

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

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Based on the motivation generated during the prayers, we can now engage in our meditation practice.

[meditation]

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

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

2.1.4.1.2. Stopping anger at wrongdoing which faults relatives

2.1.4.1.3.1. Abandoning intolerance to achieving praise and renown of enemies

2.1.4.1.3.1.1. *Since it is the cause for one's happiness it is suitable to want it (cont.)*

As explained last week when someone else praises an enemy, both the enemy and the person who gives the praise have a happy mind. Likewise, if one praises an enemy one will also experience a joyful mind. Praising an enemy will not only make the enemy happy, but one will also experience happiness. Thus it is appropriate to praise an enemy.

2.1.4.1.3.1.2. *It being the cause for the happiness of others, not wanting it is unsuitable¹*

This heading has two subdivisions:

2.1.4.1.3.1.2.1. If one does not wish others to have happiness, then one's happiness degenerates

2.1.4.1.3.1.2.2. Hence it is appropriate to wish others happiness

2.1.4.1.3.1.2.1. *If one does not wish others to have happiness, then one's happiness degenerates*

From the outline itself we can derive the understanding that not wishing others to have happiness causes one's own happiness to decline. This is explained in the following verse:

78. *Further, it is said: 'like this, happiness arises'.
If you do not wish for this happiness,
Through giving up offering wages,
The observed and unobserved degenerates.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains the meaning thus:

Further, by praising, the object of the praise becomes happy. If you do not wish for this happiness of praising others then, since the wages one pays one's servants makes them happy too, one should stop offering wages and so forth. By stopping this and other things, then in this life the servants will not work, and in a later life one will not have happiness. In such a way one's happiness degenerates in this observed life and in the unobserved future life.

As the commentary explains very clearly, *the object of praise becomes happy* when you praise them. The text then presents an example to illustrate the negative consequences of *not wishing* others to be happy. As presented, if you do not wish for others to be happy, then, since *paying wages to one's servants or workers makes them happy*, you might as well *stop* paying their *wages*. This phrase *if you do not wish for others to be happy* includes any means of making others happy, such as repaying the kindness of others with good deeds and so forth. If you really don't wish for others to be happy, then you will not take the initiative to repay the kindness of others with good deeds and gestures, or benefiting others in any way.

Following that, the commentary explains that *by stopping this*, i.e. not paying wages to workers, returning the kindness of others and so forth, *then in this life your servants and employees will not want to work* for you, or they will be very slack about their work. If they stop working for you altogether, then you will have harmed yourself, as no work at all will be done. Likewise if one does not return the kindness of others, people will start to shy away. Through losing one's workers, colleagues and friends and relatives, one will start to feel very lonely, and thus be deprived of happiness in this very life. Thus the *observed* or obvious *happiness* of this *life* will *degenerate*.

Furthermore, if one has not engaged in generosity in this life then one will not reap the positive benefits of generosity in one's *future life*. So by not engaging in acts of generosity such as paying wages, returning kindness, benefiting others and so forth, one will not reap the positive results of generosity in one's future life. Thus one's happiness in the *unobserved*, or less obvious *future life* will also degenerate.

In summary, if one dislikes others being happy, then the consequence is that one's own happiness in this life will degenerate. Furthermore, if one does not engage in generous acts, or acts that make others happy in this life, then one will experience the consequences in one's future life as well. So not wanting others to be happy is a cause for one's own happiness in both the present and in future lives to decline and degenerate.

Conversely, if one likes making others happy, one will act to benefit them and engage in acts of generosity. Then, as a consequence of making others happy, one will reap positive results in this life and in future lives. We need to take this as a personal instruction, and engage in acts that make others happy. We also need to ensure that we intentionally avoid things that will cause unhappiness. Sometimes it is very easy to make others unhappy with the simplest inappropriate gestures and remarks, so we need to try to avoid those things, no matter how trivial they may seem. We need to incorporate this way of thinking and acting into our daily life.

This dislike of enemies being happy, and wishing them unhappiness, is one of the main causes of mental agony. When we hear our enemies being praised, or see them being helped in some way, we can experience so much pain and agony. But if we actually begin to change that attitude to one of intentionally praising our enemies, speaking well of them and being happy when they experience good things and so forth, then that can really help to avoid that pain and agony. This is important to keep in mind.

We can also relate this to the practice of developing the equanimity that is part of the seven-point cause and effect practice of generating bodhicitta. When we lack that equanimity we will feel pain when our enemies experience

¹Introduced last week as *Since it is the cause for the happiness of others it is unsuitable to not want it*.

benefit, and glad when they are harmed. Conversely, we will feel joy when our friends experience benefit and anger when they are harmed. When we develop our mind so that we experience joy when we see the both our friends and our enemies benefitting, then that will release one from the agony and pain of the earlier state of mind. This is very profound mind-training that changes one's mindset.

As I have explained many times, the equanimity that is to be generated within the seven-point cause and effect sequence relates to one's own equanimity towards friends, enemies and strangers. Whereas when you generate the four immeasurable forms of equanimity, you are generating the mind of wishing others to have that state of equanimity towards friends, strangers and enemies. One generates the mind of, 'How wonderful it would be if others were to be free from being close to some out of attachment, and distant to others due to aversion', because that is the cause for sentient beings to experience the shortcomings of samsara by endlessly circling in samsara. As well as developing the very genuine and strong wish for others to have that equanimity, one can also relate it to oneself.

The conclusion is that if one actually generates the mind of wishing others to be happy, then that will be of great personal benefit, whereas holding onto a mind of disliking others being happy will be a great loss. Therefore it is in one's own best interest if one practises transforming one's habitual biased attitude into a positive one. While these points are quite easy to understand, they are actually very profound. It comes down to the very core of our wrong ways of thinking, and why we need to transform those wrong attitudes and ways of thinking.

2.1.4.1.3.1.2.2. Hence it is appropriate to wish others happiness

We can take note again of how this heading follows on directly from the earlier one, by stating that it is appropriate to wish others happiness. The verse relating to this reads:

79. *When my qualities are expressed
I wish also others to have happiness
When the qualities of others are expressed
I do not wish happiness for myself.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

When someone else expresses my qualities, that person wishes to have happiness, thus to say that when I express the qualities of others, I do not wish to have happiness myself is unsuitable and contradictory. Just as others wish to be happy in praising you, you should also be happy in praising others.

When someone else expresses my qualities then that person wishes to have happiness means that when someone we regard as an enemy expresses our qualities, they generally do so out of a wish to be happy themselves. And of course, it makes oneself happy to hear one's qualities being expressed.

Therefore *to say that when I express the qualities of others I do not wish to have happiness myself is unsuitable and contradictory.* In other words, it is contradictory to say, 'I feel happy when an enemy expresses my qualities', and then say, 'Oh, I'm not happy to express the qualities of my enemies'. If it makes oneself happy to hear nice words about oneself, then it is contradictory to say that one would not feel happy about expressing the qualities of the other. That point is further emphasised with, *just as the others would wish to be happy in praising you, you should also be happy in praising others*, which emphasises that one should take the initiative of praising others, and thus making one's own mind happy.

Here again, we can see the profound logic that is used to show why one should find reason to express the qualities of one's enemies and others in general.

2.1.4.1.3.2. Abandoning intolerance to them achieving their happiness

80. *Since one wishes all sentient beings to have happiness,
Then, having generated the mind of enlightenment,
When sentient beings find their own happiness
Why do you get angry at them?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

One has generated the mind of enlightenment out of the wish to place all sentient beings in the highest happiness of enlightenment, and has accepted subsequently to practice the trainings. Hence, when sentient beings find a little of their own happiness and achieve their wish, then why are you now angry? It is suitable to be happy.

As the commentary clearly explains, someone who has taken the bodhisattva vows and dedicated themselves to the welfare of sentient beings has *generated the mind of enlightenment, out of a wish to place all sentient beings in the highest happiness of enlightenment.* In addition to this pledge, one has further promised *to practise the trainings.* So when sentient beings, from their own side, find happiness without having had to generate the cause for their happiness, *why are you now angry?* One should, in fact, be very pleased and happy that the very being one wishes to benefit is now experiencing some level of happiness. Even if it is a slight degree of happiness, it is still good for their wellbeing. So the reasoning presented in the text is that *it is suitable to be happy* rather than being angry. The actual point is that when sentient beings experience any level of happiness, then rather than becoming upset about that through jealousy and so forth, one should actually train one's mind to feel great joy.

Many of us have already taken these bodhisattva vows and made pledges. Even though we may not have actually generated bodhicitta yet, we have certainly generated a similitude of it, in addition to taking particular vows. So the advice given here applies to us because we have made those promises. It is good to consider these points as part of our personal practice.

2.1.4.1.3.3. Abandoning intolerance to them achieving their gain

This has two sub-divisions

2.1.4.1.3.3.1. Contemplating that it achieves one's wishes

2.1.4.1.3.3.2. Contemplating that there is nothing for one to not wish for

2.1.4.1.3.3.1. *Contemplating that it achieves one's wishes*

Here there are three further sub-divisions:

2.1.4.1.3.3.1.1. It is suitable to be happy if sentient beings achieve their gain

2.1.4.1.3.3.1.2. Example

2.1.4.1.3.3.1.3. If one does not wish for that, the mind of enlightenment degenerates

2.1.4.1.3.3.1.1. It is suitable to be happy if sentient beings achieve gains

This is similar to the previous explanation. The relevant verse is:

81. *One says 'May all sentient beings
Attain enlightenment honoured by the three
worlds'.
Seeing that they receive some minimal gain and
esteem
Why does that make one miserable?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

One has accepted the promise to place all sentient beings in the state of complete enlightenment that is honoured by the three worlds. Since one wishes this, when one sees that sentient beings attain some minimal gain and esteem then why does one's mind become miserable? One's wishes have been attained in part.

As the commentary explains, *one has accepted the promise to place all sentient beings in the state of complete enlightenment that is honoured by the three worlds*. The three worlds are the nether world, the world on our plane, and the world above, which basically encompasses the six realms. *Since one wishes this*, refers to the fact that one has made the promise to place all sentient beings into a state of complete enlightenment. Therefore *when one sees sentient beings attain some minimal benefit, why does one become miserable?* In fact, *one's wishes have been partly attained*.

This is similar to the previous point. One has promised to benefit all sentient beings and fulfil their wishes, so when from their own side sentient beings experience some benefit, then it is as if one's wish for all sentient beings to be happy and to attain all their wishes has been partly fulfilled.

2.1.4.1.3.3.1.2. Example

The previous point is clarified with the following example:

82. *If someone in need of nurturing who is nurtured
by you,
And is solely dependent on your generosity,
When this relative finds the means for their
livelihood,
Are you not happy and instead get angry?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

If a relative who is in need of nurturing and who is nurtured by you, and is solely dependent on your generosity, such as a child and so forth, finds the means for their own livelihood, and it becomes unnecessary for you to give anymore. How is it that one is not happy and instead becomes angry? It is suitable to be happy.

When one has responsibility for *nurturing a relative*, e.g. a child, and that relative takes the initiative to look after their own wellbeing, then why wouldn't one be happy about that? It would be very appropriate to be happy. This is definitely true; in a family situation, for example where the father is responsible for finding the means to provide for his children. When the children grow up and start to take initiative to earn their own living and provide for themselves, that would make the father very happy. Far from being unhappy, the father would be very pleased indeed. There is no reason at all for the father to feel jealous of their children making money and so forth.

One needs to think very carefully in relation to situations where others are caring for one's close ones, otherwise that can be a cause for distress. I have heard of people making

comments such as, 'Why are they interfering and providing for my child, when it is my responsibility! I will take care of them myself!' The same applies to jobs people have, such as here at Tara Institute. There have been cases where someone says, 'Oh, this is my responsibility' and refuses any help from others. Sometimes they are not able to do the job alone, but because they refuse help from others, the job doesn't get done well. When we reflect on that situation we can see that, at times, it can be appropriate to accept help.

2.1.4.1.3.3.1.3. If one does not wish for that, the mind of enlightenment degenerates

The verse relating to this is

83. *If one does not wish this for migrators
How does one wish them to be enlightened?
How can he who is angry at the wealth of
others
Possess the mind of enlightenment?*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

If someone begrudges migrators even small gains of food, clothing and so forth, then how can this person be someone wishing sentient beings to attain enlightenment? Once someone gets angry at the slightest wealth gained by others, then how can that person possess the mind of enlightenment that wishes to place all migrators in the state of enlightenment? Since the mind of enlightenment degenerates, one should strive to abandon jealousy toward the gain of others.

This advice seems to be targeted more for ordinary beings like ourselves, rather than bodhisattvas who have already generated bodhicitta—it seems unlikely that bodhisattvas would have such narrow-minded attitudes. *If someone begrudges migrators even small gains of food, clothing and so forth* refers to the situation of being unhappy with migrators who acquire even small gains or food and so forth. How could anyone who wishes for all beings to attain enlightenment, which is the highest happiness, be unhappy about the small gains and small happiness of others? The commentary makes this quite clear when it states: *Once someone gets angry at the wealth of others then how can that person possess the mind of enlightenment that wishes to place all migrators in the state of enlightenment?* This is quite clear. Then Gyaltsab Je advises: *Since the mind of enlightenment degenerates one should strive to abandon jealousy toward the gain of others*. So the main point is the need to abandon jealousy, which seems to be one of the main culprits for causing unhappiness about the gains of others.

2.1.4.1.3.3.2. Contemplating that there is nothing for one to not wish for

Again, there are three subdivisions.

2.1.4.1.3.3.2.1. It is unsuitable to be jealous of the gain of others

2.1.4.1.3.3.2.2. It is unsuitable to destroy one's qualities

2.1.4.1.3.3.2.3. It is suitable to grieve over one's negativities, but it is unsuitable to be jealous of the virtue of others

2.1.4.1.3.3.2.1. It is unsuitable to be jealous of the gain of others.

84. *Regardless of whether it is received from them
Or whether it remains in the house of the
benefactor,
In any case, you will not have it.
So whether it is given or not, what use is it?*

The commentary reads:

Regardless of whether the enemy receives food, clothing and so forth from the benefactor, or whether it is food, clothing and so forth remaining in the benefactor's home, in either case it is the same that one will not get it. So regardless of whether it is given to the enemy or not, what use is jealousy? It is not suitable.

This example can be related to a monastic context where benefactors make offerings to the monks and so forth. *Regardless of whether the enemy receives food, clothing and so forth from the benefactor, or whether the food, clothing, and so forth remains in the benefactor's home, one will not receive anything.* If one has no direct relationship with a benefactor, it makes no difference whether the benefactor gives away food and clothing and so forth, or whether they keep it.

It is not as if one would receive it if the benefactor didn't give it to one's enemy. If that was the case, then one might find some reason to be upset when it is given to the enemy. But one would not receive it anyway, *so regardless of whether it is given to the enemy or not, what use is jealousy?* This indicates that there is no point in becoming jealous and unhappy when a benefactor gives something to the enemy, because it doesn't affect one either way. Thus, *it is not suitable* to be jealous. So again, the point being emphasised is the need to overcome jealousy.

2.1.4.1.3.3.2.2. It is unsuitable to destroy one's qualities

The root verse reads as follows:

85. *Whether it is merit or faith,
Why destroy one's qualities?
One does not find gain,
Say, 'why do you not get angry?'*

The commentary reads:

If one is angry at the gain of others and wishes gain for oneself, then why destroy with anger the causes for gain such as merits, the behaviour that causes faith in the lay person's mind, one's qualities of morality, listening and so forth. Without holding the causes for gain, which one destroys, 'Why do I not get angry at myself?'

The focus here is on those who are ordained. The verse is emphasising the danger of being *angry at the gain of others*, and *wishing to receive the gain for oneself*. As explained here, *the causes for gain from lay benefactors and so forth*, are one's *merits*, as well as *the behaviour that causes faith in the lay benefactor's mind*, such as *one's qualities of morality, listening and so forth*, i.e. the three higher trainings. Those who receive offerings from lay benefactors and so forth, do so because of the merit that they have accumulated, and their good conduct, which generates faith in the minds of lay people. Benefactors very willingly honour with gifts those who have these natural and genuine qualities. They never have to be asked to do that. This is an indication that the beneficiary has created the causes by previously engaging in virtue.

The point is that if one is lacking these causes for gain, then the fault lies with oneself. So becoming angry with the beneficiary is absurd if one hasn't actually created the causes for gain oneself. Rather than being angry at the other, if it were to be reasonable to get angry at all, then one should be angry with oneself for not creating those causes.

Furthermore, anger towards others actually destroys whatever merit one has accumulated from one's practices of morality, listening and so forth, which is the cause of gains. So if one becomes angry when others receive gain and

esteem, then it would be appropriate to contemplate, *Why am I not angry with myself?*

To re-emphasise the first point, becoming upset and angry when others receive gain and esteem is inappropriate. If there were any good reason for one to get upset and angry, then the anger should be targeted at oneself. If one is not receiving any gain or esteem from others, that is because one has not created the causes such as accumulating merit and engaging in good conduct that earns respect. Furthermore not receiving gain and esteem now is a result of not having engaged in the trainings such as listening, meditating and so forth in the past, and not developing genuine humility with love and compassion. If one has not engaged in acquiring these qualities, which are a cause for beneficence, then the fault lies with oneself. Thus, rather than becoming upset with others, one should be upset with oneself. If one wishes to be respected and honoured, then the causes are clearly to be created by oneself. We need to take this as a personal instruction.

2.1.4.1.3.3.2.3. It is suitable to grieve over one's negativities, but it is unsuitable to be jealous of the virtue of others

It is totally inappropriate if one does not regret one's own past negativities, and becomes jealous of the virtue of others. That is the reason why one does not receive gain and esteem. The verse presented under this heading is:

86. *Not only do you not grieve,
The negativity you created,
You also compete with the merits
Created by others.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je states:

Not only do you not grieve over the causes for not receiving any gain, which are the negativities that you created earlier, you also compete with the merits previously created by others and are jealous because you cannot bear them. Is this not unsuitable?

One does not grieve about the causes for not receiving any gain, which are the negativities, refers to not regretting the negativities one has created in the past, which implies one has not confessed and purified those negativities. Then on top of that one actually *competes with the merits previously created by others*, and *are jealous because you cannot bear them*.

So on the one hand, one is creating the conditions for not receiving any gains by not confessing and purifying with remorse or regret the negativities one has created in the past, while on the other hand one actually *competes with the merits previously created by others*.

It is totally *unsuitable* to be jealous when others are merely reaping the result of their previously created merit. Rather than acknowledging and rejoicing in their good fortune, if we instead become jealous, then that is really inappropriate. In fact by being jealous we are creating further causes to lack gain and esteem for ourselves. Thus, unable to bear the gains of others is totally unsuitable.

At this point in the Tibetan text it states that the second *bumpo*² is completed. The term *bumpo* doesn't refer to chapters, but to a larger section of the text.

² See the teaching of 19 February 2013 for a fuller explanation of the term.

2.1.4.3. STOPPING ANGER AT OBSTRUCTIONS TO ONE'S WISHES³

This is presented in two sub-divisions.

2.1.4.3.1. Impatience with obstacles to the harm of one's enemies is unsuitable

2.1.4.3.2. It is unsuitable to be impatient with obstacles to one's own benefit, and obstacles to the benefit of those belonging to one's side

2.1.4.3.1. *Impatience with obstacles to the harm of one's enemies is unsuitable*

This is subdivided into three:

2.1.4.3.1.1. It does not benefit one if the enemy dislikes it

2.1.4.3.1.2. Generating harmful intent for the enemy does not harm the enemy

2.1.4.3.1.3. It harms oneself

2.1.4.3.1.1. **It does not benefit one if the enemy dislikes it**

The commentary introduces the next two lines of the verse with this argument:

Argument: If you say I am happy when the enemy receives harm and I get angry at what obstructs this harm.

This is further emphasising the earlier presentation about being glad when an enemy is harmed, and unhappy when, as a result of some obstruction, they don't receive the harm one thinks is due to them.

The next two lines of verse serve as an answer to the opening argument:

*87ab. Even though the enemy does not like it
What is there for you to like?*

Gyaltsab Je explains it in this way:

Answer: Even though one's enemy generates dislike and is unhappy, what is there for you to be happy about? It does not benefit you, but harms you.

The lines *Even though one's enemy generates dislike and is unhappy, what is there for you to be happy about*, are asking: What benefit do you receive when the enemy experiences some harm? What happiness can it bring to you? How can it cause you happiness when there is no benefit for you? As the commentary states, *it does not benefit you*. In fact, it actually harms you to be glad about the harm or unhappiness experienced by others.

2.1.4.3.1.2. **Generating harmful intent for the enemy does not harm the enemy**

Again, this heading follows on directly from the previous one. It states that just wishing harm on the enemy will not actually harm them.

The next two lines of verse read:

*87cd. Just your mental wish alone
Does not cause harm to them.*

The commentary explains:

Just your mental wish alone that thinks 'may the enemy receive harm' does not cause harm to the enemy. Therefore, since your purpose is not achieved in the slightest, abandon anger.

As clearly presented here, just having the *mental wish* 'may the enemy receive harm' does not cause harm to the enemy. There are many occasions where people hold a grudge with a mind of hostility, thinking, and sometimes even saying out loud, 'Oh, I hope something terrible happens to them'. Thinking and even saying such things, will not, in themselves, be a cause for the enemy to experience any mishap or harm in any way. In fact, the enemy might very well be enjoying life and having very good time, and sleeping soundly every night! Whereas holding that grudge and thinking about it again and again causes mental distress, and one will actually lose sleep oneself. We can see how, rather than harming the enemy, a hostile mind actually harms oneself, and therefore has no benefit whatsoever.

We can relate this to the categories of anger presented in the mental factors, such as vengeance. First one becomes angry with an enemy, and when that anger escalates, it can turn into a mind of vengeance, where one really wants to harm them oneself, or wishes some mishap to befall them. It is when these thoughts of anger go round and round in our mind that we experience the ill-effects of a disturbed and troubled mind.

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

*Transcribed by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
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³ The way this section relates to the structure of the text is:

1. Meditating on patience earnestly, eliminating obstacles to its establishment and abiding

2. Applying to the mind the methods to establish patience

2.1. Eliminating the cause for anger

2.1.4. Striving in abandoning anger after having analysed the cause for anger in detail

2.1.4.1. Showing the general division of objects for generating anger

2.1.4.2. Stopping anger at undesired actions

2.1.4.1.1. Stopping anger at wrongdoings directed at oneself

2.1.4.1.2. Stopping anger at wrongdoing directed at one's friends

2.1.4.1.3. Stopping anger at those who benefit one's enemies

2.1.4.3. Stopping anger at obstructions to one's wishes