
Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

བྱང་ལྷན་མེས་པོ་འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷོ་ལ་ལ་འཇམ་པ་བཞུགས་སོ་

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While maintaining the motivation we generated during the prayers, we can engage in our meditation practice. *[meditation]*

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings along the usual lines:

In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

It is indeed important for us to familiarise ourselves with this positive motivation. It is through familiarity that we can readily draw on this positive motivation during our practice, which will make the practice truly meaningful. Even when we are not engaged in formal practice and are just going about in our everyday lives, we can periodically recall this motivation. In this way we consistently familiarise our minds with this motivation.

The optimum benefit from familiarising ourselves with this positive motivation is that once it becomes spontaneous, we will not need to spend much time generating a positive motivation when we sit down to practice, as it is already there. Thus we can go straight into the practice. If a positive motivation is not present, then one actually needs to take the time to cultivate it. It is similar to meditating on love and compassion. If we are already familiar with love and compassion then love and compassion will be present in whatever practice or activity we engage in.

2.3. It is unsuitable to be angry at obstacles to things like gain (cont.)

2.3.4. The reason why craving for gain is unsuitable

What is being presented here is something which we need to be really mindful of: craving for gain is unsuitable. The text however doesn't say that 'gain is unsuitable', but rather that it is the craving for gain that is unsuitable. This is an important point that needs to be understood. Otherwise one could easily think, 'As a Buddhist I shouldn't be thinking about any gains'. There are many who think in this way! As it clearly states here, it is craving or attachment to gain that is the problem.

One can relate this explanation to other teachings e.g. the *Letter to a King*, where Nagarjuna explains that the purpose of wealth is to be content. What prevents one from being satisfied with wealth is attachment, and in turn, as attachment does not allow a sense of contentment, the more you have, the more you want. If one had a satisfied mind through practising contentment, and sufficient means to sustain oneself, then wealth has served its purpose and one can feel very, very satisfied, content and happy.

What is being explained here is how gain through craving will only become a cause for misery, because later on, when we become old and frail, when we go on from this life, then everything has to be left behind. At that time a lot of suffering occurs; whatever has been gained through craving causes great agony and suffering, rather than being a means of bringing a sense of joy and happiness.

The important point here is to recognise craving as a cause for real suffering. Most ordinary people feel that attachment gives them a sense of satisfaction and pleasure, however that is of course an illusion. They can't be blamed as they don't know any better. When one really thinks about the situation, there is no satisfaction in craving. In fact, the more attachment one has, the more it becomes a cause for misery.

Someone who has strong attachment is someone who is really not settled; they experience great pain when their expectations are not met. This is true particularly in relation to friends, relationships, material wealth, gain, status etc. All of these cause suffering when expectations are not met, or when one has to be parted from them.

As previously stated, the most vulnerable time in life is old age, when one is frail and will soon pass on. At that time one can develop very strong attachments. For a practitioner it is said that one of the greatest obstacles for a good death is attachment and craving for one's possessions, friends and relatives. The significant point being presented here, is that if we work on craving now, then slowly, slowly we will become more attuned to its finer points, and be able to give up strong craving.

The great master Asvaghosa said: 'if someone lacks contentment due to very strong craving, there is no greater sickness than this state of mind'. This reinforces the point that craving causes a lack of contentment, which causes great mental agony; it is like a great sickness festering in one's mind. Some people say that when they didn't have much in the early part of their life they seemed to have a happier, more joyful state of mind. But as they became more successful and gained more wealth, the sense of joy and happiness started to fade away and they actually started to become more agitated and restless.

In brief, the main point here is that while we need possessions to sustain ourselves, we should not go to the extent of becoming so attached to them that they cause mental pain.

The relevant verse reads:

59. *Though I may attain much gain
And live for a long time happily,
Like being robbed by a thief
I will go naked and empty-handed.*

The commentary further explains the meaning:

Though I may attain much gain and live happily for a long time, at the time of death, like having been robbed by a thief, I will have to go naked without clothing and empty-handed without wealth.

While the explanation here is quite clear, I will reiterate some of the main points. The gain in *I may attain much gain and live for a long time happily* relates to gaining things that we perceive as giving us some sense of joy or pleasure. This refers to gaining pleasure from the five

sense objects, such as: nice forms, i.e. acquiring material possessions and relations; pleasant sounds, i.e. acquiring the means to listen to pleasant sounds; nice fragrances, i.e. acquiring the means to enjoy pleasant scents; nice taste, i.e. acquiring the means to obtain delicious foods; pleasant touch, i.e. acquiring the means to have pleasant touch or sensations. So we perceive these objects of the five senses as pleasurable.

As ordinary beings we believe that a happy life is one which is filled with the most experiences of the pleasures of the five senses. Nevertheless, no matter how long one lives, and no matter how much one has acquired through craving, at the inevitable time of death, one is stripped of everything and one has to leave everything behind. The analogy used here is *like having been robbed by a thief, I will have to go naked*. So the time of death involves being *naked and empty-handed*, and leaving behind all the pleasures of the five senses.

If one has strong craving for one's possessions, then at the time of death one would have an unbearable sensation of being robbed, and completely stripped of all that one has cherished all of one's life. Then one will experience the suffering of having to part unwillingly, and being involuntarily separated from everything. What prevents this situation from arising is overcoming attachment and strong craving for one's possessions, i.e. the objects of the five senses. If one does not have strong craving and has practised virtue, then, at the time of death, a virtuous mind with no attachment to one's possessions arises. Then one will not have the empty feeling of being stripped of everything, but rather one would be sustained with a great sense of joy in one's mind, knowing that one is not leaving anything of real value behind. Rather, one takes the most valuable asset within one's own mind, which is one's virtue and merit.

Most worldly people, because of their way of thinking, and lack of training in the disadvantages of attachment and craving, will naturally apply great effort to accumulating wealth. They believe that wealth can provide a good house, a good car and also attract good friends or a companion who looks nice and beautiful. 'With money I can achieve all that.'

[Geshe-la says in English: I have said many times before that one needs to be really careful when choosing a friend or companion, one must not look just on the outside but look for qualities inside – a good heart! Some of us have so many things, piles and piles of clothes, many sets of shoes etc. but still want more and more. What use is all that? One needs to think carefully!]

The real point to consider here is this: does having possessions and wealth really make one happy? While some pleasure may be gained through sense experiences now, one may not experience any pleasure from those same objects later on in life. So the sense objects themselves are not a real source of satisfaction and happiness, as there are definitely many cases of people who are quite poor yet who are really quite contented and happy.

While possessions, particularly those relating to the five sense objects, may give some sort of fleeting pleasures, at the most crucial time of our existence, in the last days

prior to death, then rather than giving a sense of joy and happiness, they become a cause for great suffering and misery. What purpose has the accumulation of gain served, when, rather than helping us at a time when we most need comfort and something to soothe our mind, our craving harms us? It has not served any purpose.

If we don't practise giving up possessions now, there will be a time when the possessions will abandon us. So even if you don't abandon possessions, they will finally abandon you anyway. There will be a time when we will have to go, without being able to take anything with us; all the things we worked so hard to acquire will finally abandon us. So, if one practises overcoming craving for possessions, then due to the virtuous mind of non-attachment, one will definitely experience a real sense of ease and a painless death.

Think about our existence right now. If we were stripped of all our belongings, even our clothing, and sent somewhere without anything, how unbearable would that be? Can we even imagine going somewhere without anything, not even our clothing? It would be a very pitiful and embarrassing situation to be in.

This is not a prospect that we would like to face at all, but that is what will occur at the time of death—we will be stripped of everything. It would be unbearable if it were to occur now, but it will actually occur later, and will be an unbearable cause of suffering and agony. However if we train our mind with non-attachment and non-craving now, so that our mind becomes familiar with non-craving and non-attachment, then, at the time of death there will be no sense of going naked and empty-handed. Rather, there will be fulfilment, and a sense of real joy with a virtuous Dharma mind. That is the point being emphasised here.

2.3.5. Refuting that it is suitable to establish gain

The point here, which is explained in the commentary but not mentioned in the heading, is that it is not suitable to establish gain through either anger or wrong livelihood. The heading could also read Refuting That It Is Suitable to Establish Gain Through Wrong Livelihood and Anger.

The first two lines of the verse are presented first

*60ab. If I live through gain,
I can purify negativity and shall be meritorious*

The hypothetical doubt or qualm raised here is:

Argument: If I live for a long time due to gain, then it is befitting that I achieve gain, in order to purify negativity with the four powers, and increase merits.

It is quite likely that even practitioners could have this doubt, thinking there would be nothing wrong in acquiring gain because this could sustain one for a long time and give more opportunity to make offerings to the Three Jewels, give to others and even purify negative karmas. They might conclude that having gains is a good thing. However this verse highlights it is not OK to have gains if they are acquired through wrong livelihood or through anger. As a response to this qualm the remaining lines of verse are presented:

*60cd. If one gets angry for the purpose of gain
Merits exhaust and doesn't it become
negativity?*

61. The life that I have lived for a purpose

*Should it degenerate,
What use was that life
Where I only created negativity?*

The explanation of the meaning of the lines in the verse is explained in Gyaltsab Je's commentary:

Answer: If one gets angry for the purpose of gain it will exhaust the merits accumulated over a thousand eons. Does one then not achieve negativity? If so, then what purpose did one's life serve, since it only becomes the condition for one's degeneration? The life where one only creates negativity, what shall one do with it as it is useless?

The commentary explains very clearly that, *if one gets angry for the purpose of gain, it will exhaust the merits accumulated over a thousand eons*. This relates to an earlier explanation in the text stating that one moment of anger can destroy the merit accumulated over hundreds of eons. So if the anger that has been generated over many lifetimes is exhausted, there is no question that anger will exhaust the merit accumulated over a thousand eons.

If anger is used as a means to acquire gains, then rather than benefitting from those gains, they will only become a means to harm oneself by exhausting one's merits. So if one were to continuously engage in the means to achieve gains using anger, then *does one not achieve negativity?* This rhetorical question implies that one will be only achieving more negativity and harm. So if that is the case, what purpose does one's life serve, since it only becomes the condition for one's degeneration? If one is engaging mostly in creating negativity then it only contributes to degeneration, rather than achieving one's purpose of happiness. The life that only creates negativity is useless, as it does not serve to achieve one's ultimate purposes.

2.4 It is unsuitable to be angry with others who lack faith in oneself

The teachings presented so far have been meticulous in relation to a doubt that may occur in one's mind: if someone accepts that gains are not conducive to their wellbeing, then they wouldn't get too upset if someone obstructs their gains. However this next heading is in relation to someone thinking that it is suitable to be angry with someone who lacks respect and faith in oneself. This outline explains that it is unsuitable to be angry with others who lack faith in oneself. It is subdivided into two:

2.4.1. If it is suitable to get angry when there is a loss of faith due to unpleasant words to oneself, then it is also suitable to be angry if there is a loss of faith due to unpleasant words to others

2.4.2. If one can be patient with a lack of faith for others then it is also suitable to be patient with a lack of faith in oneself due to the condition of afflictions

2.4.1. If it is suitable to get angry when there is a loss of faith due to unpleasant words to oneself, then it is also suitable to be angry if there is a loss of faith due to unpleasant words to others

What is being presented here is the absurdity of becoming angry with others if their unpleasant words cause others to lose faith in oneself. It would then follow that it would be reasonable to get angry when others use unpleasant words towards others, because it causes others to lose faith in them too.

The first two lines of the verse reads:

*62ab. If: Because it degenerates sentient beings
I shall be angry at the one saying unpleasant words.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary presents the doubt:

Argument: Though it is unsuitable to become angry at the obstacles to gain, I shall be angry at those who speak unpleasantly to me as it degenerates the faith of my faithful.

The next two lines of the verse answer that argument:

*62cd. Why do you not also get angry
When unpleasant words are said to others?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

Answer: If you are angry because of a degeneration of merit, then why do you not get angry when unpleasant words are said to another person? Here also, the virtue of faith for others degenerates.

As the explanations presented in the commentary are quite clear, they don't need to be further explained.

2.4.2 If one can be patient with a lack of faith for others, then it is also suitable to be patient with a lack of faith in oneself due to the condition of afflictions

If one can reason that one can be patient when someone causes a lack of faith for others, because one sees there is a cause for others to do this, then with that reasoning it would also be suitable to be patient if someone causes lack of faith in oneself. That is because it is the afflictions that cause the lack of faith in oneself. It is not of their own doing, but caused by the condition of the afflictions.

The word 'faith' can also be used as a term to denote a lack respect. So when others use critical words and badmouth us, then that can cause others to lose respect, etc. for us. So lack of faith also means lack of respect.

To be clear with the reasoning here: If someone makes critical remarks toward oneself, one could say 'there is cause for me to be angry'. But if one says, 'I can be patient when someone makes critical remarks that cause a loss of faith in someone else, because they deserve to be insulted. They have given cause to be criticised'. If one uses that reasoning, then in the same way, you should be patient with the person who criticises and insults you, because it is the afflictions within them that is causing them to insult you.

The verse relating to this reads:

*63. If you can be patient with non-faith,
Because non-faith depends on others,
Then why are you not patient with unpleasant words
That depend on the generation of afflictions?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary gives a more literal translation:

If you can be patient and without anger with the loss of faith in another due to unpleasant words to them because the object depends on another person, then why mind, are you not patient with the unpleasant words said to me? It follows you should be because they depend on the generation of the other's afflictions.

To use an example to clarify this: let's say that if Wayne criticises me, I have a reason to get angry. But if Wayne criticises Ross, I don't get angry about that, because Ross has caused Wayne to insult him.

Following the same line of reasoning, one could argue: I can be patient when Wayne using insulting words to me because it is not actually Wayne himself, but the afflictions within him, that cause him to insult me.

These are very fine points of reasoning which indicate that there is really no point in becoming angry. In other words, there is no valid reason or excuse to get angry.

2.1.4.1.2. Stopping anger at that which faults relatives

This is subdivided into two

2.1.4.1.2.1. Stopping it with the patience of definitely relying on the Dharma

2.1.4.1.2.2. Stopping it with the patience that does not think anything of harm. (Other translations use: The Patience Of Not Retaliating Against Someone Who Harms You)

2.1.4.1.2.1. Stopping it with the patience of definitely relying on the Dharma

This moves on from the earlier point about finding reason to be angry at others criticising oneself, or preventing gain for oneself. This verse relates to stopping anger that finds fault with one's relatives and close ones.

It is also subdivided into two:

2.1.4.1.2.1.1. The reason why it is unsuitable if the holy bodies and so forth are harmed

2.1.4.1.2.1.2. It is likewise suitable to be patient with harm to friends and so forth

2.1.4.1.2.1.1. The reason why it is unsuitable if the holy bodies and so forth are harmed

The first subdivision is preceded by this hypothetical doubt:

Argument: Though it is unsuitable to be angry when oneself is harmed, it is suitable to be angry when the Triple Gem is harmed.

This is a very significant point because there are many who feel righteous about getting angry at those who harm for religious reasons. They say 'I can get angry with someone who harms my faith or religion.' Here it is clearly explained that even religion cannot be an excuse for anger.

The verse reads:

**64. *Though the bodies, stupas and the holy Dharma
Are derided and destroyed
My hatred is unsuitable,
Because the buddhas and so forth do not have
harm.***

The commentary presents the answer:

Answer: If the bodies of the buddhas and the stupas of great enlightenment and so forth and the holy Dharma are the object of idle talk or criticism, and even if the bodies are destroyed, it is unsuitable to be angry. The buddhas and so forth, the Triple Gem, do not possess harm, and the attacker is the object of compassion, and it is suitable to be affectionate towards them.

The meaning is that the Triple Gem does not generate mental unhappiness due to mental pain.

One of the main points the commentary explains is that when others criticise or even destroy holy bodies, then there is no actual harm to the holy beings. As the buddhas have abandoned the causes to be harmed, they cannot be harmed.

The Triple Gem does not generate mental unhappiness due to mental pain. This is a significant point to understand: the parts of the Triple Gem are beyond experiencing any kind of unhappiness and mental pain because they have abandoned every cause for that kind of suffering to be experienced. They will not reoccur. While some, due to their ignorance, think they are causing harm, they do not understand that they cannot harm holy beings.

Having understood that, one should not find reason to be upset and angry with someone who causes harm to the Triple Gem. Rather, we should consider them as great objects of compassion, because they create so much negativity due to their own ignorance.

Often when His Holiness talks about the perpetrators of harms in Tibet he refers to them as objects of great compassion. He often says 'Oh! Have great pity for those who engage in such negative deeds'. In recent times His Holiness has told Tibetans who are visiting India that when they go back to Tibet (of course he is also sending messages to people who are in Tibet), 'If there is an occasion where you are forced to criticise or ridicule me, don't hesitate to do so. There is no reason for you to be unnecessarily tortured or given a hard time just because you don't want to criticise me. In fact, the whole world knows about me anyway, so there is no harm in you ridiculing or criticising me. It won't harm me in any way'. Nowadays, the world knows what the Dalai Lama stands for, and who he really is. So the more the Chinese continuously criticise him and make ridiculous remarks about him, they more they ridicule themselves. People laugh about it when the Chinese continue to do that.

However, the present Premier of China seems to have more understanding, and has actually stopped a lot of criticism of His Holiness, probably for political reasons. Apparently he is scrutinising the internal affairs of the Communist party for corruption, unjust torture, unjust trials and unjust imprisonment.

What has been presented thus far is something from which to take personal instructions. It relates to practising patience and, rather than finding reasons to justify one's anger, to actually practise patience for personal benefit. In relation to gain, it explains that one finds reason to get angry when others obstruct gains, but one should consider how there is no real benefit in craving gain; it doesn't serve any purpose, as one will have to part from it, and that can cause more suffering for oneself.

It is also unreasonable to be upset with others who criticise oneself. If one gets upset it just causes more hurt for oneself. There is no benefit, so it is far better to practice patience when others insult you or your relatives etc. You have been given the tools that will assist you when you are most in need, when you are impoverished, or in times of strife when others may not be able to help you. These tools will help you at that time.

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

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