
Nagarjuna's Precious Garland



Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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We can spend some time doing the usual meditation.
[meditation]

We need to engage in this practice wholeheartedly, rather than just casually imagining taking in some negatives and giving out good virtues. If our practice is limited to a mere thought based on a good idea, then we will not derive the true essence of the practice, and it will not contribute to transforming our mind. Rather, we need to generate a true sense of compassion from the depths of our heart, which is based on an altruistic intention of thinking about the plight of suffering sentient beings, and then generate a genuine wish to take in their suffering. We need to take the time to really feel we have taken their suffering upon ourselves and given them our own happiness and merit. In this way, slowly and gradually, the real essence of the practice will take root in our mind.

If we do this practice in a superficial way when things are going well in our life, then it might seem as a nice practice. But the real measure of this practice taking root in our heart is found when we are experiencing difficulties and problems in life. If our practice has only been done superficially, then when real problems arise we might feel lost, scared and anxious. But if we make every effort to do the practice from the depths of our heart now, then at times of difficulty, we will be able to rejoice thinking, 'The time has now come for me to actually experience difficulties and problems on behalf of other sentient beings. May this suffering that I am experiencing now become a means to exhaust the suffering and negative karmas of other sentient beings'. Implementing the practice in this way will ensure that rather than feeling daunted, we will be able to utilise any adversity as a means to further enhance our practice.

Then we can consider difficulties and problems in life as a wish being fulfilled and as an opportunity to practise *tong len* in a manner that goes beyond just mere imagination or words. This practice is also a way to equalise worldly concerns. Where we previously had the natural wish to experience well-being and happiness and not experience any kind of suffering, that attitude is exchanged and equalised so that we feel joy when experiencing suffering and are wary when experiencing well-being and goodness.

As I said earlier, the measure of having practised *tong len* successfully is being able to naturally implement it during times of adversity. Then when problems and difficulties arise, in relation to ourselves, we will be able to regard that as an opportunity to purify negative karma created in previous lifetimes, as well as a means to take the suffering of other sentient beings upon oneself. One can then be further encouraged by thinking: 'May I experience even more difficulties and problems as a

means to exhaust my own negative karma and allow me to take upon the suffering of other sentient beings. Henceforth, may I be able to withstand any negativities and problems that are presented in life'.

As I have also mentioned previously, all the great masters of the past have confirmed suffering to be an impetus to create virtue and merit and purify negative karma. We never hear about any suggestion that having an enjoyable and pleasurable life serves as a means to purify negative karma and accumulate extensive merit. This profound advice from the great masters comes from their own practice and experience, thus we need to pay heed to their advice.

I have mentioned to you in the past, that when I feel joyful and happy, I start to become wary and wonder why I am feeling like this. Could it be related to merely good external conditions? Is that why I am experiencing this sense of ease and happiness? If that is the case, then I start to become very wary and cautious. If one is experiencing well-being merely based on the good external conditions, then that is not a good sign for one's Dharma practice.

When the *tong len* practice is done sincerely, it will enable a true inner transformation take place. We need to really work on transforming our mind because that is what ultimately accompanies us. At death we have to leave everything behind, including our physical body and all other good conditions relating to physical comfort. What we do take with us is our own mind with the good imprints and qualities that we have developed from our practice. Thus it is really worthwhile to pay attention to our internal transformation rather than merely focusing on the external well-being and comfort.

The *Thirty-seven Practices of a Bodhisattva* mentions that the mind is analogous to a guest and the body is analogous to a guest-house. That analogy vividly indicates that when a guest moves on, they leave the guest-house behind and don't take it with them. No matter how beautiful and comfortable a guest-house may be the very fact that it is a guest-house means that the guest moves on and does not remain there. When applied to our body and mind the analogy shows us that our body is like the guest-house, and our mind is like the guest. This advice is to remind us of the impermanent nature of our worldly existence. Thus, it is very profound advice.

Becoming familiar with this advice and implementing it in our daily life will be of real benefit, particularly at the crucial time when we are approaching death, which is when we have to discard our body and move on to the next life. It is at that time that we really need the assistance of the Dharma, thus we need to practice now for it to work at that time. We really need to familiarise ourselves with these points and further meditate on them. If we leave it as just good advice and don't really take it to heart and put it into practice, then at the crucial time of death, if anxieties, fears and so forth arise we will not be fully prepared to deal with them.

Whereas if we familiarise ourselves with these points now, then we can be fully prepared and there will be no hesitation in facing death. For with the knowledge that

the body is nothing more than a guest-house, it is natural to leave it behind. Knowing that it is a natural course of events, we will have no hesitation in discarding our body and thus no anxiety and fears at the time of death. But if we leave this understanding merely on the surface, it will not have much effect. When we take it to heart and put it into practice, then it will definitely be of great benefit.

When we contemplate these points about impermanence again and again, familiarising our mind with it, and then it will really start to move our mind. This is how we derive the essence of the practice. In the lam rim teachings impermanence is summarised into four main points:

- ∞ The end result of all meeting is parting;
- ∞ The end result of all accumulation is exhaustion;
- ∞ The end result of all high status is falling to low status;
- ∞ The end result of all birth is to perish and die.

These are really essential points for us to take to heart. When one contemplates the impermanence of meeting with companions and friends, which will inevitably end up in separation, then strong attachment will be minimised and one will experience less pain. Knowing that all accumulation will end in exhaustion, helps the mind to be less attached to accumulating wealth and possessions. It is the same with attachment to high status and to one's own life. Contemplating that, by nature, all that is born will end in death is really sound advice about not being attached to the existence of merely this life.

This practical advice encourages us to implement Dharma practice into our life and really take it to heart. For example, there are many who are very attached to high status, and when they lose that high status they become distraught. We see many examples of people completely falling apart and in tears, unable to deal with losing their high status. They feel there is no longer any reason to live – all because they never considered that high status is impermanent state that will naturally phase out. Whereas if we have already acquainted our mind with the reality that all high status, no matter how high or how worthy, will be lost, then we will not experience great shock or unbearable suffering when that inevitable event happens.

Likewise the acquisition of wealth and, more particularly, our own life are also impermanent. Many are very fearful about the prospect of having to die. Even the thought of dying can be daunting and very difficult to handle if there is strong attachment to one's life, and one does not accept the reality of its impermanence. Whereas acquainting our mind with this reality will help us to face death bravely and courageously, knowing that there is nothing to really be afraid or shocked about, and that it is part of reality. This is very practical advice for our Dharma practice.

Even though I didn't have any particular intention to side-track in this way, I find these points of immense benefit in my own life and practice, and therefore I feel compelled to share them with you. My approach to Dharma practice is to exert myself in making meagre attempts to do small practices with small expectations about the benefits of those practices. Then, when I experience some moderate benefit from those meagre

practices, I feel quite content and happy with that. [*Geshe-la laughs*] Expecting great results from meagre attempts is beyond the bounds of reality! Even thinking, 'I am making great attempts so I should expect great results' can lead to disappointment. I feel that the practical and realistic approach is to make some attempt to practise with the least expectation. Then, even if one experiences moderate benefit from the practice, one can feel quite joyful and happy, because one hasn't set up high expectations for oneself.

Let us now turn to the text.

3.2.1.3.2. *Buddhahood cannot be achieved through practising just the four noble truths and the auxiliaries to enlightenment*

The verse relating to this heading reads:

392. *How could the fruit of Buddhahood be superior
[If achieved] through the path common to Hearers
Which has the foundations [of the Hearer enlightenment,
The meanings of the four noble truths, and
the harmonies with enlightenment?]*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse begins with an assertion:

If you say: By meditating on the four noble truths and the thirty-seven limbs to enlightenment for three countless eons, one will obtain buddhahood.

in response the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

[Response] *How could the fruit of buddhahood be superior to the foe destroyer of a Lesser Vehicle if achieved through the path common to hearers?* Buddhahood would not be superior, as it shares the common path *which has the foundation* of the hearer enlightenment through contemplating the Buddha's blessed word on the *meanings of the four noble truths* such as the sixteen attributes of impermanence and so forth¹, *and the thirty-seven harmonies with enlightenment*. From a common cause, it is impossible to achieve an uncommon result!

The *thirty-seven limbs or harmonies to enlightenment* are presented in seven categories and it would be good to become familiar with them. The seven categories are:

1. Four perfect abandonments
2. Four limbs of miracles
3. Four close contemplations
4. Five sense powers
5. Five forces
6. Seven limbs of enlightenment
7. Eight limbs of the noble path

We have covered these in detail in the past.²

They are also presented in the *Bodhisattva's Way of Life* and other teachings. These are primary points of practice that are specifically mentioned in the Theravada or

¹ See the addendum to the teachings of 30 July 2002. All transcripts referred to in these footnotes are included in the CD of teachings.

² See the teachings of 5 October 2004.

Hinayana sutras. You will, of course, recall that these practices are common to the Mahayana tradition as well.

Both traditions place emphasis on the four close contemplations on the different aspects of one's body and mind. It is really worthwhile to understand what these practices of the four close contemplations and others entail.

3.2.1.3.3. *The Great Vehicle scriptures are suitable to be considered by the wise as the word of Buddha*

The connotation of 'the wise' can relate either to those who have the sharp faculty and thorough understanding of the entire range of the Buddha's words, or it can relate to bodhisattvas.

The relevant verse reads:

393. *The subjects concerned with the bodhisattva deeds were not mentioned in the [Hearers' Vehicle] sutras but were explained in the Great Vehicle. Hence the wise should accept it [as Buddha's word].*

In explanation of this verse, Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

The subjects concerned with the bodhisattva exhaustive deeds were not mentioned in the Hearers' Vehicle sutras, but were explained in the Great Vehicle. Hence the wise should accept or hold the Great Vehicle, as Buddha's word.

In the Hearer's Vehicle the practices to achieve liberation are explained in detail, while the bodhisattvas' deeds are only mentioned, but not explained to any great degree. When the wise, or those with a sharp faculty, investigate the Buddha's words, they can see that practices that are mentioned briefly in the Hearers' Vehicle, such as the bodhisattva deeds, are in fact explained more extensively in the Great Vehicle.

The Buddha's words present practices leading a Hearer to the state of liberation. When these are further elaborated in the Great Vehicle, along with more extensive explanations of the bodhisattva deeds, how could those of sharp faculty not accept that? This rhetorical question implies that the wise would indeed have to accept the Great Vehicle scriptures as the Buddha's words.

From these points we can also derive an understanding of the significance of making particular dedications at the end of a Dharma practice. As many of you would know, one of the optimum ways to dedicate one's merits is to aspire to always meet with the perfect Mahayana teacher in all one's future lives. Making such strong dedication prayers to meet and be guided by such exemplary teachers as Maitreya and Manjushri is really essential.

We must have made those dedications in the past because we have in fact met Mahayana teachers in this life. Had we have not really paid attention to this significant dedication, then even if we had made contact with the Buddhadharmas, if we had met with a teacher of the Lower Vehicle such as the Hearers' Vehicle, we might very well be in a situation where we don't readily accept the Mahayana teachings. That would then deprive us of the opportunity to create the causes to achieve

enlightenment. So the dedication to meet with perfect Mahayana teachers is really essential, and we need to ensure that we include this dedication as a significant part of our practice.

3.2.1.4. PURPOSE OF TEACHING THREE VEHICLES

It is said that the Buddha taught with the ultimate intention of leading beings to the final goal of enlightenment. So why did he teach the three vehicles, of the hearer, solitary realiser and bodhisattva? This section of the text is a response to that question.

The first verse reads:

394. *Just as a grammarian [first] has students read a model of the alphabet, So Buddha taught trainees the doctrines that they could bear.*

The opening words of Gyaltsab Je's commentary are:

It is in order to guide the disciples, ...

Through knowing the mental disposition of his disciples, the Buddha teaches according to the capacities of his trainees or disciples. This definitely indicates the omniscience of the Buddha and the skilful means with which he taught beginners, with the intention of slowly guiding them along the path to higher grounds.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

... just as a grammarian first has students read a model of the alphabet, so Buddha taught trainees, not topics which are difficult to understand, but a doctrine that they could hear or comprehend according to their mental capacity.

In the Tibetan tradition there is a very clear method of firstly teaching the consonants followed by the vowels and then putting the consonants and the vowels together to form words, leading to the actual process of reading. It is much the same here where children are first taught the alphabet before they learn how to identify words and so forth. This is the way teachers introduce reading. The Buddha taught in a similar way; he taught beginners with moderate mental capacity at a level that they could comprehend and understand, and then he gradually guided them towards more comprehensive teachings.

The commentary next states:

This order is prevalent because...

This is an introduction to the next verse, which reads:

395. *To some he taught doctrines To turn them away from ill-deeds; To some, for the sake of achieving merit; To some, doctrines based on duality;*

Gyaltsab Je explains the meaning of the verse:

To some he taught doctrines to turn them away from ill-deeds such as killing as a way to lead those with the disposition of the small scope for the sake of achieving the god or human realm which are the results of merit; ...

There are trainees or disciples who are incapable, or who not ready to seek liberation from cyclic existence or samsara, but who are still inclined to achieve a good rebirth in the next lifetime. To help them to create the causes and merit to achieve the high status of either a god or a human rebirth in the next lifetime the Buddha taught

about turning away from ill-deeds such as killing and so forth i.e. refraining from the ten non-virtuous deeds, and engaging in the ten virtues.

This is called the path of the small scope. For those with that sort of inclination, the Buddha presented teachings to turn them away from ill-deeds, because engaging in non-virtue or ill-deeds is a cause to be reborn in the lower and more unfortunate births. The cause to be reborn in fortunate realms, such as the god and human realms, is to create virtue and merit. Thus the Buddha presented teachings that will allow the trainees to turn away from misdeeds and engage in virtuous deeds. This is the correct technique and method for those who seek that goal of the small scope.

Gyaltsab Je' commentary continues:

... to some with the mental disposition of the medium scope, the Buddha taught *doctrines based on the duality of subject and object*, such as the extreme of samsara as something definitely to be abandoned and nirvana to be adopted.

For those trainees and disciples with a mental disposition that wish to be free from samsara and achieve nirvana, the Buddha taught that samsara is definitely to be abandoned and nirvana definitely to be adopted. Thus for those who hold the views of the two lower schools, the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika, the Buddha presented teachings on duality, indicating that the subject and object are substantially different. The Buddha taught this to trainees and disciples who didn't yet have the right mental disposition to receive a presentation on the emptiness of the subject and object. Even the term 'emptiness' is not presented to them, because they are not yet ready to accept that. So the Buddha presented them with the *doctrines based on the duality of subject and object*.

It is good to really understand the progressive way in which selflessness and emptiness were presented. To those of the lower schools, in relation to the person, the Buddha presented the lack of an independent and self-sufficient person, but subject and object were presented as being substantially different. The term 'emptiness' was not used in the lower Buddhist schools. Progressively, the Buddha introduced the term 'emptiness of duality' to the Mind-only school. For this school, the lack of an independent, permanent and self-sufficient person is asserted as the selflessness of a person; and the lack of difference between object and object-perceiver such as the lack of substantial difference between form and the awareness perceiving form, is presented as the emptiness of duality. The presentation of emptiness in the Mind-only school is then progressively refined into more subtle levels in the higher schools.

All of this is presented more clearly in the teachings on tenets.³ It is really good to have a sound understanding of progressive differences of the presentations on selflessness and emptiness.

In the root text, *to some, doctrines based on duality* refers to the fact that the duality of subject and object is explained first because some trainees are not yet ready to accept the non-duality of subject and object. Thus non-duality is

introduced progressively, for in the very next verse, *doctrines based on non-duality* refers to the presentation of emptiness of duality for the Mind-only school.

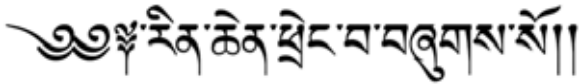
It is good for you to refer back to previous teachings on the topics presented in the tenets, to understand the distinction between object and object-perceiver being substantially different, and the lack of substantial difference between object and object-perceiver, as well as the difference between the lower and higher schools' presentation of gross selflessness and subtle selflessness of person. Basically the lack of a substantially independent and self-sufficient person is presented as the subtle selflessness of a person in the Vaibhashika, Sautrantika, Mind-only and Svatantrika schools, while according to the Prasangika this is actually gross selflessness. The Prasangika assert that the subtle selflessness of person and phenomena and emptiness of person and phenomena are essentially the same, in the sense of the lack of inherent existence of both persons and phenomena. It is important for us to get a good understanding of those differences.

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Edited Version*

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³ The text *A Presentation of Tenets* was taught in 2001.

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The prayer of taking refuge and generating bodhicitta that we have just recited will suffice as the motivation for the meditation practice. However it is essential that we remember the real meaning: taking refuge ensures turning away from a faulty path, while generating the bodhicitta motivation secures our practice as being in line with the Mahayana path. So, keeping this in mind, we can now engage in the meditation practice. [meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: For the sake of all sentient beings, in order to liberate them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. For that purpose I will engage in listening to the teaching and put it into practice well'.

3.2.1. Stopping Forsaking the Scriptures of the Great Vehicles

3.2.1.4. PURPOSE OF TEACHING THREE VEHICLES (CONT.)

We have come to the second verse relating to this outline:

396. *To some, doctrines based on non-duality;
To some what is profound and frightening to
the fearful—
Having an essence of emptiness and
compassion—
The means of achieving [unsurpassed]
enlightenment.*

In his commentary Gyaltab Je explains the meaning of the verse:

To some disciples, who understand emptiness as object and object-perceivers being substantially different, doctrines based on non-duality were presented to establish the ultimate; ...

Reiterating the points made last week, the teachings that were presented to the lower schools of the Sautrantika and Vaibhashika are topics such as the *thirty-seven auxiliaries to enlightenment*, the *sixteen attributes of the four noble truths* and so forth. However, the selflessness of phenomena was not introduced to the lower schools, thus there is no presentation about the substantial difference between *object and object-perceiver*. In the higher schools the selflessness of phenomena is gradually introduced beginning with the Mind-only school to which the *non-duality* of object and object-perceiver was presented. The selflessness of phenomena was further refined in the Svatantrika School, and finalised to the subtlest level in the Prasangika School. So selflessness of phenomena is progressively elaborated through the different schools. I have explained this extensively in the teachings on tenets.¹

Although you can refer to the earlier teachings on tenets, to give a brief overview follows. The reason why **Sautrantika** and **Vaibhashika** schools do not establish the non-duality of

form and the consciousness perceiving form as being substantially the same, because they assert that consciousness perceiving form is a result of form. They say that a consciousness perceiving form is produced by observing an object such as form. Thus, because form and the consciousness perceiving form are cause and effect, they could not be of the same substance. Furthermore, the reason why selflessness of phenomena is not established in the lower schools is because they posit that things exist from their own side i.e. that there is external existence. Thus they do not assert selflessness but rather a truly existent self of phenomena.

On the other hand, for the **Mind-only** School, the consciousness perceiving form is not a result of form, because they are in fact substantially the same and thus non-dual. According to the Mind-only School what appears as form is none other than an imprint on a mind one part of which, when activated, manifests as form, and the other part manifests as the consciousness perceiving form. Thus things do not exist externally; there is no external existence because all phenomena manifest as part of the imprint on the mind itself, hence the term 'mind only'. Therefore to the Mind-only the term 'selflessness of phenomena' is established as being the non-duality of subject and object such as form and the consciousness that perceives form.

The **Svatantrika** School assert that while phenomena do not exist entirely from their own side, they do have an inherent existence.

The presentation of the **Prasangika** School is that there is nothing that exists truly and inherently from their own side. Thus, all phenomena are empty of true and inherent existence. This is just a brief explanation and you can refer to the teachings on the tenets to get a better understanding.

To continue Gyaltab Je's commentary:

... to some disciples, the doctrine on emptiness that which is profound and frightening to the fearful – thus having an essence of emptiness and compassion – was presented as the means of achieving unsurpassed enlightenment.

For the lower schools such as the Vaibhashika and Sautrantika, the selflessness of phenomena is not presented because their mental faculty is not sharp or mature enough. Because they are temporarily unable to accept it, the selflessness of phenomena is not presented to them. As the Mind-only are of sharper faculty, the selflessness of phenomena is presented as the emptiness of non-duality which, as mentioned previously, is the non-duality of object and subject. For the Svatantrika School the selflessness of phenomena is presented as the lack of true existence, or the lack of things existing entirely from their own side. Of the four schools, the Prasangika have the sharpest mental faculty thus having the intellectual capacity to fully comprehend the selflessness of phenomena at the subtlest level. So what is presented to the Prasangika is the lack of inherent existence i.e. that there is not even an atom of inherent establishment in any phenomena. That is how the selflessness of phenomena is progressively presented to trainees.

3.2.2. Summation

The first verse of the summary of this section reads:

397. *Therefore the wise should extinguish
Any belligerence toward the Great Vehicle
And generate special faith
For the sake of achieving perfect enlightenment.*

¹ In 2001.

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je basically quotes the verse, as its meaning is quite explicit:

Therefore the wise should extinguish any belligerence toward the Great Vehicle and generate faith for the sake of achieving perfect enlightenment.

In this the verse, *the wise* refers to those who have the wisdom and sufficient capacity to analyse and check things thoroughly. Such beings of sharp faculty should *extinguish any belligerence* or contempt for *the Great Vehicle and generate strong faith for the purpose of achieving enlightenment*. This is good point to take as a personal instruction for our own practice.

The second summary verse reads:

**398. Through faith in the Great Vehicle
And through practising what is explained in it
The highest enlightenment is attained
And, along the way, even all [worldly]
pleasures.**

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Through faith in the Great Vehicle scriptures, and through one's conduct in practising what is explained in it, the highest enlightenment is attained. And along the way, even all worldly pleasures will be naturally obtained. Thus, it is appropriate to particularly have faith in the Great Vehicle scriptures and put the meaning into practice.

Again, the central meaning of this verse is a very profound instruction that we should relate to ourselves.

Engaging in the practices presented in the Mahayana scriptures and incorporating them into one's conduct is a means to achieve the ultimate purpose, a state of enlightenment. As long as that is our ultimate purpose our temporary goals relating to our worldly needs will be naturally fulfilled. Lama Tsong Khapa also mentions that if one is focusing on the welfare of others, then one will not need to focus on one's own welfare, because it will be naturally fulfilled as well. This is similar to what is being explained here. Lest we feel that in aiming for the highest goal of enlightenment we might be deprived of temporary needs and welfare, the advice is that we do not have to worry about that, because even our temporary needs will be naturally fulfilled.

As we are exhorted to do here, it is appropriate to have faith in the Great Vehicle scriptures and put their meaning into practice. This is the most essential point that we need to take as personal instruction. Having been given all the reasons for the appropriateness of engaging in the Mahayana scriptures and putting them into practice, we need to take the initiative to put them into practice ourselves. That is essential if we are to derive any benefit from these explanations.

I cannot claim that I have achieved any significant major result or realisations from my meagre attempts at practice. However I can say with certainty that there is definitely benefit from the attempts that one makes. Based on the limited experience that I have, I can confirm that there is a benefit to be gained from practice. If you were also to take heed and put these instructions into practice, it would be really meaningful.

It is good to understand the process of actually putting the teachings into practice. As explained in the teachings, the procedure begins with first listening to the Dharma—an essential and obvious point. Without first hearing the Dharma we cannot possibly contemplate it and put it into practice, because we have not developed the basis. From

hearing the Dharma, one acquires a certain amount of knowledge and wisdom. This knowledge can then be utilised to further analyse and think about the points of the Dharma, at which point our wisdom increases and becomes firmer. Finally, we put it into practice by meditating on the points we have analysed. It is good to keep in mind this instruction about how to practise the Dharma.

In fact, there is no real basis on which to engage in meditation prior to hearing the instructions, and analysing and thinking about them. Without having gained some knowledge or wisdom from having heard and analysed the Dharma, there is no basis upon which to meditate. When the teachings emphasise the practice of meditation, we need to understand that the practice of meditation is based upon having acquired wisdom from listening to the Dharma, and having analysed and thought about the points it contains. That is something that we really need to understand.

With a clear blueprint of how to engage in the practice, we will not be deprived of the means to practise meditation, and, in addition we will have plenty of different ways to engage in the practice of meditation. In the Lam Rim, Lama Tsong Khapa admonishes the trainees, saying 'If, after having heard the Dharma extensively if you are still asking what to practise, then you have completely missed the point!'

This often happens. If, after having heard the Dharma, you still wonder 'How do I practise?' then you have not spend time analysing and thinking about what you have heard. It is also the case that even though we gain some wisdom and knowledge from hearing the Dharma, it is not a very stable or firm understanding, and we can still be easily influenced when we hear something else that sounds rather convincing. So, as explained in the teachings, the understanding or wisdom gained merely from hearing the teachings is not very firm and stable. When we enhance our understanding by thinking and analysing, then it becomes firmer, and it becomes even more firm and stable when we develop the wisdom gained from meditation. The wisdom that we gain from thinking and analysing develops conviction, and based on that conviction, we put the understanding that we have gained into practice and meditate. This is how we develop the ultimate wisdom and realisations.

Also what we gain from hearing is derived from others, while whatever understanding and faith that we gain from thinking and analysing the Dharma is derived from ourselves. This is a very important point. Listening to the Dharma is dependent upon others, and we have to rely on them to gain an understanding from listening to what they explain. However because it is gained from others, it is not yet stable or firmly established in our own mind. Whereas when we further analyse and think about the points we have heard, and gain a real understanding derived from our own analysis, then that understanding becomes stable and firm. We then use that much more stable and firm faith or conviction for our practice of meditation.

The very manner in which the Buddha presented his teachings is really remarkable and quite astonishing! From it we can see how Buddhism differs from other traditions. The Buddha didn't present his teachings by saying, 'You have got to accept it because I said so. Whether it suits you or not, you have to accept what I say!' Rather, when the Buddha shared his knowledge and insight, he said, 'Use your own intelligence and wisdom to analyse it. Don't accept it just because I said so. Scrutinise and analyse it thoroughly yourselves. When you find it to be true and faultless then, as

a way to ultimately establish it in your own mind, you need to engage in practice'. So for an earnest Buddhist the real practice comes at the end of analysis and investigation, not right at the beginning. The Buddha presented his insights and then allowed his listeners and disciples to analyse and think about them. Then, as the Buddha said, 'When you find it is suitable, you can practise it'. This is a really profound, yet unrestricted way to engage in practice.

Even in this day and age, we find people in normal walks of life saying, 'Oh, I appreciate Buddhism because it does not appear to be dogmatic. It seems to be quite unrestricted and gives us the space to think about it rather than having to accept it blindly'. This remarkable attribute of allowing the trainee to have time before making a full commitment to Buddhism, is very appealing to many people these days.

Returning to the point of the text, Nagarjuna would have really investigated the reasons why the Buddha presented the three types of vehicles too. Thus through his analysis, Nagarjuna found many valid reasons why the Buddha presented the three vehicles.

C. SUMMATION²

The second-last verse of the chapter reads:

*399. At that time [when you are a ruler] you should internalise
Firmly the practices of giving, ethics, and
patience,
Which were especially taught for householders
And which have an essence of compassion.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

At that time when you are a ruler, you should internalise firmly the practices of giving, ethics – such as taking lay vows and one-day precepts – and cultivate patience, which are easier for householders to accomplish and thus were especially taught for householders.

In saying *at that the time when you are a ruler*, the text is relating to the king as a householder or layperson. The practices prescribed for a layperson are generosity, ethics – such as taking the five layperson vows and one-day precepts – and cultivating patience.

In essence the first three of the six perfections are specifically outlined as a practice for laypersons or householders because, as mentioned here, they are easier for householders to accomplish. So it is good to gain a full understanding of what these practices entail. The definition of giving or generosity is the mind wishing to give; the definition of ethics is the mind that refrains from ill-deeds; the definition of patience is the mind that refrains from becoming disturbed. The actual practice entails cultivating a conscious intention within one's mind, and based on that the respective activities will follow. So that is how we need to understand the essence.

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je goes on to say:

The connotation of 'especially' does not mean that these practices were taught more extensively to householders than the ordained, but rather because from within the six perfections the earlier three are easier for them to practice. Furthermore the first three perfections have an essence of compassion, i.e. firmly

stabilising compassion. Thus it is appropriate for you to familiarise yourself with these practices.

To derive a personal practice according to the explanations here we need to really familiarise ourselves with what these practices actually entail. What does generosity mean? What does the perfection of generosity entail? Although generosity can be practised by any individual being, the perfection of generosity is associated with the bodhicitta motivation. So the addition of a bodhicitta motivation makes the practice of generosity the perfection of generosity.

First we need to really contemplate what generosity means and then understand the different types of generosity there are. We also need to contemplate the meaning of ethics and then implement in our practice, by taking different levels of vows and precepts. Then there is patience and the perfection of patience, and what that entails. Next are the perfections of joyous effort, concentration and wisdom. You can contemplate from generosity up to the perfection of wisdom and in reverse order how wisdom relates to the earlier perfections. Just thinking about these points is, in itself, a meditation practice and very beneficial for one's mind.

We come now the final sub-division of the chapter.

D. ADVICE TO BECOME A MONASTIC IF UNABLE TO LEARN THE SPECIAL ROYAL WAYS

We can see how very skilfully, Nagarjuna presents his essential advice to the king. As a layperson or a householder, the king has his royal duties to perform. Thus Nagarjuna says to the king, 'If you find it difficult to engage in your lay practices because of your royal duties and so forth, then it could be advisable for you to be ordained as a monk.

The final verse of the chapter reads:

*400. However, if from the unrighteousness of the world
It is difficult to rule religiously,
Then it is right for you to become a monastic
For the sake of practice and grandeur.*

As the Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

However, if from the unrighteousness of the world, it is difficult, because of abstaining from the six actions of killing and so forth, to rule religiously...

This raises the issue about how practising certain aspects of the Dharma could be difficult for the king. *From the unrighteousness of the world* indicates how beings in the world are extremely unsubdued and unruly. Because there is so much turmoil in the World, the king would find it hard to abstain from the six actions of killing and so forth. As a king there will be times when the king will have to wage war upon others and actually engage in acts taking the life of another human being. The imposition of heavy taxes is a form of stealing from the public. Sexual misconduct is of course a possibility. There might be occasions when one has to engage in lying when presenting one's policies and so forth. Likewise harsh speech and divisive speech or slander may also occur. By virtue of his position the king could easily engage in all of these non-virtues.

So, the commentary concludes:

...then it is right for you to become a monastic for the sake of practice, renown and grandeur.

Again we can see that there is a very profound point being very skilfully presented to the king. Having indicated that the king might find it difficult to abstain from the six actions such as killing and so forth, he is advised to consider becoming a monastic, i.e. becoming ordained. We can see

² The fourfold structure of the chapter Advice to Train in Flawless Policy is:

A. Transition

B. Extensive exposition of flawless policy

C. Summation

D. Advice to become a monastic if unable to learn the special royal ways

here the very skilful means with which Nagarjuna presented his advice. While the king may acknowledge the need to engage in practice and abstain from the wrong deeds, deep inside he might not be so willing to give up his sovereignty by becoming ordained. He might think 'I might be ridiculed and I might lose my fame'. Apparently the hardest thing to relinquish as an ordinary being is one's fame. Knowing that this would be most difficult for the king, Nagarjuna very skilfully encourages the king not to be daunted and not to worry about fame because, 'If you were to become ordained, you would actually be even more *renowned and* have *grandeur!* How true this is from the Dharma point of view.

Even in a worldly context when someone gives up everything (riches, fame, high position) for the sake of Dharma, they are known as someone who is courageous and brave. So lest the king feels daunted by the prospect of becoming ordained because he is going to lose his fame, Nagarjuna says to the king, 'You need not worry because you will become even more renowned and more famous if you were to adopt the monastic life'. The fact that Nagarjuna said this to the king at this point must mean that Nagarjuna considered it to be an appropriate time to present such teachings to the king.

Of the ten non-virtues the six referred to in this verse are the very basis of morality. When we really think about it, refraining from these six misdeeds, and thus observing the ethics of their virtues, is the basis for all other forms of ethics, vows and precepts that we might take. Although the ten non-virtuous deeds and their opposites, the ten virtuous deeds, are presented specifically in the small scope, we must really understand that these form the basis of all other practice. We must not take them lightly thinking, 'Oh because this is presented in the small scope, it might not be so important!'

In fact they are the most relevant for our practice, whatever other vows we may have taken. A layperson may take bodhisattva vows and tantric vows, and for an ordained person there are the additional self-liberation vows. The ability to uphold those vows really comes down to the basics of refraining from these physical and verbal six misdeeds. If one is unable to observe those vows then it is evident where the fault lies. Thus, we need to understand that we should not take these six misdeeds lightly, and really make an effort to understand and establish these basic ethical values within our minds.

The very first precept or ethic that the Buddha presented is to refrain from killing. To this day Buddhism in general is renowned for its value of non-violence. Indeed, all the Buddha's teachings are based upon non-violence and compassion for others. The act of not killing is really an act of non-violence. The most harm one can inflict on any other being is to take their life, which is the most prized possession of any living being. So when we intentionally refrain from killing other beings, that is the very first step in refraining from being violent towards other beings, and it is thus a practice of non-violence

Thus we need to understand how the basis of the practice of Buddhism is non-violence, and it is on that basis that we engage in further practice. As the Buddha said in the sutras harming other sentient beings is non-Dharma—it is non-virtue. This is very profound advice.

Lastly the name of the chapter is presented:

The fourth chapter of the Precious Garland, an Indication of Royal Policy, is finished.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary concludes:

From the *Precious Garland of Advice to a King*, the commentary to the fourth chapter —an Indication of Royal Policy—is complete.

In our next session we will commence the fifth chapter, the title of which is Advice for Even Bodhisattvas Wishing Quickly to Attain Liberation to Become Monastics. Basically the advice that is presented in the fifth chapter is for laypersons as well as for bodhisattvas. It is always worth bearing in mind that someone who is inclined to practise as a bodhisattva need not be ordained. In other words a bodhisattva can be a layperson. We can also see that how there has always been this non-biased way of presenting the teachings— practitioners can either be ordained or laypeople.

As explained in the Vinaya the four circles of disciples are: fully ordained monks, fully ordained nuns, lay men who uphold lay *upasika* vows, and lay women who uphold lay *upasika* vows. This summarises the entourage of the disciples of the Buddha.

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
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Edited Version*

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Nagarjuna's Precious Garland

འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷན་པོའི་བཀའ་བློན་པོ་ལྷན་པོ།

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

22 May 2012

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

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines: For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment myself in order to liberate all beings from suffering, and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and engage in the practice well.

CHAPTER 5: ADVICE FOR EVEN BODHISATTVAS WISHING QUICKLY TO ATTAIN LIBERATION TO BECOME MONASTICS

In Gyaltsab Je's commentary the heading reads: An Indication For Both Monastics And Householders To Train In The Bodhisattva Deeds.

Types of practitioners

The advice in this chapter is for those who are lay practitioners as well those who are monastics. The particular connotation here is that lay people and monastics alike can practise the bodhisattva deeds, regardless of what level of the self-liberation vows they might have taken. Because bodhisattva deeds are practices that are the cause for enlightenment, one does not need to have taken the monastic vows to engage in these deeds.

Practices of a bodhisattva

A bodhisattva is an individual who has already developed an uncontrived bodhicitta mind. Bodhisattvas engage in the practice of the six perfections for the sole purpose of achieving enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, and to liberate them from suffering. It is to be understood that their goal is enlightenment, and that their purpose is to liberate all sentient beings.

Spontaneous vs effortless engagement

It is good to understand how an enlightened being, a buddha, constantly engages in helping sentient beings spontaneously and effortlessly. This comes about as a result of their practice along the path as a bodhisattva trainee. While on the path they have become familiar with an unceasing motivation of wishing to liberate all sentient beings, and for that purpose they aspire to achieve enlightenment. So, when they achieve their goal of enlightenment they will then unceasingly help all sentient beings effortlessly and spontaneously; that is because the buddha is simultaneously in meditative equipoise, while at the same time actively benefiting all sentient beings, by imparting teachings etc. For an enlightened being there is no distinction between meditative equipoise and post-meditative equipoise, and it should be understood that this comes about as a result of having previously trained on the path.

Uncontrived bodhicitta

It is when a trainee develops an uncontrived bodhicitta that they become a bodhisattva and enter the Great Vehicle or Mahayana path. Here we need to understand the difference

between uncontrived bodhicitta and contrived bodhicitta. Uncontrived bodhicitta means that the aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings is developed to the point where it is effortless and spontaneous.

Developing bodhicitta

In contrast, contrived bodhicitta requires an effort to develop that attitude. A contrived bodhicitta is cultivated through using the six causes to develop bodhicitta. Initially one contemplates how all beings have been one's mother numerous times in the past. Then one remembers their kindness, with the example of the kindness of our mother in this lifetime, and develops the wish to repay that kindness. This is followed by the development of great love and compassion. Then, as result of having thought about these points, the attitude of wishing to benefit all sentient beings develops in one's mind. However it is a contrived attitude because developing that attitude to benefit sentient beings still requires an effort based on cultivating the earlier attitudes. Whereas the actual bodhicitta attitude is effortless and spontaneous, and thus uncontrived.

The chapter has two subdivisions:

A. Brief teachings of what is to be adopted and discarded by bodhisattva householders and monastics

B. Extensive exposition

A. BRIEF TEACHINGS OF WHAT IS TO BE ADOPTED AND DISCARDED BY BODHISATTVA HOUSEHOLDERS AND MONASTICS

The first verse of the chapter reads:

401. *Then having become a monastic
You should first be intent on the training [in ethics].
You should endeavour at the discipline of individual liberation,
At hearing frequently, and delineating their meaning.*

The last verse of the previous chapter advised the king, *if from the unrighteousness of the world it is difficult to rule religiously, then it is right for you to become a monastic.* The practice of ethics for a lay practitioner, or a householder, is to take either the at the same time at the same time householder vows, or the five lay precepts for life. Having mentioned that if it is too difficult to refrain from certain misdeeds because of one's position, the king is advised that it is fitting to become a monastic, as a way to protect himself from those misdeeds. This is a profound instruction on how the practices of a bodhisattva are really based on ethics. As mentioned earlier, the practice of ethics for a lay practitioner, involves taking the five lay precepts for life, or the one-day vows or precepts, and for a monastic of course, there are further vows. The main thing to understand is how all practices are fundamentally based on ethics.

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

Giving up your sovereignty and then having become a monastic, you should first be intent on the higher training of ethics.

Here the king is being exhorted, 'Making the decision to take monastic or ordination vows is not sufficient until you are intent on the higher training of ethics, and really understand what those vows entail'. This is really very profound advice.

Here one needs to understand that it is the higher training of ethics that is being specified, in contrast to the normal

training of ethics. As you are aware, there are three higher trainings—ethics, concentration and wisdom. The practice of ethics in conjunction with taking refuge with firm conviction in the three jewels is defined as the higher training of ethics. Similarly, the higher training of concentration is the training of concentration, in conjunction with taking refuge with firm conviction in the three jewels. Likewise the higher training of wisdom is the training of wisdom, in conjunction with taking refuge with firm conviction in the three jewels.

This explanation clearly differentiates between these trainings and the trainings of non-Buddhist schools. What makes training a higher training is combining that training with pure refuge in the three jewels.

The essential point in the higher training of ethics is to take and keep vows such as the individual liberation vows. The main point in higher training of concentration is to engage in meditation practice to develop calm abiding. And the main point in the higher training of wisdom is to enhance the wisdom that leads to the development of special insight.

I have also previously mentioned in greater detail how the three trainings assist a trainee to reach the higher levels of realisation.¹ Without ethics, one cannot possibly develop concentration. Thus, to develop concentration, we need a firm base of ethics. Then having observed ethics, one can more easily train one's mind to develop concentration, on the basis of which one is able to develop wisdom. The three trainings are presented in this progressive manner.

I will not go into further detail now, as it has been explained previously. On those occasions I pointed out how the three trainings are a progressive means to overcome the distracted mind and, in particular, the delusions. It is good for you to keep these essential points in mind.

To continue Gyaltsab Je's commentary:

You should endeavour at the condensed discipline and the four divisions of orally transmitted teachings of individual liberation, and hearing the three scriptural collections frequently, and delineating their meaning as a means to fully understand the essential qualities to be adopted.

The ethics that form the basis for monastics are the vows of *individual liberation*. There is an explanation of these in the condensed discipline as well as the *four divisions of orally transmitted teachings* on the topic of *individual liberation*. Here the king is being exhorted to really look into these, and to study and understand them in depth.

One explanation of why they are called individual liberation vows is that by observing the vows one will obtain the state of liberation. The indication here is that you cannot ask someone else to achieve your liberation! You have to maintain those vows and create the right conditions yourself.

More specifically, the one-day precepts or the five lay precepts for a layperson, and either the novice vows or the full ordination vows of a monk or a nun are referred to as being individual liberation vows, because it is the individual who observes these vows who will be liberated, and not someone else. In other words you cannot liberate others by observing these vows. Rather, individuals have to liberate themselves by directly observing their vows. It is through observing those vows that one is liberated from the suffering

of samsara, and that is to be understood as the real connotation of the individual or self-liberation vows.

Actually the translation of the Tibetan word as 'intent' doesn't incorporate the full connotation of the Tibetan word, which has the meaning of respect. Thus *intent of the higher trainings of ethics* has the connotation of respecting the vows that one has taken, as well as the vows that others have taken. It is a matter of mutual respect — respecting one's own vows as well as respecting the vows of others. Respecting one's own vows helps to ensure that we really observe those vows; if we don't have respect for the vows, then our intention to maintain and keep the vows will be lax.

In other treatises that he composed, such as his *Letter to a King*, Nagarjuna gave the analogy that just as the field is a basis for all crops and plants to grow, ethics is the basis on which all realisations develop.

The next point in the commentary is *hearing the three scriptural collections frequently*. Here the three scriptural collections are also referred to as the three baskets of the Buddha's teachings.² It is explained that all of the Buddha's advice is included in these three baskets or scriptural collections. It is also to be understood that the higher trainings are incorporated in the three scriptural collections.

The three scriptural collections are also referred to as being an inner intelligence or science. This connotation of inner intelligence is a point that differentiates the Buddhist scriptures from non-Buddhist scriptures. Thus the Buddhist scriptures are referred to as the inner scriptures, and non-Buddhist scriptures are referred to as the outer scriptures. However the real connotation of 'inner' relates to the development of our inner intelligence, i.e. the inner development of a more profound wisdom that will serve as a means to overcome the delusions, in particular the root delusion of grasping at the self. So the connotation of inner scriptures, or the scriptures of inner science, relates to the fundamental antidote for overcoming grasping at a self. Thus the main purpose of the teachings is to overcome that root delusion of grasping at the self.

The scriptures presented by the Buddha explain the antidote for overcoming this self-grasping mind. We, who study and listen to the scriptures and make an attempt to understand them, need to ensure that whatever understanding we gain from hearing the scriptures will serve the purpose of overcoming grasping at the self. As explained in the teachings, the root cause of all our problems is this root delusion or misconception; it is the main culprit that is the source of all of our mistakes and every imaginable problem that we have. The fundamental cause of all of those problems is this grasping at the self which leads to a very unruly and troublesome state of mind. Without overcoming that, there is no way to overcome all of the other problems that we face. It was for that purpose that the Buddha, with his great compassion, presented the teachings. Therefore it is necessary that we derive an understanding of meaning of the scriptures, so they can serve their intention as an antidote to overcome grasping at the self.

As those of you who have studied the Lam Rim teachings will recall, Lama Tsong Khapa said that the true sign of a meditation practice having taken effect is when one finds that the delusions in the mind have lessened and that one's mind has become more subdued. So Lama Tsong Khapa is

¹ See for example the teachings of 16 November 2007 and 11 November 2008.

² Ed. Vinaya or moral discipline, sutra or discourses, and abhidharma or wisdom.

providing the essential advice about the purpose of meditating and practising the Dharma. We need to keep that in mind so we can derive the essential purpose of these teachings contained in the scriptures.

When the commentary says, *delineating their meaning* it is referring to analysing and thinking about the meaning one hears in the scriptures. *As a means to fully understand* has a connotation of putting that understanding into practice by meditating on it. Thus one gains a full understanding through the practice of meditation. So the purpose of *hearing the scriptural collections frequently and delineating their meaning* is to derive *the essential qualities to be adopted*.

The second verse of this first section of the chapter reads:

**402. Then, you should forsake
These which are called assorted faults
With vigour you should definitely realise
Those renowned as the fifty-seven.**

Here the king is being exhorted to engage in practice. Now in order to engage in the practice of adopting qualities, one needs to understand what those qualities are. Furthermore, adopting qualities is done in dependence upon overcoming faults i.e. the qualities to be adopted are the opposites of the faults which have to be abandoned. So in order to understand what qualities we need to develop, we need to first identify what those qualities are, and in order to identify and adopt those qualities, we need to understand their opposites, which are the faults to be abandoned. We need to identify and understand what the faults are in order to abandon the faults. This is a very meticulous presentation of how to engage in the practice of adopting virtue and abandoning non-virtue.

As Gyalsab Je explains in his commentary:

Then, you should fully understand the faults and forsake or abandon these which are called assorted faults. Amongst the various assorted faults, with vigour you should definitely realise those renowned as the fifty seven and abandon them.

In Tibetan, the connotation of what is translated here as 'fully understand' refers to recognising all faults, even the minor ones. If they are to be abandoned they first need to be identified.

B. EXTENSIVE EXPOSITION

We now come to the second main section of the text, which is very succinctly presented in two sub-divisions:

1. Forsaking defects
2. Adopting good qualities

This is a very practical presentation. If the question is, what do we need to forsake? The answer is all defects and faults. What needs to be adopted? All virtues and good qualities.

1. FORSAKING DEFECTS

This has two further sub-divisions:

- 1.1. Extensive explanation of fifty-seven defects to be forsaken
- 1.2. Summation

1.1. Extensive explanation of fifty-seven defects to be forsaken

This heading is sub-divided into three:

- 1.1.1. The first fifteen, anger, etc.
- 1.1.2. From hypocrisy to the forty-first, not thinking of death
- 1.1.3. The forty-second, proclaiming one's own good qualities, etc.

1.1.1. The first fifteen, anger, etc.

This section is further explained in two sub-divisions:

1.1.1.1 One through fourteen, anger, etc.

1.1.1.2 Pride

One could relate this presentation to the fifty-one mental factors.³ In addition to the six root delusions there are twenty-two secondary or proximate afflictions. Those presented here are mainly proximate delusions.

What are the six root delusions? They are attachment, anger, ignorance, pride, deluded doubts and deluded views, which is further sub-divided into five types of deluded views. These six root delusions are the basis of the twenty proximate delusions.

First of all, we should understand what a delusion is. The definition, as presented in the teachings is: *a delusion is a state of mind that causes our mind to become corrupt and unsubdued*. So a delusion is identified as such when it corrupts our mind as soon as it manifests, by making it unruly and unsubdued.

The six root delusions are named as such because these delusions are the primary factors that influence our mind to engage in numerous negative deeds. Being closely related to the six delusions the twenty secondary delusions are called proximate delusions, because of their close proximity to the six root delusions.

In defining a delusion there is the description of uncontrollably corrupting the mind. When the mind is uncontrollably corrupted, and thus unsubdued, then that serves to initiate corrupt actions of speech and body. So we need to understand how delusions initially arise as a corrupted state of mind, which then initiates corrupt speech and corrupt physical actions. That is how delusions are extremely devious, and how they are the main cause of all of our problems. Therefore, we must definitely understand and recognise what delusions are and apply the appropriate antidotes. We cannot be complacent and just let them be, because delusions will not fade away of their own accord. Rather we need to apply appropriate antidotes to overcome them completely.

In one of his works Gyalsab Rinpoche gave a very clear presentation of the four noble truths. He said that what pacifies our mind is the truth of cessation and what enables us to reach the state of having a pacified mind is the truth of the path. Similarly, a disturbed and distressed mind in turmoil is the truth of suffering, and what causes that truth of suffering is the truth of origination, specifically the delusions. So Gyalsab Rinpoche specifically related the Buddha's presentation of this cause and effect sequence to our own state of mind.

Gyalsab Rinpoche was highly praised for this presentation by another great master called Gungtang Rinpoche, who was himself also an incredibly learned and great practitioner. Gungtang Rinpoche's praise of Gyalsab Rinpoche's presentation really goes to show that what may seem as a simplistic presentation has a very profound and deep meaning to it. That is something we really need to understand.

In Gyalsab Rinpoche's presentation, our own experience of a pacified mind is the truth of cessation, and the cause of that pacified mind is the truth of the path. Again, in relation

³ See the teachings on Mind and Mental Factors of 5 October 2001 for a complete listing.

to one's own experience, a troubled and unsubsdued mind is none other than the truth of suffering. As Gyaltsab Rinpoche indicated, the causes of that suffering are the delusions. As we know, the truth of origination is two-fold—karma and delusions—and of the two, the delusions are the primary cause of suffering. So Gyaltsab Rinpoche is presenting these most essential points in a very simple way. He indicates the causes of both a pacified state of mind and a troubled or unsubsdued mind.

There is a saying, 'A truly great master is one who shines amongst other great masters'. For us some deep and profound understanding might seem to be presented in a very simplistic way, but when another great master praises that presentation, we should really pay heed and use the advice to move our heart, and put it into practice. Then the true benefit of that apparently simple presentation will be seen.

We can too often take things lightly and say 'Oh yeah, I've heard that before. It doesn't sound all that profound'. Often people ask a question, and before the end of the question, they suddenly say, 'I know, I know'. Apparently Geshe Jampa Tekchog was once asked a question, and before he had finished answering, the questioner said 'Oh I know, I know' and then Geshe Jampa Tekchog said, 'Well if you know the answer, why did you ask me the question?'

1.1.1.1 ONE THROUGH FOURTEEN, ANGER, ETC.

Actually the word 'belligerence' should be used rather than anger. The first of the verses in this section presents the first four ill-effects:

403. *Belligerence is a disturbance of mind.
Enmity is a [tight] hanging onto that.
Concealment is a hiding of ill-deeds [when confronted].
Malevolence is to cling to ill-deeds.*

1) The first ill-effect is **belligerence**, which is not the root delusion anger but a secondary affliction. The Tibetan word for anger is *khong-tro* and belligerence is *tro-wa*. They sound similar but there is a reason why belligerence is presented in the category of secondary afflictions rather than one of the root delusions; it is because even though belligerence is related to anger it is not actually anger.

I may have mentioned this story about the difference between anger and belligerence previously. Once during a debate session Lati Rinpoche asked Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, 'How would you explain the difference between anger and belligerence? Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey replied, 'Well, as I understand it, the difference is that the object of anger is necessarily a sentient being (*sem-den* in Tib.), whereas one can feel belligerence towards inanimate objects as well'. Lati Rinpoche laughed at that response, saying, 'You might have a made point here'.

The Tibetan word for person is *kang-zag*, which also has the connotation of sentient being. So the correct translation of *sem-den* would be a sentient being, which literally means a being which has a mind. However it seems that there are some Westerners who have the view that plants have a mind and could be considered to be sentient, and thus have feelings. I remember once Lama Yeshe jokingly said, 'You can't really rely on what Westerners claim—they think that even flowers have minds!' [*Geshe-la laughs*].

There are in fact some non-Buddhist schools which do assert that certain flowers or plants have minds, and they use natural occurrences to justify their view. They reason that as a sunflower opens up in the morning and then closes in the

evening it must have a mind. There are also other kinds of flowers and plants that shrivel up when they are touched, and recoil back later, and these too are considered by some people to be an indication that such plants have feelings. Because they react in that way, these non-Buddhist schools say, they must have a mind. However that is not a valid reason according to the Buddhist schools.

Scientists would say that plants can't have a consciousness because they don't have a brain. So the only reason that one could give for asserting that plants have feelings depends on the fact that some plants open their flowers in sunlight and close them at night, or shrivel up when you touch it and then open up later on.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of verse 403 in this way:

Belligerence is the term presented in the sutra; *a disturbance of mind* is the description from the treatises; this manner of presentation is to be understood for the rest. *Enmity* is a tight hanging onto belligerence, thus it is a later state of mind depending on the previous.

2) What is defined here as **enmity**, is *hanging on to belligerence*, so it is related to belligerence. That is because, as explained here, *it is a later state of mind, depending on a previous mental state, i.e. enmity is dependent on belligerence*.

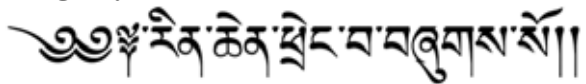
3) and 4) Then the commentary continues:

Concealment is hiding of ill-deeds through means of deception when confronted by others. *Malevolence* is to cling to ill-deeds and not give them up.

We can go into more detail about this later on. For now we have covered the first four defects of belligerence enmity, concealment and malevolence.

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Nagarjuna's Precious Garland



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

29 May 2012

Keeping in mind the motivation that we generated in the refuge and bodhicitta prayer, we can engage in the practice of meditation. [*meditation*]

It is important to generate an appropriate motivation for receiving the teachings, which can be along these lines: For the sake of all mother sentient beings, in order to liberate them from suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

As all teachers and texts explain, generating a good, strong, positive motivation prior to engaging in a practice is most important. Then, even though one may not be consciously aware of that motivation on a manifest level, it will still be conjoined with the practice, and thus make the practice meaningful. It is similar to the example of a bodhisattva in meditative equipoise single-pointedly focussed on emptiness. Although their bodhicitta motivation does not exist at the manifest level, their practice is nevertheless conjoined with bodhicitta. After completing the practice, it is equally important to dedicate it to the ultimate goal of enlightenment. In this way the beginning, the middle and the end of the practice are all conjoined with the bodhicitta motivation.

As emphasised in many teachings, it is extremely important to dedicate one's merit to an optimum goal. The benefits of such a dedication are two-fold: it helps to stabilise whatever practice one has engaged in, and it helps to propel that practice towards its intended goal. This is the case, whatever the level of practice we undertake, whether it be an extensive one or a short one, such as doing a few prostrations.

So we should secure our practice with the proper motivation at the beginning, then in the middle we should periodically recall that motivation, and at the end we should make an extensive dedication. Then the purpose of our practice will be actualised in a meaningful way.

Dedicating our merit towards the welfare and benefit of sentient beings makes our practice a genuine and unique Buddhist practice. Whereas dedicating our merit towards the ultimate goal of enlightenment makes it a Mahayana or Great Vehicle practice. This point was mentioned in earlier verses in the text.

The dedication is important because it directs our practice towards its intended goal. Nagarjuna explained this with an analogy: just as the direction of a horse is dependent on the pull of the bridle, the merit accumulated from a practice is dependent on the dedication. Returning to the earlier point of how a dedication stabilises our practice, when we seal our practice with a dedication it secures the merit gained from the practice against being destroyed by any anger that might arise later on.

The importance of dedication is mentioned in the sutras themselves. The Buddha used the analogy that just as a drop

of water added to the ocean will not be exhausted until the ocean itself dries up, similarly, when our practice is dedicated to the ultimate state of enlightenment, the merit that we accumulate will not be exhausted until we actually achieve enlightenment. In that way the Buddha established the importance of a dedication. Even if it is only a small accumulation of virtue, when dedicated towards the ultimate state of enlightenment, it will not be wasted or exhausted.

Furthermore, we need to understand that, as explained in the teachings, the Buddha dedicated all the merit that he had accumulated to the flourishing of Dharma. So that is to be understood as one of the utmost dedications, and when we dedicate any practice we do towards the goal of achieving enlightenment we should also dedicate it to the flourishing of Dharma.

As the Buddha himself foresaw, the best way to benefit sentient beings is through the flourishing of Dharma, because Dharma is the ultimate panacea that removes the suffering of all sentient beings. That is why dedicating one's merit towards the flourishing of the Dharma is considered as one of the optimum ways to dedicate one's merit. There is a particular prayer of dedication to the flourishing of the Buddha's doctrine, along the lines of the actual dedications the buddhas made themselves, and it would be good to refer to those prayers as examples of this aspiration.

Furthermore, as Gyalsab Rinpoche explained in another text (which I have previously mentioned to you), there is a difference between dedication and aspiration. An aspiration can be a mind wishing to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. However when one actually engages in a practice and then dedicates that practice to the welfare of all sentient beings and to achieving enlightenment, there is tangible practice that is being dedicated. In other words, a dedication has to have a substance to be dedicated, as opposed to merely developing an aspiration in the form of a wish.

The reason I share and emphasise these points is because in our own way, we are all engaged in accumulating virtue and merit through our daily practice. So it is worthwhile to ensure that that our practice becomes a meaningful one by sealing it with a proper dedication. Otherwise one might think, 'I have engaged in some practice but what I do with the merit? If I have gained some merit, what do I do with it?'

It is natural for us to wonder what we should do with the merit we accumulate. For example, if \$10,000 suddenly fell into our hands, our primary concern would be how best to use it. We would wonder, 'How am I going to use this? What am I going to do with it?' It is the same with our practice. As we have engaged in practice and accumulated some merit, we need to know how to use that merit for the best purpose. When we know that a genuine and unique practice entails a proper beginning, middle and an end, and what the significant points at each stage entail, then we will not be deprived of the means to engage in practice.

The instructions in the teachings that advise us to ensure that our practice meets the criteria of a proper beginning, middle and end, reminds us also that the middle is important. Even with the best motivation at the beginning, if we become distracted and don't really focus on what we're doing in the middle, then the practice won't carry much weight. These instructions enable us to keep in mind that just as the beginning and the end are important, the middle of the practice is also important, and it is good to

periodically remind ourselves of the bodhicitta motivation while we are actually engaged in our practice.

1.1. Extensive explanation of fifty-seven defects to be forsaken

1.1.1. The first fifteen, anger, etc.

1.1.1.1. ONE THROUGH FOURTEEN, ANGER ETC. (CONT.)

In our last session we introduced the first four of the fifty-seven faults to be forsaken: belligerence, enmity, concealment, malevolence.

403. *Belligerence is a disturbance of mind.
Enmity is a [tight] hanging onto that.
Concealment is a hiding of ill-deeds [when confronted].
Malevolence is to cling to ill-deeds.*

(1) Belligerence

On this Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Belligerence is the term presented in the sutra; *a disturbance of mind* is the description from the treatises; this manner of presentation is to be understood for the rest.

Another text¹ on mind and mental factors gives a more detailed explanation:

An intention to harm another through striking and so forth when one is in any of the nine situations of harmful intent. It differs from the root affliction anger in that anger is an impatience and intent to harm that arises when a harmful sentient being, or one's own suffering, or sources of suffering appear to the mind.

As mentioned previously anger is a primary delusion, while belligerence is listed as a secondary delusion. Thus it is to be understood that there is a difference between anger and belligerence. One way to understand the difference is in that the object of anger can be both inanimate and animate objects (including oneself and other living beings).² We also become angry with inanimate objects when they are a source of frustration, as well as when we experience suffering. So, when inanimate objects and suffering itself is an object of our anger, then our anger is directed at objects that don't have a mind or feelings. Thus the objects of anger can be either animate or inanimate. The object of belligerence, however, is specifically an animate or living being.

At the more specific level of the state of mind, anger is defined as an intention to harm. Belligerence is an intention to harm that has reached a heightened level after having thought about the object again and again. Belligerence occurs when the intention to harm reaches the intense level of wishing to reach out and actually harm the object. In other words, belligerence is a more intense, focussed form of anger. It arises as a result of thinking about the object and really developing a strong sense of animosity, to the point where the wish to harm the object becomes much more apparent.

As explained in the Abhidharma teachings, the nine objects of harmful intent are:

- ∞ In relation to oneself, contemplating that the other:
 - ∞ has harmed me in the past,
 - ∞ is harming me now and
 - ∞ will harm me in the future.

By thinking in that way, a strong intention to harm the other will develop.

- ∞ In relation to one's relatives and friends contemplating that the other:
 - ∞ has harmed them in the past,
 - ∞ is harming them now and
 - ∞ will harm them in the future.

There will be a strong intention to harm those who cause harm to one's friends or relatives if we contemplate in that way.

- ∞ In relation to one's enemies the intention is the opposite of the earlier two. The objects are those who:
 - ∞ have benefitted one's enemies in the past,
 - ∞ are benefitting them now and who
 - ∞ will benefit them in the future.

So, one develops a strong sense of animosity towards those who assist one's enemies.

The intention of harming these nine objects can be out of anger or belligerence which is when it reaches a heightened level due thinking about the objects again and again. However this analysis of the nine objects cannot apply to an inanimate object. For example, an inanimate object like a thorn can cause suffering and anger but we don't dwell on the thorn as having caused us harm in the past, or that it is harming us in the present and that it will harm us in the future! [*Geshe la laughs*] That sort of mindset does not arise with inanimate objects, although some might deal with the situation by immediately destroying the object that causes harm. There are many incidents of people breaking things out of frustration. Belligerence, however, specifically focuses on these nine objects. Also mentioned earlier, as the Abhidharma teachings explain, belligerence and anger don't exist in the form and formless realms, because the nine objects that cause harm are not present there.

The text describes belligerence as *a disturbance of the mind*. What one needs to note is that even though there is a distinction between belligerence and anger, belligerence is definitely related to anger. Because it is distinct from anger belligerence is listed as a secondary affliction. This understanding can also be applied to all other the secondary mental delusions as well. It is good to have an understanding of these differences, in order to be able to distinguish a primary delusion from a secondary one.

(2) Enmity

Some translations use 'resentment', which may be a more accurate rendering of the Tibetan term.

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Enmity is a tight hanging onto belligerence, thus it is a later state of mind depending on the previous.

The other text explains enmity as:

A wish to harm or to answer harm, involving non-release of a continuum of anger. It has the function of serving as a basis for impatience.

Having first defined belligerence, enmity or resentment is defined as hanging on to that mind. Resentment has that

¹ These definitions were prepared for the Masters Program by extracting them from Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness*, pp. 261-268. Hopkins noted that he based his text on Yeshe Gyaltsen's *Clear Exposition of the Modes of Minds and Mental Factors*, and Lati Rinpoche's oral teachings.

² Last week the notes erred in indicating the reverse. This is the correct interpretation.

sense of holding on to anger, and so it is actually the direct opposite of patience. There are many who confuse patience and resentment. They don't react outwardly with anger but harbour it within as resentment. There are many psychologists who say, 'You shouldn't hold onto anger – you should let it out'. However I feel that perhaps in this case the distinction between anger and enmity or resentment is not clear. It is considered as anger if it is displayed outwardly, while resentment is an inner form of acquainting oneself with a mental state related to anger.

One should not hold onto resentment, which is, as I said earlier the direct opposite of patience. When the practice of patience is introduced, some may feel that it is an inappropriate practice, because it is holding something in mind that will result in mental disturbance which, if sustained over a lengthy period, might even cause illness. However, the real practice of patience is specifically not holding onto any animosity, and therefore not allowing the mind to become disturbed by whatever caused the harm.

The Tibetan word for patience, *zopa*, has the connotation of being able to be bear. In the event of harm from others, suffering, or whatever difficulties or problems that prevail, it refers to bearing the suffering without animosity, in the sense of not allowing the mind to become disturbed.

Thus, the true mark of patience is to remain calm and undisturbed in the event of harm and suffering. How incredible it would be if we were able to practice like that! It would be so much more worthwhile to overcome an angry state of mind in that way, rather than feeling and expressing anger. How could you possibly exhaust your anger solely by charging at an actual object (or a substitute object) of harm with a stick, and hitting it? Indeed does the method of expressing anger completely exhaust it, to the point where our mind is no longer angry and disturbed? If methods, such as expressing it or acting it out, don't work towards exhaust anger, then it is far better to apply the actual antidote of patience, so that our mind is not disturbed in the first place. As I explained earlier, patience is not allowing the mind to become disturbed in the event of harm and suffering.

So, this completes the explanation of enmity.

When one begins to understand the real meaning and significance of practising patience, one will be able to implement the practice to its fullest extent. Practices such as the *tong len*, or giving and taking, will not daunt us, and we will gladly and willingly be able to accept and take upon ourselves the suffering of other beings. We will be able to do this practice joyfully and happily because it does not disturb our minds. So we can see how the practice of patience assists us with such profound practices as the *tong len* practice.

Without training our mind in patience, the slightest physical hardship can cause a much deeper level of mental anguish. However with patience we will willingly engage in any practices, even those that involve some form of physical hardship. If, when we experience some physical suffering, we allow it to become a cause for mental suffering, then our suffering has doubled. When we allow physical suffering to cause mental suffering it can reach the point where we can no longer bear that suffering any longer. But if we practice patience then, even though we may not be able to remove the physical suffering immediately and we continue to experience physical hardships and difficulties, our mind will not be disturbed. Thus the practice of patience protects us from mental suffering. In this way we will be able to bear physical hardships such as sickness and so forth.

When we understand what the real practice of patience entails, and its significance, then we can see how it serves as an antidote for overcoming anger as well as belligerence, resentment and so forth.

(3) Concealment

The explanation given by Gyaltsab Je is:

Concealment is hiding of ill-deeds through means of deception when confronted by others.

The other text explains concealment as:

A wish, through the force of ignorance, to hide a fault when another person, such as a spiritual guide, points out that fault.

Thus concealment refers particularly to concealing one's own faults, out of ignorance. When someone (a spiritual guide or a close friend) very kindly points out one of our faults to us, then rather than acknowledging and accepting it as a fault, we would rather hide it. We assume that we don't actually have that fault, thinking 'They don't have right to point this out to me'. So out of ignorance one conceals the fault.

If we fall into this trap then there is no way for us to actually begin to work on improving the state of our mind. If we are constantly concealing our faults it will be very difficult for real transformation to take place. Thus, it is to be understood that concealment is a state of mind that intentionally hides one's faults through the influence of ignorance.

(4) Malevolence

The next defect listed in the text is malevolence. Another translation uses 'spite'.

Gyaltsab Je gives this description in his commentary:

Malevolence is to cling to ill-deeds not giving them up.

The other text gives a more specific definition:

A wish, through the force of belligerence and resentment, to speak harsh words, out of ill-will towards another who has pointed out a fault.

As described here, malevolence or spite refers specifically to the influence of the forces of belligerence and resentment, which cause one to speak harsh words out of ill-will to someone who has pointed out any of our faults. In other words, when someone out of good will, points out any of our faults and brings it to our attention, we might respond by being really spiteful, rather than willingly accepting that comment. The Tibetan term for someone who is very spiteful implies that they are ready to use very harsh and violent words when speaking to others.

So spite is a corrupt mental state, which is influenced by belligerence and resentment and thus related to anger. These are all very deluded states of mind that we hold on to. It is good to try to relate them on a personal level, and identify any of these states of mind within ourselves. That is the real significance of studying this text: we can relate it to our own state of mind and see how many of these corrupt states of mind we hold on to.

It is important to recognise this through self-analysis by thinking, 'It is these very states of mind that prevent me from transforming and developing my mind, and thus hindering my spiritual realisations. From beginningless time, these are the very states of mind that have bound me to the cycle of suffering again and again'. So the main significance of studying this is to relate it to one's own state of mind. When one identifies any of these within one's own mind, one needs to then to recognise them as being the main

fault that prevents one from gaining higher realisations, and freeing one from the samsaric nature of suffering.

Another way to take this as a personal instruction is to relate it to, for example, the sayings of the First Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Gendun Drub. In one of his texts, he said that delusions such as attachment and anger are the real enemies, and that they lie nowhere else but within oneself. So isn't it, he said, worthwhile to be honest and to directly face the real enemy, and overcome it? Wouldn't that be really worthwhile? These are very meaningful and pungent words of advice which are good for us to keep in mind. Rather than trying to look outside of ourselves for the enemy and trying to find fault in everyone else, Gyalwa Gendun Drub is exhorting us to be honest and look for the enemy within, which is none other than the delusions such as attachment and anger.

What causes us real pain is not an external enemy or someone who approaches with a big stick! Mere physical pain will wear off. It might initially hurt us physically, but the mental pain doesn't usually linger on (although it may in severe cases). In most cases the actual physical pain does not cause any mental anguish; what does cause us mental anguish and pain on a continual basis is the strong attachment and anger within our own mind.

Now we come to the fourth verse of this chapter, which reads:

*404. Dissimulation is deceptiveness.
Deceit is crookedness of mind.
Jealousy is to be bothered by others' good
qualities.
Miserliness is a fear of giving.*

(5) Dissimulation

Gyaltsab Je's commentary is quite succinct:

Dissimulation is deceptiveness.

Dissimulation is defined more specifically in the other text:

A wish to hide one's fault from others through the force of desire for goods and services.

Thus it is a wish to hide one's faults from others, motivated by a desire for goods and services.

(6) Deceit

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Deceit is crookedness of mind.

The other text defines deceit as:

A pretension of having good qualities, whereas one does not, through the force of strong attachment to goods and services.

This secondary affliction is clearly defined as a state of mind where one pretends to have qualities such as knowledge and realisations and so forth, when in fact one lacks those qualities. We should be very mindful about this, not just with respect to ourselves but when we witness others displaying it. This defect can be both prevalent and obvious. There are those who go around with a sense of superiority, with pretensions about their qualities, which they announce to the world in order to secure fame and followers and so forth.

It seems that there are many people who are really influenced by that fault and who get carried away with it. So we really need to be mindful of ourselves, as well as be a little wary when someone declares their qualities and knowledge and so forth. Otherwise we might be influenced in the wrong direction. At a personal level, being cautious about deceit

assists us to avoid the eight worldly concerns; falling victim to deceit is completely giving in to the worldly concerns.

As the great master Atisha advised: 'Engage in the practice of concealing one's qualities and declaring one's faults; but announce the good qualities of others, whilst hiding their faults. This is the way we need to practise if we are to overcome the eight worldly concerns. Otherwise we might go around announcing our qualities, even if we don't have that many, and make a big deal about whatever we have studied or done and so forth. So we need to be really cautious.

This simple advice is really profound when we take it as a personal instruction. Declaring one's faults is open and honest, and will not deceive others about those faults. If we say 'These are my faults', then we are being honest right from the very beginning. One's qualities are not something to boast about; one should be modest about them and keep them to oneself. When Atisha mentions 'hiding their faults' he means not focussing on the faults of others, while focussing on their qualities. That is a very practical way to develop a really genuine appreciation of others.

When we follow that practice of focussing on the qualities of teachers and so forth, and really think about their qualities, we can develop genuine respect and faith. But if we constantly occupy our mind by focussing on their faults, then there is no room for genuine respect and faith. We need to understand how this is a really profound level of practice.

(7) Jealousy

The next defect presented here in the text is jealousy, which is described quite clearly in Gyaltsab Je's commentary:

*... with attachment to riches and honor, to be bothered
or tormented by others' good qualities.*

The other commentary gives a more specific explanation:

A disturbance of the mind from the depths that involves an inability to bear another's fortune due to being attached to goods and services. ...

As explained here, jealousy is a state of mind that is not able to bear the good fortune or good qualities of others. While it is not attachment itself, jealousy is related to attachment. We know from our own experience that jealousy is clearly a state of mind that can cause mental anguish. And it is not just ourselves who are uncomfortable when we are jealous; when others notice we are jealous of their qualities or good fortune, it makes them feel uncomfortable too. So we can see that not only does jealousy harm oneself, but it also makes others feel uneasy. There is really no benefit to be gained by jealousy.

Feeling unhappy about the good fortune of others does nothing to change their good fortune or make it disappear, but it definitely disturbs our mind. We can deal with this by practising another form of patience. Rather than allowing the good fortune and good qualities of others to cause disturbance in our mind, we can train our mind to be joyful and happy about their good fortune and good qualities. It would be such a wonderful practice if we replace jealousy with a sense of joy and happiness about their good fortune, and it would definitely generate an enormous sense of ease in our mind.

Jealousy can also bring about feelings of hostility and distance from the object of our jealousy. Rather than cultivating that sort of attitude, try to befriend them, and praise and encourage them. Rejoice with them in their good deeds and good fortune and so forth. That brings about a

two-fold benefit: when we genuinely practice like that, it brings us real joy and happiness, and will be really good for the other person as well. What a wonderful practice that is!

(8) Miserliness

As described in the Gyaltzab Je's commentary the next fault is:

Miserliness is with a fear of giving, holding on tight to ones' possessions.

The other commentary describes it similarly:

A tight holding onto articles without letting them go through the power of attachment to goods and services.

Just like jealousy, miserliness is related to attachment. Out of a fear of losing possessions, one holds onto them and doesn't let them go. Here again we can understand how it is a secondary or a proximate delusion in relation to the root delusion of attachment. From a worldly perspective, miserliness seems to be one of the drivers of investment to increase one's wealth and so forth.

I was about eighteen when I first studied these topics, which come from the study of *lo rig*, or mind and awareness. Within the topic of mind and awareness, seven different types of minds are described. One category presented in the mind and awareness texts is mind and mental factors.

Then there are the primary minds and the secondary minds. Mind, mentality, and consciousness are all synonymous with primary mind. There are six primary minds or consciousnesses or mentalities. There are fifty-one mental factors or secondary minds, which are divided into the five omnipresent factors, the five determining factors, the eleven virtuous factors, the four changeable mental factors, the six root afflictions and the twenty secondary afflictions.

I have covered all of these in detail in 2001 over four sessions, following four sessions on Mind and Awareness.³ I think we covered the six root delusions but we were unable to cover the twenty secondary afflictions in detail. I taught the text on the condition that students commit to come to all the sessions, otherwise there would no point in studying it. About seventy-five people came along for the whole eight weeks.

Margie (and others) have requested that I complete the teaching. As they are part of this text I'm spending time going into detail about each one, so I am completing my responsibility to explain them. Then you cannot complain later on, 'Geshe-la did not teach that'!

As you are aware, the next session is the discussion. As I normally exhort you, engage in the discussion a meaningful way. Come to the discussion with the intention of really sharing your knowledge and whatever you have learnt with others, and learn from them as well.

It is always a two-fold process: sharing what one has learned with others and gaining more understanding from others who may have a better understanding. In that way there is always mutual benefit. Keep in mind the particular instructions that we have just covered: for example don't come to the discussion with the intent of seeing the faults and weaknesses of others. If you see any faults, try not to talk about them. Rather, try to see whatever qualities they

have and learn that. That would be the appropriate way to have a meaningful discussion.

When dealing with others, the Lam Rim teachings advise that even though something may be true, if it would cause hurt and harm to the other then it is best not to say it. The very practical analogy given is that it would be hurtful to call a person a 'blind person' or refer them as 'being blind', even though it is true. There is no need to mention something like that. We need to relate to this advice and practice to refrain from hurting others' feelings.

Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
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Edited Version
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³ These transcripts are included in the CD of teachings transcripts.

Discussion (5.06.2012)

Week: 1 (08 May 2012)

1. In the Lam Rim teachings impermanence is summarised into four main points. List these points. [4]
2. To those of the lower schools (Vaibashika and Sautrantika), in relation to the person, what did the Buddha present? [4]
3. a) The term emptiness was not used in the lower Buddhist schools. Progressively, the Buddha introduced the term 'emptiness of duality' to the Mind Only school. For this school what is asserted as the selflessness of person? [4]
b) What is presented in the Mind Only as the emptiness of duality? [4]
- 4a). Basically what do the lower schools, Vaibashika, Sautrantika, Mind Only and Svatantrika present as subtle selflessness? [4]
b) According to the Prasangika this is actually gross selflessness. What do the Prasangika assert in relation to subtle selflessness? [4]

Week: 2 (15 May 2012)

5. a) Give the reason why the Sautrantika and Vaibashika schools do not establish the non-duality of forms and the consciousness perceiving form as being substantially the same. [4]
b) Why is the selflessness of phenomena not established in the lower schools? [2]
6. a) Give an explanation, according to the Mind Only school, of what appears as form. [4]
b) Therefore, to the Mind Only, what does the term selflessness of phenomena mean? [2]
- 7 a) What do the Svatantrika assert? [2]
b) What is the presentation of the Prasangika school? [4]

Week: 3 (22 May 2012)

8. How do the three higher trainings assist the trainee to reach the higher levels of training in a progressive manner? [4]
9. a) What are the six root delusions? [6]
b) Give the definition of a delusion. [2]
10. In one of his works Gyalsab Je gave a very clear presentation of the four noble truths. What did he say? [4]
11. What are the first four ill effects, or defects, presented in the category of the secondary afflictions? [4]

Week: 4 (29 May 2012)

12. Name and give a brief explanation of the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th faults. [8]

Exam

Name: _____

Mark: _____

Block 3

Week 6: (12.06.2012)

1. In the Lam Rim teachings impermanence is summarised into four main points. List these points. [4]

2. To those of the lower schools (Vaibashika and Sautrantika), in relation to the person, what did the Buddha present? [4]

3. a) The term emptiness was not used in the lower Buddhist schools. Progressively, the Buddha introduced the term 'emptiness of duality' to the Mind Only school. For this school what is asserted as the selflessness of person? [4]

b) What is presented as the 'emptiness of duality' for the Mind Only school?

4a). Basically what do the lower schools, Vaibashika, Sautrantika, Mind Only and Svatantrika present as subtle selflessness? [4]

b) According to the Prasangika this is actually gross selflessness. What do the Prasangika assert in relation to subtle selflessness? [4]

5. a) Give the reason why the Sautrantika and Vaibashika schools do not establish the non-duality of forms and the consciousness perceiving form as being substantially the same. [4]

b) Why is the selflessness of phenomena not established in the lower schools? [2]

6. a) Give an explanation, according to the Mind Only school, of what appears as form. [4]

b) Therefore, to the Mind Only, what does the term selflessness of phenomena mean? [2]

7 a) What do the Svatantrika assert? [2]

b) What is the presentation of the Prasangika school? [4]

8. How do the three higher trainings assist the trainee to reach the higher levels of training in a progressive manner? [4]

9. a) What are the six root delusions? [6]

b) Give the definition of a delusion. [2]

10. In one of his works Gyalsab Je gave a very clear presentation of the four noble truths. What did he say? [4]

11. What are the first four ill effects, or defects, presented in the category of the secondary afflictions? [4]

12. Name and give a brief explanation of the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th faults. [8]