

Study Group – Aryadeva's 400 Verses

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

27 March 2007

As usual it would be good to generate an appropriate motivation for receiving the teachings, such as thinking along the lines of, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings and to liberate them from suffering I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the Dharma and try to put it into practice as best as I can'.

1.2.1. THE WAY TO ABANDON MANIFEST DISTURBING EMOTIONS (CONT.)

1.2.1.3. DETAILED EXPLANATION OF HOW TO ABANDON ANGER AND DESIRE

1.2.1.3.2.5. The inappropriateness of anger when inferiors use abusive language.

Abuse from inferiors 144
Does not ensure escape.
Abuse from inferiors thus should be
Seen as isolated and trivial.

This verse is an answer to the question, 'Is it reasonable to be angry on hearing abuse from one's inferiors?' and the answer is that it is not.

As the commentary explains,

Merely some abusive words from inferiors, who like what is profane and constantly do ill deeds, taking delight in others' suffering, do not ensure one's escape...

What is being explained here is that it is inappropriate to treat abuse from someone who is inferior as serious, or to allow that to affect oneself, because as indicated here, inferior beings are those who do not like the Dharma, do not take pleasure in practising the Dharma, constantly engage in ill deeds, and thus constantly engage in negative deeds, and they also take delight in the suffering of others. This means that whenever these inferior beings see others suffering, then rather than feeling compassion for them, they take pleasure in seeing that suffering. We consider such beings to be inferior beings in relation to the Dharma.

Since these inferior beings are in such an ignorant state it is totally unreasonable for us to take their abuse seriously and let it affect us. Therefore it is not appropriate to feel angry towards such beings. Instead of feeling angry towards them one should be happy. The reason for this is explained in the next few lines of the commentary;

Therefore regarding mere abuse from one's inferiors as an isolated and trivial error, it is appropriate to feel glad.

The reason for feeling glad is, because inferior beings who have the characteristics that were described earlier, take pleasure in the suffering of others, and it is possible that they could hurt us physically or even kill us. The fact that they only use abusive words and haven't harmed us in any other way is very fortunate. So we should feel very glad that it is only words that they have uttered, and they did not hurt us physically or threaten or kill us.

If we were to come into contact with a well known notorious evil being, and they merely criticise us, then we would feel

very glad that nothing more serious had happened to us - we would feel glad that they didn't harm us physically or kill us. If one thinks along these lines then rather than being angry at hearing criticism one should feel glad.

What is being implied here is that when very negative or inferior beings start to abuse us one should actually be careful. The text is actually giving us practical advice about not going into combat with inferior beings.

1.2.1.3.2.3. Refuting that it is not wrong to punish the slander of an innocent person

This section is in line with the worldly view that if someone were to use bad words, slander, and so forth towards an innocent person, then that is punishable, because they were criticising an innocent person. However, as explained here, that is an inappropriate view.

Assertion: Is it not wrong to punish those who slander the innocent?

Answer:

If harming others is not even 145
Of the slightest use to you,
Your approval of useless aggression
Is just an addiction.

As the commentary explains,

Retaliation by hurting others like the slanderer is not the slightest use...

Normally one would feel that it is justifiable to punish or retaliate when others abuse or criticise you without any basis. In other words, if one feels one is innocent, or if others are innocent when someone criticises or abuses you (or them), then it is seen as appropriate to retaliate. That is the normal view. What is being explained here is that when someone abuses or criticises us, retaliating with anger would be inappropriate, even if one feels innocent of the criticism.

As the commentary explains, retaliation by hurting others is not of the slightest use in reversing what has already been done. In fact that anger and retaliation will not in any way reverse whatever the harm or hurt that has been inflicted upon us.

What is being explained here specifically is that anger and retaliation could be seen as being reasonable if it could undo the harm that has been inflicted upon oneself. However the reverse is the case: undoing the harm that others have done to us by actually becoming upset and angry does even more harm to oneself.

Furthermore if retaliation and getting upset were to bring some gain in terms of qualities then again that could be seen as reasonable. However, rather than bringing qualities and gains, retaliation only brings loss for oneself, therefore there is no point in retaliating. Now these are all very sound reasonings, and although they seem very reasonable to us practising along these lines might not be so easy. So it is important to think about these practical reasons and thus remind ourselves constantly of the uselessness of retaliating and getting angry.

One must however not misunderstand or misinterpret what is meant here when it says not to retaliate. When it says not to retaliate with anger, there is no indication to suggest that one should not react at all and take the loss. In other words when others criticise and abuse us we don't have to accept their views and not do anything about it, and allow oneself to be defeated. That is not being suggested here. What is being said is not to retaliate with anger. When others criticise us or wrongly abuse us then there will of course be times

when we have to deal with the situation. If it is wrong criticism that is harmful to oneself and others then one has to deal with it in order to correct the situation. However as explained here one does that without feeling anger in one's mind and without animosity. With love and compassion in one's mind one can still correct things and make them right. It is important that we keep this in mind.

As the commentary further explains,

In that case your approval of aggression, which has nothing but drawbacks and no advantages, is just an addiction to something wrong.

What is being explained here is that if it is clear that there are no benefits or advantages to oneself, but one still retaliated then that would be just out of habituation, or as translated here, addiction. One would be retaliating out of habituation without any really sound reasoning.

1.2.1.3.2.4. Preventing anger by considering the benefits of patience

This is subdivided into three:

1.2.1.3.2.4.1. Appropriateness of patience towards abuse

1.2.1.3.2.4.2. Inappropriateness of approving of aggression which defeats only the weak

1.2.1.3.2.4.3. Appropriateness of rejoicing since patience towards a cause of anger is a source of all accomplishments.

The following three verses will explain the benefits of practising patience. Having explained earlier the disadvantages of anger, that there is no benefit whatsoever in retaliating out of anger, then the question may arise, 'What are the advantages of practising patience?' The sequence presented in the teachings, helps us to remember as well to practice in that way.

1.2.1.3.2.4.1. Appropriateness of patience towards abuse

Question: What wise person tolerates the worthless abuse of others?

Answer:

If through patience enormous merit 146
Is acquired effortlessly,
Who is as foolish as
One who obstructs this.

One must understand what patience actually means. The definition of patience is not allowing one's mind to be influenced by anger, in the event of being abused or suffering, or by any suffering one experiences from that or from any other reason. In a nutshell, patience is not allowing the mind to be upset by an abuser or by suffering.

When there is abuse and the like from others, patience means not allowing the mind to be influenced by anger and thus getting upset. If one were to actually practise patience then that would be of benefit for the mind.

As the commentary explains,

If through patience one gives anger no opportunity and does not harm others...

One of the advantages of patience is that if one practises it then anger has no opportunity to arise in the mind, and thus one will not harm others. Therefore patience prevents anger and harm to others. By practising patience there is no opportunity for anger to arise, thus one's own mind remains calm and peaceful, which is a direct benefit to oneself. As the commentary further explains,

...one will acquire the fragrance and adornment [of virtue], a flowing river [of tranquillity] undisturbed by ill will, and a pleasing appearance.

As explained here in the commentary the person who practises patience is naturally adorned with these ornaments and these qualities will be continuously experienced like the continuity of a river - one will continually experience that positive result. It is the opposite for someone who has anger.

As the commentary further explains, by practising patience one creates the causes to obtain the ultimate benefits of achieving liberation and enlightenment. Until the ultimate goals are achieved, one will attain rebirth with a good appearance in future lifetimes, which serves as a quality for practising the Dharma. Therefore the benefits from practising patience can be understood clearly as being for both oneself and others. Without patience we couldn't possibly endure the hardships and so forth associated with spiritual practices, and likewise without patience we cannot possibly benefit others to a satisfactory degree, because one would not be able to endure the difficulties involved in that. So to benefit others it is essential to engage in the practice of patience.

As the commentary says,

Then who is as foolish as one who obstructs the supreme path, for he destroys his good qualities. Therefore only those who bear abuse should be called wise.

If one were to retaliate with anger and not engage in the practice of patience one would experience so much loss, such as losing one's merit and virtues, as well as disturbing one's mind now and losing in so many ways in the future. Only a foolish person would destroy so much virtue. Thus someone who does not retaliate with anger in response to the abuse and criticism of others is a wise person, because of all the benefits they will achieve from that.

Of course this is completely contrary to the worldly view, where someone, who does not retaliate when they feel innocent of the criticism and abuse from others, would be considered foolish and very stupid, whereas someone who does retaliate would be considered as wise and brave. According to the teachings here, however, the complete opposite is the case.

In a worldly context anyone who repays kindness with kindness and harm with harm is considered to be a wise and brave person. Now there is nothing wrong with repaying kindness with kindness, but repaying harm with harm is what is considered as being foolish here, as it is of no benefit. So the main point, as explained earlier, is that there is no benefit in retaliating with harm when others abuse and criticise us.

If someone hits us with a stick and we hit them back it is not as though that retaliation will remove the pain: if we happen to hurt our head, hitting them back will not heal our head. Also if we hit back, the other person may hit us again and we might get hit twice!

1.2.1.3.2.4.2. The inappropriateness of approving of aggression which defeats only the weak

For the following reasons one should get rid of anger:

Aggression especially 147
Does not arise toward the powerful.
Why then do you approve of
Aggression which defeats the weak?

Aggression followed by harm does not arise towards those who are more powerful than oneself; it will only arise towards those who are inferior to oneself, which means those who are less powerful than oneself. What this means is

that one lacks the ability to fight with, and does not dare to be aggressive with those who are more powerful than oneself, because one realises that one is not capable of harming them. So out of fear of the mighty one does not dare to harm them. Therefore we can only inflict harm on those who are less powerful than ourselves. Even in a worldly context that is not justified, and is considered unfair. When you cannot do anything to prevent those more powerful than yourself from harming you, trying to use aggression to harm those weaker than oneself is very unfair. When we actually look into it we are actually only acting out our aggression on those who we think can take it, or in other words, on those on whom we can inflict it without fear of retribution.

In a practical sense, this can lead to situations where one becomes upset and angry with someone who is more powerful than oneself at work, or some other outside environment, but because one is not able to retaliate in that context, one comes home and starts acting out one's anger or aggression on one's partner or someone else.

As the commentary explains,

Aggression especially does not arise towards the strong because one is powerless to harm them. For that reason then do you approve of aggression and anger towards the wretched, which defeats only the weak? Such approval is improper.

1.2.1.3.2.4.3. Appropriateness of rejoicing since patience towards cause of anger is a source of all accomplishments

Assertion: It is reasonable to get angry, since if one is patient, others may think one is incapable of retaliating and despise one.

Answer: It is not reasonable.

*Whoever is patient with a source
Of anger develops meditation. 148
Saying you fear the source of
Good qualities is just foolish of you.*

This of course is very much in accordance with worldly perspectives. Not retaliating when others criticise us and so forth might be seen as being weak and foolish, and thus one might be despised. So out of a fear of being seen as a weakling by others, one may then feel that it is appropriate to retaliate with anger. That is basically how many may feel: they fear being despised if they do not retaliate.

As the commentary explains,

Whoever patiently tolerates the causes for anger will develop meditative stabilisation on love and other kinds of meditation.

This is in relation to the good qualities that are said to be obtained by practising patience, and thus developing the love and so forth. These qualities are explained in *Precious Garland*, which says,

Gods and humans will be friendly,
Even non-humans will protect you,
You will have pleasures of the mind and many,
[Of the body], poisons and weapons will not harm
you,
Effortlessly will you attain your aims
And be born in the world of Brahma.
Though [through love] you are not liberated
You will attain the eight virtues of love.

As *Precious Garland* explains, gods and humans will be friendly towards oneself and one will receive protection from humans and non-humans alike. One will also have pleasures of the mind and many, which refers to the mind

and physical body. In relation to the physical body, poisons and weapons will not harm oneself, and, as mentioned earlier, one will effortlessly attain one's aims. By practising patience one will be able to achieve one's goals and thus be reborn in the realm of Brahma. Here Brahma can be understood from two points of view: from the worldly point of view Brahma is one of the highest abodes in the samsaric realm, and in another context Brahma can also refer to the enlightened state of a Buddha, the ultimate Brahma. 'Though through love you are not liberated' refers to the fact that even if one is liberated in this lifetime by practising patience, one will surely attain the eight virtues of love as a result of practising patience.

When the first line says that 'gods and humans will be friendly' that refers to how by the mere fact of practising patience one is naturally adorned with certain qualities of attractiveness and becomes appealing. Because one becomes appealing humans are naturally attracted to oneself, as well as the gods, who are also naturally attracted in the sense of wanting to benefit us and be helpful to us. So, in other words, by being patient one attracts not only human friends but the gods.

As the commentary further reads,

It is just foolish of you to claim you fear patience and give up the source of the above-mentioned virtues because of contempt regarding your ability to retaliate, for you destroy an excellent source of good qualities.

What it being explained here is similar to what was mentioned earlier - it would be very foolish to give in to retaliation and not to practise patience when the benefits of patience are so obvious.

1.2.1.3.2.5. Appropriateness of cultivating patience when disparaged by others

Assertion: Since it is difficult for the powerful to bear being disparaged by inferiors, it is proper to punish them.

Answer:

*Who has gone to the next world 149
Having ended all disparagement?
Therefore consider contempt
Preferable to ill deeds.*

Again this assertion or doubt arises from a purely worldly point of view: powerful people lose face if they are criticised and so forth by inferiors, and that is seen as very disgraceful. Thus it is seen as proper to punish those who have criticised.

As the commentary explains:

Who goes or has gone to the next world having completely put an end to his enemies by defeat and humiliation? Not even a few have done so.

What is being raised here is a counter question. Is there anyone who has come to the end of their life, who has conquered or vanquished all their enemies? There is no one whatsoever.

As the commentary further explains

By retaliating one creates ill deeds and will go to bad rebirths. Therefore one should endure contempt, thinking it is preferable to the ill deeds created by subjugating one's enemies.

There is no such thing as completely defeating all enemies and having no enemies when one dies. But it is a fact that having attempted to defeat enemies by retaliating with

anger, one actually carries the negative karmic imprints into the next life, and will experience the negative consequences of being reborn in the lower rebirths. That is what one will take onto the next life. Therefore as the commentary further states,

Through doing the former one will not go to bad rebirth but by doing ill deeds one will.

If one were to practise patience and not retaliate that would save one from experiencing the negative consequences of experiencing bad rebirths in the next lifetime, whereas if one were to retaliate one would have to experience the negative results. Therefore it is wiser and much more reasonable to accept the criticism and not to retaliate with anger, as that brings more benefit.

The main point being made is that it is much more preferable to endure criticisms and so forth than to retaliate with anger. That is because by practising the former one will not experience negative consequences in future lifetimes, whereas if one were to engage in the retaliation, one would have to experience the negative consequences in future lifetimes. Furthermore the negative karmic consequences that will ripen in the next lifetime will be further causes for one to again experience anger and retaliation, and therefore the cycle will not stop. The analogy that is given here is that just like a water wheel there is no end to disparagement. This is a very vivid analogy, a water wheel, like a Ferris wheel, continuously goes round and round, likewise through retaliation and anger one just creates more causes to act again in the same way, and that is how the cycle continues from one life to the next.

1.2.2. HOW TO CULTIVATE THE ANTIDOTE WHICH TOTALLY DESTROYS THE SEED

The previous sections concerned overcoming the manifest disturbing emotions. The following verse concerns uprooting the seed.

Disturbing emotions will never 150
Remain in the mind of one
Who understands the reality of
The abiding and so forth of consciousness.

What has being explained earlier is that patience can serve as an antidote to overcome manifest anger, however patience in itself is not an appropriate antidote to completely overcome anger at its root. Likewise, although meditating or cultivating compassion can be antidote to overcoming manifest anger, however it too cannot serve as the actual antidote to overcoming the root of anger.

As was explained earlier, both desire and anger arise from the ignorance that grasps at the self, which is the main source of the delusions that arise in the mind. Therefore without overcoming the grasping at the self completely one cannot overcome the other delusions, such as anger and attachment.

Since products change from moment to moment, they do not have inherent duration. Their production and disintegration are therefore not inherently existent either,

What is being explained is that what we call mind or consciousness is produced in dependence on causes, so therefore it is a product and because it is a product it is in the nature of impermanence. Thus it changes from moment to moment. Whatever is a product exists by its nature in this three-fold manner, in which there is a moment of production, a moment of abiding and a moment of

disintegration. The moment of production is not inherently existent because it depends on causes and conditions for its production. The moment of abiding also being dependent on causes and conditions for its abiding, is also not inherently existent, and nor is disintegration inherently existent. So in all three instances of the existence of a product there is not a single moment where one can find inherent existence.

Because it lacks inherent existence or production it changes from moment to moment. Having understood that, as the commentary reads,

One must abandon all disturbing emotions understanding that the three realms are like an illusion, since production, disintegration and abiding and so forth do not have inherent existence.

Having further understood how the three realms, which include all existence, are like an illusion, the disturbing emotions are also similar, and thus one can, and should, abandon the disturbing emotions. So as the commentary further reads,

Disturbing emotions will never remain in the mind of any adept [or yogi] who understands that the production, disintegration, abiding and so forth of consciousness do not have even an atom of real or inherent existence and who gains familiarity with this.

What is being explained here is that for a yogi or meditator, who understands what is described here, the negative emotions will not remain in the consciousness. The yogi who is engaged in removing the delusions can completely eradicate and overcome the delusions, or what can be called the negative emotions, in the mind.

The analogy given here is the one I have mentioned earlier, which is that it is like uprooting a poisonous tree. If one were to try to remove a poisonous tree by merely cutting off the branches that would not stop it from growing. If, however, one were to uproot the poisonous tree from its very roots then that would prevent the poisonous tree from further growing. So if we merely try to overcome our manifest levels of attachment and anger that will not uproot the delusions in our mind. Rather we have to combat the ignorance of the grasping at true existence.

As the commentary clarifies,

Thus by first gaining familiarity with antidotes that overcome manifest disturbing emotions and then eventually understanding dependent arising as devoid of inherent existence, one should rid oneself of all the seeds of disturbing emotions.

The summary stanza by Gyaltsab Rinpoche is:

Transmigrators governed by disturbing emotions
like desire,
Which prevent activities for the attainment of
enlightenment,
Are conveyed to the happiness of liberation by
teaching them
To become familiar with love and repulsiveness and
by teaching them suchness.

2. Presentation of the name of the chapter

This is the sixth chapter from the Four Hundred on Yogic Deeds showing the means to abandon the disturbing emotions.

This concludes the commentary on the sixth chapter, showing the means to abandon disturbing emotions.

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