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# *Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།

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As usual let us spend some time in our meditation practice.

## *Meditation*

We can set our motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will receive the teachings and put them into practice well.

Indeed, generating the bodhicitta motivation is of utmost importance. We have already established the basis of bodhicitta in our mind through our understanding of how to generate bodhicitta with either the seven-point cause and effect sequence, or the exchanging self with other technique. We need to further develop that basis by familiarising our mind with the bodhicitta motivation in every Dharma activity in which we engage. As mentioned regularly, the process of developing bodhicitta involves first generating the bodhicitta mind which has not yet been generated; once generated, to firmly establish it; and then further increase it to higher and higher levels. This is how we need to accustom our mind with bodhicitta at all levels of our practice.

Bodhicitta is the essence of the Mahayana teachings, with which we already have some familiarity. If we don't work on developing what we have already understood, and grasp on to some other form of practice, then we have entirely missed the point! Until we achieve enlightenment, we need to be continuously developing and perfecting the bodhicitta attitude, beginning with generating a contrived bodhicitta motivation, through to actually generating bodhicitta, and then engaging in the practice of the six perfections.

Although we have not yet actually generated bodhicitta, we can definitely generate a contrived bodhicitta attitude, which we can then further develop on the basis of that positive motivation. Furthermore, even though we are not yet able to practise the perfection of generosity we can definitely practise a similitude of that in the form of engaging in charitable activities. By familiarising ourselves with similitudes of both bodhicitta and the practices of the six perfections, we will gradually develop them within our mental continuum until we reach enlightenment.

## **1.2. Meditating on the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma**

This section shows us how to meditate on the patience that definitely relies on Dharma, which is one the three types of patience.

The previous section of the text explained how to rely on the patience that tolerates the suffering that we experience. As mentioned previously, this is the core practice that allows us to engage in the practice of the Dharma itself. This tolerance of suffering is developed by contemplating the benefits of suffering, rather than seeing it as an obstacle. As mentioned previously, it was only by enduring hardships and difficulties that the great practitioners of the past were able to engage in their practices. In fact, becoming a real practitioner can only be achieved by enduring hardships and difficulties—there is no other way to become a real Dharma practitioner. I could be wrong, but this is what I personally understand from these explanations.

Meditating on the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma relate to the core Dharma of contemplating the two selflessnesses. Understanding selflessness and emptiness requires a lot of study, investigation and contemplation, and thus it involves hardship and difficulties. Although Nagarjuna and Chandrakirti elucidated the two selflessnesses very clearly, we still have difficulty in gaining a really good understanding of selflessness and emptiness. Thus we need to develop the patience that definitely relies on the Dharma.

The two subdivisions of this section of the text are:

1.2.1. Extensive

1.2.2. Summary

### **1.2.1. Extensive**

The extensive explanation has three parts:

1.2.1.1. Anger and those getting angry depend on causes, and therefore lack independence

1.2.1.2. Refuting the existence of independent causes

1.2.1.3. The need for reversing anger

#### **1.2.1.1. ANGER AND THOSE GETTING ANGRY DEPEND ON CAUSES, AND THEREFORE LACK INDEPENDENCE**

This outline indicates that anger and the angry person are not independent; basically because things are dependent on causes and conditions. So what is presented here, in essence, is the dependent arising nature of all phenomena. Since everything is dependent on causes and conditions, neither anger nor the angry person can be independent.

If the angry person were to be independent, then it would not be possible for them to transform. It is because the angry person does not exist independently that it is possible for them to change and become a less angry person. Likewise, anger itself is also not an independent entity but arises due to causes and conditions. Therefore, by causing the cessation of the causes of anger, it is possible to overcome anger. We really need to understand this very profound point. In simple terms, what I derive from the explanation here is that we don't need to be slaves of anger, rather we need to be in control over our own mind, and abandon anger.

This section has two subdivisions:

1.2.1.1.1. Anger and the angry person are not independent

1.2.1.1.2. Their causes and conditions are not independent

### 1.2.1.1.1. Anger and the angry person are not independent

This in turn is subdivided into three:

1.2.1.1.1.1. The reason why it is unsuitable to be angry at an afflicted person

1.2.1.1.1.2. Anger is not generated volitionally

1.2.1.1.1.3. Since all faults are generated in dependence on conditions, they lack independence.

#### 1.2.1.1.1.1. The reason why it is unsuitable to be angry at an afflicted person

This is a significant point that we really need to understand.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins with a hypothetical argument.

Argument: Since the other person harms me, it is suitable to get angry at them.

The point of this hypothetical argument is that it is suitable to be angry with any person who harms us. The reasoning here is that the cause of anger is the person who inflicts the harm, and not the actual harm itself. Even though the actual cause of the pain is the harm, one does not use that as a reason to generate anger. Rather, the anger is directed at the person who inflicts the harm.

In answer to that hypothetical argument, these three lines of verse are presented.

*22abc. If one is not angry at bile disease and  
Other great sources of suffering,  
Then why be angry at the ones with mind,*

As an explanation of these lines, the commentary begins with a response to the original hypothetical argument.

Answer: It is unsuitable.

Then the commentary explains the reason:

One does not get angry at bile disease and the like, which are a great source for the suffering of the disturbance of imbalance. Why would one then get angry at a sentient being, i.e. a being with mind?

Basically, when we experience great suffering from diseases such as bile and so forth, we do not consider becoming angry with the disease that is the cause for that suffering. So why then does one find it reasonable to become angry with an individual being who has a mind, and consider them to be the cause of our suffering?

The irrationality of our response is that while we don't become angry with a disease, for example, we find reason to become angry with an individual, when in fact, as we perceive it, both have equally caused us suffering.

Then Gyaltsab Je presents another hypothetical argument:

Argument: Since bile disease and so forth arise without control one does not get angry at them.

In answer to that a counter argument is presented:

Answer: Then it follows it is also unsuitable to be angry at the person ...

Then the following lines from the root text are presented:

*22d. Which are also all induced by conditions.  
23. For example, although one does not desire it,  
The sickness arises anyway.  
Similarly, although one does not desire it,  
The afflictions are generated powerfully.*

One needs to relate this to our understanding of interdependence and emptiness. If there is no cause of suffering, then there cannot be a result. So suffering cannot be experienced as an independent result, because the cause lacks independent existence, and is, itself, dependent on causes and conditions. Therefore the results are also interdependent, as they only arise when the causes and conditions are intact.

When one relates this understanding of interdependent origination to the lack of independent existence, then that really contributes to an understanding of how everything is empty of independent existence. We should apply our understanding of interdependence and emptiness to derive a more profound understanding of why it is unsuitable to be angry with an afflicted person. Then one can really make progress.

The commentary concludes with:

... because afflicted beings are ordered around by the condition of their afflictions and hence do not have control of their actions.

For example, similar to this sickness arising against one's wish when the conditions are complete, this person does not desire to be angry, but due to the cause of mental unhappiness and the like, the afflictions arise strongly. Therefore, if one were to get angry, then one should get angry at the afflictions and not at the person.

As presented here, *because afflicted beings are ordered around by the condition of the afflictions they do not have control of their actions.* Everything is dependent on its own particular causes and conditions. Being under the control of the delusions, beings do not have control over their actions, and are compelled to engage in actions that cause harm. And these delusions are themselves also dependent on many causes and conditions.

So the individual who causes us harm is not really an appropriate object for our anger, because they are not engaging in those harmful actions voluntarily. Rather, they are engaging in harmful actions because they are under the control of the delusions.

As mentioned previously, people engage in harmful actions because their mind is unhappy. When the mind is afflicted by delusions it is not a happy mind. We know from our personal experience that when our mind is affected by any of the delusions it is in a state of turmoil, and it is a troubled, unhappy mind. And, as we have seen, an unhappy mind is the basis for anger.

When one contemplates these points then, rather than finding reason to become angry at the individual causing harm, one feels compassion. That is because they are completely under the control of delusions that are causing them agony and unhappiness, which is the cause of their harmful actions. Therefore they are actually an object of compassion, rather than an object of anger.

Then the commentary goes on to present the analogy that the delusions are *similar to this sickness arising against one's wish when the conditions are complete.* The analogy is that when all the causes and conditions for sickness are intact, then the inevitable effect is sickness. As presented in other texts, when all the causes and conditions are intact then there is nothing that can avert the consequences. So

when all the conditions for sickness are present then the result of illness will definitely be experienced.

When the commentary says, *this person does not desire to be angry, but due to the cause of mental unhappiness and the like the afflictions arise strongly*, it is indicating that although people don't want to be angry, because they know that is not a desirable state to be in, anger will nevertheless arise when all the causes and conditions, particularly the cause of mental unhappiness and the like, are intact. Because of their unhappiness the afflictions arise strongly, resulting in harmful actions.

So the individual person is not really to blame. Being completely under the control of the delusions, they become angry when the causes and conditions are intact, and are compelled to engage in harmful actions. So the cause of their behaviour is ultimately the afflictions. If one is to become angry, then one should be angry with the afflictions and not the person. This is really the crux of the presentation: if one is to become upset, then it should be with the afflictions themselves, which are harboured within one's own mind.

On a personal level we can understand that just as afflictions cause other people to become angry and create harmful actions, our own afflictions cause us to become upset and angry. 'Just as those who cause me harm are affected by the afflictions, I too am afflicted by the delusions, so that is what I need to target, not the individual person.' By contemplating this point, one develops patience with other people through understanding how they are affected by causes and conditions.

However, we should not be patient with the afflictions themselves because that will only cause us further harm. So one applies measures to completely overcome and destroy the afflictions.

#### 1.2.1.1.2. Anger is not generated volitionally

Gyaltsab Je begins his commentary on this section with another hypothetical argument:

Argument: Since the other person thinks 'I shall harm', it is not the same as with the afflictions.

We will be familiar with this hypothetical argument. We might reason that although the afflictions don't have an intention to harm us, the person definitely does. Using that reasoning, one might think it reasonable to become upset with the person.

The next verse presents the means to overcome such doubts:

24. *Although not thinking, 'I should get angry',  
Beings become angry naturally.  
Although not thinking, 'I shall generate',  
Anger generates likewise.*

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

Answer: Although the causes do not think 'I shall generate anger', when the conditions are complete then beings generate anger without any choice. Although afflictions do not think 'I shall generate', anger is generated likewise. They do not have any freedom of action.

Otherwise, the first half can be related to the person and the second to the condition of the afflictions.

When anger arises due to *causes and conditions*, it is not as though the *causes* themselves think, 'I shall generate anger', and then generate anger. Rather, when the conditions are complete, beings generate anger without any choice. So it is not a voluntary act, where the causes think, 'Now I will cause anger'. Rather, when all the conditions are complete, then, even without a prior intention, one becomes angry. In that very instant, without even thinking about the conditions being intact, anger is generated spontaneously, without any choice.

*Although afflictions do not think, 'I shall generate', anger generates likewise*, indicates that it is not as if the afflictions themselves are demanding that anger should arise. Rather, the anger just naturally arises when the conditions are intact. Therefore there is no freedom of action.

In saying, *Otherwise, the first half can be related to the person and the second to the condition of the afflictions*, Gyaltsab Je is indicating how on a practical level we may adopt the understanding that both the person and the afflictions have some role in the generation of anger. This explanation may sound a bit fairer to us.

#### 1.2.1.1.3. Since all faults are dependent on conditions, they lack independence

25. *All the faults that are found,  
And the variety of negativities,  
They all arise through the force of condition,  
They do not have independence.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

All the faults of afflictions that are found, and the variety of negativities that arise from them, also arise through the force of conditions, and do not have independence. Similar to it not being suitable to get angry at water flowing downhill, thinking about these reasons stops anger.

*All the faults of afflictions that are found, and the variety of negativities that arise from them, also arise through the force of conditions, and do not have independence*, refers to the fact that while we do not wish to be influenced by the afflictions and create negativities, it is as if we have no control over them. When the conditions for the afflictions to arise are intact, then one does not have any control. This is also true for others. By contemplating this reality, particularly in relation to those who inflict harm, we will understand that they are completely under the control of the afflictions, and therefore have no control over their own actions.

The analogy—*it is similar to not becoming angry about water flowing downhill*—uses an illustration from the reasoning of nature, which is one of the four types of reasonings.<sup>1</sup> One would not become upset and angry about water flowing downhill, because that is its nature. Likewise, when others have the conditions for afflictions to arise, then the natural consequence is that they will engage in harm. Thus we should not become angry with them, but instead blame the afflictions.

<sup>1</sup> There are six different modes of research or investigation, and the sixth is the research of reasoning, which in turn is subdivided into four: 1. The reasoning of dependence, 2. the reasoning of the performance of function, 3. The reasoning of nature 4. The reasoning of valid establishment.

Source: *The Dalai Lama at Harvard*, Snow Lion publications

### 1.2.1.1.2. *Their causes and conditions are not independent*

Here we should take note of the meticulous presentation of the teaching, which is designed to rule out the possibility of any independent existence.

First of all, to overcome any notion that the faults and afflictions are independent, the faults were presented as being dependent on causes and conditions. Thus they lack independence.

One may then wonder whether the causes and conditions themselves are independent. So, to rule out that possibility, this presentation shows that the causes and conditions themselves are also not independent.

In our system, no matter how far you take it back, you cannot come to a point where you can find an entity that is an independent cause for other things to be produced. When other traditions trace the causes back, they come to the point where they have no choice but to accept an independent creator who is the primordial cause of all existence. These views will be presented in the next few verses.

What is being refuted under the heading Anger and the Angry Person Are Not Independent, is that an independent cause can produce other dependent phenomena. This will be presented in more detail later on.

The verse that is presented under this heading reads:

26. *The accumulation of conditions also Does not have the thought 'I shall generate'. That generated by them also does not Possess the thought 'Why was I generated?'*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on this verse reads:

Also the accumulation of conditions that generates the sufferings does not have the thought 'I shall generate these sufferings', and the generated sufferings also do not possess the thought, 'I was generated by them'.

Therefore it is unsuitable to be angry at the other person based on the reason that the other person thinks 'I shall inflict harm'.

The commentary quite clearly explains that it is not as though the accumulated conditions themselves have the voluntary thought, 'I will generate these sufferings'. Nor do the sufferings themselves have the thought, 'I was generated by them'. So therefore, it is unsuitable to be angry at the other person based on the faulty reasoning that the other person thinks 'I shall inflict harm'.

The afflictions themselves, and that which causes anger to arise, are all dependent on many other factors, i.e. the causes and conditions. In other words, they are not generated independently or voluntarily. Therefore one should not find reason to be angry with the person, thinking that they were actually in control, and saying, 'I shall inflict harm'.

### 1.2.1.2. REFUTING THE EXISTENCE OF INDEPENDENT CAUSES

Here there are three subdivisions.

1.2.1.2.1. Refuting the independent self and primary principle of the Enumerators

1.2.1.2.2. Refuting the independent self of the Logicians

1.2.1.2.3. It is unsuitable to become angry upon understanding all beings to be like an emanation.

### 1.2.1.2.1. *Refuting the independent self and primary principle of the Enumerators*

This is further subdivided into:

1.2.1.2.1.1. Refuting the generation of independent expressions by the principle

1.2.1.2.1.2. Refuting that the knowledge-being engages objects independently

The Enumerators are also known as the Samkhya school, which presents five characteristics of the self. We went over this in detail when we studied the *Madhyamaka* text.<sup>2</sup> In brief, the Samkhya school assert a permanent, unitary and independent self. They say that because the self is not momentary it is permanent; because the self lacks parts it is unitary; and because the self does not depend on causes and conditions it is independent. However this is all refuted in our system.

Next Tuesday there will be a teaching, the following Tuesday will be the discussion, followed by the exam, and there will be two more teachings in December. Tuesday, December 16, will be the Lama Tsong Khapa puja, which will conclude the sessions for the year.

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

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*Edited Version*

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<sup>2</sup> See teachings of 22 April 2003, and 29 April 2003