
Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྡོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བལྟགས་སོ་

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Based on the refuge and bodhicitta we have generated as a motivation for the practice we can now engage in the meditation.

[meditation]

We can set the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines: for the purpose of benefiting all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will engage in this teaching and put it into practice well.

At this point please remember the verses we covered in our last session. Recall how meticulously that advice was presented and how really applicable it is to our daily situation. It is very important to keep that essential meaning in mind.

1.3.1.2.2. Protecting the training of the mind from degeneration

This is subdivided into three:

1.3.1.2.2.1. Protecting with the individual antidotes

1.3.1.2.2.2. The common antidote

1.3.1.2.2.3. The way of training in meditating on the antidote

1.3.1.2.2.1. Protecting with the individual antidotes

The verse reads as follows:

55. *Strong ascertainment and strong faith
Stability, respect and politeness,
Knowing shame and having fear,
Peaceful and striving to please others.*

There are two verses under this heading. Gyaltsab Je's commentary addresses verse 55 first. It reads:

If one were to ask 'how does one protect the mind'? Strongly ascertain the points of advice by abandoning doubt and wrong consciousnesses with regards to them; generate strong faith through belief in the Three Jewels and the points of advice, faith and aspiration; stable intent and practice; being polite by being respectful and humble with everybody; shame that is fearful of negativity by reason of oneself; being afraid of the ripened result by contemplating the shortcomings; having pacified senses and striving for the purpose of making others happy.

The five senses are normally engaged in objects of distraction, so to protect the mind is to protect it from being completely drawn into the objects of distraction through the five senses. Take note of the distinction between protection and restraint. The very term 'protection' infers that in the likelihood of the mind becoming distracted, it should withdraw from the object of distraction (withdrawal implying protection of the mind). However 'restraint', suggests not allowing the mind to become distracted with the objects of distraction from the very beginning.

The emphasis here is to protect the training of the mind from degeneration. If one does not protect the mind it is likely that degeneration from one's training or practices would occur. The heading of the verse is explicit here: 'Protecting with individual antidotes'. In relation to the degeneration

that occurs in the mind, the cause is distraction through the five senses. Primarily we need to be cautious of our eye sense, mental sense, the mind itself which generates thoughts, and the ear sense. As you can notice, these cause most distractions.

Our thoughts present distraction on a more continuous basis as the object of our mental faculty. One must be cautious and protect the mental faculty from engaging in distracting, discursive thoughts, because they can occur randomly at any time. The next main distraction comes through our eye sense, and because there are so many external objects, we naturally become influenced by them. Likewise we hear a lot of things through our ear sense, and are very easily influenced by them, and thus become distracted.

Indeed when the eye sense comes into contact with beautiful objects it causes the mind of attachment to arise. Conversely, when it comes into contact with unappealing visual objects, anger arises. Likewise jealousy can arise when we see with our eyes the prosperity and good things others have. It is similar with objects of the ear sense; when we hear praise etc. this easily provides the means for attachment and ego to arise. However when we hear unpleasant things, these can immediately cause distress, agitation and anger to arise in our mind. So we do know from experience that a lot of our emotions, particularly the delusions in our mind, are very much influenced by the objects we encounter through our senses.

Again, protection here means being able to withdraw our mind from our engagement with objects as soon as we notice distraction occurs. Protection is really important for us because we are easily influenced by our senses. Our eye sense sees a beautiful object and then grasping starts to develop. It is this grasping at beautiful objects that causes attachment to increase in our mind. That in turn can cause the sense of wanting to own or to possess the object, and if one is not able to possess it, distress arises in the mind due to strong grasping. As the term itself suggests, grasping is holding onto, and not being able to let go of certain objects, whether they be objects of attachment or objects of anger. When we come into contact with certain objects we immediately grasp onto them and don't let go, which causes the delusions in our mind to become intense and strong.

Whether it is our eye sense or other senses that come into contact with objects of distraction, if we protect our mind by not interacting with them, then the delusion and its consequences will not arise strongly and affect us in a negative way. So, we must sever the connection with that object. While this specifically applies in our meditation session, it also relates to our everyday life.

In explaining how to protect the mind the commentary says: *Strongly ascertain the points of advice.* Advice here means upholding the commitments or vows one may have taken. In relation to the practices, we need to apply the measures explained forcefully. If we do not protect our mind we will degenerate or lapse from the commitments and pledges we have taken and thus fail to engage in the advice or the practice. The commentary continues: *by abandoning doubt and wrong consciousnesses with regards to them.* This very clearly states that one needs to abandon doubt and the wrong consciousnesses which come to wrong conclusions about this advice. The way to do this is to engage in thorough investigation, gain a thorough understanding of the practices in the beginning, during the actual practice and at the end. You need to investigate and understand at all three times to remove doubts and wrong consciousnesses (leading

to mistaken understanding or conclusions) in relation to this advice.

Abandoning doubt refers to abandoning the mind that wavers in two directions. In this state one cannot confirm anything and one is unable to gain the necessary conviction.

In relation to the advice and instructions to be followed, if we have qualms about it, if we start to hesitate or become influenced by other possibilities that are maybe not valid and so forth, then as soon as this doubt arises in the mind, we are very vulnerable to giving up the practices or allowing them to degenerate. As mentioned earlier, thorough investigation needs to be employed to completely remove any doubt. This first requires hearing about the advice extensively, then we use the wisdom and understanding gained from hearing to contemplate or investigate what we have heard. Having thoroughly investigated and thought about it, we can apply the meditation, and once experience is gained from this, a firm conviction develops in the validity of the practices such that it will not degenerate.

This is how an intelligent trainee engages in the study of the practices: thorough investigation and analysis, again and again, then conviction is established. Engaging in one's practice then becomes very firm and stable. This is why the method employed by intelligent trainees is said to be the most suitable.

The commentary then explains: *generate strong faith through belief in the Three Jewels and the points of advice*. Generating strong faith in the Three Jewels indicates gaining an understanding that the Three Jewels are infallible in protecting you, thus they are suitable as your refuge and will not deceive you. The method of gaining conviction in the Three Jewels arises first from investigating the Dharma Jewel and understanding its qualities. When you develop a good understanding and see the qualities of the Dharma Jewel, you can then naturally generate admiration, faith and conviction in the one who taught it, which is the Buddha Jewel. Then having developed faith in the Buddha and Dharma Jewel, since the ones who follow these are the Sangha Jewels you naturally develop faith in them as well. This is how one generates conviction in the Three Jewels.

One needs to have *strong faith* and *aspiration* in the Three Jewels and the points of advice, and *stable intent*, which means developing a firm and stable intention toward the practices and advice. Furthermore, one needs to adopt a conduct where one is *polite by being respectful and humble with everybody*. These are all methods to protect one's training and adopt the advice.

Continuing with the commentary's explanation, the next part expands upon engaging in the practice by maintaining *shame that is fearful* (afraid of committing) *negativity by reason of oneself*. Shame was explained earlier. The commentary continues with: *being afraid of the ripened result by contemplating the shortcomings*, which refers to being afraid of the ripened results of the negativities by contemplating their shortcomings. It continues: *having pacified senses and striving for the purpose of making others happy*. A bodhisattva has intention only to benefit others, so for the purpose of benefitting others needs to engage in conduct which will inspire them, not cause them to lose faith or be critical etc. If a bodhisattva were to cause others to lose faith in the Dharma, or feel critical towards them that would cause the others to create huge negative karma. So, as a means to protect others from the negative mind of losing faith or criticising a bodhisattva, a bodhisattva needs to ensure that

they are engaging in the means and conduct of making others happy.

When others are made happy with your good conduct then there is no reason for them to criticise you, because they are happy and inspired with what you are doing, your behaviour etc. This is a very important point to take as personal instruction: when we have the means to make others happy, which we all do, why would we intentionally engage in behaviours and conduct that would make them unhappy? It would be totally inappropriate to intentionally engage in the means to make others unhappy or cause unnecessary discomfort and sorrow in their minds. This behaviour will make others unhappy with you, criticise you etc. Therefore, taking this on a personal level, we need to try to employ means for making others happy in all situations.

The next verse under this same heading:

56. *Do not be put off by the desires
Of the childish that strive with each other
And think with affection, "They have these
minds
Due to their generation of afflictions."*

Gyalsab Je's commentary reads:

Do not be put off by the contradicting desires of childish people where, having benefitted one, the other one gets angry. Have compassion for them thinking, 'this mind is generated within them due to afflictions and without them having any control over themselves. I will liberate them from their afflictions.'

In such a way do not fall under the control of the afflictions.

Again this is relevant advice for us in our daily lives as these sorts of occasions occur quite regularly. When in the commentary it explains, *do not be put off by contradicting desires of childish people where, having benefitted one, the other one gets angry*, relate it to when you take the measure of being kind to someone, then even without an intention to hurt them, the others get upset. We can see this happening readily in a circle of relatives: if you are nice to one relative then another might start feeling jealous about that and may start to complain.

In relation to beings who act childishly towards you, the advice says not to be put off by their behaviour. 'Put off' here means you should not be put off the intent of benefiting them nor generate a negative mind towards them. Instead you should have compassion towards them, thinking that *this mind is generated within them due to afflictions and without them having any control over themselves*. You can see the advice here is very true; that when certain beings are under the influence of the delusions e.g. intense anger, even one individual can create so much destruction and kill so many others out of an angry mind. We have examples right here. In Tasmania an individual killed 32 people, and in another coastal place again some other killings occurred, and many people were killed. This was done by one individual—out of his mind, the cause was being obsessed, or completely dominated by delusions such as anger. When we witness this sort of account our natural response might be to become appalled, condemn the person and become angry with them. But in fact when one thinks about what compelled them to engage in such grave negative acts, it is none other than the delusion in their own mind, mainly anger. And when one contemplates that, one sees reason to feel great compassion for them rather than condemning them, seeing how under the influence of the delusion they have no control over their own actions.

We can see too that there are certain individuals who, if they are at a trial say, 'I was given the order to kill so I had no control'. These are examples of how when one engages in negative actions such as the act of killing etc., one does not have control over oneself. Normally we would think that someone is independent and has control over whatever they want to do. If they had control they would not commit the act, but the implication of having no control over their actions is that they are compelled to do that act. Normally we would feel reason to condemn them if we thought they had control, like they had a choice and did it anyway, but the implication here is to feel compassion for them because they have no choice and control over their own actions. That is the main point.

With this understanding one should find oneself resolving to liberate them from their afflictions, rather than condemning them and becoming agitated with them. In understanding such situations, the next piece of advice says: '*In such a way do not fall under the control of the afflictions*' oneself. So when relating to others who have engaged in great misdeeds, one needs to protect oneself from the influence of the afflictions. If one doesn't protect oneself then we fall short and become agitated and angry towards the other. So therefore this is a direct instruction for oneself to be responsible for one's own state of mind.

In order to back up this explanation of how one needs to practice in such a way, the commentary presents a citation:

From the *Ornament of Mahayana Sutras*,

By thinking how they are without power due to constant faults,
Possessing the mind, do not hold it against beings.

As clearly presented in this quote, when someone is afflicted by the faults or the delusions, they don't have the power to control what they do. Thus, one should not hold their negative actions against them. It is really important to understand how every action one engages in, be it positive or negative, there is always a state of mind that compels one to engage in those actions.

The commentary then cites another text.

From the *Four Hundred Verses*:

Just as a physician is not upset with,
Someone who rages while possessed by a demon,
Subduers see disturbing emotions as the enemy,
Not the person who has them.

The verse from the *Four Hundred Verses* clearly explains with the analogy of a physician. A physician will not be upset with someone who is possessed by, for example, a demon, because when someone is possessed they might do things which a normal, rational person would not do, such as fighting back, doing wild things like hitting etc. However the physician knows they are affected by their ailments and will not be upset, rather they will be intent on treating them. Likewise the buddhas see disturbing emotions as the enemy. They do not consider the person who has anger as negative, rather it is the afflictions within them that need to be overcome. That is because it is the afflictions in the mind that cause them to engage in actions which are harmful.

As I regularly advise, when someone is really angry you should be cautious around them; they might do anything, they might hit you or hurt you because in intense moments of anger they are not able to act rationally. With the recent unfortunate circumstances of the Malaysian Airlines plane being shot down, my comment was, when the plane is in an area where rebels are carrying their weapons with an

agitated mind and angry, and just want to kill, then an accident on such a scale can occur. They would not analyse well and would see no reason to not to use their weapons to shoot anything down. This is an example of how we need to be very wary and cautions around people who are really agitated because we might get hurt ourselves. So if your partner is really upset and angry, you must be careful and cautious.

With this unfortunate event of the plane being shot down, why would the aeroplane go in that direction? Why would they take that route when it is so dangerous? Damien was looking at a map and said that it is actually the normal flight path. Even though I wasn't looking at any map, and I didn't exactly know the location, it was my assumption that the plane pathway shouldn't go that far off in the north of Europe. Apparently they are still investigating how it actually might have gone off route. The routes should be the same for Singapore Airlines and Malaysian Airlines.

Anyhow the main point is that when people are agitated and angry they will have no qualms, they will not hold back in using their weapons, and that is when disasters can occur.

1.3.1.2.2.2. The common antidote

What is being referred to here are common antidotes which could be applicable to all afflictions.

The verse reads:

57. *Objects free from the unutterable
Are for self and sentient beings.
Without ego, always protect this mind,
Like an emanation.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

The engagement in virtuous actions, which are free from forbidden and natural misdeeds, is for the purpose of oneself not degenerating and for the benefit of sentient beings. Engage in actions as if they are illusions or magical apparitions by holding them with the wisdom realising emptiness.

Thus always protect your mind without pride or exaggeration.

In *The engagement in virtuous actions which are free from forbidden and natural misdeeds*, the term used to reflect misdeeds is also translated as 'unutterable' and 'unmentionable'. We'll use 'unmentionable' as it refers to misdeeds of a certain kind where the consequences are so grave that they cannot even be mentioned by the supreme beings, let alone engaged in. We have discussed the forbidden and natural misdeeds earlier. Forbidden misdeeds specifically relates to the misdeeds laid down by decree, and natural misdeeds are negative regardless of context. So engaging in virtuous actions which are free from such misdeeds is done for the purpose of oneself, not to degenerate from that advice etc. and for the benefit of sentient beings. That being the case, the advice here is that one needs to engage in actions while remembering that they are like illusions or like magical apparitions, as a means to prevent the delusions from arising. That is how we need to view things, seeing them as not truly existent, by holding them with the realisation of emptiness, realising that they are empty of inherent existence, then that understanding will prevent strong negative minds of delusions such as anger and attachment etc. from arising. When one has an understanding of how things are not truly existent this serves as an antidote to overcome all afflictions and thus all misdeeds. In this way always protect your mind without pride or arrogance.

As explained in other texts, a being who has a realisation of emptiness during meditative equipoise will view all existence like the sky, empty like space, and when they are in a post-meditative state they will be able to see all phenomena as being like mere illusions. This is how one needs to maintain one's view of phenomena as a way of not being affected by the afflictions in the mind.

1.3.1.2.2.3. The way of training in meditating on the antidote

The verse reads:

*58. Having repeatedly contemplated one's attainment
Of supreme freedom after a long time,
Hold on to that mind
As immovable as Mount Meru.*

Think: After a great accumulation, which lasted for a long time, I have attained the precious human rebirth with freedoms and endowments. By contemplating repeatedly the great purpose and rarity of the precious human rebirth, generate the intent to definitely achieve the great purpose. Then firmly hold that mind, as immovable as Mount Meru.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary clearly explains here that having engaged in a great accumulation, incurred over a long period of time, as a result one attains a precious human rebirth with freedoms and endowments. Contemplating on the difficulty of obtaining a precious human rebirth, obtaining something which has been so difficult to obtain, repeatedly contemplating the great purpose and rarity of the precious human rebirth, one generates the intent to definitely achieve the great purpose. One needs to hold this intent firmly in the mind, as immovable as Mount Meru.

The main point of the advice is that one needs to repeatedly contemplate the precious human rebirth one has obtained. One aspect of this advice can be how we should not feel discouraged, even if it takes a long time to accumulate certain merits, the results are definitely achieved. So by relating to the good consequences we have obtained now, it can encourage us to further develop and engage in the practices to gain further good results in the future. This is how we need to maintain a mind which is free from despondency and have a courageous mind to continue with the practices and hold our mind firm and stable.

1.3.2. The way of training in the morality of accumulating virtuous dharmas

This is subdivided into two:

1.3.2.1. Abandoning attachment for the body which is the cause not to train in morality

1.3.2.2. To be skilful in practising virtue

1.3.2.1. ABANDONING ATTACHMENT FOR THE BODY WHICH IS THE CAUSE NOT TO TRAIN IN MORALITY

The meaning of morality here specifically refers to accumulating virtuous Dharma. Generally the definition of morality is the mind which employs restraint; restraint is presented as the definition of morality. However this refers mainly to restraint from a particular misdeed. In relating to this morality, accumulating virtuous Dharma, it is explained specifically in Lam Rim teachings how all virtues of a bodhisattva's conduct encompasses morality. In other words, all virtuous Dharma can be an aid to further enhancing a bodhisattva's morality. In a broader sense, all virtues engaged in by bodhisattvas are said to be morality.

The general definition of morality as the mind of restraint may be more suitable for that: for the morality of restraining from misdeeds.

Under the first subheading there are five subheadings.

We can leave this explanation for the next teaching session.

As you are aware the next session will be the discussion followed by the exam. So as usual it will be good to engage in the discussion with a proper motivation and proper conduct and also the exam as well.

And then also for the seminar which is coming up at the end of next month, you need to have a good discussion amongst yourselves as how to conduct that.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

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