up, you need to engage in accumulating merit and wisdom.

An appropriate way of going to sleep with a positive state of mind would be with the bodhicitta attitude. When we have that attitude in our mind before we go to sleep, then our sleep will naturally be very sound, and we will wake up in a clear and bright state of mind. With that positive energy we will be able to face the day with a positive mind.

5. The fifth common good quality is covered in these lines:

*280cd. Because your inner nature will be without defect,
Even your dreams will be happy*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

5. As a result of having a pure mind, *because your inner nature will be without defect, even your dreams will be happy*. Thus endeavour to practise Dharma.

This is very clearly explaining that a happy state of mind, even to the extent of having good dreams, is a result of maintaining a pure mind. In contrast, if we have a mind infested with delusions, such as strong anger, desire, pride and so forth then, we will have an unsettled state of mind, to the extent of having nightmares and disturbed sleep. So troubled sleep is none other than the consequence of an impure, and thus disturbed mind.

If we really look into ourselves we can detect how supposedly external reasons for problems and so forth are really the outcome of negative attitudes, which are influenced by delusions such as strong anger and attachment. As we are familiar with the Dharma, it is not as if we don't know the ill-effects of attachment and anger, but nevertheless we resort to finding those faults in others. We think, 'Attachment is not good, anger is not good. He or she is so negative with lots of anger and desire', so, all too easily, we find the faults of these negative states of mind in others. Our problem is not that we don't know the faults of anger and attachment, but rather we are not willing to acknowledge those faults within ourselves. We need to see that the fault is the attachment and anger within our own mind, and that is what causes our agitation and problems.

As His Holiness the Dalai Lama mentioned recently, prominent scientists now believe that that 95% of negative attributes come from one's own mind rather than from the object's side. His Holiness said that this is really quite a remarkable finding. It is really quite significant that someone, who is not from a religious background, has found through scientific investigation that 95% of problems actually come from one's mind rather than existing objectively. Of course Buddhism explains that it is our own mental projections that cause us to see faults in others, but here we have someone from a scientific background, coming to the same conclusion through scientific investigation! So we really need to pay attention to this very significant point.

As explained in the teachings, when a state of mind of anger, for example, perceives an object, it exaggerates the faults of that object. Therefore the faults that are perceived in the

object are mostly projected by the exaggerated faulty mind, rather than being an actual negative attribute of the object itself. Thus the scientific investigation is completely in accordance with the teachings, which explain that it is an inappropriate attention that exaggerates the faults of the object (in the case of anger), which makes us see the faults in the object. However we still find it hard to be convinced about that, even though we have heard it again and again in the teachings, and which is now supported by a purely empirical investigation.

To further emphasise the parallel between the scientific investigation and the Buddha's teaching, you will recall that it has been explained that there is no denying that an object of desire or attraction does have an attractive attribute or quality. The problem is that the mind of attachment exaggerates the attributes of that object to the point where the mind of attachment views those exaggerated qualities as being actual qualities of the object. Likewise with anger; if the question is whether there is some faults in the object, then the answer is that there are faults, but when anger views the object it exaggerates those faults.

Anger and attachment are said to be wrong consciousness because they perceive an exaggerated fault or quality of the object, which does not in fact exist. Similarly when the scientist explains that 5% of the fault lies in the object, he is not denying that there is a fault in the object. Rather, he is saying that while 5% of the fault lies in the object the remaining 95% of perceived faults come from one's own perception.

Even though the scientist may not use the same terminology, the conclusion is the same. There is no denying that there is a fault in the object, which is confirmed by scientific investigation, but 95% of the fault that is perceived comes from one's own mind, and only 5% lies with the object itself. I think that this scientific investigation is really quite significant because empirical scientific reasoning is supporting the Buddha's explanation.

The main point in the verse is that if your inner nature is without defect then even your dreams will be happy. To understand the full context of this, we need to understand that the opposite is also true; if the mind has defects then everything, even to the extent of our dreams will be unhappy. Having a happy or an unhappy state of mind is all dependent on our own inner state of mind, rather than external conditions.

2. ARISING OF TWENTY-FIVE PARTICULAR GOOD QUALITIES

1. The first particular good quality is covered by the next two verses, the first of which reads:

281. (1) *Intent on serving your parents,
Respectful to the principals of your lineage,
Using your resources well, patient, generous,
With kindly speech, without divisiveness, and
truthful,*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

(1) *Intent on serving your parents* by providing them with food, clothing and so forth, and be *respectful to the principals of your lineage*. *Using your resources well*, means that food and so forth are not obtained through non-virtuous means. Be *patient, generous, with kindly speech, without divisiveness and truthful*.

This is a description of eight disciplines to be performed throughout one's lifetime, all of which have been explained earlier. 1) *Serve your parents by providing them with food and*

clothing and so forth; 2) be respectful to the principals of your lineage; 3) use your resources well which, as the commentary explains, *means that food and so forth are not obtained through non-virtuous means*. Whatever our need for food and clothing and other resources to sustain ourselves, we need to ensure that they are free from being obtained through wrong deeds; 4) *be patient; 5) generous; 6) with kindly speech; 7) without divisiveness; and 8) truthful*.

282. *Through performing such discipline for one lifetime
You will become a monarch of gods
Whereupon even more so you will be a monarch
of gods.
Therefore observe such practices.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

Through performing such discipline as these eight, during this very one lifetime, its effect is that *you will become a monarch of gods whereupon even more so you will perform deeds to be a monarch of gods* [in the future]. *Therefore observe such practices*.

We really need to take heed of this incredibly essential and practical advice that Nagarjuna is presenting. Many of the qualities mentioned here have been covered previously, but it is useful to review them again. **Serving one's parents** is an extremely practical, meaningful and fitting practice, because it is a way to repay their kindness. At the very start of our lives, we were extremely vulnerable as we were not able to eat by ourselves or go to the toilet by ourselves; if left by ourselves we would not have survived for even a day. It is due to the kindness of our parents at the very beginning of our life that we have been able to get this far in life.

Reflecting on those kind acts will be sufficient motivation for us to engage in respecting and serving our parents now. Unfortunately this practice of service seems to be lacking in many places, but if it were to be established in the world, it would cause so much natural goodness in the world.

Kindly speech, without divisiveness and being **truthful**, are also extremely important points for us to consider, as so much conflict arises from harmful and harsh speech. So we need to be really mindful, because so often we don't consider how our speech could affect someone else, and we speak in a manner that could be hurtful, and which causes discomfort and conflict. A lot of unnecessary conflict comes none other than not being mindful of one's speech. If we could be a little bit more mindful and use kind speech rather than a harsh speech, then whatever we say will be more effective. Rather than causing disharmony and conflict, it will result in well-being. Therefore, we should never underestimate the importance of kind speech.

Equally important is not using divisive speech, because a lot of conflict within families and communities, and so forth, is caused by divisive speech. Through uttering something divisive to someone else, just one person can cause many others to have doubts and conflicts. If we are not mindful, we can go round spreading rumours and spreading ill-will just through our divisive speech. It is also essential to use truthful speech. These practices are not beyond our reach; they are not some really profound level of practice that we are not able to engage in, and in fact it is just a matter of implementing them. As we all recognise this as being righteous way of living and conducting ourselves, why not implement it in our life?

Nagarjuna's advice is thus very practical advice. In fact Nagarjuna is renowned as being the second buddha; he is revered as he was equal to the Buddha in terms of knowledge, wisdom, and skill in imparting the teaching. It

is due Nagarjuna's kindness that we have access to so many levels of the profound teachings of the Buddha in our age. It was Nagarjuna who revived the Buddha's teachings after a period of decline, re-establishing them and disseminating them so effectively that they have lasted until now. So Nagarjuna's advice is not to be taken lightly, as it is very profound and it arises from his real compassion. Knowing that his advice is really beneficial and useful for all of mankind, it is worthwhile that we try to implement it in our daily life.

2. The second of the particular qualities is described in three verses, the first of which is:

283. (2) *Even three times a day to offer:
Three hundred cooking pots of food
Does not match a portion of the merit
In one instant of love.*

Gyalsab Je's begins his explanation by stating:

(2) Lest one wonders whether it would be possible to accumulate the collection of merit if one lacks material things to be generous with, the following is an example how one can gain even more merit.

Sometimes we may feel, 'How can I accumulate merit if I don't have *material things to be generous with* and so forth?' To remove that doubt, it is indicated that there is a possibility of accumulating much more merit than by giving material wealth and so forth, Gyalsab Je explains:

Even to offer three hundred [clay] cooking pots of food with sixty different type of dishes which are prepared with the finest ingredients three times a day, does not match a portion of the merit in one instant of love that wishes other beings to be happy.

These few lines describe the unimaginable benefit of cultivating love and compassion for all sentient beings. As mentioned here, if one were to cook great lavish meal, with *three hundred different pots of food, all with sixty different types of dishes, using the finest ingredients and offer that three times a day to others*, then that would be considered as a very generous act, as it involves a lot of cost and effort and preparation. However contemplating love and compassion, even for an *instant*, by thinking about the welfare of sentient beings and genuinely wishing them to be free from all sufferings and endowed with all the causes of happiness, is said to be far more meritorious than giving material aid.

This is an essential point that we really need to consider. We might feel that we do not have the capacity to create a big generous deed, but we do have the capacity to generate love and compassion. We know how to cultivate and meditate on love and compassion; we know how to contemplate the suffering of sentient beings not wishing them to suffer and wishing all beings to be happy. We are all capable of doing that, so it is just a matter of generating that attitude.

Personally I feel that this is one of the most beneficial practices of my daily practice. Periodically, during the day, I try to spend a few minutes contemplating the plight of all beings. When one brings to mind the suffering nature of sentient beings in samsara, it seems to move the mind towards really wishing them to be free from their suffering and wishing them happiness. I am not in any way claiming that I have developed any profound level of compassion and love, however, when I do spend some time just contemplating that, I can safely say that it definitely moves my mind, and gives me a real sense of encouragement. I also feel that as a result my mind naturally becomes very settled, very calm and also very focused. From my limited personal

experience, I have a high regard for this practice of meditating on love and compassion by focusing on sentient beings.

There are not enough words to express the real benefit of such a meditation practice. Based on my limited experiences I can confidently say that it is a really powerful practice. It is just a matter of using some time in daily life, if possible throughout the day. But even if it is just a few minutes, bring to mind the suffering nature of sentient beings, and then wish them to be free from suffering, and to enjoy a genuine state of happiness.

As many teachings emphasise this powerful practice is a very practical way for us to accumulate merit. In *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, Shantideva mentions again and again the great benefit of developing great love and compassion for all sentient beings. Like all other teachers, Shantideva emphasises that meditating on the bodhicitta attitude is the most supreme way to accumulate merit, and the most powerful practice to purify negative karma. What more do we need to than an essential practice that is powerful for both accumulating merit and for purification?

284. *Though [through love] you are not liberated
You will attain the eight good qualities of love—
Gods and humans will be friendly,
Even [nonhumans] will protect you,*
285. *You will have mental pleasures and many [physical]
pleasures,
Poison and weapons will not harm you,
Without striving you will attain your aims,
And be reborn in the world of Brahma.*

These two verses cover the eight qualities of love. In his commentary Gyalsab Je explains the first verse thus:

The benefits of love are: *in this very life, you will attain the good qualities of 1) love, expressed by gods and humans, thus they will be friendly,*

The *first* quality is that if you cultivate love you will actually attain the benefit of the *love expressed by gods and humans*, which means that *gods and humans will be friendly* to you. When one expresses genuine love and compassion for others then the natural response from them, humans and gods alike, will be to express love for you. As I emphasise regularly, expressing love for others is the optimum way to find a genuine companion. The main point here is that as a result of expressing love and compassion for others, one will not be deprived of companions, and true friends.

Then *second* quality of love is that:

2) *Even non-humans will protect you.*

If you develop genuine love and compassion for all beings then rather than harming you, *even non-humans*, such as spirits and so forth, *will protect you.*

Thirdly:

3) *You will have mental pleasures*

Expressing love and compassion naturally brings about a joyful and happy state of mind. The more one cultivates and expresses love and compassion, the more the mind will naturally be in tune with love and compassion, and with a loving and compassionate state of mind only joy and happiness will be experienced. That is how expressing love and compassion naturally leads to a happy state of mind.

As a result the *fourth* quality is:

and 4) *many physical pleasures.*

As emphasised again and again in the teachings, having a happy state of mind contributes to physical well-being. It

has also been proven scientifically that those who have a happy and joyous state of mind also seem to enjoy natural good health.

Then we go on to the *fifth* and *sixth* qualities which are:

5) *Poison and 6) weapons will not harm you;*

The *seventh* quality is:

7) *without striving, you will attain your aims.*

Without much effort, due to their positive consequences or effects, expressing love and compassion will also have a personal benefit in that one's goals will be naturally be fulfilled without much effort.

The *eighth* and final quality is:

In the future lifetimes, you will *be reborn in the world of Brahma.*

Here, *being reborn in the world of Brahma* can be taken literally or, as some teachings indicate, it also has the connotation of being liberated from suffering. If we were take it literally then that means being born in the highest state within cyclic existence. Some teachings further emphasise this point by saying that if when one develops love and compassion for other sentient beings, one actually creates the merit to be born in the world of Brahma as many times as there are beings for whom one has expressed love and compassion.

This is basically indicating a measure of how much merit one accumulates. Accumulating the merit to be born in the world of Brahma is mainly a measure of how much merit one has accumulated because vast amounts of merit are needed to be born in that state. When it is related to liberation, then even more merit has to be accumulated to free oneself from suffering of samsara.

The amount of merit that one accumulates by developing love and compassion is large enough to be born many times over in the world of Brahma. And then, of course, one can use that merit in more effective ways for one's practice. The commentary further explains that even if one is not liberated in this lifetime, by meditating on love you will attain the eight qualities of love.

In conclusion, as Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

Though through love you may not be liberated [in this life-time], by meditating on love you will attain the eight good qualities.

By cultivating and expressing love and compassion for other sentient beings one will, at best, achieve personal liberation or freedom from suffering and the trappings of samsara. But even if that were not to happen in this lifetime, the definite benefit that one will achieve in this lifetime is the eight good qualities of love that were explained earlier. So the main point being emphasised here is that it is worthwhile to develop, cultivate and express love and compassion, because of the great benefits that will ensue.

3. We come to the third of the twenty-five qualities.

286. (3) *If you cause sentient beings to generate The altruistic aspiration to enlightenment and make it firm, You will always attain an altruistic aspiration to enlightenment Firm like the monarch of mountains.*

The explanation of this verse in Gyaltsab Je's commentary is:

(3) If you cause sentient beings to generate the altruistic aspiration to enlightenment and teach methods to make it firm so that it does not decline, you will always attain, in this and future lives, an altruistic aspiration to

enlightenment, which is firm like the monarch of mountains.

If, at the same time as one is developing bodhicitta, one were to *teach methods* and encourage others to develop the valuable and extremely precious bodhicitta attitude, which is *the altruistic aspiration to achieve enlightenment*, and *make it firm* in others, then one could *attain* or realise the bodhicitta attitude *in this lifetime*. And even if it is not developed in this lifetime, it will definitely create the cause to generate that bodhicitta mind in a future lifetime, which will remain very stable like *the monarch of mountains*.

4. The fourth particular good quality is indicated in this line:

287a. *Through faith you will not be without leisure*

As this is quite easy to comprehend Gyaltsab Je's commentary just repeats the main point

(4) Within the collections, through faith you will not be without leisure.

Developing faith is one of the collections of merit, and the consequence of developing faith that is one will not be without leisure. In a precious human rebirth one can be fortunate enough to enjoy leisure, but one can also be reborn in a life without leisure which includes being born with defects. Basically this is indicating that faith will protect one from a life without leisure.

The *fifth* particular good quality is

287b. (5) *Through good ethics you will move in good transmigrations*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads,

(5) Through good ethics you will move in good transmigrations of human and god realms.

Adhering to moral *ethics* will be a cause to be reborn *in a good transmigration* which, as the commentary indicates, will be rebirth in the *human and god realms*.

The *sixth* of the particular good qualities is:

287cd. (6) *Through becoming familiar with emptiness You will attain detachment from all phenomena.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains

(6) Through becoming familiar with emptiness by realising and meditating on it, you will attain the conscientiousness of not declining from virtue, thus gaining detachment from all phenomena.

When one *becomes familiar with emptiness*, by *meditating on it* and thus *realising emptiness*, then by the virtue of realising emptiness *you will develop* that unceasing constant vigilance or conscientious mind that protects one from *declining from virtue*. In other words, from the moment that one has realised emptiness, one will be perpetually engaged in virtue, and one will always be protected from non-virtue. In that way one gains *detachment from all phenomena*, which means that one will be free from the trappings of desire and attachment to worldly phenomena.

The main points here are that faith is part of the collection of merit, which was explained previously in more detail. Likewise moral discipline or ethics is part of the collection of merit, as has also been explained previously. The realisation of emptiness is the collection of wisdom, and although the benefits of emptiness have been explained in great detail previously, they are mentioned here again briefly.

Transcribed by Su Lan Foo

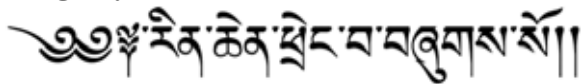
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

© **Tara Institute**

23 August 2011 week 2

Nagarjuna's Precious Garland



Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

30 August 2011

With the appropriate motivation we can engage in the practice of meditation. [meditation]

We can now generate the appropriate motivation for receiving the teaching from the depths of our hearts. The motivation can be along these lines: 'In order to benefit all sentient beings by freeing them from all suffering and leading them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and will put them into practice well'.

2. ARISING OF TWENTY-FIVE PARTICULAR GOOD QUALITIES (CONT.)

This refers to the results of engaging in the collections to accumulate merit.

4. The fourth of these qualities is:

287a. Through faith you will not be without leisure

It is good to bring to mind what these words mean. i.e. that with *faith* one will be able to obtain all the right conditions for practising the Dharma. To be in a condition without leisure includes being born human but without access to the Dharma, or holding wrong views which means that even if were to be born in places where the Dharma flourishes one will not be receptive to the Dharma teachings. So we can rejoice in the fact that we enjoy all the conditions to practise the Dharma now, while engaging in practices to obtain such conditions again in future.

5. The relevant line from the root text is:

287b. (5) Through good ethics you will move in good transmigrations

Basically this means that observing moral ethics now will be the cause to be reborn in the human and god realms in the future. So we need to remember how important it is that we actually engage in accumulating the causes for a good rebirth. What is being explained here is that through practising good ethics one will have a higher rebirth in the next lifetime. It needs to be understood that moral ethics is something that we need to practice for ourselves. It is not as if associating with others who have good moral ethics will help us to have a good rebirth—the only thing that will help us to have a good rebirth is our own moral ethics.

The teachings explain that the Dharma is the actual refuge, which means the real protector. This is very clear in the context of how practising morality will prevent one from being reborn in the lower realms. It is the ethics that we personally observe that protects us from the lower realms. This means we need apply ethics in our daily life to the best of our ability and then slowly increase the level of our practice. For example, we can start by making the strong commitment, 'Even for a few moments I will not harm any sentient being; I will refrain from harming other sentient beings'. Observing that commitment, even for just for a few moments, becomes a powerful cause to secure a good rebirth in a future lifetime. This is a practical way of applying the

practice in daily life. It is not sufficient to just repeat these lines and have some sort of general understanding of them. Rather, we need to actually apply them in our practice.

Through reading and studying this text and receiving explanations of its meaning we gain the resources to practice the Dharma. Otherwise we might be like those who, despite having studied for a while, have to ask, 'How do I practice? What is the Dharma that I need to practice?' That just goes to show that they have missed the point, which is that we need to put into practice the material that we are studying, at every opportunity. The way to practise is to incorporate the teachings into our daily life. The teachings need to be regarded as personal instructions to be implemented in our daily practice. This is how we derive the essence and our study will have served its purpose.

The way that we relate the teaching to our personal life is to see it as a means to transform ourselves. What we need to keep in mind is that transforming ourselves is a gradual process, where one practice is gradually complemented by another. Then we will begin to see our mind gradually becoming calmer, gentler and more peaceful. When we investigate we will find that a real sense of calm and tranquillity is experienced every time we practise ethics. That is the immediate benefit that we are able to experience.

6. Sixth is:

*287cd. (6) Through becoming familiar with emptiness
You will attain detachment from all
phenomena.*

This has been explained previously. So what does it mean? Although only two lines, their meaning is incredibly profound, so it is essential that we understand that meaning. As it says, if you meditate on emptiness you will not be attached to all worldly phenomena. So how does that work?

Student: By realising that everything is empty, there will be no grasping at the self or other things, so then it is not possible to have attachment.

Here we need to be careful. Some misinterpret these lines to mean that since everything is empty, nothing really exists, and thus there are no objects to become attached to. This is based on the misconception that that nothing really exists, and if one realises that then one will not have attachment. That would be a misinterpretation, right?

To derive a more essential understanding of these two lines, we need to relate to how becoming familiar with emptiness, by realising and meditating on it, serves as the antidote to overcome the root of all delusions, which is grasping at an inherently existent self, or grasping at the 'I'. As explained in the teachings, the root of all delusions is grasping at the self or 'I', and the antidote that overcomes that grasping is the realisation of emptiness or selflessness. Thus, the realisation of emptiness is the direct opponent that overcomes grasping at the self or 'I'. As the grasping at a self is weakened, the delusions that arise from that grasping, i.e. attachment, anger and so forth, also become weaker and less intense.

As Gyalsab Je's commentary explains:

(6) Through becoming familiar with emptiness by realising and meditating on it, you will attain the conscientiousness of not declining from virtue, thus gaining detachment from all phenomena.

As explained in the commentary, one develops conscientiousness through becoming *familiar with emptiness*. Understanding emptiness is the direct antidote that overcomes grasping at the self or 'I', which is the root cause

of all the delusions. When that grasping is weakened, then one naturally develops the conscientiousness of becoming very wary, and not allowing the delusions to gain a foothold. It is essential that we understand that in order to overcome the delusions, we need to tackle their root cause. Otherwise, as we have all experienced, if we find a technique that overcomes one delusion, such as meditating on the faults or unappealing attributes of the object to overcome attachment, then that may seem to work for a while but later, under different circumstances, the delusion arises again. When we try to tackle each individual delusion with a specific antidote, then it seems that we never seem to get a grip on actually eliminating the delusions. We are unable to stop them from arising because we have failed to deal with their root cause, which is why the realisation of emptiness is essential.

The main point we need to understand here is that familiarising ourselves with emptiness, by meditating on it, and then eventually realising emptiness, serves as the ultimate antidote for overcoming all delusions. That is why it is so essential that we gain the realisation of emptiness. Otherwise, as mentioned earlier, we might find that even though we are beginning to develop some awareness and avoid becoming angry, attachment starts to arise. Worse, if we have been able to deal with our anger and attachment, the delusion of pride arises as we think, 'Oh, I am really reaching some level here'. Then before we realise it, we are being affected by pride or jealousy when we see someone else doing better.

In this way it seems that the delusions are competing with each other; while we try to subdue one, another one rises spontaneously. The reason we are not able to effectively combat the delusions is because we are not dealing with the root cause, and it is the realisation of emptiness that overcomes the root cause of all delusions.

As Lama Tsongkapa very compassionately advised us that when we do any practice we need to be really mindful about not becoming stuck with only one form of practice, losing our conscientiousness and failing to detect other faults that may arise. The way to engage in practice is to applying the understanding one has gained from extensive study of the teachings, using all the tools to tackle the delusions in every aspect. That is how we can begin to really subdue our own mind. When we are meditating on one aspect of the teachings, we need to be mindful of other practices as well, and always be wary about the different delusions that may creep in at any time. Being vigilant about one's state of mind is essential to personal transformation and progress. In summary, Lama Tsong Khapa is pointing out that the study of the Dharma and subduing one's mind need to work hand in hand.

7. the root text reads:

288a. (7) Through not wavering you will attain mindfulness,

With respect to this Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

(7) *Through not wavering*, which is obtained by listening to the doctrine and so forth, *you will attain mindfulness* with an intelligent mind.

Another essential quality that we need obtain is *mindfulness* and an *intelligent mind*. *Not wavering* means trying to develop a stable unwavering and intelligent mind, which is obtained by listening to the doctrine and understanding its meaning. That combination of mindfulness and an intelligent mind is essential to maintain a really good focus.

The main implication of *not wavering* is having a truthful and stable mind, whenever one engages in practice. For example, when listening to the teaching and engaging in any practice there is a strong emphasis on developing a positive motivation, which is also a way of making the mind stable and very pure. That combination of a pure and stable mind allows the mind to be firm and unwavering. If one lacks a stable mind then one's mind is prone to being persuaded by faults, negative intentions and so forth. So techniques that develop a stable, pure and truthful mind are essential.

8. The eighth particular good quality is:

288b. (8) Through thinking you will attain intelligence

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

(8) *Through thinking* about the doctrine, *you will attain the intelligence* of great wisdom.

The earlier point referred to the qualities that one obtains from listening to the doctrine, and now the emphasis is on thinking about the doctrine. Here, *intelligence* refers to *great wisdom*. While it is important to listen to the Dharma, it is just as important to contemplate and think about the meaning of the doctrine that one has heard. The more we apply ourselves to *thinking about* the meaning of *the doctrine*, the deeper our understanding of the Dharma will be, and in this way our intelligence or wisdom will naturally increase.

As explained in other teachings, the way to gain realisations about the Dharma is by first listening, then thinking about or contemplating it, and finally meditating on the points one has understood. This text is emphasising that you really need to think about the Dharma or doctrine not just once or twice, but again and again. It is only through really analysing and thinking about the Dharma that one gains intelligence or wisdom.

9. Ninth is:

288c. (9) Through respect you will be endowed with realisation of meaning,

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je states:

(9) *Through respect* for the Dharma and its propounder, *you will be endowed with realisation of the meaning* of the Dharma.

Here we need to understand that we will naturally develop *respect for the Dharma* when we listen to it and then analyse and think about it, because we will see its value. Then we will develop respect for *those who propound* the Dharma – the teachers of Dharma.

A simple way to understand this is that when we begin to see the value of the Dharma, we gain a natural respect for it, and then naturally we expand that respect to those who teach the Dharma, sharing its great meaning. Then, through that combination of respect for both the Dharma and those who propound it, one will be endowed with the realisation of the meaning of the Dharma. So the cause and effect sequence is that respect for the Dharma and the teachers leads one to realisations about the meaning of the Dharma. An essential point here is that when we begin to see the Dharma as valuable and sacred, then those who propound that Dharma will naturally be seen in the same light.

10. Tenth is:

288d. (10) Through guarding the doctrine you will become wise.

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

(10) *Through guarding the doctrine*, that you have heard, *you will become wise*.

This is another essential point that we need to bear in mind. As much as we might put some effort in listening to the doctrine, and reading texts, it is equally important to guard the doctrine. Here *guarding the doctrine* has the connotation of retaining what one has heard. If we don't retain what we have heard we will be like a vase with a hole in it. No matter how much water you put in the vase it never fills up, because water keeps dripping out of the hole—nothing is retained. Similarly if we don't put some effort into retaining and recollecting what we have heard, then the Dharma will not really have much effect on our minds. Then we will lack the ability to become really intelligent and wise.

In summary, in order to gain wisdom we need to first listen to the Dharma, because we gain certain amount of wisdom just through listening. When that wisdom is used to further analyse and think about the Dharma, we reach another level of wisdom, which is then used for meditation. This point is the same as that made in *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, where Shantideva explains that if one does not make an effort to retain whatever Dharma one has heard it will be similar to a vessel with a hole in it. If one does not guard or retain the meaning of the Dharma one has heard, then one will gain the wisdom of the dharma. Therefore the way to retain the meaning of the Dharma is by applying mindfulness to remember its meaning.

11. Eleventh is:

**289. (11) Through making the hearing and the giving
Of the doctrine be unobstructed
You will company with buddhas
And will quickly attain your wishes**

As Gyaltsab Je makes clear in his commentary:

(11) *Through making the hearing and the giving of the doctrine be unobstructed*, by removing faults of being miserly with the teachings, concealing it and so forth, *you will company with buddhas and you will quickly attain your wishes*.

As explained here, whether listening to the Dharma or if one is in the position of explaining Dharma to others, then that explanation should not be obstructed by concealment, or given in a miserly manner. Here *miserly* means being unwilling to share what one has understood or giving only partial advice, thinking, 'If I were to explain the full meaning of what I have understood then I will no longer be wiser than them'. Being miserly with one's understanding of the teachings is a faulty state of mind. *Concealing it* means not imparting the full meaning but offering some sort of contrived meaning. If someone were to ask, 'What does *conventional truth* mean' and one replies with the definition of ultimate truth, then that would be an example of concealment.

The main point here is the need to be really mindful about having a pure motivation that is free from the defect of conceit or desire for personal gain, while listening to the teachings, or while sharing them with others. Of course, many of us here are engaged in both listening to and sharing the Dharma, but sharing the teachings is not necessarily a formal teaching. It can just be a sincere answer to a question someone asks. The main thing is to have the pure wish to benefit the other and sincerely share one's understanding without withholding anything.

12. The twelfth is quite clear:

**290a. (12) Through non-attachment you will achieve
the meaning [of doctrines]**

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

(12) *Through non-attachment to sensual pleasures, you will achieve the meaning of the doctrine.*

13. Next is:

**290b. (13) Through not being miserly, your resources
will increase.**

Nagarjuna talks a lot about the faults of being miserly. It is also said that the result of being generous and not miserly is that one's resources will increase naturally. Gyaltsab Je's commentary repeats the main point:

(13) *Through not being miserly, your resources will increase.*

14. The fourteenth good quality is:

**290c. (14) Through not being proud you will become
chief [of those respected],**

As Gyaltsab Je says in his commentary:

(14) *Through not being proud you will be honoured by all and become chief of those respected.*

Again, this is quite straightforward. Any individual who practices genuine modesty and who is *not proud* will naturally be *respected and honoured* by others. We can all see examples of this.

15. As the text reads:

**290d. (15) Through enduring the doctrine you will
attain retention.**

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

(15) *Through enduring the doctrine on emptiness, you will attain retention—the siddhi of non-forgetfulness.*

Here the word *enduring* has the connotation of the patience of applying the Dharma, which is one of the categories of patience. The patience of applying Dharma refers to understanding the Dharma. The main emphasis here is the doctrine on emptiness; when one gains an understanding of emptiness then that becomes the main realisation that combats our negativities and delusions.

When we categorise emptiness, there is the emptiness or selflessness of person and the selflessness of phenomena. So first of all we need to think about why there are two categories of emptiness or selflessness. Then we think about what emptiness or selflessness of a person means. What does the emptiness of an individual person mean and what does the selflessness or emptiness of other phenomena imply? We need to think about these points again and again. So here *endurance* means having a willingness to engage in this contemplation and think about emptiness and selflessness again and again, without any sense of it being a chore.

The natural result of engaging in that way is that one will gain the type of retention that is called the *siddhi of non-forgetfulness*. Although the root text refers to *retention*, this means, as the commentary explains, obtaining the *siddhi* of non-forgetfulness. It would be wonderful to achieve that *siddhi*, as we would never forget the main points we have understood from the teachings.

The very process by which one gains a realisation is by thinking about an essential point again and again. If we can't recollect a certain point of a Dharma explanation, then that is because we haven't given enough time to think about it. We gain some understanding, but we fail to put more time into it, and then later on when we have to try to recall what we have understood, it has gone from our memory. The fact that we don't remember it is because we haven't given much time to thinking about it again and again. What is implied

here is that we need to apply that process of thinking again and again about the Dharma, especially in relation to emptiness. By thinking about it again and again, we will obtain that siddhi of retention or non-forgetfulness.

16. The root text reads:

**291 (16) Through giving the five essentials
As well as non-fright to the frightened
You will not be harmed by any demons
And will become the best of the mighty.**

Gyaltsab Je's commentary adds some points to make the meaning clear:

(16) *Through giving the five essentials* – molasses, ghee, honey, sesame oil and salt – *as well as non-fright*, such as an escort to those who are frightened of enemies and so forth, *you will not be harmed by any demons and will become the best of the mighty.*

As explained here, by engaging in the act of generosity with material things, such as *giving the five essentials*, as well providing an *escort* for those who are travelling to places where there known to be *enemies* or bandits and so forth, the positive result is that *you will not be harmed by demons and become mighty* or powerful.

17. The next verse reads:

**292. (17) Through offering series of lamps at
monuments
And through offering lamps in dark places
As well as the oil for them
You will attain the divine eye.**

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads

(17) *Through offering series of lamps at monuments and through offering lamps in places that are engulfed in darkness, as well as the oil for them, you will attain the clairvoyance of the divine eye.*

This is quite straightforward. By engaging in these positive deeds of *offering lights and lamps* to holy objects, as well as *in dark places*, the positive result is that one *will attain the divine eye*, which is one of the five types of clairvoyance that are obtained through practice.

Offering light is a practice for gaining merit. One can offer light to the enlightened beings, holy objects, monuments, statues and so forth, as well as offering light for those who are in dark places. In addition, if there are oil lamps one can offer oil. That kind of generosity will become the cause for obtaining the clairvoyance of the divine eye. When we go on pilgrimage or visit holy places, we naturally offer a lamp or light, so it is good to know the significance of that offering and the kind of results that one will obtain by offering light for the benefit of others. These are the things to keep in mind when we make an offering of light.

18. The eighteenth good quality is covered in the next verse:

**293. (18) Through offering musical instruments and
bells
For the worship of monuments
And through offering drums and trumpets
You will attain the divine ear.**

Gyaltsab Je gives this explanation:

(18) For the purpose of making offerings, *through offering musical instruments and bells for the worship of monuments and through offering drums and trumpets, you will attain the clairvoyance of the divine ear.*

Again, this is quite straightforward. *Offerings to monuments and holy objects* can include *musical instruments* or putting

bells on holy objects, as well as making offerings for musical instruments such as *drums and trumpets* and so forth. Making these offerings will be the cause to obtain the *clairvoyance* called *divine ear*, another of the five types of clairvoyance.

19. The next verse reads:

**294. (19) Through not mentioning others' mistakes
And not talking of others' defective limbs
But protecting their minds
You will attain knowledge of others' minds.**

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

(19) *Through not mentioning other's faults because of their mistakes and not talking of other's defective limbs* such as of a blind person, *but protecting their minds, you will attain the clairvoyance of knowing others' minds.*

As mentioned here, we need to be really diligent and mindful about not talking casually about the faults of others. If we get into a habit of talking about the faults of others then that will prevent us from obtaining the clairvoyance of knowing the minds of others. So it is good to know that that we need to protect ourselves from gossip and finding faults in others.

Furthermore, when we encounter someone who has defective limbs or, as mentioned here, someone who is blind, then even though it is a fact that they have some defect, it would hurt them if we were to talk about that in derogatory terms in front of them. Therefore we need to be mindful of not using derogatory language that will harm the minds of others. The positive result of practising in that way is that one will create the cause to obtain the clairvoyance of knowing the minds of others.

There is nothing that we can disagree with here. This very practical advice is presented by the great compassionate master, Nagarjuna, who was not only great scholar but an enlightened being. He presents us with very manageable advice that we can apply in our daily life. If we were to neglect this advice or not apply it in our daily life, thinking that we need some sort of special technique or method to practise, then we have completely missed the point.

The advice given here is so practical, beneficial and meaningful. It would be a great pity if we were to assume that we have to look somewhere else for some sort of profound instruction. To do that would be a waste of the great opportunity that we have here now.

So we need to resolve to try to use whatever means we have to put this essential advice into practice right now. It would be good to also make strong aspirational prayers such as, 'May I be able to apply that practical advice, and put into practice all the other essential advice and the practices that are found in the teachings of Nagarjuna, who expounded the essential advice of Buddha Shakyamuni himself. May I be able to apply that advice in this life, and in future lifetimes may I again be able to meet with these great teachings, so that I can further develop myself. From life to life may I never be parted from such profound advice'. To make such aspirational prayers would be really meaningful and useful.

Transcribed by Su Lan Foo

Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett

Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

Edited Version

© Tara Institute

Nagarjuna's Precious Garland

འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷན་པའི་བཀའ་བཀའ་ལྟོས་པའི་གསུང་རྒྱུ་ལོ་ལོ་

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga
Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

6 September 2011

With an appropriate motivation, we can now engage in the practice of meditation. (*meditation*)

As usual, it is appropriate to set a motivation for receiving the teachings such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings, by liberating them from all suffering and leading them to ultimate happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well'.

Regardless of the practice or activity one is doing, the main thing is to try to maintain a kind mind and be compassionate to others. With a kind and compassionate mind, and in addition to remaining joyful and peaceful, whatever activities we engage in become very meaningful, and we can actually benefit others. So it is really essential to secure this positive state of mind. We need to consider the positive attitude of kindness and compassion as being our most valuable inner asset. In other words, if we are looking for a state of mind that secures our general wellbeing, then a compassionate attitude is essential.

When we acquaint ourselves with this positive attitude again and again, our mind will not be deterred by negative states of mind, or feelings of hostility that may arise at times, and thus we will be able to maintain a general sense of wellbeing. On the other hand, if we have a selfish attitude, being concerned only with our own wellbeing, then we will find that we are never really successful whenever we try to practise and meditate. That is because the selfishness attitude is hindering our practice.

Furthermore, when we investigate the attitude that pervades our daily activities, we will detect that it is one that is merely concerned for this life's enjoyments and wellbeing. When we acknowledge that, we will have found the cause of all the disturbing thoughts and problems that we face in life. When we think about it, all our anxieties arise from the attitude of being concerned merely about our wellbeing in this life. If we don't do anything to overcome that underlying motivation, then we will always seem to be restless and never satisfied with whatever we do. Whatever we engage in, there will always be that nagging feeling of dissatisfaction and being unsettled. Whereas when we let go of the concerns merely about this life and take into consideration our long term goal for future lifetimes, then we can see our mind becoming a little bit more content and relaxed, and a reduction in our agitation and anxiety. That is the positive effect when the affairs of this life are not of primary concern.

Try to think about this daily, for half an hour, or even a few minutes and when you detect the concern merely for this life, try to combat that. Try to see how it is not fitting to be concerned only about this life. Then, when we let go of that attitude, we will begin to feel a genuine sense of wellbeing.

Furthermore, we really need to understand the meaning of the advice in the teachings about practising less desire and having more contentment. It doesn't mean that we get rid of

all our possessions. We must understand this advice in its right context, because practising less desire and having more contentment is a positive state of mind developed within and not related to external conditions. Getting rid of one's possessions will not necessarily guarantee less desire and more contentment. In fact, one might even feel a sense of loss after giving everything away.

The main point is that practising less desire and more contentment is a mental attitude. We need to cultivate that attitude while we utilise what we have around us, which will naturally release the grip of excessive attachment to material things and a self-centred attitude. Then we can begin to expand our mind to think about the wellbeing and welfare of others.

If we are really honest with ourselves, we will find that most of the time our primary concern is about our own personal wellbeing; we seem to be preoccupied with our own wellbeing. It is very rare to find an attitude where the main concern is for others. We so often hear the lamentation, 'Oh, things are not going well for me, I've got all these problems and difficulties' and so forth; but we rarely hear, 'I feel so sad because things are not going well for others. I'm really concerned about how to bring joy and happiness for others'.

There are, however, a few occasions where people have said to me, 'Even though it does not accord with my own wishes, I agreed because it made the other happy'. When Regina and Cody, who used to come here, bought a house, Cody said that he didn't like the colours in kitchen, but Regina did. Regina said 'I am very bad because he always does what I want'. Cody's view was, 'I don't like it, but I love her dearly, and if Regina likes it, then I'll agree to it'.

Too often we say 'I like' or 'I don't like' and don't enter into any discussion about a compromise. We hardly take into consideration 'What's she thinking?', or 'What's he thinking?' He thinks he's better, she thinks she's better and on it goes. It's always better to discuss things. Otherwise it's 'Whatever you do I don't like it'. Cody and Regina have spent twenty happy years together. They have a very open relationship, they can tell each other what they like or dislike but in the end it comes down to 'If she's happy I'm happy', and 'If he's happy I'm happy'.

Cody and Regina's relationship is such that they can say to each other, 'Even though it doesn't accord with my wishes it's OK if it makes you happy'. That is a much better attitude than thinking, 'That doesn't suit me so I am not going to accept it'. Thinking of the other will make the situation much more relaxed and the relationship will be much better.

Regina is very nice, with a big heart, and she works very hard. When they go camping in the bush she even digs the toilet. When Cody first came to Australia from Czechoslovakia he didn't speak the language at all. He said that on the day he landed in Adelaide he went out to look for a job. He found one, and when they asked, 'Do you want the job?', he said 'Yes'. They asked, 'When can you start?' He said, 'Today'. 'When did you arrive?' 'I arrived today'. When he was asked 'Where is your luggage?' he showed them a small bag.

Despite his lack of language and culture and so forth when he started, because of his enthusiasm and zealous approach to work he now does very well. The reason I relate this story is because sometimes it is good to look at how when others persevere, despite hardships and difficulties, things work out quite well in their life. So that is a good example for us to recall.

There is another Polish lady who I met when I was doing a course at Mt. Martha. She said that when she first came here she spent a whole year living in a tent. Then she moved into a one-bedroom flat where she spent three years. By the time she came to the course she was quite well off. At one point we were having breakfast and a piece of bread was left to be thrown away. She felt, 'Oh, we shouldn't be throwing that away' and it brought back memories of being back in Poland where it was hard to find enough food to eat. With that background she found it hard to see bread being wasted like that.

Of course, those who are poverty stricken would not waste even a small piece of bread. They really work at using their limited means in very efficient ways. Even some wealthy families I visit don't waste food and put leftover food away. Of course, there are many such stories to share from my own experiences in Tibet and so forth, and these real life experiences are worthwhile to reflect upon, because they encourage us, and help us to appreciate what we have. However, we will not take more time now.

2. ARISING OF TWENTY-FIVE PARTICULAR GOOD QUALITIES (CONT.)

20. The twentieth particular good quality of the collections is:

295. (20) *Through giving shoes and conveyances,
Through serving the feeble,
And through providing teachers with transport
You will attain the skill to create magical emanations.*

With respect to this, Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

(20) *Through giving shoes and conveyances to the needy, and through serving the feeble by offering to lift or carry them, and through providing teachers with transport, you will attain the skill to create magical emanations.*

These are very practical ways of assisting those who are in need, even to the point of *giving shoes* to those in need of them. If we have some spare shoes we can give them to those who are needy. *Serving the feeble*, means to help those who are weak or disabled, e.g. carrying a disabled person across the water or assisting them to cross the road. These are very practical ways of benefiting others. Providing service and giving one's time to help others are very practical acts of generosity that benefit others. Of course, the advice to provide transport for those who need it is directed to the king, who has the means and the wealth to provide this assistance.

Nagarjuna is exhorting the king to share his wealth and use it to help the needy. The king would definitely have many pairs of shoes, and giving a pair of shoes to others who need it, would be a very practical help. This is in contrast to Imelda Marcos, the wife of President Marcos in the Philippines, who had something like 4000 pairs of shoes. When you think about it, how many pairs could she have put on each day in order to actually be able to use all of her shoes?

Here, Nagarjuna is telling the king that the result of sharing his wealth with others is that he will attain *the skill to create magical emanations*. When one has attained this *siddhi* then it will be possible to benefit others through many emanations. We are limited to this one aspect of ourselves, but with this *siddhi* of being able to create magical emanations, we will be able to manifest many times over to benefit others. So the main point here is to contemplate the great virtue of being generous to others.

21. The twenty-first of the qualities is explained in the following verse:

296. (21) *Through acting for the doctrine,
Remembering books of doctrine and their meaning,
And through stainless giving of the doctrine
You will attain memory of your continuum of lives.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je elaborates on the meaning of the verse:

(21) *Through acting for the doctrine by enduring hardships and constructing temples. Likewise not forgetting and remembering books of doctrine and their meaning, and through stainless giving of the doctrine, i.e. giving without hope of reward, you will attain the clairvoyance and memory of your and other's continuum of lives.*

As explained in the commentary, *through acting for the doctrine* or practices of the Dharma, refers to *enduring hardships* and engaging in activities such as *constructing temples*. For example, a certain amount of time and hardship was needed to acquire these premises for Tara Institute, which serves as a good deed according to this explanation. *Likewise not forgetting and remembering books of the doctrine*, means endeavouring to remember the meaning of the doctrine and not forget the points made in the Dharma. *Stainless giving of the doctrine*, refers to giving whatever understanding one has gained from the doctrine or teachings, without any anticipation of either praise or material rewards, but with the sole intention to benefit the other. The result of engaging in these virtuous deeds is that you will attain the *clairvoyance of remembering your previous lifetimes*.

Because I am engaged in sharing the Dharma I take this point about the stainless giving of the doctrine as personal advice. Stainless giving means giving the doctrine free from worldly concerns, ensuring that one is not teaching the doctrine in order to become famous, praised for one's knowledge, or seeking material gain. It implies that one needs to be free from strong attachment to one's own doctrine while having aversion to the views and doctrine of others. It also means not engaging in giving teachings out of a sense out competition with others – if others are teaching then I need teach it better. That would be imparting the doctrine out of jealousy. This is how one needs to protect oneself when sharing the doctrine. Many of you are also in the position of teaching others and sharing whatever knowledge you have, so it is good to be mindful about sharing in a stainless pure way. If your attitude is not pure and stainless but mixed with worldly concern then, if others don't appreciate what you are teaching or don't take your advice, you will feel hurt and be uncomfortable. That is a clear sign that one's sharing was not free from worldly concerns.

22. The verse that relates to the twenty-second quality is:

297. (22) *Through knowing thoroughly, correctly,
and truly
That all phenomena lack inherent existence,
You will attain the sixth clairvoyance –
The excellent extinction of all contamination.*

As Gyaltsab Je explains:

(22) *Through knowing thoroughly, correctly and truly that all phenomena lack true and inherent existence, you will attain the sixth clairvoyance, the cessation of deluded*

obscurations, and *the excellent extinction of all contamination* i.e. attain the liberated path.

This is another really profound point that is being re-emphasised. It refers to the correct understanding of the lack of inherent existence of phenomena, i.e. the emptiness of phenomena. As the commentary explains, as a result of *knowing thoroughly and correctly that all phenomena lack true inherent existence, you will attain the sixth clairvoyance.*

Of the six types of clairvoyance, the sixth includes the cessation of all deluded obscurations. As explained previously, there are two obscurations, the first of which is the deluded obscuration, and the realisation of emptiness serves as the antidote that overcomes all those delusions. As explained here, the result of gaining that understanding is that one will obtain *the cessation of deluded obscurations, and attain the excellent extinction of all contamination.* This refers to obtaining the liberated path. That is the end result of having the endurance to understand the lack of inherent existence of phenomena.

23. The twenty-third quality is:

**298. (23) Through meditatively cultivating the wisdom of reality
Which is the same [for all phenomena] and is moistened with compassion
For the sake of liberating all sentient beings,
You will become a conqueror endowed with all supreme aspects.**

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je elaborates on this further:

(23) Through meditatively cultivating the wisdom of reality, which is the same for all phenomena, and is moistened with compassion – i.e. the wisdom realising emptiness combined with the essence of compassion – for the sake of liberating all sentient beings, you will become a conqueror endowed with all supreme qualities such as the perfection of generosity and so forth.

As explained here, when one cultivates the *wisdom realising emptiness*, combining it with *essence of compassion* it becomes the means to obtain all the supreme qualities of the perfections of generosity, morality, patience, joyous effort, and concentration. When one obtains the state of buddhahood one obtains the supreme qualities of all six perfections.

In summary, what is being explained is that through the combination of method and wisdom, complemented with the practices of the six perfections, one will become a conqueror endowed with all of the supreme qualities. This is the path that leads to the ultimate state of enlightenment.

There is another point that we need to bear in mind; the phrase *with all supreme qualities* means that we need to incorporate all of the perfections – generosity, patience and so forth – into our practice. All of these must be intact otherwise we will not obtain all the supreme qualities.

24. We come now to the second last of the twenty-five qualities, which is covered in these two lines:

**299ab. (24) Through multitudes of pure wishes
Your buddha land will be purified.**

Having referred to the causes for becoming a conqueror, the question of where a buddha resides may arise. This is answered here, where it states that the specific cause of the *purified* abode of the enlightened is a *multitude of pure wishes.* As Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

(24) Through multitudes of pure wishes, such as billions of infinite aspirational prayers, your buddha land will be purified.

This indicates that *billions of infinite aspirational prayers* over many lifetimes secures the attainment of the purified abode that is called the buddha land.

25. The last quality is:

**299 cd. (25) Through offering gems to the Kings of Subduers,
You will obtain the state of emitting infinite light.**

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

(25) Through offering gems to the Kings of Subduers you will emit infinite light.

When Buddha Shakyamuni manifested the attainment of enlightenment, his body started to radiate light in all directions. So one of the enlightened qualities of a buddha is emitting incredible light throughout the universe. What, then, are the causes that one can create now to obtain that enlightened quality of emitting light? The teachings explain here that *offering gems* to reliquaries or images of the Buddha will become the cause to obtain that quality of *emitting infinite light.* Nagarjuna is presenting this teaching in very systematic and practical way. We could say that it is like really teaching a child reading and reading, which is a very gradual process. This systematic presentation is very suitable for us, as we are really ignorant of the Dharma. So we can see the greatness of Nagarjuna from his very practical presentation.

Next is the verse that summarises the chapter:

**300. Therefore knowing the concordance
Of actions and their effects,
Always help beings in fact.
Just that will help yourself.**

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

Therefore knowing the concordance of actions and their effects i.e. the inter-relationship between the collections and their results, always help beings. In fact just engaging in that will help yourself.

We should reflect on this really practical advice. Although it was presented to the king, it is extremely profound advice when we take it as a personal instruction. Having explained in detail how to engage in the accumulation of the collections and their effect, we now need to consider *the concordance of actions and their effects.* This refers to *the interrelationship between the collections* that were presented earlier, and the specific effects or results that follow from that. Having studied and understood that, one then resolves to help other sentient beings. When one sincerely and wholeheartedly commits oneself entirely to the service of others then that, in itself, is the best way to benefit oneself. This verse really summarises the main point that I emphasise again and again in all of my teachings.

In brief, the optimum way to secure personal wellbeing is by benefiting others at all times.

Then the name of the chapter is presented.

The third chapter of the Precious Garland, A Compendium of the Collections for Enlightenment, is finished.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

The commentary on the third chapter of the Precious Garland of Advice for the King, a Compendium of the Collections for Enlightenment is complete.

As you will be aware, the next session will be the discussion session and following that is the exam. As I always

encourage you, have a good discussion with good intentions, and really try to share your understanding. Following a good discussion, a very meaningful approach is to try to write down the main points.

You have just heard about the benefits of stainless giving of the doctrine, and because we are discussing points about the Dharma we are giving the Dharma. For one's discussion about the Dharma to become stainless, one needs to be mindful that it is free from judgemental thoughts about others and making sure that one doesn't become agitated. This will be the way to secure that one's giving of the Dharma in discussion will be really meaningful and stainless.

Part of the commitment for the Study Group, as most of you are aware, is to recite Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* or *Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. When we did the recitation for Lama Zopa Rinpoche's health, I mentioned that attendance at that session would suffice as the Study Group commitment, and that those who were not present would have to complete the recitation themselves as a part of their commitment. How many have not done the recitation of the *Bodhisattva's Way of Life*?

Since there seem to be quite a few of people who haven't done the recitation, I am wondering if it would be worthwhile to have a group recitation again. This recitation is a really meaningful practice, and in fact many other geshe have praised me for giving people this opportunity as part of their Study Group commitment.

As all other weekends are allocated, we can do the recitation on Sunday 30 October. It is, of course, a commitment for those who have not yet completed that recitation, but it would be good for those who have already done it to come along too. I will be coming, because I consider the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* to be a primary practice. Even though I can't recite it every day, I do try to recollect the essential points of the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, is like a good companion practice that really helps my mind. So if one can generate a good attitude, a good state of mind, relating to the text then what more do we need? Of course, with the different doctrines in Buddhism, there are many famous texts, however the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* has all the essential points. Nothing is more supreme, you could say, than the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*.

It will be good to announce the date in the newsletter, presenting it as an invitation to all, rather than a Study Group commitment. After all, the Study Group people already know their commitment, so it should be presented as an activity for the whole centre, and emphasise that everyone is welcome to join. We should be inclusive rather than exclusive.

When we did the recitation for the health of Lama Zopa Rinpoche we finished it before noon, but it would be good to have lunch as well. So if you can have the lunch ready then we can see how we go for time. The recitation can be done in the same manner as we did for Lama Zopa Rinpoche, where we omitted the meditation, and concentrated on the text. Sometimes the meditation can be a bit of a distraction, because we are not really sure about what to do. It is much more worthwhile to focus one's full attention just on the recitation, and then, when we think about the meaning of the text, that becomes the meditation. That is the best way to do the practice.

Transcribed by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
Edited Version
© Tara Institute

Discussion (13.09.2011)

Week: 1 (16 August 2011)

1. List the three types of generosity. [3]
2. Explain the twenty-first branch of wisdom:
Verse 272. **Bear suffering alone**
And share your pleasures with others [4]
3. Explain verse 273. **Do not be inflated**
Even by the prosperity of gods
Do not be depressed
Even by the poverty of hungry ghosts. [4]

Week: 2 (23 August 2011)

4. Describe the point that Geshe-la heard mentioned recently, where science comes to the same conclusion as Buddhism. [4]
5. "I can safely say that it definitely moves my mind and gives me a real sense of encouragement. I also feel that, as result my mind naturally becomes very settled, very calm and also very focused."
a) Describe the daily practice that Geshe-la is referring to here. [4]
- b) What does Shantideva emphasise in relation to this practise? [2]
6. How could one attain or realise the Bodhicitta attitude in this lifetime? [4]
7. What happens from the moment one has realised emptiness? [4]

Week: 3 (30 August 2011)

8. Explain the ninth Particular Good Quality:
Vs. 288c) Through respect you will be endowed with realisation of meaning. [4]
9. The fifteenth Particular Good Quality reads:
Vs. 290d) Through enduring the doctrine you will attain retention.
Explain the meaning of *endurance* and *retention* here. [4]
10. "So we need to resolve to try to use whatever means we have to put this essential advice into practice right now. It would be good to also make strong aspirational prayers." Show Geshe la's example of an aspirational prayer [4]

Week: 4 (6 September 2011)

11. Explain the twenty third quality, verse 298 : **Through meditatively cultivating the wisdom of reality**
Which is the same for all phenomena and is moistened with compassion
For the sake of liberating all sentient beings.
You will become a conqueror endowed with all supreme aspects. [4]
12. Explain Verse 300: **Therefore knowing the concordance**
Of actions and their effects
Always help beings in fact.
Just that will help yourself. [4]

Exam

Name: _____

Mark: _____

Block 5

Week 6: (20 September 2011)

1. List the three types of generosity. [3]

2. Explain the twenty-first branch of wisdom:

Verse 272. ***Bear suffering alone***

And share your pleasures with others [4]

3. Explain verse 273. ***Do not be inflated***

Even by the prosperity of gods

Do not be depressed

Even by the poverty of hungry ghosts. [4]

4. Describe the point that Geshe-la heard mentioned recently, where science comes to the same conclusion as Buddhism. [4]

5. "I can safely say that it definitely moves my mind and gives me a real sense of encouragement. I also feel that, as result my mind naturally becomes very settled, very calm and also very focused."

a) Describe the daily practice that Geshe-la is referring to here. [4]

b) What does Shantideva emphasise in relation to this practise? [2]

6. How could one attain or realise the Bodhicitta attitude in this lifetime? [4]

7. What happens from the moment one has realised emptiness? [4]

8. Explain the ninth Particular Good Quality:

Vs. 288c) *Through respect you will be endowed with realisation of meaning.* [4]

9. The fifteenth Particular Good Quality reads:

Vs. 290d) *Through enduring the doctrine you will attain retention.*

Explain the meaning of *endurance* and *retention* here. [4]

10. "So we need to resolve to try to use whatever means we have to put this essential advice into practice right now. It would be good to also make strong aspirational prayers." Show Geshe la's example of an aspirational prayer [4]

11. Explain the twenty third quality, Verse 298: ***Through meditatively cultivating the wisdom of reality
Which is the same for all phenomena and is moistened with compassion
For the sake of liberating all sentient beings.
You will become a conqueror endowed with all supreme aspects. [4]***

12. Explain Verse 300: ***Therefore knowing the concordance
Of actions and their effects
Always help beings in fact.
Just that will help yourself. [4]***