

which are either to take a fortunate rebirth or an unfortunate one—for as long as we are in cyclic existence, these are the only two options.

What leads to having an unfortunate rebirth is the negative karma that we create now, whereas engaging in virtue now is the cause for obtaining a fortunate rebirth in the next life. So we can see here that it actually comes to same point as in the Christian tradition. I have heard that in the Christian tradition there is a very strong emphasis on adopting virtue, and that the way to create virtue seems to be very much in line with the ten virtues that are explained in the Buddhist tradition.

Within the ten non-virtues, the Buddhist explanation of holding on to wrong views would be quite different to the Christian faith. However, the very basis of ethics, i.e. avoiding the non-virtues of body and speech and mind, seems to be really very similar to the Buddhist tradition. The point here is that we are all heading towards our impending death, and thus every tradition emphasises the need to prepare for what comes afterwards.

Within our own tradition, all the teachings emphasise strongly that obtaining a good, fortunate rebirth is not based on chance, and thus we won't achieve a fortunate rebirth if we don't create the causes now. If we fail to create the causes to have a good rebirth, then our hope and wish for a good rebirth will have no effect.

As explained in the Lam Rim teaching, we need to really contemplate death and impermanence, going over the main points and really familiarising ourselves with them, to the point that it becomes a great impetus to practise the Dharma. The meditation on death and impermanence is not to be underestimated as it is, in fact, a very profound level of practice. Sometimes it may be all too easy for us to think, 'Since that the topic of death and impermanence is presented in the small scope, it must be a low level of practice' and perhaps feel that it is not of great importance, and that there are grander, more important Buddhist teachings to focus on. But in fact there is no greater impetus for practising Dharma than to really contemplate death and impermanence in its entirety, particularly in relation to what happens after death.

We need to really contemplate the consequences of not engaging in the practice of Dharma, and engaging in non-virtuous deeds. What kind of rebirth would that lead to? If we really contemplate that point, it will become an impetus to practise Dharma. If we develop a complacent state of mind, thinking, 'Oh yes, I know desire is not good, but I'm not going to give it up—it's OK to have attachment', then there is no way that we can seriously engage in the practice of Dharma.

As explained in the teachings, the greatest practitioners experience death with a sense of joy and happiness, which is devoid of any fear and anxiety. For a medium level practitioner, the mark of having practised the Dharma is that they will not experience any fear at the time of death. And even for a practitioner who has done the least amount of Dharma practice, the state of mind at the time of death will be one of having no regrets. Whatever our level of Dharma practice, it is good to engage in it with the conscious intention of facing death at one of these three levels.

One of the main points of practising Dharma is to develop a sense of less desire and more contentment. This seems to be in accord with the Christian tradition, which also seems to have a strong emphasis on being contented and having less desire. When it comes down to the essential points of

practice, there is really lot of similarity between Christianity and Buddhism. I recently heard that, when done in the proper way, there is a Christian practice of having a strong, single-pointed faith in God, which actually works to reduce self-grasping. So in that sense it is quite a profound tradition, as any practice that works to lessen grasping at a self is a profound practice.

It is good to reflect upon, and become familiar with the practice of contentment as presented in the different traditions, as a way of encouraging ourselves to adopt this practice in its entirety, knowing that it has been thoroughly tested and seen as being worthy in all traditions. One must not misinterpret this to mean that being contented and having less desire means having to give away all one's belongings and live like a pauper. Rather it is a state of mind where we are not overly concerned about possessions and wealth and money and so forth, and where we utilise whatever we have in a proper way.

1.1.3. The forty-second, proclaiming one's own good qualities, etc.

(42) Conceptuality concerned with approbation

The root text reads:

426 *Conceptuality concerned with approbation
Is the thought that—no matter what—
Others will take one as a spiritual guide
Due to possessing good qualities.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains,

The forty-second, conceptuality concerned with approbation, is the thought that—no matter what—others will take one as a spiritual guide due to possessing good qualities; this is in conjunction with the attitude of wanting others to know about one's qualities.

This is a very clear explanation. The defect that we need to overcome is having the thought, 'When others know about my good qualities they will accept me as a teacher, or a spiritual guide'. We need to be very careful that we don't incur this defect.

(43) Conceptuality concerned with attachment to helping others

The root text reads:

427abc *Conceptuality concerned with attachment to others
Is an intention to help...
Due to being affected by desire*

Here, Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

The forty-third, conceptuality concerned with attachment to others, male or female, is an intention to help due to being affected by desire.

Of all the different types of desire, the attachment between males and females, is one of the most harmful and disturbing types of desire. That kind of disturbing sensual attachment is really a nuisance for the practice of Dharma, because it is a form of attachment that seems to take up so much time, cause so many difficulties, and lead to so many unwanted complications. Maybe I don't need emphasise this point much, because you might have already experienced that for yourselves! *[laughter]*

Some have confided in me that the one thing that really disturbs their mind the most, the thing that makes them really agitated and unsettled, is being affected by sexual desire. In terms of contentment, this is apparently the one attachment that can never be satiated. The more one engages with it, the more, it seems, one has to further engage in it, as

there is no real sense of contentment to be had in sexual desire.

It is when one actually gives into it that desire that the complications arise. Because there is no satisfaction, one is constantly trying to appease that desire, and if the person that one is attracted to is not very compatible, then further complications arise. This is why I regularly emphasise that, as ordinary beings, we cannot expect ourselves or others to be completely free from sexual desire. After all, that is one of the characteristics of being of ordinary being. But because we are inclined to engage of the practice of Dharma, and because we are inclined to accumulate virtue, it is worthwhile for us to really consider bringing a true sense of love, and concern, and compassion to our relationships.

If the element of true compassion and love is present, then that helps to overpower the element of strong attachment to sexual desire. When the factor that holds you together is genuine love and concern then that can be considered as a good relationship that is of mutual benefit, but if attachment is the main factor then that is when the complications start to arise. These are points that you really need to consider.

As I have mentioned previously, we need to be really mindful and careful not to engage in negativity and feel glad when we are able to engage in that negativity, and feel regret when we are not able to engage in a non-virtue. Sexual desire is one of the negativities where these inappropriate feelings arise. If that is the case then how can we possibly assume that we are going to take a good, fortunate rebirth? Willingly engaging in non-virtue, and feeling regret about not being able to engage in that non-virtue is a sure path that leads to the unfortunate realms. These are points that I would assume Dharma practitioners take into consideration. However there are some who are known to have knowledge of Dharma, yet who still engage in these activities. I am not sure if it is because they are not able to practice or what the reason may be. Nevertheless this point needs to given specific consideration.

(44) Conceptuality concerned with attachment to harming others

Here the root text reads:

*427bcd ... not help others
Due to being affected by...
an intent to harm.*

As Gyaltsab Je's restates:

...and the forty-fourth, not to help others, due to being affected by an intent to harm.

This is very like the previous defect, and thus no further explanation is really needed.

(45) Dislike

The first line of the next verse reads:

428a Dislike is a mind that is unsteady.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary merely reiterates this line:

The forty-fifth, dislike, is a mind that is unsteady.

This defect is more like a consequence of dislike, in that when the mind dislikes something then, because of the nature of that dislike, the mind becomes unstable.

(46) Desiring union

The next line is:

428b Desiring union is a dirtied mind.

As this is quite explicit, the commentary doesn't give much further explanation:

The forty-sixth, desiring union, is a dirtied mind polluted with desire.

Thus the defect of desiring union is having a mind that is polluted or stained with desire.

(47) Indifference

The root text reads:

*428cd Indifference is a laziness with a sense of inadequacy
Coming from a listless body.*

Here Gyaltsab Je says:

The forty-seventh, indifference, is laziness with a sense of inadequacy, coming from a listless body.

Basically, what is described here as indifference, is a form of laziness, which was explained earlier. This particular type of laziness is a sense of inadequacy coming from a listless body, which refers to a body that feels heavy, and weighed down by a listless mental state that has no inclination to use one's body to engage in the practice of Dharma.

This particular laziness comes from feeling complacent about the practice of Dharma and not wanting to engage in virtue. The words 'listless body' convey the sense of just lying around. As Shantideva emphasised in *Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, when there is laziness there is no opportunity for virtue to be accumulated. Here Shantideva was quoting directly from a sutra where Buddha mentioned this point. Thus laziness is really the opposite of joyous effort, which is defined as joyfully engaging in virtue. So laziness causes one to lack any sense of joy about engaging in virtue. It is also explained that the person who is infected by laziness will not achieve their goals or wishes.

(48) Distortion

*429ab. Distortion is for the afflictive emotions
To influence body and colour.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je adds a slight point to explain this further.

The forty-eighth, distortion, is for the afflictive emotions to influence a transformation of body and colour.

As explained here, afflictive emotions transform one's body and colour.

(49) Not wishing for food

As the root text says:

*429cd. Not wishing for food is explained
As physical sluggishness due to over-eating.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

The forty-ninth, not wishing for food, is explained as physical discomfort due to overeating.

As a result of overeating the body becomes very sluggish, and there is no wish to eat more food. The Buddha explained in the vinaya text that the ideal measure of how much one should eat is where two thirds of the stomach is filled, and one third is empty. As the Buddha explained this enables the mind remain fresh, because breathing is not obstructed. From experience you might have noticed that if we eat too much, it becomes harder to breathe, and that is because there is not much room, as the stomach is completely filled up.

(50) Having a dejected mind

The root text reads:

*430ab. A very dejected mind is taught
To be fearful faintheartedness*

Because this is quite explicit, Gyaltsab Je's commentary just reiterates these lines.

The fiftieth, *a very dejected mind, is taught to be fearful faintheartedness.*

Basically, this is a state of mind where one feels very low and has no enthusiasm. With such a state of mind we lose all inspiration and enthusiasm to engage in any activity, in particular Dharma practice. So we need to ensure that we have courageous mind, but again it is a matter of finding the right balance, as being over-courageous and over-zealous can also be a fault. So we need to try finding a realistic measure of courage and zealousness to engage in whatever we want to achieve.

I have emphasised this point in earlier teachings. A great Indian master called Lopon Pawo, or Ashvagosha in Sanskrit, said that if one has a dejected and discouraged mind then nothing meaningful can be accomplished, but with a mind of courage and self-confidence one will be able to achieve everything, which actually lies within our own hands. With that state of mind we will be able to engage in activities to obtain whatever goals that we set out to achieve. So what this great master is actually emphasising is the need for us to have a courageous mind, and a strong sense of confidence in what we want to do.

(51) Longing for desires

These two lines of the root text relate to this defect.

430cd. *Longing for desires is to desire
And seek after the five attributes.'*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

The fifty-first, *longing for desires is to desire and seek after the five sense pleasures.*

As clearly explained here, this defect is the longing for desire, specifically seeking out the five sense pleasures.

(52) Harmful intent

Although this was also explained earlier, harmful intent is introduced again in this verse:

431 *Harmful intent arises from nine causes
Of intending to injure others –
Having senseless qualms concerning oneself,
friends, and foes
In the past, present, and future.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary gives this clear explanation:

The fifty-second, *harmful intent arises from nine causes of intending to injure others, having senseless qualms concerning oneself, friends and foes; that others have harmed oneself and friends in the past, are harming us in the present and will do so in the future, and in regards to enemies, that they have benefited them in the past, are benefiting them in the present and will do so in the future.*

As explained previously, an intention to harm occurs in relation to one's friends and enemies. The nine causes of harmful intent are.

- ∞ In relation to *yourself*, the harmful intent arises in relation to those who have harmed you in the past, are harming you now, and will do so in the future.
- ∞ In relation to your *friends*, the harmful intent arises in relation to those who have harmed your friends in the past, are harming them now, and will do so in the future.
- ∞ In relation to your *enemies*, harmful intent arises towards those who have benefited by your enemies in

the past, are benefiting them now, and who will benefit them in the future.

(53) Sluggishness

432ab. *Sluggishness is non-activity
Due to heaviness of mind and body.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reiterates:

The fifty-third, *sluggishness, is non-activity due to heaviness of mind and body.*

This defect influences the ability to be able to maintain a focused meditation. In meditation, sluggishness is said to be one of the obstacles that can cause the mind to be really dark and in a stupor. As the prayer for the Flourishing of Lama Tsong Khapa's Teachings states: *His pure meditation is cleansed of dark fading and fog.* Through experience you would have noticed that sometimes in meditation there can be a sense of darkness and heaviness in the body and mind, and when that occurs then there is no joy in meditation anymore. When one attempts to meditate, if the mind doesn't seem to be clear and actually feeling dark, then this is the obstacle of sluggishness, which arises from ignorance.

(54) Drowsiness

432b. *Drowsiness is sleepiness.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary elaborates:

The fifty-fourth, *drowsiness is sleepiness, which is when the six sensory functions are uncontrollably withdrawn from their respective objects of engagement.*

As explained clearly here, drowsiness is actually a form of sleepiness, and when that occurs then the six sensory functions are uncontrollably withdrawn, and are therefore not able to engage with their objects of engagement. There are a number of causes of drowsiness or sleepiness: overeating, hard work or labour, and being very tired, and these are an obstacle to meditation.

The significant point about sleep is that it is one of the fifty-one mental factors, where it is presented as one of the four variables. The reason it is presented as a variable is because, although by its very nature it is usually neutral, sleep can be also non-virtuous or virtuous. These three categories of sleep – virtuous sleep, neutral sleep and non-virtuous sleep – are dependent on the state of mind just prior to going to sleep.

These are very significant points to consider. Since we are practitioners and want to accumulate virtue, we can transform a simple activity such as going to sleep into virtue. We all go to sleep and spend big portion of our life in sleep, so if we can ensure that our sleep is virtuous then we will naturally accumulate virtue even while we sleep.

The way to ensure *virtuous sleep* is to reflect on whatever good deeds one might have done during the day just before going to bed, and think about any practice one has done and rejoice about that. If possible, just before going to sleep visualise the Buddha Shakyamuni just above one's pillow, with light rays flowing down and entering ourselves, and blessing our mindstream. If we can actually fall asleep like that, then we will sleep soundly and naturally, and even at a subconscious level our mind will be in a virtuous state.

If, on the other hand, prior to going to sleep we are reminded of conflicts we have had with others, and we have disturbing thoughts and attitudes, then going to sleep in that state of mind will be *non-virtuous sleep* and, most likely, disturbed sleep as well. Of course if we don't have either good or bad thoughts, virtuous or non-virtuous thoughts,

when going to sleep, then our sleep will be naturally a *neutral sleep*.

So, when we are skilful we can even use our sleep as a means to accumulate virtue. Then if you sleep longer at least you have a virtuous frame of mind for longer [*laughter*]. If we bring to mind all our negative thoughts and concerns prior going to sleep, then our sleep will be non-virtuous sleep, and we will have wasted an opportunity to create virtue as we sleep.

On a practical level, sleep is one of the best ways to rejuvenate our body, and in fact that is the purpose of sleep. So it is most important that our sleep is very sound and undisturbed. If we are not able to sleep well then that doesn't help to rejuvenate the body. If we ensure that we have a virtuous frame of mind as we go to sleep then, by default, because our mind is very peaceful, it will induce a good sound sleep, which will then help to rejuvenate our body, and on the next day we can use it for good purposes. This is another significant point to consider.

(55) Excitement

As the root text says:

432d. Excitement is strong disquiet of body and mind.

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je basically reiterates this line:

The fifty-fifth, *excitement*, is a strong disquiet of body and mind, due to overeating.

This defect of excitement actually stems from attachment and, as you are aware, excitement is one of the main obstacles to meditation practice. Excitement hinders our capacity to focus the mind from the very beginning. Once we are focused on the object then another obstacle that may arise is laxity, which is when the focus on the object slowly slackens and becomes sluggish. The main point here is that the excitement that arises from attachment is a defect, and that it is one of the main obstacles to our meditation practice. It is said that while distraction can arise from various causes, excitement is particularly related to attachment. This is another point to note.

(56) Contrition

As the root text explains:

*433ab. Contrition is regret for bad deeds
Which arises afterwards from grief about them.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary merely reiterates these lines:

The fifty-sixth, *contrition*, is regret for bad deeds which arises afterwards from grief about them.

It is explained in the teachings that, just like sleep, regret is also one of the variable mental factors. Like sleep there can be a virtuous regret, non-virtuous regret and neutral regret.

Virtuous regret is the regret that arises in relation to acknowledging that one has done a negative deed, accepting that that is a wrong deed and generating a strong sense of wishing to purify that negative karma.

Non-virtuous regret is regretting having done a positive deed. When we do engage in a good deed, we might later regret it thinking, 'Oh, that was waste of time' or, if you have been generous to others, later you might think, 'Oh, if I haven't given that away I would be able to use it now', and you feel a bit deprived.

Neutral regret is the normal regret we feel when we lose something, or a loved one passes away.

Virtuous regret (regretting having engaged in negative deeds in the past) is said to be a very important element of

the purification of negative karma. As most of you would be aware, for a purification practice to be complete, all four opponent powers have to be intact, and of these four the most essential one is regret.

As explained in the teachings, strong regret about a non-virtuous act can purify half of the negative karma that was generated. However for a full purification to take place, all four opponent powers have to be intact, which includes resolve, i.e. making a resolution that one will not engage in that negative deed again in the future. When one is engaging in the practice of purification one must develop the determination to not engage in that negative deed again.

Although it may be possible that one will encounter similar situations and commit the same misdeed in the future, one should not anticipate that this will happen. Rather we need to develop the strong determination, 'I will not engage in this negative deed again', and that strong determination in itself suffices as the opponent power of resolve. If at the back of one's mind one is already anticipating engaging in negative deed, then that resolution would be like a lie. However, if we develop a strong determination to not engage in that misdeed again as part of the purification practice, it is a complete opponent power of resolve.

The main point is the necessity of engaging in the practice of purification, because we don't have to make any effort to accumulate negative karma. We are so drawn to accumulating negative deeds it is as if we cannot even survive without negative karma. It seems to be an essential part of our life and that we cannot survive without engaging negative deeds. One way or another we find ourselves accumulating negative deeds again and again, and the main counter to that is purification practice. That is why purification practice is presented as being essential for Dharma practice. We have so readily engaged in negative deeds, due to habituation and past imprints, and if we don't apply a purification practice then negative deeds rain down on us, and we accumulate more and more negative karma. If, on the other hand, we are constantly mindful and engage in purification practice, it can definitely minimise the effect of our negative deeds. This is how we need to contemplate.

The practice of purification helps to protect us from being daunted by the prospect of not being able to avoid engaging in negative deeds. We might end up thinking, 'Oh, there is no hope for me, because I keep committing this negative deed again and again'. However all is not lost and we can counteract that negativity by engaging in the purification practice. That is the reason why purification practice is presented as essential for our transformation.

An essential element of the purification practice that we need to consider is that while the particular negative deeds that we may have committed in this life may be an impetus for us to engage in purification practice, the real impetus comes from recalling all the negative karmas we have created in past lives. That assumption is based on the fact that in this life, even with a certain amount of intelligence and understanding of virtue and non-virtue we have still created negative deeds. So how much more have we have created in the past when we were completely ignorant of the need to avoid non-virtue. As an animal, a tiger for example, how many other lives have we taken in the past? As a human we might have been a very evil person, committing really negative deeds, such as theft and murder and all of that. Or we have taken rebirth as a god, and been completely engaged with sensual desires, or taken rebirth as a hungry

ghost in the hell realm, being completely obsessed with food and drink.

If we bring to mind how we have been completely immersed in negativity in past lives, then when we engage in the purification practice our regret will be as strong as if we have consumed poison. This analogy of poison is a very vivid illustration of the degree to which we need to develop regret. If we consume poison we would fear for our life, and think, 'I might die from this. What I have done by consuming this?' We would do everything possible to try to remove that poison from our system. It is said that prospect of the consequences of the negative karma that we have created in the beginningless past lifetimes is even graver, in that it becomes the cause for unceasing suffering in unfortunate rebirths. Therefore developing very strong regret is essential for our purification practice to have a strong effect.

Just as we develop regret for negative deeds, it is good for us to rejoice in our many good virtuous deeds in past lifetimes. Even though we don't remember them now, we must have also created virtuous karma, because we enjoy a fortunate rebirth now. So we should rejoice in the virtues we created in the past, the virtue that we are accumulating now, and the virtues that we will create in the future. Following that rejoicing in virtue we need to dedicate the merit that we have accumulated from those virtues in the past, the merit we have accumulated now, and the merit that we will accumulate in the future, to the ultimate goal of enlightenment. Practising purification and accumulating merit is the way for us to engage in life as a practitioner.

(57) Doubt

As the root text reads:

*433cd. Doubt is to be of two minds
About the [four] truths, the Three Jewels, and so
forth*

What is translated here as doubt, is basically a state of mind which has qualms in two directions, being uncertain about whether something is 'this' or 'that'.

Gyalsab Je's commentary basically reiterates the verse:

*The fifty-seventh, doubt, is to be of two minds about the
four truths, the Three Jewels and so forth.*

There are said to be three types of doubts: doubt that leans towards falsity, neutral doubt, and doubt that leans to the truth.

The doubt that is presented as one of the six root delusions is to be understood as deluded doubt. It seems we need to refer to that as a deluded doubt, because all doubts are not necessarily a deluded doubt, thus not necessarily a delusion.

The doubt that is presented here is being of two minds about the four truths, the Three Jewels and so forth, is a doubt about the validity of the Dharma. So this presentation of the defect of doubt is definitely related to a deluded doubt. Deluded doubt is to be understood as one of the three main obstacles to achieving the ultimate goal of liberation and enlightenment.

The *Abhidharmakosha* says that the three main obstacles to liberation that are to be abandoned on the path of seeing are deluded doubt, the view of the transitory collection, and holding unethical conduct as being supreme. Deluded doubt causes uncertainty about obtaining liberation; the view of the transitory collection causes fear and hesitation about obtaining liberation; and holding unethical conduct as being

supreme causes one to go on a wrong path, which misleads and thus does not bring one to liberation.

This can be understood with a simple analogy: If one wishes to reach a particular destination, the three main obstacles to reaching our destination are going on a path that has a fork, causing you to wonder is it this path or that path; having fear and hesitation about actually stepping onto the path; and going on a completely wrong and misleading path, which never gets you to your destination.

I usually advise people to rely upon their own wisdom. If we have keep on asking someone else, it will be hard to always find someone to ask. Ultimately we need to develop the wisdom to be able to determine what is best for ourselves. And if one can cultivate and really strengthen that wisdom then we won't have to constantly have to rely upon always seeking advice from others.

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has to be based on the motivation of renunciation, i.e. having the determination to develop renunciation is the basis for taking self-liberation vows. To take the bodhisattva vows one needs to have the basis of the bodhicitta motivation, which is the altruistic wish to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings i.e. bodhisattva vows are obtained on the basis of that bodhicitta motivation. Whereas tantric vows are obtained on the basis of this superior or special bodhicitta motivation: In order to liberate all sentient beings from suffering, I need to achieve enlightenment very, very quickly; not at some distant time in the future, but even in this very life time!! This level of determination comes with the special bodhicitta motivation.

It is also good to take note of the duration of the vows themselves. Self-liberation vows are based on the intention, 'I will keep the vows until the end of my life'. So when this life ends, one loses the self-liberation vows that one has taken. Whereas when one takes the bodhisattva vows, the very intention of taking these vows is 'until I achieve enlightenment'. Thus, when one dies, one does not lose the bodhisattva vows, and they remain intact in one's mental continuum. These are also significant points to consider.

2. ADOPTING GOOD QUALITIES

Again it is really worthwhile for us to note the significance of sequence of the presentation, which is highly meaningful. It is a very significant indication of how to engage in the practice, and we should follow that advice.

In the earlier part of the chapter, rather than saying that we need to forsake the defects and just leaving it at that, the text goes into an extensive explanation identifying what the defects are, and each and every defect is explained very specifically and clearly. Having clearly presented the defects that are to be forsaken, what follows next is the qualities to be adopted. Again, rather than just leaving the advice at that, the text then proceeds to present and extensively explain the qualities that we need to adopt. This is the very meticulous way in which the teaching is presented.

Studying the order in which the material of the text is presented really helps to develop a heightened state of wisdom, in particular the analytical wisdom that is able to distinguish between faults or defects that are to be abandoned, and qualities that are to be adopted. That type of analytical wisdom is really strengthened and further developed by studying this text.

The manner of adopting good qualities is presented under two main headings:

2.1. Temporary good qualities

2.2. Final good qualities

We are inclined to focus on our ultimate goal, which is to develop the final good qualities. However, in order to obtain those final good qualities, one needs to firstly acquaint ourselves with the temporary good qualities and cultivate them. From this presentation we can also derive the understanding that there is a sequential way of proceeding towards obtaining our goals. We cannot assume that we can jump straight into achieving our ultimate goals. Rather we have to train by starting at the

beginner's level to obtain the temporary good qualities, and gradually move onto achieving our ultimate goals.

2.1. Temporary good qualities

This section is sub-divided into two:

2.1.1. General teaching

2.1.2 Good qualities of the ten grounds

2.1.1. General teaching

This section is presented in four sub-divisions:

2.1.1.1. Brief description of the entities of good qualities

2.1.1.2. Identifying the individual entities of good qualities

2.1.1.3. Individual effects

2.1.1.4. General effect

Again the very meticulous presentation is evident in the layout of the sub-divisions.

2.1.1.1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE ENTITIES OF GOOD QUALITIES

The two lines from the root text relating to this read:

*434cd Freed from these defects
Good qualities are easily observed.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary further expands on this point:

When bodhisattvas are freed from these defects, good qualities are easily observed. Thus be intent on abandoning defects and acquiring good qualities!

If we intend to develop good qualities, it is essential to first of all free ourselves from defects. In fact, we may find from our own experience that even though we might wish for a particular good quality, and attempt to adopt that good quality, it is very hard to maintain that quality if we have not already worked on overcoming the defect that hinders that quality. So a defect is really an opposing factor to a good quality. Thus in order to acquire a particular good quality, one needs to initially work on overcoming its opposing factor, which is the defect. Then, as the defect itself starts to weaken, the good quality will naturally strengthen. That's how things work in nature. When an opposing factor is weakened, then the opposite to that will increase and become stronger. That is how we need to understand the procedure of developing the good qualities.

The actual description of the entities of good qualities is contained the next verse, which reads:

*435 Briefly the good qualities
Observed by bodhisattvas are
Giving, ethics, patience, effort,
Concentration, wisdom, compassion, and so
forth.*

As Gyalsab Je explains in his commentary:

If asked what are, briefly, the good qualities observed by bodhisattvas? They are giving, ethics, patience, effort, concentration, wisdom, and bodhicitta which is motivated by compassion and so forth.

The entire practice of a bodhisattva is presented in this one verse. As other teachings also present, the state of mind of a bodhisattva is having the altruistic mind of bodhicitta, and the actions in which a bodhisattva engages are the six perfections. This really summarises the description of a bodhisattva; a being who has generated the awaking mind and thus engages in the

practice of the six perfections. It is compassion that motivates the spontaneous, altruistic mind that aspires to achieve enlightenment, the awakening mind, which, in turn, motivates the practice of six perfections, which are the deeds of the bodhisattva.

Since I have presented the six perfections in detail many times previously, I don't not have to describe them to you in great detail. However the text presents the meaning of each one individually.

2.1.1.2. IDENTIFYING THE INDIVIDUAL ENTITIES OF GOOD QUALITIES

The first four perfections are:

- 436 *Giving is to give away one's wealth.*
Ethics is to help others.
Patience is to have forsaken anger.
Effort is enthusiasm for virtues

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary further explains:

Giving is the intent to thoroughly give away one's wealth to others, as well as the physical and verbal actions motivated by that intent.

As presented here, the definition of **giving** is the intent to thoroughly give, which is said to be the entity of generosity. The substance of one's generosity is what one actually gives, whether it be material wealth, Dharma or whatever else. But the actual entity of giving is the intention to give that is developed in one's mind.

Ethics as presented by Gyaltsab Je is:

Ethics is, with the intent to help others, abandoning to strive merely for one's own benefit.

Although we might be familiar with the definition of ethics as generally being the intention to refrain from misdeeds, in this context, it relates to the ethics observed by a bodhisattva. The specific definition here is the intent to help others by abandoning striving merely for one's own benefit. Thus the intention to help others has no stains of self-interest or ulterior motives, and is practised solely to benefit others. The definition thus implies that because there is the intent to help others, there is no way that one could engage in harmful deeds or acts. Thus the implicit presentation here is that ethics enables one to restrain from harmful deeds with the intention to always benefit others.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary presents **patience** as:

Patience is to have forsaken anger, such as by thinking definitely about the Dharma and so forth

The first part of the definition of patience is to forsake anger, which is specifically a state of mind devoid of anger and any sense of retaliation. We really need to understand what patience actually means. Avoiding retaliation is not patience if one still harbours thoughts of anger. So we need to understand that the real mark of patience is when there is no trace of anger within one's mind.

The words 'and so forth' in the commentary refer to the patience of willingly enduring hardships as well as the patience of not retaliating when someone harms us. We also need to understand the definition of patience that is presented in other sources, which refer to the state of mind that is not disturbed in the event of harm, suffering or adversity. These are really essential points to

understand, not just intellectually, but to be developed personally.

The commentary specifically mentions the patience to definitely think about Dharma. As Geshe Chekawa mentioned, there is no way we can seriously engage in Dharma practice without developing patience. Patience is essential if we are to engage in the practice of Dharma, because there are bound to be adversities and difficulties and so forth.

We need to understand the three types of patience:

- ∞ The patience of not allowing our mind to become disturbed in the event of experiencing suffering;
- ∞ The patience of not allowing our mind to become disturbed in the event of experiencing adversity; and
- ∞ The patience of definitely thinking about the Dharma.

The next perfection is effort, although a more complete translation would be **joyous effort**. As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

[Joyous] effort is enthusiasm merely for virtuous deeds.

As other teachings also indicate, all good qualities come about from joyous effort, which indicates that without joyous effort we cannot acquire any of the good qualities we wish to obtain. Here, we need to note the difference between the Tibetan word *tsundu* which we translate into English as 'joyous effort', and *dugri*, which is a general kind of effort, where we exert ourselves to complete a task but not necessarily in a happy state of mind.

We have now covered four of the six perfections: giving, ethics, patience and joyous effort.

The next verse presents the last two perfections:

- 437 *Concentration is unafflicted one-pointedness.*
Wisdom is ascertainment of the meaning of the truths.
Compassion is a mind having the one savour
Of mercy for all sentient beings.

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Concentration is a virtuous one-pointedness, unafflicted by the savour [temptations] of laxity and excitement.

As clearly presented here, **concentration** is a state of mind that focuses one-pointedly on a virtuous object. This perfection of concentration is in contrast to a mind that seems to be focussed, but which is still affected by the savour of laxity and excitement, and therefore not a genuine concentration. While one may seem quite focussed, if one doesn't pay attention to the clarity of the single-pointed focus, then subtle laxity and excitement could become involved in that seemingly focussed state of mind, which would not be a genuine concentration. Rather it would actually be another more subtle form of savouring laxity and excitement.

So we need to be mindful from the beginning about what concentration actually is. As presented in other teachings, the definition of concentration is a mind that has arisen from one's own side and not dependent on others, which is able to focus single-pointedly on a virtuous object. As presented here, this is also related to developing calm abiding. There are some who seem to have a general

understanding of calm abiding, but who seem to have doubts about what concentration actually implies. So we really need to understand that calm abiding is derived from concentration and thus based on developing concentration.

Gyaltsab Je then presents this definition of **wisdom**:

Wisdom is ascertainment of the meaning of the two truths, four truths, and so forth.

Wisdom is presented as that which is able to clearly ascertain the meaning of the two truths, and is able to identify and distinguish between them, as well as being able to clearly identify and ascertain what the four noble truths are and so forth. So the wisdom presented here is a specific type of wisdom.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

Great compassion is a mind that focuses on sentient beings and has the one savour of mercy, of freeing all sentient beings from suffering.

This adds to the meaning of the verse, by explaining that great **compassion** is a state of mind that focuses on sentient beings, and has the taste (or savour) of mercy, or compassion, which is the intention of freeing all sentient beings from suffering. Great compassion, as presented here, is wishing from the depths of one's heart for all beings to be free from suffering. You will be aware from the seven-point cause and effect sequence that for great compassion to become a cause for bodhicitta, one needs to then further develop that compassion into superior intention. This means developing a state of mind where one takes personal responsibility for freeing all beings from suffering: 'I will free all beings from suffering. I will take it upon myself to free all beings from suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness'.

This state of mind called superior intention is in contrast to the earlier aspirations, 'How wonderful it would be if all beings are free from suffering', which is great compassion, and 'how wonderful it would be if all beings obtain the state of happiness', which is great love. Although these are incredibly noble thoughts and aspirations, they do not directly help to alleviate suffering and provide happiness to others. Superior intention, on the other hand, is developed when one takes on personal responsibility for freeing all beings from suffering and leading them to the state of ultimate happiness. It is when we develop this superior intention that sentient beings are actually benefited.

2.1.1.3. INDIVIDUAL EFFECTS

This section is a presentation of the individual effects or positive results of each of the six perfections of generosity and so forth.

As the verse reads:

*438 From giving there arises wealth, from ethics
happiness,
From patience a good appearance, from
[effort in] virtue brilliance,
From concentration peace, from wisdom
liberation,
From compassion all aims are achieved.*

As the commentary explains the meaning of the verse:

From the results of giving there arises wealth; from ethics, happiness of a happy transmigration; from patience, a good appearance; from effort in virtue, brilliance; from concentration, peace through pacifying the delusions such as excitement and laxity; from wisdom, liberation from cyclic existence. From compassion, all aims of self and others are achieved.

As mentioned earlier, this verse summarises all the virtuous deeds of the bodhisattvas, which are subsumed into the six perfections. Really comprehending and understanding what the six perfections entail is a means to understand the practices in which the bodhisattvas engage.

The deeds of a bodhisattva can be divided into the deeds that benefit others, and the deeds that benefit oneself. There are no other deeds of a bodhisattva that are not included in these two categories. Thus the first three perfections, generosity, ethics, patience are the deeds that directly benefit other beings, whilst concentration and wisdom are the two perfections that are essential for personal benefit or development. The perfection of joyous effort is said to be a perfection that relates to benefitting oneself as well as others. Without joyous effort, there is no way one can benefit others or oneself. In this way, all of the deeds of the bodhisattvas are subsumed into the six perfections.

Because they wish to provide continuous and unceasing benefit to sentient beings, bodhisattvas engage in being generous, observing ethics, showing patience and so forth, as well as further developing themselves over many successive lives. This is where the bodhisattvas' altruistic motivation—the aspiration to intentionally remain in samsara in order to benefit sentient beings—comes from. As bodhisattvas vow to benefit sentient beings in successive lives, it is good to understand how the individual effects of the six perfections are an aid to benefit sentient beings.

We need to understand the results in a sequential way. In order to benefit sentient beings, it is essential to have a good basis, which relates to a good rebirth. Without the basis of being in good physical conditions, there would be no way to benefit other beings. It is the practice of observing ethics that is the main cause to ensure that one obtains the most favourable physical conditions in a good rebirth, thereby ensuring that one has a good basis with which to benefit other sentient beings.

However having the basis of a good rebirth, while lacking sufficient means such as wealth, will not be sufficient to benefit sentient beings. Thus one needs to have a sufficient amount of wealth, and the cause for obtaining wealth is through the practice of generosity. Engaging in the act of generosity to directly benefit other sentient beings and to be able to continue to do so, is a cause for acquiring wealth in the future.

Then again, with the good physical conditions and good material resources there is no way one can benefit others if one lacks the conditions of a good entourage or a good following; as we can see the lack of good followers can lead to many complications. Having a good entourage or following is an essential way of benefitting others, and the cause for obtaining a good charismatic appearance and qualities is through the practice of patience.

Having acquired all of these good conditions, concentration is necessary to ensure that these conditions become a means for benefitting others, and not a cause for delusions to arise. The way to pacify the delusions is through concentration which, as presented earlier, is a single-pointed focus on virtue. If the mind is not single-pointedly focussed on virtue, then it will be prone to the influence of defilements or defects, which is why concentration is essential.

For all of these good conditions to become a means to liberation, to free oneself and others from the bondage of samsara, one needs to have wisdom. Thus cultivating wisdom is most essential.

The cause to acquire all of these good qualities as a way to benefit others and to further develop oneself is through enthusiasm or joyous effort. Without joyous effort none of these can be obtained and so joyous effort is also essential.

In this manner it is good to understand to how the six perfections serve as a means to benefit others by becoming a cause for acquiring further qualities and so forth in future lifetimes.

On a personal level, it is important that these practices are not dismissed as being practices specific to bodhisattvas and therefore not relevant to oneself. In fact, when we take them as a personal instruction, we can definitely see that it is all too easy for our good conditions to become a vehicle for delusions and defects to arise. We can see the importance of having a good healthy body, however, the times we are in sound health are the times when we might be more inclined to engage in negative deeds through our physical actions. So we can see how a good physical condition can become a cause for acquainting ourselves with negative activity.

It is the same with wealth. We may suffer when we have no wealth, but if we are not mindful when we do have sufficient wealth, that wealth can become a cause for one to further engage in negative activity, thereby increasing the defilements and delusions. This is why it is essential that we engage in the practice of meditation and develop concentration.

Then of course, there are our companions and friends, which can be related to the bodhisattva's entourage. Being deprived of friends and companions is a cause for suffering, but those companions and friends can also become a means to further increase negativity and conflict and so forth.

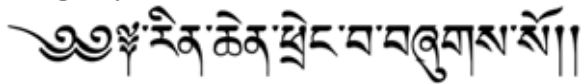
How wonderful it would be if we could secure a state where our good physical conditions, good resources and good companions don't become a cause for delusions to arise, but are utilised as means for further developing oneself and accumulating virtue! That would be a truly wonderful state.

When we are not able to properly utilise all of those conditions we experience so much angst and unhappiness in relation to our wealth, physical condition and companions or friendships. Therefore on a practical level, it is worthwhile endeavouring to secure ourselves against being affected in a negative way.

If we are inclined to engage in the practice of Dharma, these are really essential points that we should bear in mind, and try to implement.

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Nagarjuna's Precious Garland



Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

14 August 2012

As usual, we can spend some time in meditation.

Our motivation can be based on the Refuge and Bodhicitta prayer that we have just recited. At our level even generating the thought, 'I will dedicate myself to do whatever I can to benefit other sentient beings' may be the equivalent of generating a bodhicitta attitude.

However, if we were to go into further detail, there is, as the teachings explain, a distinction between an uncontrived bodhicitta attitude and a contrived bodhicitta attitude. The uncontrived bodhicitta attitude refers to a spontaneous aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings that arises without effort. Whereas the contrived bodhicitta attitude is based on having contemplated the sequence of the six causes, such as recognising all beings as one's mother, remembering their kindness and wishing to repay the kindness and so forth, and then intentionally generating the attitude of wishing all beings to be free from suffering, and for that reason wishing to achieve enlightenment. In order to develop an uncontrived bodhicitta attitude, one has to have first generated a contrived bodhicitta attitude. Therefore every attempt that we make now towards developing even a contrived bodhicitta attitude is highly meaningful and beneficial.

The main thing for us to do on a regular basis is to try to cultivate and strengthen the seed of bodhicitta that has already been implanted in our mind, as a consequence of having repeatedly heard what bodhicitta means from many different teachings. We have also spent some time contemplating it. This is a significant point to remember. So the main point is for us to generate that bodhicitta attitude for our practice of meditation now.

[Meditation]

Now we can come out of our meditation session, to engage in the teachings. Only a buddha is capable of teaching while in meditative equipoise. Indeed, this quality of the Buddha is signified by the mudra in which his left hand is in meditative equipoise, and the right is in the teaching mudra. This signifies the Buddha's unsurpassed quality of being able to teach while simultaneously being in meditative equipoise, which is well beyond the capacity of any sentient being. If we are meditating, then we aren't able to engage in the teachings at the same time.

In the opening lines of the *Vajra Cutter sutra* it mentions that the Buddha, having undertaken his alms rounds, sits on the throne with mindfulness to engage in the teaching of Dharma. This indicates that prior to engaging in teaching, the Buddha intentionally generated mindfulness. Of course, it goes without saying that as an enlightened being the Buddha was in a perpetually

mindful state; thus the Buddha's deeds are a reminder for us to practise mindfulness. Also, the reason why the teachers snap their fingers after reciting a verse prior to sitting on the throne, is to remember impermanence, as way to remove any pride about giving the teaching. When a teacher is mindful of the subject matter of the teaching, then there is no room for pride to arise in their mind, because the very point of the Dharma is to overcome delusions such as pride. These are important points for us to keep in mind.

2. ADOPTING GOOD QUALITIES

2.1. Temporary good qualities

2.1.1. General teaching (cont.)

In our last session, we concluded with the verse that explained the individual effects of the six perfections.

2.1.1.4. GENERAL EFFECT

The verse relating to this heading reads:

439 *From the simultaneous perfection
Of all those seven is attained
The sphere of inconceivable wisdom,
The protectorship of the world.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je gives this explanation:

From the simultaneous perfection of all those seven qualities, which are practised on the trainee's path, one attains the sphere of inconceivable wisdom, the protectorship of the world that is perfect buddhahood.

The essential point here is that achieving the result of perfect buddhahood is dependent upon practising the six perfections while on the trainee's path. We really need to understand that the state of perfect buddhahood or enlightenment does not spontaneously materialise out of nothing!

At this point we can consider the unique presentation of the Buddhist path. Of course, I cannot claim that I know much about the presentations of other faiths and traditions, but it seems that they hold the view that God has existed since primordial times. The explanation of God seems to be, that he is an entity who is intrinsically pure, possessing only divine qualities, and that he is the creator and saviour of the world. This seems to imply that if you have faith in God, he will reach down to save you.

Whereas the unique Buddhist explanation is that an enlightened being is not an entity which has always existed, nor do they materialise out of nothing. Rather, an enlightened being is someone who has gone through all of the trainings on the trainee's path to develop the necessary qualities leading to enlightenment. Furthermore all the qualities were developed step-by-step, sequentially. They engaged in the six perfections and practised them sequentially on each level to achieve further realisations, leading all the way up to enlightenment. These are really significant points for us to contemplate, as they also indicate the way that we need to train.

When we hear about the amazing qualities of enlightenment, we might be inspired to achieve enlightenment ourselves. We might think that we can go straight to that state without engaging in the trainings at the lower levels, but that is just not possible. The cessation of suffering to be obtained is dependent on the

path, which is to be actualised and realised sequentially. Thus, in order to achieve ultimate cessation, one needs to train from the beginner's level, working sequentially through all the practices leading up to the ultimate goal. That is something we need to understand.

Here we are using the word 'unique' in the sense of how Buddhism differs from other traditions. None of these traditions with respect to God suggest that it is possible to become God oneself. To them that is inconceivable and may even be blasphemous. The reason for that is because there is no explanation of the sequence of causes and effects that lead to achieving a state of Godhood.

However the unique feature of the Buddhism is that we revere our teacher, Buddha Shakyamuni as an incomparably kind and compassionate enlightened being, who achieved that state through none other than by developing the causes, which are, in brief, the six perfections. We can also engage in those very same causes that lead an individual being to the state of enlightenment. It is because we can engage in and cultivate those very causes right now that it is possible for us to conceive the possibility of achieving the state of enlightenment.

Returning to the text and Gyaltsab Je's explanation of it, the commentary states:

From the simultaneous perfection of all those seven qualities, which are practised on the trainee's path...

Here, we need to understand that the reference to the *simultaneous perfection of all of those seven qualities* indicates that it is not sufficient to engage in and perfect just one of these practices, for example, practising only generosity, ethics or just patience. Rather, *simultaneous* indicates that one must engage in the practice of all seven qualities and perfect them all. One engages in these practices on the trainee's path to reach the perfected level of all seven qualities. This will be the cause for one to attain *the sphere of inconceivable wisdom*.

The lower Buddhist schools relate the six perfections to the ultimate perfected state of enlightenment. Whereas the unique feature of the Prasangika presentation is that the six perfections are practised on the trainee's path. Thus when Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland* says, *from the simultaneous perfection of all those seven*, it is indicating that these seven are practised on the trainee's path, it is a presentation of the Prasangika view. If you can recall, I have mentioned in the past that *perfection* incorporates three main features, which are the bodhicitta attitude, a unique dedication and the view realising emptiness. Thus an act of generosity, for example, that is intact with all three features is a perfection of generosity. This explanation is to be applied to the rest of the perfections.

The last two lines of the verse are explained in this way by Gyaltsab Je:

... one attains the sphere of inconceivable wisdom, the protectorship of the world that is perfect buddhahood.

This indicates that having engaged simultaneously in the practice of the six perfections on the trainee's path, the goal that will be obtained is *the sphere of inconceivable wisdom, the protectorship of the world, which is buddhahood*.

That is the ultimate goal that one obtains by practising the six perfections.

In order to better understand the practices of the six perfections it is good to identify the opposite of each of the seven practices. In fact, relating those opposites to ourselves can serve as an impetus to overcome these faults. Thus the opposite of generosity or giving is miserliness; the opposite of ethics is unethical behaviour or faulty ethics; the opposite of patience is anger; the opposite of joyous effort is laziness; the opposite of concentration is a completely distracted mind; the opposite of wisdom is corrupt wisdom; and the opposite of compassion is harmful intent or violence. When we check within, as the teachings indicate, and we find ourselves being miserly, then we need to engage in the opposite, which is generosity.

If we are overcome with anger, then we need to practice patience. If someone approaches you and says 'I have a problem with anger, what do I need to do?' you can say, 'Oh, practice patience!', but just saying that, without explaining how to do so, would not be sufficient. When patients go to see a doctor, for example, if there is any indication that they are very nervous, upset or angry and agitated, then the doctor will more than likely advise, 'You should be a bit more patient'. It is quite significant that doctors these days even suggest doing meditation, because they see it as a technique that helps to calm the mind. So they are now acknowledging meditation as a technique that helps to settle and calm the mind.

I mentioned earlier that the opposite of compassion is violence or harmful intent, so we need to be mindful about avoiding that. An earlier verse in the text mentioned that compassion is an essential practice, which should be practiced from the very outset. As presented in the teachings, it is the result of having developed compassion that one engages in the practices of the six perfections. As indicated in the teachings, compassion is essential in the beginning, in the middle, as well as at the end. So it is a practice which encompasses all aspects of the path.

As indicated in some teachings, the stronger the expression of compassion and its cultivation within one's heart, the easier it becomes to develop the actual bodhicitta. Apparently, compassion can be developed to such a strong and intense level. As the earlier verses said, compassion is that which can accomplish all of our purposes, for the benefit of oneself and others.

2.1.2 Good qualities of the ten grounds

The verses in this section of the text are a presentation of the ten grounds of the bodhisattva's path. As we have already covered the ten bodhisattva grounds in previous teachings, perhaps someone can name them?

Student: The joyful, the stainless, luminous, radiant, difficult to overcome, and the manifest...

Ven. Fedor and I worked quite hard to present the entire *Madhyamakavatara* teaching. Initially, Ven. Fedor's commitment was to come to Tara Institute only for one year, however when I indicated when I was going to teach the *Madhyamaka*, Fedor took the initiative, saying 'If Geshe-la teaches the *Madhyamaka*, then I will stay until that is complete!' At the time I mentioned that it would

be difficult to start it and not complete it. So having worked hard at it, the implication is that it would be a pity to let it go. I don't know about the students, but the translator, Fedor, took the initiative, and has definitely become much more familiar with the *Madhyamakavatara*!

It happened that His Holiness made one of his visits when I was teaching the *Madhyamaka* text. So when His Holiness asked me, 'What teachings are you teaching at the centre?' I said, 'On one evening, I am teaching the *Madhyamaka* text and on another evening the *Thirty-Seven Practices* are being taught'. His Holiness actually put the palms of his hands together, brought them to his forehead and said, 'That is really incredible. To be able to present both method and wisdom aspects of the teaching to the students is really wonderful!'

Precious Garland gives a sequential presentation of the ten grounds. However as an assignment, you can familiarise yourselves with them in advance. Denis mentioned quite a few of them, so it was a good attempt!

This reminds me of a story from the past. When we were studying in India, some of the senior teachers and geshe were selected to undertake some special classes in Mussoorie, including Hindi as well as some English. I heard from one of the abbots, who attended those classes as a geshe, that everyone was very zealous, so they sat quite close to the teacher. However when the English teacher, who happened to be a woman, used to very forcefully say the letter 'F', a lot of spit would come out!! So the geshe in the front row started to back away. No-one wanted to sit in the front row anymore!!

As Hindi was also being taught, one particular geshe, Yeshe Gawa from the Ganden Jangtse monastery was very zealous about learning to count in Hindi. At one point he and as well as the late ex-abbot of Sera Monastery Khensur Lobsang Wangchuk, who was a great master and scholar, went out to a shop together. They didn't really know the name of the object they wanted to buy, but they finally saw it on display, and indicated that they wanted to buy it. When they asked how much it was, the shop owner said *oonis* in Hindi. Then Khensur Rinpoche looked at Yeshe Gawa, who was counting through the numbers in Hindi, but seemed not to be able to go much beyond ten or eleven. He never reached *oonis*, which is nineteen! So Geshe Lobsang Wangchuk, who was a very realised being, unassumingly said, 'Oh, I think it must be around nineteen or twenty, in fact, it might be nineteen!'

From then on Geshe Lobsang Wangchuk used to advise the younger monks, 'It's good to pay attention to the Hindi language. We are living in India, so you need to have enough Hindi to be able to go to the shops and buy something to eat and so forth'. There were those of course, who didn't have any tuition in Hindi; some of them actually tried to memorise dictionaries, which of course, is not sufficient to be able to actually use a language.

There is also the story of the geshe who went to a clinic because had a lot of stomach pain. He asked a Tibetan who was supposed to know Hindi to come along as an interpreter. The supposed interpreter apparently said to

the doctor, in Tibetan, 'His stomach is not well' so there had been no point of taking him along as an interpreter!

Another incident that became the talk of the town for quite a while concerned the geshe and monks who attempted to make the journey to Dharamsala. They went to the train station, and as they didn't have much command of the language they relied upon a monk called Chonzay who was considered to be diligent in studying Hindi and more likely to know the language—apparently he was the one who had memorised the dictionary! They wanted to know which platform they should go to, so they said to Chonzay, 'Come on, find out where the right platform and the train that we need to catch is'. He then replied, 'Oh, hang on, hang on, my language is in my bag, I have to look for it!', and he started to search for his dictionary. That's another story about having learned and memorised something, but not being able to use it. These stories came to mind when you were attempting to name the ten grounds.

With respect to this section Good Qualities of the Ten Grounds, the commentary adds two sub-divisions that are not included in the root text. They are:

2.1.2.1. General meaning

2.1.2.2. Branch meaning

2.1.2.1. GENERAL MEANING

Gyaltsab Je included this section as a way of giving a general presentation of the ten grounds. His commentary begins:

In the commentary on the *Madhyamakavatara* it states:

This commentary of the *Madhyamakavatara* is Chandrakirti's auto-commentary. Then Gyaltsab Je quotes from this commentary:

When the uncontaminated wisdom of bodhisattvas is conjoined with compassion and the like, they obtain the state that is called 'ground'. That is because they have become the support or basis for [higher] qualities.

Here, *ground* refers specifically to the ground that is part of the classification of 'grounds and paths', rather than its ordinary meaning. The definition of ground, as presented in other texts is, that which serves as the basis for achieving many qualities, and which is a clear realisation within a continuum of one who has entered the path.

The term 'ground' generally refers to the ground beneath us, and the ground that is part of the classification of grounds and paths is so named because, just as the earthly ground serves as the basis for many plants and trees and so forth to be cultivated, likewise the ground that is classified within the grounds and paths also serves as the basis for the cultivation and development of many higher qualities.

Although this has been presented previously, I remind you that 'ground', 'path' and 'clear realisation' are synonymous.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

This passage presents the following four attributes in relation to grounds—nature, type of qualities possessed, how the term 'ground' is obtained, and the meaning of the term 'ground'.

The attributes of a ground, are presented in four categories. This relates to the quote from Chandrakirti's *Auto-commentary on the Madhyamakavatara* which refers to the uncontaminated wisdom of a bodhisattva. That uncontaminated wisdom actually relates to the ground. Thus, the identification of ground presents a distinction between what is contaminated and what is uncontaminated.

This presentation of 'uncontaminated' is in accord with the unique Prasangika presentation of uncontaminated wisdom as being free from any stains. According to the lower schools, as presented in the *Abhidharmakosha*, the distinction between 'contaminated' and 'uncontaminated' lies in the fact that contaminated objects are a cause of delusions such as attachment, while uncontaminated objects do not cause any delusions to arise.

(1) The first attribute of a ground is **nature**. Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

- 1) That which is stained by the deluded ignorance of grasping at true existence or its imprints are a contamination, while the wisdom that is free from those stains is uncontaminated.

Here the distinction between *contaminated* and *uncontaminated* is made clear.

Contaminated refers to *that which is stained by the deluded ignorance of grasping at true existence*, which is deluded ignorance itself, or its *imprint*. So both the ignorance of grasping at true existence and the imprints of that ignorance are contaminated. The imprints of that grasping at true existence refers to the fact that even when one has actually overcome the ignorance of grasping at true existence, things still have the appearance of true existence. The imprints are the residue or the stain of that ignorance, which remains in the mental continuum, and which lead to a mistaken perception in relation to the appearance of true existence.

The analogy given in the teachings is the dream state. The reason why dreams are mistaken and not real or true is because the consciousness is affected by the sleep consciousness, which obscures the mind from perceiving real or actual objects. In sleep, things that are in fact, not true or real appear to be real. That which affects the consciousness in this way is the sleep consciousness. Similarly, that which causes the mind of a sentient being to grasp at the appearance of true existence is the imprints of the delusions on the mind. Even when the ignorance of grasping at true existence has been overcome, there can still be the appearance of true existence, due to the imprints of the original delusion.

Both the delusion of ignorance of grasping at true existence, and its imprints, serve as obscurations to achieving liberation and enlightenment. The first, the ignorance of grasping at true existence is referred to as a deluded obscuration, that which is the main obstacle for obtaining liberation, while the imprints of grasping at true existence are referred to as obscurations to omniscience. So even though one has overcome the deluded obscurations, the obscurations to omniscience, which are the imprints of the delusions, still remain in one's mental continuum, which hinder one from obtaining the ultimate goal of enlightenment.

As a way to back-up this point, Gyaltsab Je quotes from a commentary on Nagarjuna's *Root Wisdom* by Chandrakirti:

This is so, for as stated in *Clear Words*: That which is free from the defects of ignorance is uncontaminated wisdom, and thus it does not rely on the nature of the object.

Uncontaminated wisdom is defined as that which is free from the defects of ignorance; so it does not rely on the actual nature of the object, but rather the state of mind.

Following this quote from Chandrakirti's *Clear Words* the commentary continues:

That is to say, apart from an arya's non-conceptual wisdom of meditative equipoise, there is no consciousness that is not stained by the imprints of ignorance, prior to obtaining the buddha ground.

Apart from the consciousness of an arya's non-conceptual wisdom of meditative equipoise, all other consciousnesses are stained by the imprints of ignorance. So from the Prasangika point of view the consciousnesses of all ordinary sentient beings are necessarily stained by the imprints. This means that all of their five sense consciousnesses are stained by the imprints of ignorance. As mentioned earlier, the only exception is the non-conceptual wisdom of meditative equipoise, which is not stained by the imprints of grasping at true existence.

This means that for an ordinary being's mind or consciousness, there is necessarily the appearance of true existence, because their consciousness is tainted by the ignorance of grasping at true existence, as well as the imprints of that grasping. So it is as if we are doubly tainted.

When we think about how we perceive things, we see that we totally believe in how things appear to us. When someone says 'Can you bring that clock', the fact that we stand up, and go and fetch the clock is because it appears to our eye consciousness as being a truly existent clock. So we have no qualms about what actual clock is, because it appears to us as being a truly existent clock. That is how the ordinary consciousness is completely influenced or tainted by the appearance of true existence. The reason why we have that appearance of true existence is because our mind is tainted by the ignorance of grasping at true existence, as well as the imprints of that grasping at true existence.

When we think about it, we have that perception of things as existing from their own side without depending on anything else. For example, when someone says, 'Bring a book', we have in our mind an image of a solid book that exists from its own side, not depending on any other causes or conditions, but existing independently. We perceive the book as an independently existing book and our ability to fetch the book, is based on our perception of a truly and independently existent book. This perception of things as truly existent phenomena is identified as being a mistaken perception.

However, although an ordinary sentient being's mind (in contrast to the mind of arya being in meditative equipoise) is necessarily a mistaken consciousness, one must not confuse that mistaken consciousness with a

wrong consciousness. That is another significant distinction that you also need to understand.

While I have presented these points many times in the past, it is best to emphasise them again in case you have had a lapse of memory. It is good to try to keep in mind that the mistaken perception of grasping at true existence, or grasping at a self, relates to our unquestioning belief in that perception. For example, when we see a friend coming, we immediately think 'Oh, there's my friend'. The moment that we have that perception, we believe that what we are seeing is our friend, which, in itself, is an indication that our perception is tainted by grasping at true existence. We apprehend and grasp at an independently existent friend, believing them to exist from their own side. The moment we believe, 'That is my friend who's coming towards me', we are tainted by that mistaken conception.

When we relate to our own appearance and believe that is who we are, then that is the grasping at a self. The appearance of ourselves is not in accordance to how we actually exist. That is because we appear to ourselves as an inherently and independently existent self, which is not dependent on other causes and conditions. When we believe that what we refer to as 'me' is really me, then that is an indication of our mistaken conception of true existence, or grasping at a truly existent self.

There is also a distinction between the appearance of true existence and grasping at true existence. If there is an appearance of true existence, it doesn't necessarily have to be grasping at true existence. My feeling is that in order to apprehend something as being truly existent, there has to be a thought of actually believing that what one is referring to as a friend for example, actually exists as a friend. As explained in the teachings, it is only when one actually grasps onto an appearance that there is grasping at truly existent phenomena. Whereas if there is an appearance, but one does not believe in that appearance and is able to distinguish between the appearance and how it actually exists (even if it appears to exist truly), and understand that it doesn't actually exist in the way that it appears to exist, then there is no grasping involved. So the main point is that there has to be a thought of true existence for there to be grasping at true existence.

This coming Sunday is the discussion seminar, so have a good discussion on that day. On Saturday I begin my retreat for the initiation. Normally, I try to ensure my retreat coincides with the Study Group discussion and exam nights. However, that was hard to schedule this year. So I request you to do your discussion next week, followed by the exam the following week, and then classes will resume after that. So it seems that we will miss one Tuesday from our block, however I don't have much choice. While I will come down for the Wednesday evening, Tuesday requires more preparation so you will have to excuse me for this change. So next Tuesday will be the discussion, followed by the exam. Is that clear?

We have to be mindful of what comes first and what comes next. If one actually trains one's mind now with order and sequence, then that will help to maintain mindfulness throughout life. Then, in old age it will be quite natural to be mindful, which could in fact prevent

dementia. I wonder if dementia could be a consequence of having little to no order in one's thinking earlier in life. It seems that if you think of too many things too randomly, then later on you will have no real recollection or knowledge of the order of things.

However from another perspective, it seems that dementia may not such a bad thing. It appears that people with dementia don't have any worries about a lot of things. Just recently, I heard about a mother who was in a state of dementia; when she was informed that her own daughter had passed away, she didn't seem to show much concern about it. She didn't understand what was going on, so it didn't seem to affect her too much.

On earlier occasions, I have mentioned that when someone loses their ability to remember and so forth, it might be that their mind becomes a little bit more joyful. If that were the case then that could be significant. We have the problem of trying to remember too many things, which causes a lot of anxiety and mental chaos. Indeed, Vasubandhu mentions in the *Abhidharmakosha* that it is the superficial or nonsensical conceptual thoughts that are the main cause of unhappiness in the mind, and that seems to be very true.

In his works Aryadeva mentioned that those who are deprived of sufficient means, and so forth, endure more physical suffering, while those of high social status (having wealth and so forth) experience more mental suffering. It is good for us to remember these points which seem to be very true. It is good to remind ourselves that our overall happiness and well-being are not dependent on our social status, or our wealth and so forth. Having wealth does not necessarily mean that one will be relieved from all forms of suffering, and, in fact, if we are not careful it can even be a cause for mental suffering.

As I have mentioned previously, there are only very rare cases of suicide because people find themselves in an impoverished state—impoverishment rarely seems to be a cause for suicide. Those who do commit suicide seem to be come from conditions where they are not deprived of the basics of food and drink and so forth, but somehow some are not really satisfied with that. These are points to really consider.

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright
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Edited Version*

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Discussion Week 4 (21.08.2012)

An assignment, Geshe Doga has asked us to familiarise the ten grounds in advance of his teachings on them. They can easily be found in the text from verse 441 onward.

Week: 1 (31 July 2012)

1. a) What are some reasons for contemplating on and generating a fear of death? [4]
b) For the three different levels of practitioner what are the experiences at the time of death? [6]
2. What did Shantideva emphasise in 'The Bodhisattva's Way of Life', with regards to laziness? [4]
3. What are the nine causes of harmful intent? [4½]
4. 'Regret is also a variable mental factor'. Name and explain the three types of regret [3]
b) Explain the analogy of poison and regret [4]

Week: 2 (7 August 2012)

5. How does a practice e.g. 'ethics' become a higher form of practice? [4]
6. Give the definition of ethics specific to this text. [2]
7. a) Give the definition of patience. [3]
b) What are the three types of patience? [3]
8. Give the definition of effort. [2]
9. What is concentration? [2]
10. Give the definition of wisdom. [3]
11. What are the results of the six perfections? [6]

Week 3 (14 August 2012)

12. What does '*simultaneous perfection of all those seven qualities*' indicate? [4] pg2 c 1
13. A '*perfection*' incorporates three main features. What are these three features? [3] pg. 2 c 1
14. In order to better understand the practices of the six perfections it is good to identify the opposite of each of the seven practices. List the practices and their opposites. [6] pg. 2 c 2
15. What are two synonyms for 'ground'? [2] pg. 3 c 2
15. a) What does '*contaminated*' refer to? [[4] pg. 4 c 1
b) What is '*uncontaminated wisdom*'? [4] pg. 4 c 2

Exam

Name: _____

Mark: _____

Block 5

Week 5: (28.08.2012)

1. a) What are some reasons for contemplating on and generating a fear of death? [4]

b) For the three different levels of practitioner what are the experiences at the time of death? [6]

2. What did Shantideva emphasise in 'The Bodhisattva's Way of Life', with regards to laziness? [4]

3. 'Regret is also a variable mental factor'. Name and explain the three types of regret [3]

b) Explain the analogy of poison and regret [4]

5. How does a practice e.g. 'ethics' become a higher form of practice? [4]

6. Give the definition of ethics specific to this text. [2]

7. a) Give the definition of patience. [3]

b) What are the three types of patience? [3]

8. Give the definition of effort. [2]

9. What is concentration? [2]

10. Give the definition of wisdom. [3]

11. What are the results of the six perfections? [6]

12. What does '*simultaneous perfection of all those seven qualities*' indicate? [4]

13. A '*perfection*' incorporates three main features. What are these three features? [3]

14. In order to better understand the practices of the six perfections it is good to identify the opposite of each of the seven practices. List the practices and their opposites. [6]

14. What are two synonyms for 'ground'? [2]

15. a) What does '*contaminated*' refer to? [[4]

b) What is '*uncontaminated wisdom*'? [4]