

---

# *Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

༄༅། །བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་རྒྱུད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe

20 October 2015

---

Based on the motivation that we have just generated let us engage in our regular meditation practice.

Now we generate the motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment, so for that purpose I will listen to this Mahayana teaching and put it into practice well.

## 2.1.2.2. THE METHOD FOR GENERATING THE ANTIDOTE

### 2.1.2.2.1. *Abandoning attachment to the inner object of sentient being*

#### 2.1.2.2.1.2. **Abandoning upon having understood the faults**

##### 2.1.2.2.1.2.2. *The way of abandoning (cont.)*

As we learnt last week, there is no benefit whatsoever for oneself or others in associating with the childish.

*14cd. As they have not produced one's purpose  
And one also does not become meaningful for them,*

*15a. One should get far away from the childish.*

It was explained very clearly that one cannot serve the purposes of the childish. As we cannot benefit them and they cannot benefit us, it is best to resort to isolation to engage in our Dharma practice.

This of course has its own significant points. Of course teachers also advise some, who might be inclined to go into isolation, to remain with their students and disciples in order to teach as it would be much more beneficial for them to engage in propagating the Dharma. So for the purpose of the Dharma and benefiting sentient beings they follow their teacher's advice, forsaking their wish to go into isolation and help to propagate the Dharma. These lines from the root text are a general explanation of why one should rely on isolation in order to engage in the practice of Dharma, and they serve to remind and encourage us to engage in the real means of practising the Dharma.

#### 2.1.2.2.2. *Abandoning attachment to outer gain, praise and the like*

Here there are two sub-divisions:

##### 2.1.2.2.2.1. The faults of the object possessor

##### 2.1.2.2.2.2. The faults of the object

#### 2.1.2.2.2.1. **The faults of the object possessor**

This is further sub-divided into two:

##### 2.1.2.2.2.1.1. The faults of pride

##### 2.1.2.2.2.1.2. The faults of attachment

##### 2.1.2.2.2.1.1. *The faults of pride*

We really need to take measures to overcome pride. When one is affected by strong pride, not only does it harm oneself, but it also affects others. No-one

appreciates someone who is full of pride and contempt for others, and we often hear comments like, "Oh, he is just so proud"—such people are scorned. Having seen the faults of pride, it is good to then take measures to overcome one's own pride. It's fair to say that pride in others is never really appreciated. However, not taking any initiative to look into one's own pride and then to claim that others are being very proud, isn't really an honest and sincere approach.

This advice seems to be particularly applicable to those of high status, such as renowned lamas. It is indeed very useful advice for teachers who have a large following.

The verse reads:

*17. By saying "I have a lot of gain and praise,  
I am very popular with others."  
If one holds such arrogance  
One will be frightened after death.*

Then the commentary reads:

If one says, "I have a lot of gain, I am praised and I am very popular with others" and holds such arrogance and conceit, one will go to the lower realms due to the faults of pride and attachment, and thus one will generate fear after death.

As clearly explained, if one is not mindful then gifts, offerings or praise can generate attachment to such things, along with pride. One could begin to think, "Oh I am admired by so many and there are many who praise me", which causes a mind of pride and conceit. In fact one needs to be particularly careful with how one uses the offerings made to one by others. It is explained in the teachings that when offerings are made with sincere faith, one needs to be very mindful to utilise them in a proper manner, and not to misuse those offerings. Personally, I am very careful about such offerings and so forth. They need to be used in an appropriate manner, and put it towards a good purpose as a means to accumulate more virtue or merit. That will then be beneficial for both oneself and the person making the offering. Basically, one needs to be really careful when obtaining and using offerings, ensuring that they are treated appropriately.

You will recall there are also detailed explanations in the lam rim teachings about the danger of making offerings and so forth that have been obtained through wrong livelihood. In addition to these extensive explanations in the lam rim, there are also explanations in the *Vinaya*, the text for monastics; as monastics we need to pay extra care to not misuse offerings.

In my own case, when someone, for example, cooks lunch for me, they might also bring a cake or some biscuits. Occasionally I ask for the cake or the biscuits to be left behind, and that they not be opened. That is because my intention is to offer them later. Some might wonder, "Why is Geshe-la not eating the biscuits or cake? Maybe he is saving it all for later". So not everyone understands my intention. I can't claim to engage in any great practices, but I do try to adopt these simple practices, just as the previous great masters did—they always made offerings of what was offered to them. Also I don't consume the offering of lunch mindlessly. I offer it and pay attention to dedicating the offering by thinking, "By consuming this meal may those who offered it be

endowed with all resources, and be able to practise Dharma".

The main point is that one needs to be very mindful about offerings. When others make offerings of gifts and so forth to oneself, there is a great danger of becoming quite attached to those offerings. Likewise, hearing praise can generate pride. If great teachers have a large following, there is the danger of feeling, "Oh, I've got a great following, and many people like me". Now some of you might feel, "Oh I am not in that situation, I'm in no danger of generating pride with a large following and receiving gifts from others". But the situation can change, and one may achieve that status, if not in this life, then in the future lives to come. Even though overcoming attachment to gifts and so forth is not an easy practice, contemplating the disadvantages of these faults, and training one's mind now, can prepare oneself for the future, so that one will not be affected by these faults then.

As I have mentioned previously, at an ordinary level, one may not yet be free from these faults of attachment and pride and so forth. However recognising and acknowledging that they are faults can become an impetus to engage in purification practices i.e. confessing them and purifying them. So in that way we can minimise any negative effects.

#### 2.1.2.2.1.2. *The faults of attachment*

The lines relating to this heading are:

18. *Thus, deluded mind,  
You become attached to this and that,  
And separated from this and that,  
And suffer a thousand times.*
- 19ab. *Therefore, the skilful should not be attached,  
From attachment fear is generated.*

The commentary explains:

Hence, a mind that is deluded with regards to projecting karma, to however many objects one becomes attached to if they are summed up, it will add up to a thousand-fold. The result surely is for great sufferings to arise. Therefore, by being skilful in what has to be abandoned and adopted, one should not generate attachment to gain and praise. Due to attachment, one will generate the fear of the lower realms.

The Tibetan word *phen-pe-le* translated here as *projecting karma* can also have a more literal meaning of *actions that benefit oneself*. So if we take the literal meaning, then what is being explained is that the mind of attachment is a *mind that is deluded* into thinking that the objects of attachment will benefit oneself. With that deluded mind, one's attachment to the object increases more and more. One is not satisfied with being attached to one object; soon one wants two and then more. Furthermore, attachment towards the objects increases.

*If they are summed up, the attachments will add up to a thousand-fold, and due to that one experiences the result of great sufferings.* Of course, when attachment to an object has increased a thousand fold, then the consequences of the suffering to be experienced in the future will also naturally be great. The thousand-fold increase is not a fixed number, but an indication of the magnitude of the increase. One may think that one is attached to only one

object, but in each moment of attachment to that object one is generating further attachment, thus attachment increases more and more. So what may seem like attachment to just one object becomes a thousand-fold attachment, which then brings about extensive suffering as a result. *Therefore, by being skilful in what has to be abandoned and adopted, one should not generate attachment to gain and praise.* In summary, *due to attachment, one will generate the fear that is the lower realms.*

These explanations of the verses are not all that obscure or difficult to understand. It's a matter of contemplating them and trying to put them into practice as much as we can.

#### 2.1.2.2.2. **The faults of the object**

This is sub-divided into two:

2.1.2.2.2.1. **Desire objects are unreliable**

2.1.2.2.2.2. **Praise and criticism do not harm or benefit**

##### 2.1.2.2.2.2.1. *Desire objects are unreliable*

One needs to understand that the actual fault being presented here is a mind that relies on, and then develops attachment to objects of desire. The means to overcome this mental fault is to understand that the fault of the objects is that they are *unreliable*. Such objects of desire are never reliable, because they can change at any time. We often hear comments like, "That person is so unreliable — you just can't rely on them". Likewise objects of desire are also unreliable.

The lines of verse relating to this heading read:

- 19cd. *Because they have to be given up naturally,  
One should generate firm realisation of this.*
20. *Although one may receive lots of gain  
And also receive fame and pleasantness,  
This accumulation of gain and fame,  
One has to give them up without freedom.*

Then the commentary explains:

Though one may attain these objects of desire, they are unreliable. One needs to generate stable conviction and realisation that they will have to be given up naturally. Although one may receive a lot of gain, as well as fame and pleasantness, this accumulation of gain and fame will have to be given up without freedom at the time of death. The meaning is that at the time of death gain and fame will not follow one.

As explained in the commentary, *though one may attain these objects of desire* such as gain, praise and the like, *they are all unreliable*, regardless of their form. Whatever objects of desire one may obtain, one will not hold onto them; eventually a separation has to take place. Although they are inanimate, it's as if the objects discard you, and you also have to discard objects. The more one contemplates this fact, the easier it becomes to not hold on to objects with strong attachment. Then, when the actual separation takes place, it will not cause mental agony or angst.

Of course, at the end of this life, at the time of death, we will definitely have to leave everything behind. But even before then, there are many times when we are separated from objects of attachment. So the more one contemplates these points now, and thinks about how the very nature of these objects of desire is that they are unreliable, the

easier it will be for the mind to handle the separation that will inevitably occur.

As the commentary further explains, *one needs to generate a stable conviction and realisation that they will have to be given up naturally*. So one has to develop that mind to make it stable and strong. Furthermore, as just mentioned, *although one may receive a lot of gain, as well as fame and pleasantness, this accumulation of gain and fame will have to be given up without freedom at the time of death*.

Understanding that one needs to generate a stable conviction and realisation that objects of desire will have to be given up naturally is neither a subtle, nor an obscure point. We have all seen the agony and suffering that many experience when they are separated from objects of attachment, such as loved and dear ones at the time of death or otherwise because of a break up, or when they experience a great financial loss. Many people are not able to accept that separation, due to the strong grasping of attachment. So when separation occurs, they experience the agony of enormous suffering. Thus the advice being presented here is an instruction on how to prepare our minds, so that when separation does occur, we will not experience great mental distress.

It is, of course obvious that although one may receive a lot of gain and praise and experience pleasant situations and so forth, we will definitely, without any freedom or control from our side, have to give all of that up at the time of death. But if one has created extensive merit, then there is the possibility of obtaining wealth again in future lives. One can definitely create the causes to obtain such good conditions in the next life.

As explained in the teachings in great detail, by practising morality, one will create the causes to secure a body with all of the senses intact in a future life. By engaging in the practice of generosity, one will obtain good resources and wealth in future lives, and by practising patience one will create the cause to obtain a good retinue, or companions in future lives. So rather than being attached to objects, and engaging in immoral deeds to accumulate more wealth and so forth, one should practice the opposite of these deeds: the opposite to engaging in corrupt morality is to practise morality, and the opposite of miserliness is to practise generosity, and the opposite of anger is patience. So while we might not be able to prevent separation from the good conditions that we have now, such as our body and resources, we can at least engage in practices to secure such good conditions again in the future.

Contemplating the cause and effect sequence of how to obtain good conditions in the future encourages one to abide by the law of karma and engage in virtue. This is how we need to apply our understanding of the faults and disadvantages of attachment, and the importance of practising its opposite. There are stories of people who are so overly attached to their objects and possessions that they keep them hidden in their pillows and so forth. If one's mind is a bit more prepared by thinking about the faults and disadvantages of attachment, it will help to reduce a lot of the agony when separation takes place.

When I was in India, an Indian once asked me "Why do you always seem to be so joyful and happy?" My

immediate response was "Because I lost everything, my country, my home, my family. I had to leave everything behind to escape to India". When I said that he was first taken aback and wondered how that was relevant. Soon enough, he seemed to get the point. He said, "Oh, what you mean is that you have given up attachment to all of these things, and that is what is making you happy now". It seems that he had derived a significant point from what I was saying. Even though I had to leave everything behind, I don't recall it causing great agony or mental distress. That is just a small account from my own experience of how we could have to discard everything at any time.

The main point of the practices that are being explained here is the need to reduce strong attachment and grasping at our own body, resources, wealth, fame and so forth. If one contemplates these points now, to that extent it can definitely help at the time of death, for example. When separation is imminent, it will help to relieve mental agony and distress, and while physically we might experience some discomfort of pain and so forth, mentally we can remain calm with a sense of joy.

2.1.2.2.2.2. *Praise and criticism do not harm or benefit*

21. *If there are others who criticise one  
Then why be happy when one is praised?  
If there are others who praise one  
Then why be unhappy if one is criticised?*

The commentary explains the meaning as follows:

It is unsuitable to have attachment and anger for praise and criticism. What does one have to be happy about when one is praised directly, if one is secretly criticised by someone else, as there is interference to that happiness? What does one have to be unhappy about if one is criticised, when there is someone by whom one is praised?

As one does not become high or low through praise or criticism, one should abandon attachment and hate towards them.

These are very significant points for our practice as a means to overcome the eight worldly concerns.<sup>1</sup> If one is obsessed with the eight worldly concerns, one will be happy when praised, and unhappy when criticised. If one has worldly concerns of feeling glad when one is praised, and feeling unhappy at the slightest criticism, then that will cause much mental distress and angst. Therefore, as explained here, *it is unsuitable to have attachment and anger for praise and criticism*.

*What does one have to be happy about when one is praised directly, if one is secretly criticised by someone else, is a really significant point to consider. Even though one may be praised directly by some, there are others who may secretly or indirectly criticise oneself. Thus, as a way to not become too attached to any praise one hears, it is good to remind oneself, "Oh, I might be offered praise now, but there are, of course, others who will be criticising me. So I shouldn't let that praise affect me too much". Likewise when one is criticised one can think, "Oh well, there are others who also indirectly praise me!"*

<sup>1</sup> Ed: Gain and loss; praise and criticism; fame and notoriety; happiness and suffering.

---

This kind of thinking prevents criticism from weighing too heavily on one's mind, and having a negative impact.

As also mentioned many times in the past, when one is inclined to practise the mind training teachings to reverse the eight worldly concerns, one needs to practise an attitude of not being happy when praised, and happy when one is criticised. When one is able to transform our immediate responses to these kinds of attitudes, one will have a more stable mind, which will not be easily influenced by the slightest praise or criticism.

This is very practical advice. If someone criticises us we think, "OK, they might criticise me, but that's fine as there are others who praise me. So I shouldn't be too worried about the criticism, and not take it too personally". And if one is praised too much then one should also remember that criticism and the faults that one might engage in if one develops pride. More specifically, when one is praised then that can cause elation and happiness and then one develops strong attachment to that feeling, which is how praise can induce attachment. Whereas when one hears criticism, that can cause the mind to feel unhappy, and due to that unhappy state of mind, anger can arise.

Of course I have discussed these points many times in previous teachings, however I really want you to reflect on them. If one is inclined to put the Dharma into practice, then when one previously liked praise and disliked criticism, one needs to change that. The mind training teachings explain how to equalise these worldly concerns, and then change one's attitude to disliking praise and liking criticism. If one can reach that level of liking criticism and disliking praise, then one has entered the ranks of real Dharma practitioners.

As the lam rim teachings mention, a good Dharma practitioner is someone who has no concern for the worldly dharmas. Through training the mind, one can slowly transform one's attitude towards praise and criticism. From having once sought praise and so forth, and been overly attached to that, one reaches a point where, rather than disliking criticism, one will like it, and then use that for further development and so forth. When one trains one's mind, it is possible to achieve that transformation. So we need to incorporate these practices in our daily life.

Of course, as I have mentioned previously, these are not very profound or subtle points, and they can be easily understood just by reading the text. However, the reason why I take time to emphasise these points, and explain them a little bit further, is to encourage you to put them into practice. That's my intention.

### **2.1.2.3. THE FAULTS OF DISTRACTIONS**

This is sub-divided into two:

2.1.2.3.1. Since it is difficult to be associated with the childish, one should not be attached to their distractions

2.1.2.3.2. Stating supporting quotes

you know, is a good and sincere person, and very hard working. What we can do at this critical time is to generate a mind of love and compassion for him, rely on a powerful practice and dedicate it to the success of his surgery, so that he becomes well and strong again both physically and mentally, and that he continuously has the opportunity to engage in Dharma practice. This is how we can dedicate our prayers for him.

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

*Transcript prepared by Bernii Wright  
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett  
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe  
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

We'll conclude the teaching session here and dedicate our Tara Praises to John Frigo who is now undergoing, or has just undergone, major surgery. John Frigo, as many of