
Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་བལ་འདུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

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Based on the motivation we have just generated we can engage in the practice of meditation. [meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to become enlightened myself, and so for that purpose I will engage in the teaching, and put it into practice well.

The *tong len* meditation practice that we have just attempted to do is, of course, the basis for developing love and compassion, which is the core practice of Buddhism. We cannot possibly assume that we are engaging in any real practice if we leave this essential element aside.

This is in line with an understanding of what it means to be a practising Buddhist. A practising Buddhist is someone who, based on the teachings on non-violence that the Buddha gave, wholeheartedly entrusts themselves to the Three Jewels (the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha), seeing the Buddha as their protector and teacher, and following his teachings. It is essential that we, who consider ourselves Buddhists, know what Buddhadharma encompasses. It would be quite pitiful if, when we are asked what Buddhadharma is, we hesitate in giving an answer. Several years ago at one of the Easter courses, I recall that when Vanessa's younger sister was present and showing interest, I told her to take the question 'What is Buddhadharma?' to her discussion session. When she posed that question, no-one seemed to be able to give a succinct and good answer to it.

It is particularly important that those who present Buddhism to newer students respond to questions with succinct answers that encompass the essential points. As I regularly share with those who present the classes for beginners, you need to prepare yourself not only for the presentation, but also be prepared to answer any questions that are asked.

When classes are advertised as an introduction to Buddhism, people will inevitably ask such questions as 'What is Buddhadharma?' It would not be sufficient to answer, 'It is the practice of abandoning the ten non-virtues such as killing and so forth' because the morality of abandoning killing is common to other traditions as well, such as Christianity and so forth. So we cannot present the practice of abandoning negativities and adopting virtue as being unique to Buddhism.

2.2.2.3.4. Why it is appropriate to abandon negativity and practise virtue

2.2.2.3.4.2. It is appropriate to contemplate the cause of ignorance (cont.)

Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins with a query:

Query: How did one become confused?

Why is it that one is not taking the freedoms and endowments, which enable us to engage in the practice, to heart? Why are they not being utilised to engage in practice?

Something must be causing this confusion and inability to act. As the verse states:

*27cd. I do not know how I got so confused,
What is lurking inside of me?*

Then Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

Answer: I also do not know due to which cause I got confused and thus deceived. What cause for confusion is lurking inside me? I think there definitely is something.

If one falls into laziness, then one should think in this way.

The hypothetical query at the beginning is presented as a way to really look into the main culprit that is causing one to not adopt the practices. As the commentary states, *I also do not know due to which cause I got confused and thus deceived. What cause for confusion is lurking inside me? I think there definitely is something.* Presenting this point in the form of a personal dialogue brings to light the fact that, although we see the value of observing morality, and engaging in the practices of listening, contemplating and meditating, and have the inclination to practice, there seems to be something that is preventing us from really embracing that practice on a continuous basis. So what is it that is preventing us from practising?

We need to take particular note that this presentation is suggesting that we undertake a personal investigation. The very words *what cause for confusion is lurking inside me* indicates that there is definitely something lurking within that is the cause of our procrastination and hesitation about practising. So, as suggested here, we need to take the measure of checking within to identify the main cause of the confusion that causes the hesitation, laziness and so forth. Then, as emphasised here, lest *one falls into laziness* and becomes complacent, *one should be thinking in this way*, again and again, about how there is something within that is causing such confusion.

Then the text presents the causes of that confusion.

2.2.3. Conscientiously abandoning the afflictions

This heading implies that having identified the afflictions, one needs to apply conscientiousness and joyful effort as a way to abandon the afflictions.

This section of the text has three subdivisions:

2.2.3.1. Contemplating the faults of the afflictions

2.2.3.2. How it is unsuitable to tire of the difficulty of abandoning the afflictions

2.2.3.3. Meditating on joy knowing that if one makes an effort it is possible to abandon the afflictions

2.2.3.1. CONTEMPLATING THE FAULTS OF THE AFFLICTIONS

This has three further subdivisions:

2.2.3.1.1. Contemplating how the afflictions harm oneself

2.2.3.1.2. How it is unsuitable to meditate on patience for the afflictions

2.2.3.1.3. Generating courage to destroy them

2.2.3.1.1. Contemplating how the afflictions harm oneself

This is subdivided into four:

2.2.3.1.1.1. They take away our freedom

2.2.3.1.1.2. They generate boundless suffering

2.2.3.1.1.3. They harm over an infinite amount of time

2.2.3.1.1.4. The reason why it is unsuitable to befriend the afflictions

Following the earlier presentation where the great master Shantideva entreated us to look into ourselves and really contemplate the sources of the confusion that cause all of the aforementioned faults - hesitation about practising, procrastination and so forth - when we genuinely and honestly look within we will be able to identify that it is the afflictions that are the main cause. So, as a way of overcoming them, we need to think about the disadvantages of these afflictions. Shantideva then presents four disadvantages.

2.2.3.1.1.1. They take away our freedom

Once we are dominated by the afflictions, they overpower us and we are completely under their control.

The verse that relates to this heading reads:

28. *The enemies of anger, craving and so forth
Do not have legs, arms and so forth,
They are neither brave nor wise,
How did they make me like their slave?*

We need to see this presentation as being related to our own circumstances, right now, and not just as some dry hypothetical presentation. While we are easily able to acknowledge the very good conditions that we enjoy now, we also need to identify what prevents us from fully utilising our potential, and taking full advantage of these conditions. It is not sufficient to look within once or twice, but rather we need to implement this in our regular daily practice, investigating our minds again and again.

The more we analyse our own state of mind, the clearer it becomes that the afflictions, or delusions, are the real cause of all our faults. It is not immediately apparent to us that anger, for example, is a cause of our faults and our mistakes. When it comes to attachment, it is even more difficult for us to recognise attachment as being a fault. Thus it requires careful analysis again and again, and careful attention to fully identifying and recognising these delusions such as anger, attachment and the like as being the real causes of all our problems. When we take initiative to really personalise this investigation in our contemplations, then that, in itself, becomes a very worthwhile and productive object of meditation.

Gyalsab Je's commentary on the verse reads:

My enemies of anger, craving and so forth, which are contained in the root and associated afflictions, do not have legs, arms or weapons in their hands and they are not very brave with great effort, nor are they wise with skilful means.

How did they take away my freedom and make me their slave?

In order to acknowledge the afflictions as being faults, we need to first identify them. To understand what the afflictions are, the Lam Rim presents them under these headings: identifying the delusions; the stages in which the delusions develop; the causes of delusions and the faults of the delusions. Some Lam Rim texts present the delusions under four headings and some under three, however, the main structure is essentially the same: identifying the delusions, understanding how they are developed, and knowing their causes and their faults.

Here, the identification of the delusions is presented in summary form. In order to abandon the afflictions, they definitely need to be identified. If one doesn't even recognise the afflictions for what they are, then there is no way that one can abandon them. For example, if one doesn't acknowledge anger as an affliction then there is no way one

will take the initiative to abandon anger; it is the same with attachment and so forth. One will be able to recognise anger as a faulty state of mind when it is clearly identified as a delusion that is not based on reality, but on a faulty perception, and thus has no sound basis. Then the initiative to abandon this affliction can be strongly generated and one will make the effort to abandon anger. It is the same with the rest of the afflictions: first we need to clearly recognise and identify what they are, and then, based on the understanding that they are faulty states of mind, we then take the initiative to abandon them.

The text presents the afflictions identifying two of them, *the enemies of anger, craving and so forth*—which includes all other afflictions in summary form. As explained clearly in the text, the real enemies that hinder our wellbeing are the delusions or afflictions.

As indicated here, these delusions such as anger, craving and so forth are the real enemies, *yet they do not have legs, arms or hold weapons in their hands*. The comparison here is with an enemy that has form, such as a well built, muscular person protected by amour and carrying weapons and so forth. It would be difficult to face such a powerful enemy if we are comparatively smaller in size. However, these afflictions are not like that. As they are not form, they don't have legs, arms or weapons and so forth. Again we can take note of how, as explained in the teachings, it is seemingly easier to practise a bit of patience with a powerful figure because of our sheer incapacity to be able to combat or to fight them. So it is no wonder that we show a bit more tolerance toward someone who is more powerful! But practising patience with someone who is weak and meek and thus much easier to defeat, is much harder. So when one is able to practice patience with such weak beings, it is much more admirable.

Unlike a powerful external enemy, the delusions such as anger and craving and so forth are not equipped with any physical protection or intimidating size. Furthermore, it is not as if these delusions are also *very brave with great effort*, meaning that they are not very persistent. We need to also remind ourselves that one reason why the delusions are not very persistent is that they are aided by another delusion, called laziness. Furthermore, it is not as if these delusions are *wise* and have *skilful means*; in fact, they are not based on sound wisdom or intelligence of any sort. That is because they associate with yet another delusion, which is ignorance.

So if the afflictions do not have any of the aforementioned attributes then *how did they take away my freedom and make me their slave?* This is a significant point, implying, by means of a rhetorical question, that one is essentially enslaved by the afflictions. A powerful master can make his slaves do anything he commands, because the slaves are completely under his control. The slaves have to follow every wish or command of their master, who completely dominates them. Likewise, we are enslaved by our own afflictions. Why else would we do things that we know are not really wise or favourable to our wellbeing? Yet still we find ourselves following the commands of afflictions such as anger and craving and engage in actions that ultimately harms us.

This is a very significant point about why we continue to create negative actions, even though we understand that they are faults, and know the consequences are not favourable. There is no other reason than being dominated by the afflictions that overpower us. It is the same with the faults or misdeeds that others commit. When they see others committing murder or stealing and so forth, some people

comment 'Why is there so much violence in the world? Why are people killing each other?' We need to understand that the reason they engage in the negative actions of killing and so forth is because they are completely dominated by the afflictions. When the afflictions compel them to engage in those actions it is as if they don't have any control over their own actions. Analysing things in this way enables us to understand the real motivator behind the negative actions others commit, and thus becoming more tolerant and compassionate towards them, rather than seeing them only as negative and evil. These are important points to keep in mind.

For as long as the delusions have complete control or dominance over us, we don't have much choice. But if we recognise the afflictions for what they are, then we have a chance of not being influenced by them. About two years ago, Maria's daughter, who was sitting in the very place where Maria is sitting right now, commented that having been introduced to the afflictions and their disadvantages, she came to a point in her meditation where she was able to recognise how those afflictions affected her. Even though this recognition did not prevent the afflictions from arising, she felt that recognising them had definitely helped her to become a little more wary, and helped to reduce their intensity. She said that she had been meditating for about a year and found it had been really helpful for her. She was making a really significant point, and had used a lot of intelligence and understanding to come to that conclusion.

In summary, we need to recognise the delusions for what they are. But if we don't do anything once we have recognised them, then the act of recognising afflictions would be quite pointless. As Shantideva has so very precisely presented here, we do have the potential, and we do have the ability to overcome the afflictions. So it is possible not only to identify the delusions, but to apply the antidotes and overcome them as well. Shantideva is giving us really profound advice: we have these great conditions of the freedoms and endowments, so it is definitely possible for us to overcome and abandon the afflictions.

2.2.3.1.1.2. They generate boundless suffering

Having briefly identified the afflictions, the next section presents their disadvantages.

As I have mentioned many, many times, these are very essential points to keep in mind, because this is a profound practice that can really protect your mind. When seeing others engaging in inappropriate deeds or saying inappropriate things, we need to be able to identify that it is the fault of the delusion, rather than a fault of the person *per se*. That will help to generate a sense of compassion for them rather than agitation and feelings of annoyance and anger. This is a really profound practice that we need to keep in mind. That recognition and understanding in relation to others can only come about when we have fully identified and recognised the delusions within ourselves, and understood how they actually dominate us so that we are then compelled to engage in negative deeds and actions, even though we don't want to. Then, based on our understanding of our own difficulties, we can recognise and apply that to others. It is really important to remember this if we want to maintain a good harmonious relationship with those around us. I have spoken about this many times in the past, and the point cannot be stressed enough.

The following points on the faults or disadvantages of the afflictions will encourage us to really try to overcome the afflictions, and apply the appropriate antidotes. Why should

we want to do that? Because delusions generate boundless suffering and so forth.

The verse relating to this heading is:

29. *While they remain in my mind
They harm me joyfully.
Bearing this patiently without anger,
Is unsuitable and this patience is an object of
criticism*

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

To practise patience with regard to those that joyfully create the sufferings of the lower realms whilst they abide in my mind is unsuitable. This patience is an object of criticism and one should regard the afflictions as enemies and strive to abandon them.

Having identified and recognised the delusions or afflictions for what they are, it would be inappropriate to patiently and willingly allow them to remain within us, because not only do the delusions that lurk within us cause immense suffering, but they lead us to the extreme *sufferings of the lower realms*. Willingly being patient with these causes of immense suffering is not appropriate. As you would recall, not retaliating to the harms and sufferings inflicted by others is one of the classifications of patience. However, willingly enduring the dominance of the afflictions, rather than ensuring that one overcomes them, is inappropriate.

This patience is an object of criticism indicates that the buddhas and bodhisattvas would take a dim view of such patience, and not regard it as an appropriate type of patience. Being patient with anger would mean allowing anger to arise and infest our minds. Even from a worldly perspective we can all see that wrong deeds, such as killing and so forth, come from none other than the influence of delusions such as anger. Such misdeeds arise from being willingly submissive to anger and following its dictates. Just as we recognise this in others, it is exactly the same for ourselves. Being patient here means becoming submissive and allowing anger or attachment to arise and then following every command they give.

As the commentary explains, *one should regard the afflictions as enemies and strive to abandon them*. This means that as soon as an affliction arises, we need to immediately recognise it as harmful and, rather than willingly becoming submissive and patient with it, apply an antidote to overcome whatever affliction it is.

In order to do that, the commentary further explains:

One should work at understanding the definitions, divisions, causes and functions of the afflictions as they are explained in the *Knowledge Treatises* and mainly meditate on their disadvantages.

The author of the commentary, Gyaltsab Rinpoche, is explaining that one should know the afflictions in detail *and mainly meditate on the disadvantages*, which is the key point. For as long as we don't recognise or contemplate the disadvantages of the afflictions, then the need to overcome or abandon them will not arise. Therefore, contemplating the disadvantages of the afflictions again and again is, as explained here, a key point.

This relates back to that very intelligent and wise comment which I related earlier, about the fact that even just recognising the delusions definitely helped that student to become a little more wary, and helped to reduce their intensity. Recognising the afflictions for what they are definitely helps to minimise their intensity.

As presented in the teachings, the definition of an affliction is, that which causes discomfort and unease in our mind as soon as it is developed. We know this from our own experience; we can see that the moment certain kinds of afflictions are generated, we immediately feel weighed down, uncomfortable and unsettled. The fact that there is this discomfort is the sign that it is an affliction.

There are many people who make comments about how they sometimes, without any apparent reason, feel unsettled, unhappy, or disturbed. If we contemplate the real cause of that, it will be understood that is because of the delusions being prevalent in the mind.

As presented earlier in the commentary, there are six root delusions and twenty associate or secondary delusions.

The Lam Rim teachings present six causes of the delusions.

1. **Basis:** This means having the very seed or imprint of the delusions within one's mental continuum.

2. **Object:** It is very easy to understand that one develops attachment to an attractive object, and aversion or anger towards an unattractive object.

3. **Social context:** This refers to the people with whom you associate, where conversations with them can cause delusions such as attachment, anger and so forth to arise.

4. **Faulty narration:** This refers to faulty treatises and so forth that cause delusions to arise. For example, there are treatises that define sexual positions and so forth, which would cause attachment to arise and manifest themselves within one's mind. Likewise, friends might talk about things that can cause various delusions to arise.

5. **Habituation:** The more one is familiar with a particular delusion, the more likely it is that the delusion will be generated—and we can be affiliated with certain delusions from a very young age. We see people who are intolerant with the most insignificant and minute things, such as feeling strong attachment when they see an attractive object, or feeling angry and great disappointment when things don't go their way, or feeling despondent and so forth. These are delusions that manifest easily due to long-time habituation.

So we need to use our situation now to try to minimise our familiarity with the delusions as much as possible by applying the appropriate antidotes. If we continuously allow ourselves to become more and more familiar with delusions, then that will be the cause for the delusions to become more dominant and increase even more. Therefore we need to utilise our conditions to de-familiarise ourselves with the delusions.

6. **Inappropriate attention:** This refers to paying attention to the objects that cause the delusions to arise. We might see something that looks very attractive. If it is a mere glance and we pay no further attention then it may not cause much attachment to arise, however if we pay further attention to the details of that attractive object, then the more attention we pay to the colour, shape and so forth, the more the attachment will increase. If we take the example of a man being attracted to a woman, then the more the man thinks about her attractive figure, the smoothness of her hair, the complexion of her skin and so forth, the more his attachment will increase, to the point where he is obsessed. Likewise with anger, when one thinks about someone who has inflicted harm upon us, the more we pay attention to what they did; and thinking how they have harmed me in the past, 'They used this kind of measure to harm me', 'They harmed me just the other day, and they will harm me again

in the future'. So in this way the more we pay attention, thinking again and again about how they harm us, the more reasons we find to become angry with them, to the point where anger becomes intense like a burning fire in one's heart. Many of you would have had the experience of paying attention to past memories of particular incidents and so forth, resulting in feeling sad or angry, despondent and so forth. These, in brief, are the six causes of delusions.

This explanation here is in accordance to the knowledge treatises, the *Abhidharma* in which three primary causes for delusions to arise are presented. I have explained this to you several times in the past, and they are very significant points to keep in mind. As presented in the *Abhidharma*, when 1) the delusions are not been abandoned, and 2) one is in close proximity with the objects of delusion, and 3) one applies incorrect attention to those objects, then the causes for the delusions to arise are all intact.

As presented here, for an ordinary being whose afflictions have not been abandoned, even if the delusions are always dormant, even though they are not manifest at present. Thus, the delusions manifest immediately as a result of not having abandoned the delusions, when one is in close proximity to an object that causes delusions to arise coupled with the incorrect attention that one applies whilst perceiving that object. The incorrect or improper attention is a faulty state of mind which taints one's perception to exaggerate the qualities or faults of the objects. So, just recognising a delusion as a fault will help to prevent incorrect attention from overpowering one's perceptions when perceiving any object.

The functions of the afflictions will be presented later on in the text. As I have mentioned previously, it is good for you to be able to identify and understand the six root delusions which are attachment, anger, ignorance, pride, and deluded doubt and wrong views. Wrong views can have a fivefold and a ten-fold classification. Basically there are five wrong views and this becomes ten if you include the five non-views.

The reason the term 'wrong views' is used is that there can also be correct views, such as the view of realising emptiness. Likewise, not all doubts are necessarily afflicted or deluded. There can be some virtuous doubts, so to be included as one of the six root delusions, the doubt must be a deluded or an afflicted doubt. The associated afflictions are belligerence, resentment, concealment, spite and so forth.

As presented in some of the texts I have come across—although not many mention it—the distinction between the root delusions and the associated delusions is that root delusions are generated in many different ways with many different objects whereas secondary delusions are more targeted at specific objects. The associated delusions are described as being closely related to either of the six root delusions¹. When we understand that associate delusions are closely related to one of the six root delusions, we can see how they stem from one of the main root delusions.

It would be good to have a list the six root delusions and the secondary delusions along with the six causes, as such a list is good for those who are not familiar with them. The delusions are clearly explained in the Lam Rim texts and it also good to go to other sources and become more familiar with their explanations.

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¹ Translator's note: Proximate delusions might be an appropriate term.