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## Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

། འབྲུག་ལྷོ་མེམ་མ་དཔའི་རྒྱུད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་མོ།

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While maintaining the motivation we generated during the prayers, we can engage in our regular 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, and for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well.

When one generates such a motivation, whatever positive action one engages in will indeed become a cause to benefit other sentient beings.

Having covered the subdivisions of the next outline last week, we come to the first of these categories which is:

### 2.2.1.2. CONTEMPLATING THE IMPURE NATURE OF THE BODY AND SO FORTH

2.2.1.2.2. *Contemplating the situation in relation to animate phenomena (cont.)*

#### 2.2.1.2.2.3. Hence, stop grasping at the pure

2.2.1.2.2.3.1. *The body cannot be cleansed by effortful means*

2.2.1.2.2.3.1.1. *The impure body cannot be made pure by scents such as sandal*

The verse is presented with the hypothetical argument or query: "Although the body is impure it is suitable to be attached to it when scents such as sandal are applied to it."

This hypothetical query or question arises in conjunction with the notion the mind of attachment has, which is that, while one may agree that the body is impure by nature, it is still a suitable object to be attached to when beautiful scents like sandal and so forth are applied to it. This is how the mind of attachment works.

The verse and a half relating to this outline are:

65. *The scents applied to the body  
Are among others, sandal, and nothing more.  
Why be attached to another  
Due to a scent separate from it?*

66ab. *If it naturally has a bad smell,  
Is it not befitting not to be attached to it?*

The commentary explains:

The scent applied to the body can be, among others, camphor or sandal, and does not belong to the body. For what reason are you attached to the body of others due to a smell separate from that body?

The meaning of the next two lines are presented as a rhetorical question:

"If the body naturally has a bad smell, then is it not befitting not to be attached to it?"

The answer to this is:

"Indeed if one is attached to the body, it causes many sufferings."

As presented here, the faulty mind of attachment may present faulty reasons for being attached to a body. While acknowledging that a body may be impure in nature, the mind may trick one into believing that if that body were beautified with various scents — sandal, camphor, musk and so forth — it would become a suitable object of attachment.

However, as presented here, that reasoning is absurd. Since the body by its very nature is impure and has foul smells, why see it as a suitable object of attachment when scents that do not naturally occur in the body have to be applied to it? The fact that scents need to be applied to a body shows it doesn't have a naturally good smell; one has to apply these external scents to make it smell good.

As the commentary explains, *the scent applied to the body can be, among others, camphor or sandal, and does not belong to the body*, so when one smells the scent it is not coming from the body itself. Therefore, *for what reason are you attached to the body of others due to a smell separate from that body?* The commentary is basically showing the absurdity of being attached to an object due to an external factor making it smell nice.

The meaning of the next two lines is that due to the natural bad smells of the body, it is proper not to be attached to it. As the commentary explains, it is indeed proper not to be attached to the naturally foul smelling body because being attached to it causes many sufferings.

2.2.1.2.2.3.1.2. *There is no reason to be attached to an unrelated smell*

The next verse and a half relates to this heading.

66cd. *Why do those who crave the meaningless  
Transitory world, apply nice scents?*

67. *As the scent belongs to sandal  
How can it become that of the body?  
Why be attached to something  
Due to a scent that does not belong to it?*

The commentary that explains the meaning of this verse reads:

Those who crave for the meaninglessly transitory world apply scents such as sandal to their body in order to generate attachment for it. However, if the pleasant scent is a quality of the sandal, then how can it become a quality of the body? As it is not in any way a quality of the body, why be attached to something due to a scent that does not belong to it? It is unsuitable.

The presentation here is quite clear. The main point is to really reflect on and contemplate this meaning. The text is presenting the objects of meditation – the imperfections of the body — as a means to overcome attachment to the body. The explanation asks us to reflect on the act of applying scents to body out of attachment — out of pure vanity, wanting to beautify the body, just to become an object of attachment for others.

When we take the eight Mahayana precepts during the *nyung-nye* practice, for example, one of the precepts entails avoiding applying scents and perfumes. This specifically requires one to refrain, for the specified time, from applying scents and perfumes out of attachment to beautifying the body. This also implies that to apply scents and perfume without strong attachment is fine —

for example, as part of one's daily personal hygiene routine. However, one must avoid doing this out of attachment when one takes precepts.

As stated here, *those who crave for the meaninglessly transitory world apply scents such as sandal to their body in order to generate attachment for it* — thus this implies that when one takes precepts, one must avoid this attitude.

*However as explained further, if the pleasant scent is a quality of the sandal, then how can it become a quality of the body? So, if the nice smell coming from the body is, in fact, due to the sandal that was applied on the body, how can it be a quality of the body itself? That is a rhetorical question implying that it is not a quality of the body.*

*As it is not in any way a quality of the body, why be attached to something due to a scent that does not belong to it? It is unreasonable and thus unsuitable.*

2.2.1.2.2.3.2. *The body is not beyond the nature of being frightening*

When the body is left in its natural state, it can indeed appear frightening. So it has to be beautified in order not to appear frightening.

The hypothetical query or argument presented to explain the meaning of the verse is that *the body is an object of desire once hair, nails and so forth are cleaned up and made nice.*

The body is not naturally beautiful — that's why we have to spend so much money on beautifying it. How much money do we spend just on beautifying the hair? Apparently a lot of money also goes into polishing fingernails to make them look nice! Then there are our teeth.

What is being pointed out here is the fact that one has to go to great lengths to beautify the body. If it was left in its natural state it wouldn't appear beautiful, but rather quite frightening.

The verse and a half which relates to this reads:

68. *If the nature of the naked body  
With long hair and nails, yellow teeth  
And anointed with the scent of foul  
smelling mud  
Is only frightening,*
- 69ab. *And if it is like a weapon that harms me,  
Why do I clean it with effort?*

The commentary explains:

If the hair and nails are long, the teeth are yellow and body has the smell of unpleasant smelling mud, then the naked body is frightening. If it harms me like a weapon that is killing me, then why do I clean it with effort? It is unsuitable.

If the body is left ungroomed, in its natural state — for example, if we were to let our hair grow extremely long and it became matted so that our body was covered just with our matted hair — it wouldn't be a pleasant sight. Furthermore, if our nails were not trimmed, they would grow really long and look frightening. If one didn't clean one's teeth, one's mouth would have a foul smell. It is quite frightening to picture a body with long matted hair, long nails and yellowish teeth. Then there are the unpleasant foul smells that ooze from the body if it's not cleaned. So the unkempt naked body can definitely look

frightening — some might even run away thinking it was a ghost!

What we need to understand is that while we should not beautify the body out of attachment, we must of course clean the body and take care of it, for the sake of hygiene and of our health. Otherwise, the reality is that if the body is left in its natural state, it can be a frightening object.

The presentation here clearly shows that to make the body presentable and to further beautify it, one has to rely on external sources (to clean it, apply scents, and so forth). When one doesn't apply these external measures to beautify the body and it is left in its natural state, it emits natural foul smells and appears frightening. These are referred to as the body's natural imperfections.

When we cover up these natural imperfections, they are not apparent, we don't see them. But here the text presents logical reasons, based on the reality of the body, for the existence of its natural imperfections.

The text goes on to say that, *if it harms me like a weapon that is killing me, then why do I clean it with effort?* The analogy used here is that of polishing and cleaning a weapon that will be used to kill us; it would be absurd to take care of such a weapon. Similarly, if one beautifies the very object that causes one attachment, it is as if one is taking care of something that is destroying oneself. Thus *it is unsuitable.*

The reality is that we need to care for our body for hygiene and health reasons. For example, we need to bathe regularly, and of course nourish our body with food. So for our survival we need to engage in these deeds.

So, if we generate the proper motivation while engaging in actions involved with caring for our body, then those actions become meaningful — they can even become a practice. For example, when bathing and cleaning the body, one can think: "I'm cleaning away the stains and dirt to keep my body healthy so as to benefit other sentient beings". Further, when nourishing one's body with food and drink, as mentioned many times previously, it can become a means to create a great amount of merit by offering the food and drinks first. Then when one consumes it, one can be mindful one is consuming it to nourish one's body so that one can be of service to other sentient beings, that one is using one's body to achieve one's ultimate goals of liberation and enlightenment. So then that becomes a highly purposeful and meaningful practice.

As I have mentioned previously many times, we need to ensure that our everyday activities — such as eating, drinking, sleeping and walking — become a means to engage in virtue and accumulate merit. If we engage in these daily activities with mindfulness and a positive motivation, even seemingly normal activities become a means for one to accumulate virtue.

I personally see this as being much more practical than sitting down rigidly with closed eyes for a set time, and assuming that one is engaging in meditation. It is good to know that sitting down with closed eyes is not the only way to practise; with the proper motivation, one can transform normal activities into a means of accumulating virtue and collecting merit.

In fact, for an ordinary person practising at an ordinary level, I doubt whether sitting down with closed eyes and sitting rigidly would be a means to accumulate much virtue if the mind is distracted. I can say from my own experience that at a beginner's level it is extremely hard to have a concentrated and focused mind. Even if our body is sitting rigidly and our eyes are closed in a seemingly meditative posture, at best the mind may remain focused for a few moments, but then it can become completely distracted with thoughts of worldly concerns. So one is not engaging in the practice of accumulating virtue at that time. I'm not referring here to the great, advanced meditators who have reached a level where their concentration is sound and firm. They can actually keep their mind single-pointedly on a virtuous object for a prolonged period. Rather, at a beginners' level, I know from experience it is extremely difficult to have a really focused mind.

Therefore, a more practical approach would be engaging in practices such as prostrations, making offerings, and other practices involving more physical activity. When one does prostrations to purify one's negativities it becomes a highly meaningful and purposeful practice. With the proper motivation, the very physical activity of prostration in fact purifies a lot of negativity. This will then help the mind to become clearer and sharper. Such activities are a more practical means of engaging in practice, as I've shared in the past.

Also, out of worldly concern, one might sit rigidly in a meditative posture for an hour or two in the presence of others. That is possible. However, one needs to be careful that if one resorts to this as a way to impress others, in fact it only becomes a worldly dharma, not a real Dharma practice. One needs to be mindful of this.

#### 2.2.1.2.2.3.3. *Contemplating it as an object of disillusionment*

The next two lines and the verse relate to this:

69cd. *Through efforts deluded with regard to self,  
The crazed completely disrupt this place.*

70. *If one becomes disgusted with the cemetery  
Because of seeing only skeletons,  
Can one delight in the cemetery of the city  
Filled with moving skeletons?*

The commentary explains:

In this way, through efforts deluded with regards to the self, people are crazed because they are mistaken with regards to the continuum due to afflictions. They completely disrupt this place and are everywhere.

If one becomes disgusted with the body in the cemetery due to seeing only skeletons, then how can one be delighted in the town that is a cemetery filled with skeletons moving around through motivational impulses? It is unsuitable to be delighted.

In other words, when people are deluded by ignorance, they perceive an inherently existent self when in fact there is no such self. Likewise, due to the deluded mind, even if an object doesn't have any attributes to make it appealing, people will see it as appealing and thus develop attachment to it. This is all the consequence of having a deluded mind.

Thus, as mentioned here, people are indeed 'crazed' with the delusions, particularly attachment. We can clearly see in the world that it's as if people are crazed with attachment, doing unthinkable things and going to great lengths to pursue their attachments.

They are *crazed because they are mistaken with regards to the continuum due to afflictions*. So, *they completely disrupt this place and are everywhere*. With a crazed mind — that is, one affected by the delusions — it is as if everything around it is polluted by that deluded mind.

Next the text says: *if one becomes disgusted with the body in the cemetery due to seeing only skeletons, then how can one be delighted in the town that is a cemetery filled with skeletons moving around through motivational impulses?* As explained here, if we saw a skeleton in a cemetery, it would be an object of fright and we would be repulsed by it, especially if some bits of flesh were still stuck to it.

Yet other human beings and the beings we are attached to are like live skeletons moving about due to some motivational impulse. Sometimes on TV we see shows with skeletons moving around, just like this. When we think about the structure of our body, it really is as if we are skeletons moving about. The only difference is that we are moved about by some motivational impulse from within the mind, whereas a dead body cannot move because it does not have these motivational impulses.

By using the analogy presented here — of not taking delight in seeing skeletons in a cemetery — one needs to reflect upon the unsuitability of having strong attachment to other living human beings. That is the main point being presented.

#### 2.2.1.2.3. *Contemplating that it will give rise to much that is unwished for*

That is subdivided into two:

- 2.2.1.2.3.1. Showing
- 2.2.1.2.3.2. Explanation

##### 2.2.1.2.3.1. **Showing**

The next verse relates to the *showing* or presenting, which is:

71. *Thus, this impure object  
Is not obtained without a price,  
As one works for it one is exhausted  
And receives the harms of the hells, among  
others.*

The commentary which explains the meaning of this verse reads:

Thus, the impure body of a woman is not obtained without paying a price of wealth and so forth. As one builds up one's wealth for one's own body, among other things, in this life one will be exhausted due to hardship, and in the next life, one will receive the harms of the hells, among others.

As explained here explicitly with the example from a male's perspective, the *impure body of a woman is not obtained without paying a price*. If you're a male that is the reality — a woman's body is not something you get freely, it is something that you have to pay a price for. At the very minimum, you can't take a bride without presenting a ring!

Whether it may be from the man's or woman's perspective, the object of attachment does not come without a price. The commentary implies that there are many other prices one has to pay, apart from wealth, to obtain the object of one's attachment. In relation to the accumulation of wealth, *as one builds up one's wealth for one's own body, among other things, in this life one will be exhausted due to hardship* — this is where many seem to succumb to the strong pull of attachment to wealth.

Many people have the grand idea that if they were to acquire wealth, they would use it for a good purpose. While they may initially have such good intentions, as ordinary beings, these intentions soon get forgotten. In fact, when one actually does acquire some wealth, one may blindly pursue even more wealth. Far from using that accumulated wealth in a meaningful way for the purpose of others, one may not even use it for one's own kin, such as one's own children or relatives. Instead such a person may only use that wealth as a way to accumulate more, or to gain a more beautiful partner and so forth. We can see many examples of this — people using their wealth only to fulfil their desires, rather than using it in a meaningful way.

For those with a real, sustained Dharma motivation, when wealth is acquired it can be definitely used for a good purpose, to help and benefit others beginning with close relatives and so forth. But often it is hard for ordinary beings to maintain their initial good intentions and act upon them. The main point here is that if wealth is not utilised properly, it can be a source of one's downfall. While the text clearly explains this, it's good to also reflect on these points.

As explained here, when one exerts one's energy for the mere sake of gaining more wealth to satiate one's desires, one becomes *exhausted due to the hardship*. Apart from the loss of experiencing great hardship in this life, this exertion will not benefit, but will in fact harm one's next life.

#### 2.2.1.2.3.2. Explanation

The explanation is subdivided into two subdivisions:

2.2.1.2.3.2.1. One does not attain one's wishes

2.2.1.2.3.2.2. One will be inseparable from many things one does not desire

*2.2.1.2.3.2.1. One does not attain one's wishes*

This is subdivided into four:

2.2.1.2.3.2.1.1. There is no time to rely on desire objects

2.2.1.2.3.2.1.2. One cannot rely on desire objects due to exhaustion

2.2.1.2.3.2.1.3. Difficulty meeting the desired object as it is far

2.2.1.2.3.2.1.4. One receives many undesired hardships as one will be under the control of others

*2.2.1.2.3.2.1.1. There is no time to rely on desire objects*

The verse relating to this is:

**72. A child cannot increase wealth**

*And what happiness will it give in the prime of life?*

*After having spent one's life accumulating wealth,*

*What is one to do with desire in old age?*

The commentary explains:

When one is a young child one cannot achieve wealth for the purpose of finding a woman and when one is in the prime of life one does not find a woman, so what happiness will wealth give then? Once in the prime of life, if one passes one's life with accumulating wealth, what is one then to do with one's desire in the end of one's life, when one is old, as one is not able to rely on desire objects then?

The first part of the explanation is obvious. *When one is a young child one cannot achieve wealth for the purpose of finding a woman*. That is true because a child may be hardly capable of accumulating wealth for their own purpose, such as to feed themselves.

Then *in the prime of life*, such as when one is in one's youth, *one does not find a woman, easily*. Having reached the prime of life in one's youth and middle age, one may exert oneself in accumulating expansive wealth. But then *if one passes one's life with accumulating wealth, what is one then to do with one's desire in the end of one's life* — at the end of one's life, even if one has desirable objects, due to old age *one is not able to rely on or utilise those dire objects*. So, at the end of one's life, again wealth does not serve its purpose of bringing one real happiness.

As mentioned earlier, the presentation and the meaning of the verses are not that obscure or difficult to understand. The main thing is to try and derive real meaning from it, then apply that understanding in one's practice.

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This year I intend to go back to the normal schedule we've had in the past of doing exams and discussions in six-week blocks (of four-week teaching periods.) This is because when we reach the ninth chapter, in particular, it will be good to leave time for discussion to help students gain a better understanding of the chapter's material.

With this chapter that we are studying now, the eighth chapter, we can have the discussion after six teaching sessions, excluding the first one, because we didn't really have a teaching on the first session. So today would be the second teaching session in this block. Then after six teachings on the text, we'll have a discussion and exam. Then there might be two more sessions where we can complete the eighth chapter.

These verses and explanations, as I mentioned, are quite clear and don't rely too much on further discussion. However, while I might be going through these verses quite quickly, when we reach the point of discussing the exchanging-self-with-other technique of generating bodhicitta, then I will make a point to emphasise and explain that in further detail.

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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23 February 2016 week 2