

As usual, let us spend some time in our regular meditation practice. [*Tong-len meditation*]

As I mentioned before, if time permits, it will be good for us to recite the dedication chapter together over the following teaching sessions on this chapter. This evening, we can specifically dedicate our recitation to the late John Frigo, who passed away few days ago, and also for Elvira's dad, who is has not been feeling well. With the bodhicitta motivation, let us recite these verses of incredibly powerful aspirational prayers and dedicate the merits accordingly.

If one has actually generated bodhicitta, then this chapter shows how the merits of bodhisattvas are dedicated. The rest of us who are inspired to generate bodhicitta, can at the very least generate the altruistic state of mind thinking, 'May I only benefit sentient beings, not causing the slightest harm to any living being'. Think, 'May all my virtuous deeds become a means for sentient beings to experience only happiness; it is for that purpose that I dedicate all my merits'. The way to dedicate every virtue we have created is explained in this text, which gives us the perfect means to dedicate our virtues.

As we go through explanations of the verses, you'll see how incredibly meticulous and extensive the dedications are. [*Recitation of chapter 10*]

[To explain the context of the next chapter we need to return to the subdivisions introduced in chapter 1.¹]

2. The actual explanation of the stages of the path

2.2. The method for taking the essence

2.2.2. Explaining the individual meanings²

2.2.2.2. The way of training in the practices of generating the two minds

2.2.2.2.2. The way of training in the actions, the perfections

2.2.2.2.2.1. The way of meditating on conscientiousness, the limb preventing the degeneration of the training in the mind of enlightenment³

2.2.2.2.2.2. Explaining the way of training in morality, by relating it to introspection and mindfulness, the methods for keeping virtuous dharmas pure⁴

2.2.2.2.2.3. Explaining the way of training in the remaining four perfections⁵

2.2.2.2.2.4. Explaining with the limb of dedication the training in the generosity of giving away body possessions and roots of virtue for others

CHAPTER 10: EXPLAINING WITH THE LIMB OF DEDICATION THE TRAINING IN THE GENEROSITY OF GIVING AWAY BODY POSSESSIONS AND ROOTS OF VIRTUE FOR OTHERS

The chapter is subdivided into two:

- I. Explaining the words of the chapter
- II. Explaining the name of the chapter

The commentary clarifies the difference between an aspirational prayer and a dedication, and this is often quoted in other texts.

Whilst the first chapter also presented the practice of generosity, the tenth chapter, as its title indicates, specifically presents the practice of generosity in the form of dedication. Within the six perfections, the perfection of generosity is presented here with the limb of dedication, which is done by dedicating one's body, possessions and root of virtue for the sake of all other mother sentient beings.

I. EXPLAINING THE WORDS OF THE CHAPTER

This first heading is subdivided into:

1. In brief: dedicating that all sentient beings may enter the bodhisattva trainings
2. Elaborate dedication
3. Prostrating by remembering kindness

1. IN BRIEF: DEDICATING THAT ALL SENTIENT BEINGS MAY ENTER THE BODHISATTVA TRAININGS

The brief dedication for all sentient beings to enter the bodhisattva trainings is presented with the first verse.

The verse reads:

1. *By any virtues of my writing the
Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Actions
May all migrators
Enter the bodhisattva's actions.*

Gyaltsab's commentary explains:

The author of the treatise is saying: By any virtue derived from composing this detailed exposition on how to enter the action of bodhisattvas by completely practising the paths of the three beings, the path for one person to attain enlightenment, which is the purpose of all the teachings, and by the virtue derived from explaining, listening to and contemplating the meaning, may all migratory beings practice the bodhisattva trainings accordingly.

Here the commentary highlights that the purpose or essence of all the Buddha's teachings is presented as an entire path for an individual to attain enlightenment through practising the paths of the three scopes. Furthermore, it explains how to dedicate the virtue one derives from explaining, listening and contemplating the meaning of what is presented with the aspiration, *may all the migratory beings practice the bodhisattva trainings accordingly*. This is quite clearly explained as the essential purpose of engaging in virtuous deeds.

As you can see from the dedication, dedicating for the benefit of all other sentient beings is not sullied with even an atom of self-cherishing mind. This is the extent of the altruistic mind that one should develop for an ultimate dedication.

The commentary then quotes from the *Sutra Requested by the Ocean of Wisdom*.

¹ See the teaching of 26 March 2013

² Introduced in the teaching of 2 July 2013

³ Covered in chapter 4, introduced on 25 February 2014

⁴ Covered in chapter 4, introduced on 20 May 2014

⁵ Covered in chapters 6 to 9, introduced on 23 September 2014

From the *Sutra Requested by the Ocean of Wisdom*,

Just like a drop of water fallen into the great ocean
Does not exhaust for as long as the ocean does not
dry up,
The virtue that is thoroughly dedicated towards
enlightenment
Does not exhaust until enlightenment is attained.

The quote from this sutra is presented in many other teachings as it clearly states that even the smallest virtue you accumulate can be dedicated towards enlightenment. The benefits of dedication are presented in the verse with the analogy of *a drop of water fallen into the great ocean. It does not exhaust for as long as the ocean does not dry up.* This illustration highlights that even when just one small drop of water merges into the ocean, we cannot possibly say that this particular drop is exhausted until the whole ocean has dried up. Similarly, even the smallest virtuous deed that you accumulate, when dedicated towards the ultimate state of enlightenment, will never be exhausted or wasted.

The commentary further explains:

Upon contemplating the benefits mentioned above, such as that virtue that would otherwise be exhausted in the interim if undedicated, does not become completely exhausted and rather is increased, and that even small virtue brings forth a great result.

This passage shows the importance of dedicating even the smallest virtue that you may have accumulated towards the end of achieving enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. If you were to dedicate your merits only for a certain length of time e.g. 100 years, then when that period is up the accumulated merit would be exhausted. But by dedicating the merit to the highest enlightenment it will never be exhausted. By contemplating its incredible benefits, you'll be motivated to engage in the practice of dedication.

The commentary then quotes from another sutra:

From the *Sutra of the Wisdom Gone Beyond*,
Dedicate all roots of virtue only for omniscient
transcendental wisdom,
And not for the Hearer and Self-Liberator grounds.

This clearly states that whatever virtues you accumulate need to be dedicated only towards the ultimate goal of omniscient transcendental wisdom. While it is a great achievement on a personal level to attain the hearers' or self-liberators' ground (i.e. liberation from cyclic existence just for oneself), dedicating your merits to this end will only assist you achieve that goal; it will not become a source of merit that causes you to achieve omniscience and the highest state of enlightenment. Hence dedication to a lesser goal actually obstructs the virtues from becoming merits that serve as a cause to achieve the ultimate goal of enlightenment. That is why not dedicating to a lesser goal is mentioned here.

To take this instruction on a personal level, whenever we accumulate virtues, we must be mindful not to dedicate them towards our own personal goal of liberation, but rather dedicate all merits towards achieving the ultimate state of enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. These are profound instructions to keep in mind.

The commentary then states:

These virtues need to be dedicated by being held by the wisdom realising the lack of true existence of the three circles.

This explains the need to ensure that the dedication you make is also held by the wisdom realising emptiness. Whatever merits you accumulate need to be complemented with both accumulations i.e. method, which is the bodhicitta motivation, and wisdom, which is the correct understanding of emptiness.

The commentary then presents the distinction between aspirational prayer and dedication:

Although there is no big difference between dedication and aspirational prayers, a prayer is characterised by an aspiration to obtain a result for that which is aspired for.

While:

A dedication is characterised by an aspiration that transforms a causal virtue into a cause for the desired result.

Apparently this clarification is not presented in many other texts, which is why this passage is often quoted when explaining the difference between dedication and an aspirational prayer. The main point is that aspirational prayers do not necessarily need to be accompanied by actual deeds, i.e. actual virtues one has created. Whereas for a dedication, one needs to have actually engaged in virtue and accumulated merit for it become a cause to obtain a particular goal. Another way to understand the distinction is that whilst all aspirational prayers are not necessarily a dedication, all dedications are by nature aspirational prayers as well.

2. ELABORATE DEDICATION

This is subdivided into three:

- 2.1. Dedication for the purpose of others
- 2.2. Dedication for the purpose of self
- 2.3. Dedication for the increase of the Dharma, the source of happiness

We can feel moved by the very presentation of this outline, as it presents dedication for the purpose of others, dedication for the purpose of oneself and dedication for the increase of the Dharma, which is the source of all happiness. When presented in this way we can see that the outline of the material itself is very inspirational and we can derive a lot of meaning just from going over the outline itself. Indeed Gyaltshab Je, the author of the commentary, was a great master in his own right and we can see his eloquence in his presentation.

2.1 Dedication for the purpose of others

This is subdivided into two parts:

- 2.1.1 Dedicating of the purposes of the world
- 2.1.2 Dedicating for purposes having gone beyond the world

2.1.1 Dedicating of the purposes of the world

This section is further subdivided into four parts:

- 2.1.1.1 Pacification of sufferings such as sickness
- 2.1.1.1 Pacification of sufferings such as sickness
- 2.1.1.3 Dedicating for happy migrations
- 2.1.1.4 Dedicating in a summarised way for the purpose of all sentient beings

2.1.1.1 PACIFICATION OF SUFFERING SUCH AS SICKNESS

This is subdivided into two parts:

2.1.1.1.1 Dedicating for temporary happiness

2.1.1.1.2 Dedicating for ultimate happiness

2.1.1.1.1 Dedicating for temporary happiness

The first to be explained is dedicating for temporary happiness.

The verse reads:

2. *May those found in all directions
Afflicted by suffering in body and mind
Attain an ocean of bliss and happiness
Through my merits.*

The commentary explains:

May those found in all directions, who are held by the sufferings of physical and mental sickness, be liberated from their sickness and be filled with an ocean of physical bliss and mental joy by whatever merits I have for happiness.

As you can see, the dedications are presented with an altruistic mind. *May those found in all directions*, implies one is extending one's scope and dedicating one's merits without any discrimination to all beings in every direction. Not focusing on certain beings, certain locations or certain directions means not leaving out others and shows how encompassing dedications focus on all beings in every direction who might be *suffering physical and mental sicknesses*. For them to be *liberated from their sickness and be filled with an ocean of physical bliss and mental joy by whatever merits I have for happiness*, means whatever merits I have accumulated for my own happiness, I dedicate for others' physical and mental happiness.

2.1.1.1.2 Dedicating for ultimate happiness

The verse reads:

3. *For as long as they are in cyclic existence
May they never fall from happiness.
May migrators attain uninterruptedly
The highest happiness.*

The commentary explains:

May these migrators [referring to all migrators in every direction] never degenerate from happiness until the end of cyclic existence, and in the end, may they attain the unceasing cause for the highest happiness. For the meaning of the first line of the verse, some commentaries explain it as 'until Buddhahood is obtained', however it comes to the same meaning.

This means that by the merits of the conduct of the bodhisattvas, may the migrators *attain unceasing causes for the highest happiness*, or the state of enlightenment.

2.1.1.2. PACIFYING THE SUFFERINGS OF THE LOWER REALMS

This is subdivided into three:

2.1.1.2.1 Pacifying the sufferings of the hells

2.1.1.2.2 Dedicating for animals

2.1.1.2.3 Dedicating for hungry ghosts

2.1.1.2.1. Pacifying the sufferings of the hells

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.1.2.1.1 Dedication for the quick pacification of sufferings

2.1.1.2.1.2 Dedication for pacification through the power of others

2.1.1.2.1.1. Dedication for the quick pacification of sufferings

This is subdivided into three:

2.1.1.2.1.1.1 Pacifying suffering in general

2.1.1.2.1.1.2 Pacifying the sufferings of the cold hells

2.1.1.2.1.1.3 Pacifying the sufferings of the hot hells

2.1.1.2.1.1.1 Pacifying suffering in general

Pacifying suffering in general is presented with the next verse. The verses in this chapter are quite easy to understand, but as with any explanation, if you read through them and try to derive their meaning, they have much more meaning and power.

The verse reads:

4. *May all embodied beings existing
In all the hell realms
Found in the transitory worlds
Be happy and attain bliss through happiness.*

The commentary explains:

May every suffering of every embodied being in all the hot and cold hell realms found in all transitory realms extending to the edge of space be pacified, and may they attain mental joy through the bliss of the Realm of Great Bliss.

With respect to *may every suffering of every embodied being in all the hot and cold hell realms*, recall the classifications of the hells i.e. the eight hot realms and the specific cold hell realms as well. These are mentioned in more detail as all the sufferings experienced in all of these various hell realms extend to the end of space. The dedication is, 'Wherever these sufferings may occur, may all of them be pacified and may the beings *attain mental joy through the bliss of the Realm of Great Bliss*'. Again, we can see that these are very inspirational prayers, and aspirational dedications.

2.1.1.2.1.1.2. Pacifying the sufferings of the cold hells

The first line of the next verse reads:

- 5a. *May those burdened by cold attain warmth.*

The commentary highlights:

May those burdened by the cold of the eight cold hells of blisters and so forth attain the warmth that will generate bliss for them.

The mention of, *those burdened by the cold of the eight cold hells*, again refers to the eight cold hells. Then, *of blisters and so forth attain the warmth that will generate bliss for them*, indicates that as they are suffering from the cold may they obtain warmth to sooth those particular sufferings.

This is again subdivided into four:

2.1.1.2.1.1.3.1 Pacifying suffering with water from the clouds of the two accumulations of bodhisattvas

2.1.1.2.1.1.3.2 Pacifying the sufferings of the neighbouring hells

2.1.1.2.1.1.3.3 Pacifying the sufferings of the actual hells

2.1.1.2.1.1.3.4 Pacifying other sufferings of the neighbouring hells

2.1.1.2.1.1.3.1. Pacifying suffering with water from the clouds of the two accumulations of bodhisattvas

The remaining three lines of the verse read:

- 5bcd. *May infinite water from
The great clouds of bodhisattvas
Refresh the beings oppressed by heat.*

The commentary explains:

May infinite water from the great clouds of compassion, building up the two accumulations of a bodhisattva, refresh those oppressed by heat.

The commentary explains, *may infinite water from the great clouds of compassion, building up the two accumulations*, i.e. the accumulation of merit and accumulation of wisdom, of a bodhisattva, refresh those oppressed by heat. Using this analogy of great clouds full of water that pour down as rain, you can visualise the two accumulations of the great bodhisattvas in the form of clouds laden with rain when you read the verses. This is symbolic of nectar, and so when the nectar pours down from the clouds of accumulation it enters into the beings who are experiencing extreme suffering of the hot realms etc. and completely pacifies them and eliminates their sufferings.

2.1.1.2.1.1.3.2 Pacifying the sufferings of the neighbouring hells

This next dedication of pacifying the sufferings of the neighbouring hells introduces the *neighbouring hells* which are situated around the hot hells.

The two verses read:

6. *May also the forests of blade leaves
Become beautiful sandalwood forests.
May the trees or the Shalmari forests
Become wish-fulfilling trees.*
7. *May they be beautified by the melodious
sounds of
White swans and yellow geese and other water
fowl.
Through lakes with greatly scented lotus
flowers
May the places of hell become enjoyable.*

The commentary explains:

May the forests with blade-like leaves, which exist next to the hot hells, become for the sentient beings there beautiful pleasure gardens like the flourishing groves of Indra.

May these trees be beautified by the melodious sounds of white swans, yellow geese and other water fowl. May the places of hell become enjoyable through lakes with greatly scented lotus flowers.

The commentary states that in the hot hells there are forests with blade-like leaves with spiky thorns on both sides of the leaf. They might be a sort of cactus that has spikes on both sides. When beings who dwell in these hells move about they are cut by these leaves. So the dedication is, *May the forest of blade-like leaves actually transform and become beautiful pleasure gardens like the flourishing groves of Indra*. This transformation into beautiful pleasure groves can occur due to the merits the bodhisattvas have accumulated.

The commentary further explains:

May the iron trees of the Shalmari forest, with the thirty-six downward pointing thorns be transformed

into wish-fulfilling trees becoming the source for everything desired.

An abode called the Shalmari forest is said to have downward-pointing thorns which are like swords. When beings are below a tree, they hear sounds that beckon them to climb upwards, but when they go up they are severely cut by sword-like thorns that point downwards. Then once they reach the top they are beckoned down, but when they go down the sword-like thorns point upwards, and they are cut again. There are detailed descriptions on this in the lam-rim teachings.

The dedication here is, 'May these razor-blade trees which cause so much agony and suffering in this abode, turn into wish-fulfilling trees'. A wish-fulfilling tree allows whatever one desires to magically appear, so this is a dedication for these trees that cause so much suffering to transform into wish fulfilling trees that only bring joy.

Furthermore, once these trees have been transformed into beautiful wish-fulfilling trees, the verse says *May they be beautified by the melodious sounds of white swans, yellow geese and other water fowl*. In conclusion, *May the places of hell become enjoyable through lakes with greatly scented lotus flowers*.

These descriptions create a very good visualisation and a sense of joy, and we can use them as a form of meditation. When your mind is filled with suffering and you are feeling weighed down and uncomfortable, then when you envision places of bliss and happiness for others it helps you too. Furthermore, doing these dedications can also become a cause to diminish the negativities to be reborn in these extreme levels of sufferings that we have created for ourselves. One can incorporate all these visualisations into one's dedication.

2.1.1.2.1.1.3.3. Pacifying the sufferings of the actual hells

The next two verses read:

8. *May the heaps of burning coals become heaps
of jewels.
May the burning ground become like a crystal
ground.
May the grinding mountains become the
crystal palace
Of offerings, and be filled with Ones Gone To
Bliss.*
9. *May the rain of leaves, embers and weapons
Become forthwith a rain of flowers.
May those cutting each other with knives,
Forthwith throw flowers for fun.*

The commentary explains:

May also the heaps of burning coals in the hot hells become heaps of jewels. May also the burning iron ground become like a pleasant crystal ground. May the ram-like grinding mountains, between which one becomes crushed, transform into the crystal bathing house filled with Ones Gone To Bliss.

May the rain of fire leaves, embers and weapons transform forthwith into a rain of flowers. May those in the reviving hells, who slice each other with knives, throw instead flowers at each other for fun.

The first verse says, may the heaps of burning coals become heaps of jewels. The hot hells explained here

have burning grounds, like red-hot sheets of metal. So the dedication here is, *May this burning iron ground transform into pleasant crystal ground.*

Then there are the grinding mountains, which are *ram-like* because they are like the heads of two rams colliding when they fight. These mountains are called *grinding* or *crushing mountains* because beings caught between them are completely crushed. We dedicate that these mountains transform into a crystal bathing house filled with Ones Gone to Bliss, a pleasant blissful abode where only buddhas are present.

In the explanation of the second verse, *may the rain of the fire leaves, embers and weapons* is an aspiration for these hot hells to *transform forth with into rain of flowers.*

Next is a dedication to pacify the reviving hells. Those reborn in this hell are in constant combat with each other using various weapons like swords etc. They fight and pierce each other with their weapons, falling to the ground with cuts and lacerations, but then they all revive again and start to fight all over again. And so it goes on and on. The dedication here is, 'For those who are reborn in this hell, may their weapons transform into flowers, and instead of using them against each other, may they instead engage in the playful gesture of throwing flowers at each other'. This is the aim of the dedication.

There are similar battles happening here on earth, where we see people constantly fighting each other and trying to destroy each other with various weapons. It is good to also reflect on that reality.

2.1.1.2.1.1.3.4. Pacifying other sufferings of the neighbouring hells

The verse reads:

10. *May those sinking in Vaitarani, equalling a fire pit,
Their bones, the flesh boiled off, in the colour of
the Kunda flower,
Through the power of my virtue attain the body
of a god,
Enjoying themselves with goddesses.*

The commentary states:

May also those sinking in the wrathful boiling waters of Vaitarani, the bank- less river of ash and boiling water, whose bones, with the flesh boiled off, are in the colour of the Kunda flower, attain the perfect body of a god through the power of my virtue, enjoying themselves with goddesses in a bathing pool.

May those who are sinking in the wrathful boiling waters of Vaitarani describes beings in hell realms being boiled in a cauldron of molten liquid iron, which is extremely hot. It brings to mind an image of something similar to lava from a volcano, which is basically molten rock. If beings are boiled a cauldron of liquid iron, their flesh is burnt away and their bones are completely exposed. Even the bones disintegrate into ashes. The dedication for those experiencing such extreme sufferings in these hell realms is, *May they attain the perfect body of a god through the power of my virtue, enjoying themselves with goddesses in a bathing pool.* Rather than experiencing extreme sufferings in the boiling cauldron, may the molten iron transform into pleasant water giving them the sense pleasures of the gods and goddesses.

2.1.1.2.1.2. Dedication for pacification through the power of others

The four subdivisions are:

- 2.1.1.2.1.2.1. Vajrapani pacifying suffering through power
2.1.1.2.1.2.2. Chenrezig pacifying suffering through compassion
2.1.1.2.1.2.3. Manjushri pacifying sufferings with emanations
2.1.1.2.1.2.4. The other close disciples pacifying suffering with ability

As indicated in the following outlines, Vajrapani pacifies suffering through power; Chenrezig pacifies suffering through compassion; and Manjushri pacifies suffering with emanations. The 'other close disciples' pacify suffering with ability. These are very meticulously presented.

If we take the concepts presented in the text and the commentary on a personal level, we can see that making a connection with deities such as Vajrapani, Chenrezig and Manjushri can have a very long-lasting positive effect for us. Even if we have to experience the results of our previous karmas with extreme suffering, then due to the power of our connection and prayers now, our sufferings will be quickly pacified. We should recognise the great fortune we have in making a connection with these deities now.

As will be covered later in the text, hell beings, who have the particular karma to see Manjushri, see him and call out to other hell beings to come quickly and see Manjushri. These are indications that even if reborn in the hell realms, positive karmic connections are still there, which occur due to the power of one's previous imprints of positive karma. Such miraculous things can happen. Take this into account when doing prayers for the deceased. Making strong prayers to Avalokiteshvara, and making requests for the being to be liberated from the unfortunate realms will have a definite positive effect. It will also have a positive effect for you, as well as the deceased, when you do this visualisation with strong faith and devotion. When we do these aspirational prayers, it will definitely have a positive effect for the deceased, so it is good to keep that in mind.

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

*Transcript prepared by Su Lan Foo
Edit 1 by Jill Lancashire
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe
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