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Having covered the first opponent power, which is the power of regret, we now cover the power of opponent force, which has six general means of applying the opponent forces. The first means is reciting profound sutras, the second meditating on emptiness, and the third reciting mantras, which we are up to now. As the text explains, when one does purification practices, with whatever means, one must extend the practice until one sees the signs of purification. There are two means of explaining the signs of purification. Firstly, in reciting the mantra, one can refer to a mantra such as the one hundred syllable mantra, One recites that mantra to an extent where one can see the signs of purification. When relying on a recitation such as the hundred syllable mantra, one does it in accordance with how it is explained in the ritual text, and then it becomes more intact and more profound. How do we engage in the means of purification? The text quotes from a sutra called *The Tantra Request* by Subahu. The verses quoted here are using analogies to show how the purification practice takes place.

*The flames from fires that spread in the spring forest,
Are out of control burning up all thickets;
Likewise the winds of ethical discipline fan the
fires of recitation,
And the flames of great perseverance burn up
the sins.*

If there is a fire in a spring forest when things are dry, and if there are strong winds that fan the fire, then there will be nothing to stop the fire from burning and destroying the bush or forest. The fire will rage through and completely destroy whatever is in its path. It will be hard for anything to stop that right away. The recitation itself is like the fire that destroys the negative karmas within oneself. Just as fires need wind to provide them with force and energy, likewise we need discipline and enthusiasm in our recitations. The enthusiasm, coupled with discipline, becomes like the wind for the recitation to become powerful and destroy the negative karma we have created. When we do recitation with ethical discipline and with enthusiasm, then it will definitely purify. Referring to the analogy again, thickets, bushes and so forth are like the negative karmas we have created, and are imprinted within ourselves. Just as very thick forest or bush area can be consumed by raging fire that is blown by the wind, similarly when we recite the one hundred syllable mantra (or any other mantra that we decide to use for purification), and it is fanned with enthusiasm and ethical discipline, that is leading a moral life, then just like the fire destroys the whole forest, that

practise will destroy the negative karmic imprints within oneself.

The quote from the sutra is further continued with another analogy:

*Just as when the sun's rays destabilise snow,
It melts in the unbearable brilliance,
So too do the snows of sins disappear,
When destabilised by the sunbeams of
recitation and ethical discipline.*

The purification practice becomes as effective as the strong sun rays which fall upon the snow and melt it. The snow is like the negative karma that we have created, and the intense sun rays are like the recitation practice which destroys the negative karmas within oneself. The discipline in the practice means not harming others when we are reciting.

*Lighting a butter lamp in a dark gloom,
Entirely clears away the darkness;
Likewise, the darkness of sins accumulated for
a thousand life times,
Is quickly dispelled by the butter lamp of
recitation.*

We bring light into a dark room if we switch on a light or light a candle. The moment the light comes into the room, the darkness is spontaneously dispelled. Likewise, when our practice of recitation is based on moral ethics, then it will destroy the darkness of negative karma within oneself.

One must engage in the practice of purification until one sees signs of purifications occurring. What are those signs? Some of the signs occur in dreams. If one engages in prolonged purification practise and one begins to have dreams where one is seeing oneself vomiting foul stuff, like black substances, then that would be one indication. Other signs of purification are dreams of drinking or consuming milk or yoghurt, or vomiting it out; or where one sees bright sun light or very bright moonlight or if the bright sun or moon light is entering one's body and feeling very soothing and very nice; or dreams of elevating and flying in the sky; or seeing fire blazing upwards; or wrestling with a very dark figure and winning over them. Other indications are to dream of seeing ordained sangha among fully ordained monks or nuns, or being in the company of sangha; or climbing on top of a high mountain or a throne that is uplifted by snow lions; or climbing up a medicinal tree, or dreaming one is receiving teachings.

However dreams are also an example of what is not true. When we talk about illusions, one of the examples being contrary to reality is, it's like a dream. So, one cannot rely entirely on just dreams, even though there might be some indications which can be some encouragement. So what does one rely on as a real sign of negative karmas being purified? The real signs are when one's mind becomes calmer, more subdued, and the delusions become less powerful. Then the mind becomes kinder and one's respect and faith, particularly in the teachings and the teachers, spontaneously increases. One has stronger faith in the teachings and they become much clearer in one's

mind. That is the real sign of purification having taken place.

What has been emphasised in the quotations of the sutra is that in order for the purification practise to be effective, one needs to lead an ethical life. This seems to be emphasised again and again. Leading a life of non-harmfulness and non-violence means that one doesn't engage in harming others. Leading an ethical life boils down to refraining from harming others intentionally. Not harming means more than just not harming others, it also means avoiding the intention of harming. Making a commitment to avoid harming others is what we call the ethical life. It is the state of mind where one intentionally avoids harmful acts towards others. If we just say that not harming others is leading an ethical life, then what about a situation where we would like to harm someone else but we just don't have the ability or means to do so? So, just 'not harming others' is not necessarily a real ethical behaviour.

Question: Sometimes most people have very good skills and use their skill to help people, but sometimes it can harm them. It's just an observation..

Answer: Geshe-la says the question is in your mind but you can't express it.

The observation is true in the sense that when the skill is not used in the right way, then it can be harmful. It is not just the outward gesture that really counts. In accordance with the Buddha's teachings, human beings are not evil by nature, because basic human nature is based on love and compassion.

But sometimes the skill is not used in the proper way, and that good nature doesn't come forth; often what prevails is the negative side. Unless that good nature is used in a proper way it does not benefit anyone. In terms of actually relating to others, there are outright evil ways of relating to others, which of course is harmful. And sometimes there are nice words and kind manners, but with the ulterior motive that once you get their confidence and their trust, then you would harm them. It's like cats when they want to catch a mouse - they can be very quiet and seemingly calm, but are just waiting for the right moment to pounce on the mouse. Even when they catch the mouse they might even start to play with them. This looks like they are being kind to the mouse, but actually they are engaging in the kill. That sort of gesture may deceive even a mouse, so what really counts is the intention. The cat, in order to catch its prey, may slide down to the floor and appear to be very humble, but it is waiting for the right moment. Likewise, humans can also have that attitude towards and gestures towards others, such as seemingly being very calm and quiet and nice, but yet with the intention to harm them later. So one could say that being kind and nice to gain others' confidence is a skill, but if it is with an ulterior motive, then it's used in a wrong way.

Question: So do these skills come back to destroy the person?

Answer: With an evil intention that is definitely true. When evil intention is involved, then in trying to harm

others it actually hits oneself. When the Japanese waged war against America, then they got bombed themselves. They were trying to conquer others, but in fact were harming themselves in the worst way.

Question: Could you give advice on how to deal with people who try to harm you? Especially those who love you and care for you?

Answer: According to the Buddhist teachings, out of all the different situations of developing patience that is one of the most difficult. Trying to develop patience towards those that you have relied upon, trusted upon and benefited from, when they begin to harm you, is one of the most difficult times. Deal with that situation by trying to see the reality and the nature of the other person, and what kind of situation they are in. If one begins to really understand the situation they are in, then they become the object of one's compassion rather than anger. As one of the great masters in our tradition, Lama Tsong Khapa, mentions in his teachings, for those that have shown great care and love and benefited others, and then if they harm you, that means their mind is very ignorant. It is ignorant like an animal, even worse than an animal, because even with animal if you are kind and nice to them, they will be good to you. Even an animal can distinguish between who is kind and who is harmful to them. If you have benefited a person and if in return they harm you, then they are in a very pitiful state; it means their state of mind is ignorant - they don't have the ability to distinguish between who is helping and harming them.

If one's help has been genuine, and as a response they harm you, then they become a real object of compassion; because one begins to contemplate on the fact that such a person will have difficulties. As long as they maintain that sort of attitude no-one could love them and be nice to them. So practise patience and always try to benefit them rather than be angry. Even though it is not easy for us initially it is something which can be slowly developed. Quoting another great Tibetan master called Langri Tangpa, in one of his works called the *Eight Verses of Mind Training*, he mentions specifically that for those who have entirely given themselves to caring and nurturing others, and when they harm us in return, then rather than being upset and getting angry about that, think 'may I in return see them as a great teacher, meaning a great teacher of patience. That is an attitude that can be developed through practise. Whether it can really change the other person right away or not is questionable, but it will definitely help one's own mind if one can practise developing compassion towards them and trying to be patient. However, if one does try to practise along these lines, then because of one's positive, caring attitude towards them, regardless of their attitude towards us, and because we don't respond to them negatively, they may eventually start to change and began to realise their own mistakes and then start to really appreciate you. If one begins the change within, then things around oneself can also change.

Question: When doing meditation for purification, do you recommend anything to visualise at that time of

doing mantras?

Answer: If one wants to do a practise of recitation, one would refer to the actual ritual, which would have all the visualisations depending on what mantra is recited. In relation to the specific mantra that was referred to above, the one hundred syllable mantra, which refers to the mantra of Vajrasattva, there is a deity called Vajrasattva; so if one is to do a practise of recitation of the Vajrasattva mantra, then look at how it is explained - there are small booklets available that explain how to visualise the deity himself on top of one's crown and then light and so forth coming down purifying oneself. The explanation of this visualisation is quite detailed and would take a another set of teachings.

Question: When I have been on the process of purification, I notice that I'm moving forward along the path very well, but then all of a sudden for some reason, I just take a step off, and leap off onto another dangerous path, like getting drunk for three days straight. What causes me having to break or divert so much and how could you possibly combat that happening?

Answer: What is actually happening is that one is engaging in a practice which one is not too familiar with, yet one sees some progress. But what kicks in later is what one has been familiar with earlier. For example, a person who has been addicted to smoking wants to give up smoking. After some attempts they might be able to actually give up smoking after six months, and then after six months they see that there is a big progress, but then maybe there will be the urge to have a puff or two, so they might rationalise to themselves thinking 'Oh I have given up for six months, a puff or two would not really harm me.' So they may start smoking one cigarette, have a few puffs which leads to another cigarette, and then maybe two, and then three. They might come to a situation where the habit kicks in again and they seemingly get worse. When people seek advice from me about how to overcome this problem, usually what I try to tell them is 'wouldn't it seem more practical or realistic to reduce your intake of whatever substance you are taking, drinking or smoking, and then gradually overcome it. Then usually the response I get is that 'That doesn't work, I have to really cut it off completely; if I don't cut it off completely just gradually trying to reduce it just doesn't work.'

Question: That was a metaphor for any sort of thing not necessarily smoking.

Answer: Yes, I know. This was an analogy. The example of drinking or smoking is the same for any activity that we are very familiar with. Once we try to stop an activity that we are really familiar with, and then the habit of doing it might begin to kick in. And it seems when I stop for a while that it has become worse again, but basically one needs to try to find the balance. Anything that one has been familiar with, which may of course lead to addictions, is much more difficult to overcome. In contrast to that, certain delusions in our mind arise only when we meet an object; it is not like it is persistently always there. One may not feel anger when the object of

anger is out of the way. And attachment is said to be a very deep rooted delusion in our mind, which is very difficult to overcome entirely right away because of the familiarity we have with it.

Before we conclude for the evening let us take a few moments for meditation. Sit in an appropriate posture with our back straight and bring our mind inward, distance our mind from the distractions, and focus on the sound of the Shakyamuni mantra.

TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

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