
The Six Perfections

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

14 May 2019

As usual we will do some meditation first.

[Tonglen meditation]

We should all begin with the right motivation, so that when we either listen to or give a teaching, it serves the purpose of the Dharma.

Last week, we talked about the benefits of patience and the benefits of engaging in meditation practice. Essentially, the main benefit of meditation is that it enables us to calm our mind when it is disturbed and unstable – by relying on our practice, we know what to do when our mind is disturbed and agitated. However, if we lack an understanding of meditation practice, that is another story. In that case, when we are confronted with an agitated and disturbed state of mind, we will be completely ignorant and confused about what to do. We might turn to some other method, such as taking medication.

For our practice to be beneficial, it is not enough to simply know about meditation. Rather, we need to put our knowledge into practice. For example, when our mind is agitated or disturbed, we need to apply our understanding of meditation into practice – that is, to overcome or prevent that agitated state of mind, we need to direct our mental attention to a virtuous object. When we apply that knowledge, we can see how, the moment our mind rests in that object of meditation, we will really begin to feel our mind relax. Therefore, this knowledge gives us a positive motivation to engage in meditation practice. As the term ‘meditation’ [gom = to familiarise] implies, we need to apply the practice of meditation every time we are faced with a very agitated or disturbed mind. By doing this, we will become more familiar with the practice, and it will get easier over time.

Each one of us who follows a meditation practice must recognise the benefit of doing so. We must see how following such a practice enables us to achieve what we want and avoid what we do not want. Therefore, when we talk about gaining the benefits of meditation practice, as I said before, it is not enough to simply listen to Dharma or teach it to others. Rather, for an individual to really gain benefit, he or she must practise meditation and integrate their Dharma knowledge into everyday life.

As to learning about meditation practice, it is more important to utilise your rational, intelligent mind, and analyse what you know and what you have learned about the Dharma, rather than just listening to someone talk or reading a text. Through this process of utilising your power of discriminating wisdom or intelligence, the understanding that you develop is much firmer, more reliable and more definitive. On the other hand, if your understanding merely depends on someone’s hearsay or what you’ve heard from others, your understanding is not that stable.

Meditation practice has real benefits to offer us, not just as individuals, but to families and to society at large. For

example, if you look closely at our affluent, materialistic and materially developed society, the kinds of problems and difficulties people experience are primarily related to their minds being agitated, disturbed or confused. If we consider the most effective means or tools we have for overcoming emotional or mental problems, it is really meditation practice.

Of course, if the problems we face are more to do with our physical health, then meditation is not that relevant. For example, if somebody is undergoing a terminal illness, simply telling that person to meditate is not going to cure the illness and delay the death. Similarly, if you advise people who are starving to do meditation practice, that will not overcome their hunger, nor will their appetite be appeased. The exception here is advanced meditators who have gained a high state of meditative concentration: they are less dependent on physical needs, such as food, that we normally depend on to sustain our health and wellbeing. So, if our problem is related to our physical condition, it is a separate issue. But when it is related to our mind, we can see that the most effective means to solve the problem is really meditation practice, which focuses on changing our mind.

I have given a lot of thought to the matter of how our problems in life can be reduced and overcome by simply training our mind; I also have a great deal of knowledge and personal experience about this matter. What really helps us overcome our mental unhappiness or problems? To manage our problems, we need to find within ourselves our own support system, or what we call an ‘inner friend’. I can categorically say, from my own experience, that if you find that inner friend within yourself then, regardless of whether you are alone or with others, you will always be assured of inner peace and happiness. It can also safeguard you from outer causes of harm and disturbance, such as when someone provokes you. When you have the advantage of this inner friend, your mind cannot be harmed. This inner friend can serve as a shield to protect your mental peace and happiness from any adversary.

Speaking of outer problems or difficulties, I could say that I have been through a lot of that kind of hardship. So, when I talk about the benefit and effectiveness of meditation practice, I am not just saying it because I have clairvoyant power! Rather, the things I say here are derived from my own life experiences. If you observe your own life, you can see how, most of the time, your problems are creations or projections of your own mind. When we recognise and understand this, we will then understand that to overcome the problem, we need to change our way of thinking.

In fact, meditation practice is really about training our mind and changing our mental attitude or outlook. Through this process of training, controlling and disciplining our mind, we will be able to cultivate and develop a positive state of mind that serves as a stable source of inner peace, happiness and strength, whatever we face in life. Whether the situation is favourable or not, or whether our circumstances are difficult or easy, we can internally maintain a stable and lasting peace and happiness because of the positive mental outlook we have cultivated within us.

(b') How to begin the cultivation of patience (cont.)

We have been discussing the subject of developing patience, which is essential for us to cope with life’s challenges and maintain a stable sense of peace and happiness. When we look at our own life, we continually face inevitable

difficulties or unfavourable situations. If we are unable to tolerate or be patient with these, we will worry about them and become emotionally handicapped by them. Worrying, becoming agitated, and stressing out do not help us when we face difficult situations; rather, this attitude further adds to the problems we are already facing.

That's why the text here emphasises the importance of developing patience towards the harm we receive from others – particularly the patience of accepting suffering and hardship. When we accept hardship, we will be able to remain on top of a problem, rather than falling victim to mental pressure and suffering. In this way, hardship will not really become a hardship for us, because we know how to manage it. The tremendous benefit of practising patience is that we can maintain a calm, relaxed and joyful mind, which is even more necessary when we face adverse situations.

We can also note here that our mind is trainable, in the sense that if we train our mind, it has the ability to change in the way that we want. If you want your mind to change to a positive mental attitude, you can change it: you can train your mind to develop into that positive state.

Regarding our discussion of patience, last week we talked about the benefit of the practice of patience. We need to understand and reflect on these benefits: 'If I practise patience, what are the benefits?' You should make a list of the benefits of practising patience, then reflect on every single item on that list. This meditation will then inspire or motivate us to practise patience.

The text also talks in detail about the shortcomings or faults of anger. It is important to understand this well, so that you will be motivated and inspired to counteract anger. The text presents the visible and invisible faults of anger. Having a good knowledge and awareness of the faults or shortcomings of anger makes a significant difference when we need to counteract anger. Whenever anger arises, this awareness makes you more vigilant. It makes you think, 'I should not be completely overpowered by anger. I should not simply fall as prey to anger, or else anger will greatly harm me.'

As we learn about the faults of anger, we will understand how important and essential the practice of patience is. Indeed, it is one of the most important practices, the essence of Dharma practice. The text says anger is one of the main obstacles for bodhisattvas in engaging in the deeds of benefiting other sentient beings. This is why the text goes into specific detail about how to counteract anger. In comparison with other mental afflictions, anger is very powerful in disturbing our mind and causing us to damage things. The mental affliction of desire or attachment, on the other hand, is a force that attracts or pulls us towards others. Although it is not lasting, desire does attract or bring people together.

I don't have personal experience of this, but you may have. When you first develop a relationship with another person, desire or attachment may be the force that attracts you towards that person. So, desire can connect us with others so that we form a relationship with them and bring benefit to each other. Whereas there is no such benefit to oneself and others from anger. Rather, anger is a destructive force that wrecks things and doesn't have any positive outcome. For example, it wrecks our relationship and is a cause of separation. It is therefore important that you recognise the faults of anger within the context of your own life experience.

As I said before, desire or attachment is a force of attraction that brings people closer together. So there can be some positive outcome, in terms of extending benefit to others and forming a relationship with them. But I always say that, for such a relationship to be long lasting we must add love and compassion to it. Cultivating love and compassion is an essential ingredient for making our relationship meaningful, truly beneficial and satisfying. If we look at the nature or meaning of love and compassion, it is a genuine sense of affection, care and concern for others. We usually express love and compassion when the person we love is in despair or in need of help or support from others. At such a time, if we show our love and support, the other person will highly appreciate us. We must always be aware that everyone seeks happiness and does not want any unhappiness.

However, desire or attachment is based on the perception of the object as being beautiful and a cause of satisfaction for us. So, in the long run, what will benefit you most in having a healthy relationship with others is love and compassion. Sometimes, people say that after their breakup, their relationship may have become more meaningful, with each partner offering more mutual benefit and help. A healthy relationship is based on trust and mutual benefit, and this in turn depends on each having a shared feeling of true love and compassion.

Again, the reason why all this is important is that we all seek happiness in our lives. Therefore, working on developing love and compassion is an important cause for finding happiness.

As part of studying the practice of patience, we have to study the meaning of patience. Earlier, we talked about the faults of anger. First, we need to ask, what does anger mean and how do we define it? Anger is one of the six root mental afflictions and it arises in dependence upon any of the three factors: unwanted suffering, the causes of suffering, and sentient beings. As a mental factor observing any of these three, anger is a malicious thought that wants to harm its object.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama once told the story of his car mechanic in Tibet who was lying under the car to fix it, and accidentally hit his head on the car's underside. He got so angry at the car, he started banging his head as a way to take revenge on it. Of course, the result was a bigger headache! *[laughter]* This example clearly shows how our mind becomes confused and loses its rational thinking when overpowered by anger.

Along the same lines is another story from the late Senior Tutor of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Kyabje Ling Rinpoche. His story was in relation to a short-tempered Chinese painter, who once had a tantrum and threw a very expensive Chinese bowl and broke it. Afterwards, Kyabje Ling Rinpoche saw him holding the broken bowl in his hands looking worried!

In Tibetan, anger is called *khong-khro* which, in its initial stage, is just a hostile or malicious thought. However, if we allow ourselves to become habituated with it, this thought will continue to grow, until it reaches the stage where we are ready to take aggressive and violent action, such as being ready to hit someone with a stick. At this point, it has become *khro.ba* (Tibetan), which is a more intensified state of anger, like hatred or belligerence. This is the difference between *khong-khro* or anger, and *khro.ba* or hatred.

We will pick up the text from where we left it last time:

With respect to the faults of anger, the invisible faults are as follows. *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* states:

Any good deeds, such as
Generosity and worshipping the sugatas,
You have collected over a thousand eons
Are all destroyed in one moment of anger.

This quote from *Engaging the Bodhisattva Deeds* where it says *any good deeds such as generosity and worshipping the sugatas* shows how the virtue you accumulate through the practices of generosity, moral ethics and so forth *collected over a thousand eons can all be destroyed in one moment of anger*. This shows the destructiveness of anger in terms of destroying virtue.

The text continues:

Aryasura formulated this exactly as it is presented in *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds*. The *Play of Manjusri Sutra (Manjusri-vikridita-sutra)* mentions the destruction of virtue accumulated over a hundred eons, and also Candrakirti's *Commentary on the "Middle Way"* says that virtue accumulated over a hundred eons of conditioning to the perfections of generosity and ethical discipline is destroyed even by the generation of just a momentary angry thought.

Concerning who or what the recipient of such destructive anger must be, some say that it must be bodhisattvas, while others assert that it is recipients in general. The former accords with the statement in the *Commentary on the "Middle Way"*.

Therefore, a moment's anger toward a conquerors' child
Destroys the virtue arising from generosity and ethical
discipline
Accumulated over a hundred eons.

With respect to the person who gets angry, Candrakirti's *Explanation of the "Middle Way" Commentary* says that if anger even by bodhisattvas destroys their roots of virtue, it goes without saying that the anger of non-bodhisattvas toward bodhisattvas does. Regardless of whether the recipient of the anger is ascertained to be a bodhisattva or whether the perceived faults that cause the anger are real, the destruction of virtue is said nonetheless to be just as explained above [i.e., the virtue accumulated over a hundred eons is lost].

In general, for there to be destruction of the roots of virtue it is not required that the anger be toward bodhisattvas. *The Compendium of Trainings* states:

The text of the Arya-sarvastivadins also says: The Bhagavan said, "Monks, consider a monk who makes a full prostration to a stupa that contains a buddha's hair and nails and who has an attitude of faith."

"So be it, Revered One."

"Monks, this monk will experience reigns as a universal monarch a thousand times the number of grains of sand eighty-four-thousand leagues under the ground his prostrate body covers - down to the disk of gold that supports the earth."

Then the venerable Upali, who was located off to the side from where the Bhagavan was seated, bowed with hands joined respectfully and asked, "The Bhagavan has said that this monk's roots of virtue are so great. O Bhagavan, how are those roots of virtue used up, diminished, erased, and extinguished?"

"Upali, when such a sin as malice is done to fellow practitioners, it is like a wound or maiming. I cannot see its full impact. Upali, this diminishes, erases, and extinguishes those great roots of virtue. Therefore, Upali, if you would not feel malice toward a burned stump, what need to

mention feeling that way toward a body with consciousness?"

If you read this text, you can quite clearly understand it. We find here the benefit of, for example, performing prostrations, in terms of the amount of merit you accumulate, which is many more times the number of sand particles in the ground deep beneath you when you fully stretch your body, enabling you to accumulate the merit of taking rebirth as a universal king, and so forth. Essentially this indicates the enormous merit we accumulate from engaging in the practice of prostrations. Of course, here the issue is not just the enormity of that merit, but how it can be lost by a moment of anger.

You can understand these quotations by reading them; the text raises some critical points, which we will discuss next week.

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

21 May 2019

As usual we begin with a short meditation.

[*Tong-len meditation*]

Try to cultivate the right motivation, generating a thought to benefit other sentient beings, and ensuring there is no self-centredness in it. We should listen to the teachings with a genuine aspiration to benefit others as our motivation.

Last week we discussed the meaning of anger and we also talked about the shortcomings and disadvantages of harbouring it. After this, the text explains the shortcomings of anger in terms of the way it destroys or damages the root of virtue.

It says:

Some scholars' position: "The meaning of destroying the roots of virtue is that in destroying the capacity of previous virtues to issue their effects speedily, you delay the issuance of their effects. So anger, for instance, will give its effect first, but it is certainly not the case that the seeds of the roots of virtue will not issue effects when they later meet with the requisite conditions, because, given that no mundane path can eliminate the seeds that are to be eliminated, it is impossible to have an elimination of the seeds of the afflictions."

The text then gives a reply to that critique:

Reply: This reasoning is unsound because (1) even the purification wherein ordinary beings clear away nonvirtue by means of its remedy, the four powers of confession, is not an elimination of its seeds; nevertheless, though the seeds of this nonvirtue may later meet with the requisite conditions, they cannot issue a fruition; (2) even virtuous and nonvirtuous karma that are spent upon issuing their individual fruitions do not lose their seeds; nevertheless, even when the seeds of such karma meet henceforth with the requisite conditions, it is impossible for fruitions to arise; and (3) when you attain the peak and forbearance levels of the path of preparation [the second and third of four levels], you do not eliminate the seeds of nonvirtue that cause wrong views and miserable rebirths; nevertheless, even though the seeds of this nonvirtue may meet with the requisite conditions, they cannot give rise to wrong views or a miserable rebirth.

First of all, we need to be clear about the point being made by some scholars when they say *the meaning of destroying the roots of virtue is that in destroying the capacity of previous virtues to issue their effects speedily*. The question relates to the meaning of the destruction of the roots of virtue, by the force of anger for example. Some scholars assert that it means delaying the yielding of the ripening result of the root virtue. Their assertion implies that destroying the root virtue means annihilating or eliminating its seed. This, they say, is not the case because the root virtue will produce its result later when it meets with the right conditions.

Then the text gives a summary of the reply.

Furthermore, the reasoning is unsound because, as the earlier citation [Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Knowledge Auto-commentary*] says:

As to the actions that give rise to cyclic existence,
There are those that are weighty, those that are near,
Those to which you are habituated, and those you did
earliest.

Among these, the former will ripen first.

This citation indicates various factors that determine the chronological order in which various karmas yield their result. It says, for example, that the karma which is most weighty or most powerful, whether it be virtuous or non-virtuous, will produce its result first. If the virtue is more powerful then it will produce its result ahead of non-virtue. As the text says:

Any virtuous or non virtuous action that comes to fruition does temporarily stop the opportunity for the fruition of another action;

Both virtue and non-virtue cannot produce a ripening at the same time. So, at a time when a virtue actualises its ripening result, the repining result of non-virtue will not arise. However, this doesn't mean that the virtue has damaged the non-virtue. It simply means that the ripening result of non-virtue has been delayed. Likewise, if the ripening result of non-virtue is produced first, that will postpone the virtuous result, rather than a case of a virtue being destroyed. Therefore, saying that the meaning of non-virtue destroying virtue from the angle of non-virtue destroying the seed of the virtue is not a valid reasoning; however, it is not said nor can it be established that a mere preceding fruition destroys virtue or nonvirtue.

You learnt about the meaning of the line *As to the actions that give rise to cyclic existence*, when you studied karma and its results. Under the topic of karma, there is a section which talks about the weight of karma, and the factors that determine which karma will produce its result before other karmas. For example, if someone is close to death, then, as it says there, the karma which is heaviest or most powerful will ripen its result first. If all the karmas are equal in weight at that moment, then the karma which is created nearest to that moment will ripen its result first. If that too is equal, then the karma with which he or she is most habituated will take priority. If the habituation is also the same, then the one he or she has created first will produce its result first. This explains the meaning of the citation quoted above with respect to the order in which karma ripens its result – which karma ripens first, and which karma ripens its result later.

From this explanation of karma, we understand how important it is for us to habituate our mind with a positive mental attitude as much as possible, such as the thought of wishing other sentient beings to have happiness, and be free from suffering, thinking 'I will only benefit other sentient beings and will never harm any other beings both in thoughts and deeds.' If we familiarise ourselves with virtuous states of mind by cultivating them again and again, then they will become more forceful and powerful. As a result, they will arise and produce their results easily. As we become more habituated with positive mental attitudes, it doesn't take any great effort for us to engage in virtuous practices.

Even just a small reminder from some friend would be enough to trigger us to engage in virtuous practice. For example, when Susan Coates, who was a Tara Institute member, passed away her familiarity with Tara practice helped her at the time of her death. She was very weak and could not respond much, but when Sandra visited her and told her that I had advised that she do the Tara practice, she understood that and expressed her thanks for that advice and became very calm. If we become very familiar with a practice, then it will only need a very small effort to engage in that practice. The support that Sandra gave her helped Susan to create the cause to find a good rebirth and help her to prevent bad rebirth.

The best way friends can help support each other is in developing virtue and positive qualities. If we are not careful, then, instead of helping our friends to cultivate positive qualities, we could be a very negative influence on them. As much as possible we should try to translate whatever we achieve or have in our life into a cause of virtue, because what we all seek is happiness which results from virtue.

We all have some fixed idea about what happiness means to us. We believe that happiness means having the right friends, plenty of wealth, a good-looking body and so forth. Accordingly, we pursue these things with a great deal of self-sacrifice. Therefore, it is important that when we attain those things we make sure they actually do serve as cause of happiness and support for our spiritual practice. Everything, such as our friends, our health, our wealth etc., has the potential to bring us happiness and be a cause to increase virtue. However, if we are not careful, then instead of bringing happiness and increasing virtue, these very things that we have worked so hard to accomplish, turn out to be a continuous source of suffering for ourselves and others, both now and in the future.

So it is important that we thoroughly check what we believe in and try to see where that belief is taking us, and whether holding that belief is beneficial or not. For example, some people believe that if they find the right person they will be truly happy. However, if they get too obsessed with that belief, they will continue to suffer for as long as their desire remains unfulfilled, and along the way they are also shutting themselves off from many other good opportunities in life.

What we have got to remember is that we want happiness and do not want suffering. Happiness results from virtue and suffering results from non-virtue. Therefore, we must also remember to cultivate a virtuous state of mind and habituate our mind with it, and on the other hand, diminish non-virtuous states of mind and break up their habitual patterns within ourselves. In this way, we can find more peace and happiness, both now and in the future.

The text continues:

Therefore, concerning this the master Bhavaviveka states (as already explained) that in the case of both the purification of nonvirtue by the four powers of confession and the destruction of roots of virtue by wrong views and malice, the seeds of the virtue or nonvirtue cannot give rise to effects even though they may later meet with the requisite

conditions, just as spoiled seeds will not give rise to sprouts even though they may meet with the requisite conditions.

The main point here is that when we purify non-virtue through applying the four opponent forces, purification means preventing non-virtue from producing its main results. In a sense, the purification has the effect of destroying the capacity of the seed of non-virtue or sterilising it so that it cannot produce its result.

So, purification of non-virtue doesn't mean completely abandoning or annihilating the seed of non-virtue. If a non-virtue is purified, then its seed is damaged. Just like damaged or rotten seed won't be able to produce a sprout, so too the purified non-virtue won't produce its main result. From this we should also understand how anger destroys the root virtue by preventing the desirable or pleasant ripening results of virtue from arising.

Then the text continues:

Moreover, as already explained, even though you cleanse your accumulation of sins through purification by the four powers, this does not contradict the fact that you are slow to produce higher paths.

As a benefit of purification practice, you prevent the result of negative actions from arising, however *it does not contradict the fact that you are slow to produce the higher paths*. It doesn't mean that your negative actions have not slowed down your progress on the path. In other words, despite purification, a particular non-virtue can delay one's journey on the spiritual path. This refers to an instance where someone who is not declared as a bodhisattva generates anger towards someone who is a declared bodhisattva. In this context, it is said that the person can purify the anger, however, the anger will still have the impact of slowing down speedy progress on the path.

So, we can see here how we can purify non-virtue and thereby stop the ripening result, but there are certain non-virtues which can be still be a cause to delay our spiritual realisation and progress on the path, even though we have purified them. We must be very cautious about not engaging in such non-virtues. This is important!

Now the text says:

Accordingly, for some persons anger destroys, for instance, their resources and excellent body - the respective effects of giving gifts and safeguarding ethical discipline, but is unable to destroy their ability to easily produce roots of virtue again through giving gifts and safeguarding ethical discipline by means of the causally concordant behavioral effect of their habituation to generosity and an attitude of abstention.

Here, the text goes into more specific results of virtue and non-virtue. For example, there are two types of karmic results called the ripening result and the result similar to its cause. It is saying here that destroying a root virtue doesn't necessarily mean that all the types of the result of the virtue are stopped from producing results. We could have instances where the ripening result is prevented from manifesting, but not the result similar to its cause and *vice versa*. In the context of the practice of giving, the primary or ripening result is gaining wealth. If anger destroys the virtue of giving, the result is that you won't gain wealth. Nonetheless, this doesn't mean that you will

not produce a thought of giving as a result similar to its cause from your habitual practice of giving. Similarly, a thought of moral restraint can still arise as a result similar to its cause with respect to your habitual practice of moral ethics, even if anger has caused damage to the ripening result of your moral ethics. This is the meaning of the words *by means of the causally concordant behavioral effect of their habituation to generosity and an attitude of abstention*.

The text continues:

For other persons, anger destroys the continuous occurrence of a similar type of causally concordant virtuous behavior like ethical self-discipline and so on but does not destroy the occurrence of an excellent body, resources, and so forth. Some [bodhisattvas] realize a path through which they progress to perfection within one eon, for instance, if they do not generate anger toward a bodhisattva who has obtained a prediction of his or her upcoming enlightenment (as explained earlier). If they produce a single angry thought toward such a bodhisattva, this path is not expelled from their mind-stream, but their progress on the path becomes slow for the length of an eon.

We touched on this point a bit earlier. It is saying here that if a bodhisattva on the path of accumulation generates anger towards a bodhisattva who has been predicted to achieve complete enlightenment, they won't go backwards on the path, however the length of the time needed to move onto the next path could be doubled – if the bodhisattva needs to accumulate merit for over an aeon in order to enter the next path, they will now need to accumulate the merit for two aeons.

In brief, just as in the case of the purification of nonvirtue there is no need to purify every behavioral effect, so with respect to the destruction of virtue there is no need to destroy every behavioral effect. However, as this is important and as it is critical to analyse it using the scriptures of the unique Buddha and the reasoning based on them, you should research the scriptures well and do an analysis.

It is said that generosity results in wealth, while moral ethics result in a happy rebirth and so forth. But the link between the cause and the effect is extremely subtle and difficult to understand. Gaining such an understanding of cause and effect requires us to rely on the Buddha's own words and other valid scriptures, and also we need to apply three modes of analysis to verify the validity of those scriptures. Therefore, it is very important that we study Dharma well and then think about and analyse what we have learnt to deepen our understanding.

The text continues:

Thus, the invisible faults of anger are that it projects its own fruitions, which are extremely unpleasant, and that it prevents the arising of the measureless very pleasant fruitions of its opposite [virtue].

This is saying that it is extremely difficult to recognise the various undesirable or unpleasant ripening results of a moment of anger. Likewise, it is also extremely difficult to recognise the extent to which anger destroys the desirable or pleasant results of virtue, and this is something beyond our normal perception. So, we need to further deepen our Dharma knowledge in order to transcend our perception and awareness.

Now the text turns to the visible faults of anger.

The faults of anger visible in this lifetime are that you do not experience a peaceful and good mind; ...

The moment anger arises we lose all mental peace and happiness.

... the joy and happiness that you had previously perish, ...

Whatever joy and happiness you had before will be all gone.

... and you cannot regain them; ...

Anger prevents joy and happiness in the future.

... you cannot sleep well; ...

It even spoils your sleep.

... and you weaken the stability wherein your mind stays calm

Your capacity to remain calm and think clearly will also be affected.

It is important for us to reflect upon all these shortcomings before anger arises and overpowers us. If we reflect on all these shortcomings it will really help us to be more cautious about allowing anger to arise, and also a sense of fright will arise within us even at the prospect of the approach of anger.

Then the text continues:

When you have great hatred, even those for whom you formerly cared forget your kindness and kill you; even friends and relatives will get annoyed and leave you; although you gather others with your generosity, they will not stay; and so on. *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* states:

In the grasp of the mental pains of hate,
Your mind does not experience peace,
You do not find joy or happiness,
Sleep does not come, and you become unstable.

Even those who depend on a master
Who cares for them with wealth and services
Will overcome and kill
A master who gets angry.

His anger disheartens friends.
Though he gathers people with gifts,
They will not serve him. In brief,
No angry person is happy.

The *Garland of Birth Stories* also says:

When your complexion is spoiled by the fire of anger,
You cannot look good, though adorned with jewelry.

If we think about our own experience, we will see how very true these words are.

You may sleep on a good bed, but
Your mind suffers the sharp pains of anger.

You forget to achieve goals beneficial to yourself;
Tormented by anger, you take an evil path.
You ruin the achievement of your aims and your good name.
Your grandeur fades like the waning moon.

Though your friends love you,
You fall into an abyss of wrong.
Weakening your intelligence about what is helpful and what is harmful,
You mostly transgress and your mind becomes confused.

Through anger you are accustomed to sinful acts,
So you suffer for a hundred years in miserable realms.
What harm greater than this could be done

Even by enemies avenging the great harm you have done?

This anger is the inner enemy;
I know it to be so.
Who can bear
Its proliferation?

Meditate until you are firmly convinced that grave consequences such as these arise from anger.

So as said before, it is important to reflect on the harm, damage and destruction anger does to our ourselves and others when we let it overpower us. Try, as much as possible, to reflect on this until you have a clear and strong understanding of anger as being a very harmful and destructive force.

The text then says:

Thus, *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* says:

There is no sin like hatred
And no fortitude like patience.
Therefore, earnestly cultivate
Patience in a variety of ways.

First, understand the benefits and faults, and then strive to cultivate patience in many ways. The reason behind the first line is set forth in Candrakirti's *Explanation of the "Middle Way" Commentary*:

You cannot measure the fruitions of anger, just as you cannot measure the water in the ocean with a balance scale. Therefore, for projecting unpleasant effects and damaging virtue, there is no sin greater than a lack of patience.

This indicates the amount of damage that anger causes to our virtue, as well as the undesirable ripening results that the anger produces. The shortcomings of anger are really beyond measurement.

For, although other sins result in extremely unpleasant fruitions, they are not great sins on that account alone, given that they do not destroy roots of virtue.

This is saying that not only does anger have the capacity to produce great suffering but at the same time it can damage the roots of virtue. Furthermore:

Still, there are many wrongs other than anger that combine both production of a terrible fruition and destruction of the roots of virtue:

As well as anger there are the other negative states of mind, such as wrong view, which also have a destructive force.

... wrong views that deny cause and effect; abandoning the sublime teachings; generating pride in relation to bodhisattvas, gurus, and the like and thus terribly belittling them; and so forth. You can know of these from the *Compendium of Trainings*.

Having discussed the faults of anger and so forth, the text then goes onto how to meditate on patience.

(c') The divisions of patience

We will continue with this next week.

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
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Edited Version*

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The Six Perfections

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

28 May 2019

As usual we begin with a short meditation.

[Tong-len meditation]

We cultivated the proper motivation when we recited the refuge and generating bodhicitta prayer, and we should reinforce the same motivation for listening to the teaching.

The refuge prayer begins with, *I take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha until I achieve enlightenment. By gathering the spiritual accumulation through practising giving and so forth, may I achieve the state of buddhahood to benefit all sentient beings.*

You have heard the explanation of this prayer many times in the past. Essentially, in this prayer it clearly shows the objects of refuge, which are the *Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.*

When it says, *I take refuge until I achieve enlightenment*, this implies the taking of the Mahayana refuge. The term, *enlightenment* can either refer to the state of dharmakaya to be achieved, or to present-day Bodhgaya, the place where you achieve complete enlightenment. The *I* in *I take refuge*, implies the person who is taking refuge.

The last two lines of the prayer are, *By gathering the spiritual accumulation through practising giving and so forth, may I achieve the state of buddhahood.*

It is important to understand the meaning of the prayer so that you can contemplate its meaning as you recite the prayer. Some Tibetan versions use the word *by gathering the accumulation of merit*, instead of just saying *the spiritual accumulation*. His Holiness the Dalai Lama suggests that it is better to say, *By gathering the spiritual accumulation through practising giving and so forth*, and in that way the accumulation includes the accumulations of both merit and wisdom.

As it says in the prayer, the way you gather two accumulations is through *giving and so forth*, and here *so forth* refers to the rest of the six perfections.

The words *to benefit all sentient beings* implies that the reason you gather the spiritual accumulation is to benefit other beings. There are two aspirations: an aspiration to accomplish the welfare of other beings, and an aspiration to accomplish one's own welfare. So *to benefit all sentient beings* implies the purpose for which you gather the accumulations and the aspiration to accomplish the welfare of other beings.

The word *buddhahood* implies the aspiration to accomplish one's own welfare. These two aspirations are in fact the main elements of the definition of bodhicitta, the mind of enlightenment.

The words, *may I* indicate the actual generation of the bodhicitta mind, and the way it is generated here is in the form of an aspirational prayer.

There's no clear indication of the scriptural source of this verse, because you can't find it in any sutras or scriptures. The source is attributed to Atisha as this verse of taking refuge and generating bodhicitta has been a very common prayer in Tibet from the time Atisha introduced Buddhism to Tibet.

Now we will continue with the commentary. Last week we stopped at this section called:

(c') The divisions of patience

The section on the divisions of patience has three parts:

1. Developing the patience of disregarding harm done to you
2. Developing the patience of accepting suffering
3. Developing the patience of certitude about the teachings

Then the text goes into detail about each of these three types of patience.

(1') Developing the patience of disregarding harm done to you

This is further explained through two subheadings.

1. Stopping impatience with those who harm you
2. Stopping both dislike for harmdoers' attainments and delight in their troubles

Of course, the text goes into great detail about these two headings. But for the time being let's reflect simply on the outline of the subject matter. We will find such a reflection quite challenging as it strikes at our normal views and attitudes. Normally, we hate to see harm doers experiencing any success or goodness. We feel jealous about their success and accomplishments because we dislike them and feel they don't deserve to have anything that makes them happy. As some other lamrim teachings say, the greater their success the more jealousy we feel and the greater our feelings of dislike and animosity. As it says here, *we delight in their troubles*. Normally, we are delighted and pleased to see harm doers in difficulty, facing defeat or disgrace. So the outline *stopping both dislike for harmdoers' attainments and delight in their troubles* diametrically opposes our normal mental attitude.

If we think about it, many of our normal attitudes serve as an unnecessary source of suffering for ourselves. Feeling jealous about the success or goodness of others is not a pleasant feeling at all. Instead of feeling animosity and dislike about their attainments or success, we should try to feel positive and good about their attainments by cultivating love and compassion towards them.

If we have cultivated an unbiased, impartial compassion for all beings, without any discrimination between friends, enemies or strangers, then instead of feeling dislike and hostility we will rejoice in the success of other beings and feel empathy when they are in difficulty and want to help them.

Now we return to the text.

(a'') Stopping impatience with those who harm you

Stopping impatience with those who harm you has two parts:

1. Stopping impatience with those who prevent your happiness and with those who cause you to suffer

These outlines used by the great Tsongkhapa reflect his own practice. Here, the topic is how to engage in the practice of patience as a remedy to overcome and prevent anger. We normally become angry when others cause harm to our happiness or when they cause us problems and suffering. Imagine being able to apply the practice of patience to both of these two circumstances and see that there is no cause for anger. Tsongkhapa has encapsulated the whole practice of patience as an antidote to anger into one line. How amazing!

The second subheading of this section is:

2. Stopping impatience with those who prevent your praise, fame, or honor, and with those who have contempt for you, or say offensive or unpleasant things to you

(1'') Stopping impatience with those who prevent your happiness and with those who cause you to suffer

Stopping impatience with those who prevent your happiness and with those who cause you to suffer has two parts:

1. Showing that anger is unjustified
2. Showing that compassion is appropriate

Under these two outlines we find further details about how to engage in the practice of patience in situations where someone who prevents our happiness or causes us to suffer.

(a) Showing that anger is unjustified

Showing that anger is unjustified has three parts:

1. On analysis of the object, anger is unjustified
2. On analysis of the subject, anger is unjustified
3. On analysis of the basis, anger is unjustified

(1) On analysis of the object, anger is unjustified

Here the anger is on the basis of the object.

It has four parts:

1. On analysis of whether the object has self-control, anger is unjustified

This is looking at whether the harm doers, who are the object of our anger, have self-control or choice about harming us. It concludes that if they have no choice then our anger is unjustified.

2. On analysis for either adventitiousness or inherency, anger is unjustified
3. On analysis of whether the harm is direct or indirect, anger is unjustified
4. On analysis of the cause that impels the harmdoers, anger is unjustified

(a') On analysis of whether the object has self-control, anger is unjustified

Analyze, thinking, "What would be reasonable grounds for anger toward harmdoers?" Whereupon, you might think, "They first had the thought of wanting to harm me, prepared the method, and then either prevented my happiness or inflicted unpleasant physical or mental suffering, so my anger is justified."

If we read these lines very closely and think about their meaning, we will see their logic and how rational they are. With *Analyze, thinking*, "What would be reasonable grounds for anger toward harmdoers?" we see that our justification for anger evolved from our recognition of how a harm doer initially had an intention of harming us, and then engaged in various harmful actions which spoiled our happiness or brought suffering upon us. As the text says, the scenario in our mind to justify our anger, hostility and impatience towards harm doers is thinking, "They first had the thought of wanting to harm me, prepared the method, and then either prevented my happiness or inflicted unpleasant physical or mental suffering, so my anger is justified."

Then the text continues:

Are you angry because they inflicted harm while they had the self-control not to harm you, or are you angry because they were utterly without any self-control and hurt you while helplessly impelled by something else?

This raises the question of whether, in this scenario, we are angry because the harm doer had self-control or had a choice not to harm us and chose to inflict harm, or because they had no self-control and so inflicted harm on us.

The text is saying that our anger on the grounds that the harm doers had the self-control not to harm us is unjustified. First of all, it is wrong to assume that the harm doers had such self-control. Secondly, the harm that we receive is not simply dependent on whether or not the harm doers have a thought to harm us. Even though we may think that they have self-control, if we actually take their true situation into account, we can understand that they lack self-control. We can also understand that there are many other facets to the cause of harm in addition to the intention of harm doers.

The text says:

In the former case, your anger is unjustified because those who inflict harm do not have control over themselves, for, when the conditions and causes – seeds left by afflictions to which they were previously habituated, ...

Here the text is saying the harm doers have no self-control because they are overpowered by mental afflictions and the seed or propensity of the affliction within them, due to their habituation with the afflictions. Then:

... a nearby object, ...

This indicates other necessary causes and conditions of harmfulness. And next:

... and erroneous conceptions come together, they give rise to the thought to harm, ...

The terms *habituated*, *a nearby object*, and *erroneous conceptions* refer to the necessary causes for mental afflictions to arise, as described in the *Abhidharma* teaching.

The *erroneous conceptions come together* refers to the subtle confused or mistaken state of mind that we have. With this underlying *erroneous conception* or confused state of mind, people perceive the object of harm as being very negative, unpleasant, unattractive and undesirable, and this in turn *gives rise to the thought of harm*. Next comes:

... even though the harmdoers do not think, "I will feel malice"; ...

We normally think that people harm us because they hold harmful mental attitudes towards us. The text is saying here that there is more to the cause of harm than just harmful thoughts. If all the causes and conditions of the harm are present then the result will be harm, even though the harm doers do not want to harm us. Whereas if the causes and conditions are incomplete, then harm will not occur *even though* they might think 'I will feel malice.'

The text continues,

These causes and conditions produce the desire to harm; this in turn produces the work of harming; and this produces suffering for someone else, so those harmdoers do not have even the slightest self-control. Moreover, they have become like servants of their afflictions, because they are under the control of others, i.e., their afflictions.

This clearly states that the eventuation of harm is not just a matter of someone's thought, rather it's a matter of all the causes and conditions coming together. It is only when these come together that harm will eventuate; if they do not come together no harm will eventuate. When all the causes and conditions are present then the desire to harm arises, and this desire to harm naturally propels the person to undertake harmful actions without any choice on their part. *So those harmdoers do not have even the slightest self-control. Moreover, they have become like servants of their afflictions, because they are under the control of others, i.e., their afflictions.*

If we reflect on the situation from this angle, then we can clearly see the very good grounds for feeling compassion towards these harm doers. The text continues:

In the latter case ...

This refers to the question of whether the person is utterly without any self-control, as indicated earlier in the text.

... you are angry because the harmdoers are utterly without any self-control and, being helplessly impelled by something else, they hurt you then your anger is totally unjustified.

This is quite self-explanatory. If the person who harms us totally lacks control, lacks freedom, and lacks choice about their behaviour, then we are unjustified in showing anger; rather we need to have compassion for them. In fact, if we reflect on the sequence of cause and effect, then we see how, when a person is completely overpowered by anger, they naturally lose their self-control and are completely controlled by the mental affliction of anger. When we reflect on their helplessness, then we are more likely to show compassion for that person.

The text continues:

For instance, some people who have been possessed by demons and have come under their control may wish to hurt those who are helping them to get free of their demons and thereupon beat them, etc. However, their helpers think, "They do this because their demons have eliminated their ability to control themselves," and do not have even the slightest anger toward them. They then strive to the best of their ability to free them from their demons. Likewise, when bodhisattvas are hurt by others, they think, "They do this because the demons of the afflictions have eliminated their

ability to control themselves." Without being even the slightest bit angry with those persons they then must generate the spirit of enlightenment, thinking, "I will strive at the bodhisattva deeds in order to free them from these afflictions."

When a person is completely possessed by some sort of evil spirit, or has become insane, then they will lack any ability to recognise who is helping them, and who is not helping them. So they will even attack those who are helping them. However, the person who is helping won't react with anger because they understand the true situation of the person they are helping.

This, the text is saying, is how the bodhisattvas view those who cause harm to them. They feel compassion and empathy for the perpetrator of harm. The blame for the harmful actions lies directly with the mental afflictions and not the person, because the person is completely controlled by their mental afflictions.

As it says in the text:

Accordingly, Aryadeva's *Four Hundred Stanzas* says:

Just as a doctor does not fight but helps
Patients who are possessed by spirits, though they
get angry,
So the Sage sees that the afflictions are at fault,
Not the persons who have the afflictions.

Here *the Sage* refers to a buddha, a fully enlightened being, who sees the affliction as the enemy, and never the person. Beings are so overpowered by their mental afflictions that they are helpless. So, they are objects of compassion.

Furthermore,

The master Candrakirti also states:

"This is not living beings' fault,
Rather it is the fault of the afflictions."
So the learned analyze
And do not fight with others.

The text continues,

Although many reasonings are set forth in *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds*, it is easy to be certain of this one, and it is a very powerful remedy for anger. Also, the *Bodhisattva Levels* has the same meaning where it states that you can bear harm after you meditate on the idea of mere phenomena, so meditate repeatedly on this remedy until you reach certain knowledge of it.

As a way to counteract anger towards someone who harms us, we have to realise that the person has harmed us because they didn't have any self-control. As the quotation from Chandrakirti says, they are controlled by mental afflictions, and so have no choice and no control. It is these mental afflictions that are impelling that person to create those harmful actions.

When we understand the situation from this angle, we will see that the true harm doer is the mental affliction, not the person who is acting harmfully. The mental affliction is the driving force, and the person simply succumbs to the force of affliction. When we think of the situation like this, we will feel empathy towards the person who inflicts harm upon us.

The text continues:

If these beings had self-control, they would not have any suffering, because they would not want suffering and because they could control it.

If you read this carefully, then it is very clear how the person who causes harm is indeed totally enslaved by those mental afflictions and has no choice but to be driven by them. If we think along these lines, then if the person did have *self-control, they would not have any suffering, because they would not want suffering and because they could control it*. This also helps us to develop patience towards those who cause harm.

The text continues:

Furthermore, you should stop your anger by also thinking, "When these beings are moved by strong afflictions, they commit suicide, leap from cliffs, harm themselves with thorns, weapons, etc., and stop eating and so forth. [If they do this to even their greatly cherished and dear selves, of course they will hurt others."

This clearly indicates the destructive force of mental afflictions. Normally the self is what we most cherish, yet through the force of mental afflictions people can inflict a lot of harm upon themselves, culminating in self-harm and even suicide. The force of such mental afflictions is so great that people will injure what they hold most dear – themselves. If they do that then what need is there to say that they will cause harm to others. Reflecting on this is a very powerful way of counteracting anger and developing patience.

The text continues,

Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds states:

Thus, everything is dependent on something else,
And, because that in turn is dependent, it is not
autonomous.
Understanding this, do not be angry
At anything, all things being like illusions.

This touches on overcoming anger and developing patience through reflecting on the ultimate reality of things and how all things lack intrinsic existence. Reflecting on things as being like an illusion serves as a remedy to overcome anger.

The text continues,

And also:

Therefore, if you see an enemy or friend
Doing what is wrong, think
"This arises from certain conditions,"
And remain happy.

This relates to what we have already discussed. If, when you receive harm from an enemy or a friend, you reflect on how things happen because of the coming together of various causes and conditions, the harm you receive will not detrimentally affect your attitude. Then you will be able to maintain your inner peace and happiness.

The text continues,

If all beings could achieve results
According to their wish, then,
Since no one wants suffering,
No one would suffer.

And also:

While under the control of their afflictions,
Some people will kill even their dear selves.
So how can you expect them
Not to harm the bodies of others?

All these verses contain very effective advice on how to counteract anger. Therefore, it's very beneficial to repeat these kinds of verses whenever we can, and even memorise them as a way to help us meditate on how to overcome anger and develop patience.

(b') On analysis for either adventitiousness or inherency, anger is unjustified

We will continue with this next week.

*Transcript prepared by Mark Emerson
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Edited Version*

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The Six Perfections

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

4 June 2019

We begin with the usual meditation.

[Tonglen meditation]

Ensure you cultivate a bodhicitta motivation – the aspiration to achieve the state of buddhahood to benefit all sentient beings. As we are here to listen to a Dharma teaching, it is important that we begin with a bodhicitta motivation.

The bodhicitta mind is the genuine and pure wish to achieve complete enlightenment to benefit all sentient beings. When we cultivate it, we are leaving a profound impression in our mind to achieve complete enlightenment in order to benefit all sentient beings. Many scriptures state that there is tremendous benefit from generating a bodhicitta mind, even for just an instant. In fact, it is said in the commentary on bodhicitta by Nagarjuna (*Bodhicittavivarana*):

A person who for an instant meditates on the
awakening mind
The heap of merit [obtained from this]
Not even the conquerors can measure.

The benefit of bodhicitta is inconceivable, in that only the omniscient mind of a buddha can apprehend it.

The main cause of a bodhicitta mind is the cultivation of love – the genuine wish for all other sentient beings to possess happiness – and compassion – the wish for all sentient beings to be free of all suffering. Before we can generate bodhicitta, we must develop love and compassion to the point where we don't merely wish others to have happiness and be free from suffering, but also generate the strong sense of universal responsibility, or the superior intention, of taking on the burden of fulfilling the welfare of all beings. So, you not only wish for all beings to be happy but you take on the responsibility of placing them in a state of happiness and freeing them from suffering.

Having generated a superior intention, however, you realise your own limitations, and your inability to fulfil that wish of benefiting others. As you investigate how you can fulfil this thought of benefiting all beings, you realise that you need to achieve complete enlightenment. This is how a bodhicitta mind – the aspiration to achieve complete enlightenment in order to benefit all sentient beings – is generated. In Haribadra's text called *The Commentary Clarifying the Meaning*, the term 'aspirational prayer wishing for the state of enlightenment' is used as another term for bodhicitta.

Having generated a bodhicitta mind, you then need to engage in the six perfections, which are the deeds of bodhisattvas.

In short, with the intention of benefiting all sentient beings as our motivation, we engage in the six perfections as our deeds. We have finished discussing the first two perfections of 'giving' and 'morality' and we are currently discussing the perfection of 'patience'.

Bodhicitta mind is cultivated through the stage-by-stage training and transformation of our mind. Prior to cultivating love and compassion for other beings, we need to have a

strong desire to free ourselves from the suffering of lower rebirth and cyclic existence. So, we need to meditate on the fact that if we took lower rebirth, for example, as an animal, we would go through unbearable suffering. We could, however, prevent being reborn in the lower realms by adhering to the karmic law of cause and effect.

We then need to realise that merely freeing ourselves from lower rebirth is not enough, because as long as we remain in cyclic existence we are subject to the nature of perpetual suffering. Hence, we need to cultivate a sense of renunciation which is the urge or definite thought to leave cyclic existence. After realising that merely liberating ourselves from cyclic existence and leaving behind all our motherly sentient beings is not right, we need to generate love and compassion.

We can see how this stage-by-stage development of our mind culminates in the bodhicitta mind, which serves as our mental intention. Driven by this mind, we then engage ourselves in the six perfections, the bodhisattva deeds, and the result is attaining the twofold body of a buddha.

I won't say I have gained any experiential realisations of the lam-rim, but I can say I have studied the lam-rim in depth over many years. From the ages of 20 to 26, I really devoted myself to studying and practising lam-rim. In those days, the facilities were very poor and I hardly had anything, but I used to work on calming down the desirous mind and trying to be contented with my life.

I also used to focus on the ten innermost jewels of the Kadampa masters. Around that time, I received a commentarial transmission of Kyabje Pabongka Rinpoche's *Three Principal Aspects of the Path*. Then, one day the late Khensur Ogyen advised me to focus on studying the great treatises of ancient Buddhist masters.

We shall now continue with the text.

(1st) Stopping impatience with those who prevent your happiness and with those who cause you to suffer

(a) Showing that anger is unjustified

(1) On analysis of the object, anger is unjustified

(a') On analysis of whether the object has self-control, anger is unjustified (cont.)

Last week we stopped at the verse from *Bodhisattoacharyavatara* which reads:

While under the control of their afflictions,
Some people will kill even their dear selves.
So how can you expect them
Not to harm the bodies of others?

If we think about its meaning, this verse is saying that if we really understood what harmdoers are going through – that they are enraged with anger or hatred or are experiencing other mental afflictions or delusions – it would instil in us a feeling of compassion or empathy towards them. Then we would not generate any thought at all of retaliation, or of getting angry with them.

This verse is advising us that when someone causes us harm, we should try to understand their harmful actions as a manifestation of their mental afflictions (such as anger) and try to understand the suffering they are going through in that situation. Then, instead of retaliating, we will feel empathy and compassion for them, and at least try to adopt a mental outlook that will prevent that situation from disturbing our own wellbeing.

(b'') On analysis for either adventitiousness or inherency, anger is unjustified.

The commentary says:

The fault of doing harm to others either is or is not in the nature of living beings. If it is in their nature, it is wrong to get angry, just as it is wrong to get angry at fire for being hot and burning.

As this clearly implies, one way of overcoming the thought of becoming angry with someone who harms us is to examine whether or not it is in their nature to harm us, or whether it is due to some external condition which inflames their anger, causing them to harm us. In either case, we cannot justify showing them anger and retaliating. If it is in their nature to harm us, then it is not right for us to get angry and retaliate.

The analogy used here is fire: the nature of fire is hot, and it has the function of burning. If we touch fire, it will burn our hand; because we know that fire by its nature is hot and can burn things, we don't get angry at the fire that burned us. In the same way, if it were in the nature of other sentient beings to cause harm to others, then just as with fire, it would be wrong for us to get angry at them.

Similarly, if it is adventitious, it is also wrong to be angry, just as when smoke and the like appear in the sky, it is wrong to be angry at the sky on account of these flaws of smoke and so forth.

Likewise, the reason you receive harm from others is not because of their nature, but because of certain adventitious or immediate causes. Again, there is no reason for us to blame others for the harm we receive. It is like getting itchy eyes when the sky is polluted with heavy smoke. We don't blame the sky and become angry with it; rather, we blame the smoky pollution. Similarly, if cloud covers the clear sky, we don't get angry at the sky for the darkness, because we know the cause of the darkness is the cloud. Using the same logic, it is not right or justifiable to be angry with the person who harms us because the harm we receive is conditioned by adventitious causes.

The commentary continues:

Thinking in this way, stop your anger. *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* states:

If doing harm to others
Is natural for the childish,
It is wrong to get angry at them,
Just as it is at fire's burning nature.

Still, if the fault is adventitious,
And the nature of beings is good,
My anger is wrong, just as is
Anger at smoke's appearance in the sky.

(c'') On analysis of whether the harm is direct or indirect, anger is unjustified.

This gives us yet a different perspective to help us overcome anger. Here, the text says:

If you are angry at the agent of harm that directly inflicts the harm, you will have to be angry at the stick, etc., just as you are at the person. If you are angry at the harmdoer who indirectly inflicts harm, then, just as the person impels the stick and so forth to do the harm, so hostility impels the person. Therefore, get angry at the hostility.

This paragraph is raising the question of whether the object of our hatred or anger is a direct, or indirect cause of the harm, or pain we experience. Again, from either perspective, it is wrong for us to direct our anger at the harmdoer.

For example, if someone hits you with a stick, you will experience pain and therefore express anger towards the person. The question here is, why direct your anger at the person? Why not at the stick and the hostile motive of the person, both of which are the contributing causes of your pain?

It is clear that the reason you direct your anger at the person is because you believe that he or she is the cause of your pain. If so, then the direct cause of the pain is obviously the stick, so you should also get angry at the stick. But this shows your angry mind's lack of reasoning. Normally, your anger is not directed at the stick but at the person holding it; you may argue that the stick didn't harm you of its own accord, because it is controlled by and used by the person. Therefore, you get angry at the person, whom you hold responsible for the harm you receive.

The argument here is that, just as the person is an indirect cause of harm, so too is the harmful thought motivating that person. Just as the stick is used by the person, likewise the harmful thought within the continuum of that person uses or propels that person to harm you. When you consider this rationale, then really the main culprit behind the harm you receive is the mental afflictions, such as anger, within the continuum of harmdoers, and not the harmdoers themselves.

If two cars are hit by another from behind in a rear-end accident, the driver of the first car won't blame the driver of the second car, but rather he would blame the driver of the third car who initiated the crash.

Next:

Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds says:

The stick and so forth directly cause the harm.
But if I am angry at the one who throws it,
Then, since hostility impels them,
It is better to get angry at hostility.

If you are not angry at the stick, it is also wrong to be angry at the one who throws it; if you are angry with the one who throws it, then you should be directing the anger at the harmful thought of the person too.

Not believing this, your mind has gone down a wrong path. Therefore, become certain about the overall sameness of the logic here and direct your mind toward not being angry at the person in the same way that you are not angry at the stick.

This emphasises that, for the same reason that you do not get angry with the stick, you can also prevent yourself from getting angry with the person. It then says:

Furthermore, use the reasonings taught earlier that negate the idea that anything has self-control in order to understand that you should not differentiate the stick and the one who throws the stick by whether they have a harmful intent.

So the harmdoer has no choice, but is totally under the power or influence of the anger or hatred in his or her mind; they are fully controlled by it. Therefore, the commentary advises us to *use the reasonings taught earlier that negate the idea that anything has self-control* - that is, reflect on what we covered in last week's teaching, the fact that when you receive harm from another person, try to recognise how the person is lacking self-control in that situation, and in this way try to generate tolerance.

(d'') On analysis of the cause that impels the harmdoers, anger is unjustified.

This section of the commentary advises us to overcome anger by focusing on the actual causes and conditions that impel harmdoers to carry out harmful actions. As it says:

The experience of suffering produced by those who harm does not occur causelessly or from discordant causes, so it occurs from concordant causes; that is to say, from non-virtuous actions you have done in the past.

This relates to the law of cause and effect.

Therefore, harmdoers are helplessly impelled to do harm by the power of your karma.

Here, the text touches on the function of the law of cause and effect, which is to say that everything that happens in our lives is the result of our own karma. This includes situations where, for example, friends seem to dislike us and do things contrary to our wishes. There are many such situations where we don't understand why things occur, or why people act towards us negatively.

We may feel that we don't deserve this and that, or that we have not done anything wrong towards others. But our assessment of the situation is only based on our limited knowledge and memory. In fact, as the text points out here, everything that happens in our lives, including the harm we receive from others, is the fruition or ripening or result of one's own karma.

Consequently, blame yourself, thinking, "This is my fault, and I am wrong to get angry at others," and stop your anger on all occasions.

When you receive harm from others for no reason, you can recognise that adverse situation as having been influenced or instigated by your own past karma. Therefore, you should try to see the cause of that harm as your own negative actions, rather than blaming it on the harmdoer.

Earlier, we came across the term 'concordant' or 'discordant' causes. This term is used to classify the two types of karmic result: the ripening result, and the result concordant with or similar to its cause. An example of the ripening result of a non-virtuous action is taking a rebirth in a lower realm, such as an animal. However, the concordant result or result similar to the cause of that same non-virtuous action could also ripen in a good rebirth. For example, the suffering we experience as a human would be the result concordant with its cause of a non-virtuous action.

The commentary continues:

For example, it is similar to the way that beings produce the guardians of hell with their own bad karma, and these guardians then inflict harm on them.

Here, the text is saying that when beings take birth in the hell realms, they encounter the guardians of the hell realms, which inflict suffering on them. But those guardians do not come into existence independently of themselves – rather, they are the result or manifestation of beings' own past negative karmas.

Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds states:

I, at a former time, inflicted
Harm such as this on living beings.
Therefore, it is fitting that I, who hurt others,
Should receive this harm.

So it's important to acknowledge that the harm and suffering you receive is the ripening or exhaustion of your own negative karma. Since experiencing harm and suffering or facing difficulties indicates the exhaustion of our past negative karma, it is saying here that we should accept it

joyfully and rejoice. The situation should also be regarded as a lesson and inspire us to think: 'I should not create any more negative karma but should create only positive karma'.

We need to be very clear in our mind that if we harm others we will receive harm from them. Sometimes, we will notice that others immediately retaliate when we harm them. From this experience, we can learn that all the harm we receive from others and the suffering we experience in our life is the result or fruition of our own past karma.

The text continues:

And also:

The childish do not want suffering,
Yet crave the causes of suffering.
So why should I be angry with others
When it is my own fault that I am hurt?

In relation to this, one master said: 'I am happy when I receive suffering, but I am not happy when I receive happiness.' This master's outlook is based on the fact that finding suffering and misery in our lives is an indication of the exhaustion of our past negative karma, so from this angle it is good news. Whereas finding joy and happiness is an indication that our positive karma is being exhausted; this is bad news, as we don't want to use it up.

The commentary continues:

For example, just like the guardians of hell
And the Sword-leafed Forest,
I produce this harm with my own actions.
So at whom should I get angry?
Those who do me harm arise
Impelled by my own karma.
If thereby they go to a hell,
Have I not ruined them?

Also, Sha-bo-ba said, "When you say, 'I am not at fault,' it indicates that you, in fact, have not internalized even a bit of the teaching."

(2) On analysis of the subject, anger is unjustified

If you get angry at a harmdoer through an inability to bear suffering, it is contradictory because, even as you are failing to bear slight suffering in the present, you are aggressively creating the cause of measureless suffering in the miserable realms.

As it says here *if you get angry at a harmdoer through an inability to bear suffering, it is contradictory*. Normally, we lose our temper and get angry because we don't want even the slightest suffering or cannot tolerate the slightest loss or harm from others.

If that's the case, then it is saying here that it is contradictory to let anger control our mind, because anger will bring a far greater amount of suffering and loss upon us. If you really do not want to experience suffering, then instead of getting angry, you should practise patience.

When the text says *because, even as you are failing to bear slight suffering in the present, you are aggressively creating the cause of measureless suffering in the miserable realms*, the implication is that if we do not practise patience, we will lose our mind to anger. When our mind fills with anger, it is almost as if we are deliberately creating the cause of suffering, which – compared to what we are currently experiencing from the harm we receive from others – may be measureless suffering in miserable realms.

The text continues:

Therefore, induce a sense of embarrassment, thinking, "I am very stupid," and work to contain your anger.

We need to truly recognise that when we get angry, we are in fact creating a cause for greater suffering in the future – all because of our inability to tolerate a slight experience of suffering now. So when we observe our situation holistically, we can see how narrow-minded, foolish and stupid our judgement is when we receive harm. In fact, we have reason to feel ashamed of ourselves.

Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds states:

If I cannot endure
Even the slight suffering of the present,
Then why do I not stop my anger,
The cause of suffering in the hells?

The suffering generated by harm is the effect of previous bad karma; by experiencing it, you exhaust this karma. If you bear the suffering, you do not accumulate new sins and you greatly increase your merit. Therefore, you must not consider how harmdoers ruin their virtue, but view them as kind in that it is as though they are engaged in actions for the sake of clearing away your sins.

The main point here is to see the harmdoer as someone doing you a great favour. As it says here, *therefore you must not consider how harmdoers ruin their virtue* – that is, the harmdoer is ruining their own practice of virtue, yet is doing you a favour. So if you can bear the suffering, you will not accumulate new sins, and you will greatly increase your merit, and so on.

Next:

The *Garland of Birth Stories* says:

We note here how Tsongkhapa first gives the explanation, then cites the source of the explanation.

I do not think about this person ruining his virtue,
But that he is as if engaged in actions to clear away my
sins;
If I am not patient even with this person,
How could I be any more unkind?

It clearly implies here that we should cultivate a sense of gratitude towards harmdoers or enemies. His Holiness the Dalai Lama frequently emphasises that we develop the practice of patience thanks to our enemies or those who harm us. Indeed, it is not our spiritual gurus who provide us with practical lessons on developing patience, but it is our enemies or harmdoers whom we depend on to develop patience. So, thinking in this way, you can develop patience.

And Candrakirti's Commentary on the "Middle Way" says:

You want to say that you are exhausting
The effects of non-virtuous karma done in the past;
How then can you sow the seeds of further suffering
By getting angry and harming others?

This is aligned with what we discussed earlier. In a sense, the harm we receive from others benefits or helps us exhaust the result of our negative or sinful actions and is thus favourable for us. Therefore, we should not be angry with others in return. If we are angry with them, then we will aggravate their situation: as it says, *we sow the seeds of further suffering by getting angry and harming them*. So, as well as having harmed us out of their hatred for us, the harmdoers will also plant the seed of further suffering for themselves. Thus, this verse is saying that the person who receives the real harm is not us, but rather the harmdoer.

We can also understand here how, just as it is detrimental for everyone else to show anger towards others, we should

likewise not get angry at others. By doing that, we are creating the cause for our own future suffering. Therefore, there is no benefit, and nothing to win, when we generate anger within ourselves, or if we cause anger to arise in others.

On Sunday 16 June, we have the Saga Dawa puja. Geshe-la would like to sponsor lunch, but he will have to rely on volunteers to organise it. Then on 6 July is His Holiness' birthday. To celebrate this, Geshe-la suggests that maybe you students will host a lunch.

Saga is the Tibetan name for a particular very bright star that appears once in the fourth month of each year of the Tibetan lunar calendar. *Dawa* means month in Tibetan. So, that month is called 'Saga Dawa', which is observed as a very auspicious month, associated with the Buddha's birthday, which falls on the eighth, and the Buddha's enlightenment and paranirvana, observed on the fifteenth of the month.

In Tibet, many people take the Mahayana precepts and observe vegetarianism during Saga Dawa. In that month, you can only buy dry meat in markets but not fresh meat. The Saga Dawa month is very auspicious for engaging in virtue as it will be multiplied many times at this time.

At the Centre, we are holding a Nyung Nye this weekend. It is a wonderful practice of purification and accumulating merit. People who have done the Nyung Nye say that they find it hard in the beginning and during the practice, but at the end of the practice, they really feel very positive. As a benefit of the practice, they have found themselves mentally and physically much healthier, fresher and clearer. These are some signs of the purification of negativities and accumulation of merit. Years back, while I did a two-week retreat in Sorrento, Angelica did the Nyung Nye practice and she said she found it extremely beneficial.

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