
Study Group - *Madhyamakavataranama*

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དབུ་མ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བཞུགས་པོ།

8 October 2002

Please generate a virtuous motivation for listening to the teachings thinking that I have to attain the state of complete enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, and in order to be able to do so I'm now going to listen to this profound Mahayana teaching, and then I'm going to put it into practice as much as I can.

2.2.1.2. To retaliate is contradictory to not desiring subsequent suffering

The verse from the root text shows that it is contradictory to not wish for future suffering on the one hand, and on the other hand to retaliate after receiving harm. When we read this verse we should meditate on how those two ideas are contradictory, and how, if one wishes to have future happiness, then one should avoid retaliating.

The results of non-virtuous karma previously created

Are expressively asserted to be eliminated by that alone,

Because of the suffering of retaliation and anger leading to the mere seed in whichever way.

Previously it was said that becoming angry and retaliating is useless because retaliation won't negate or reverse the suffering that one has experienced, or the harm that one has already received. In addition there's also the danger that one will receive further harm within this life. If one has already received a wound to the head and one retaliates, there's a danger that one will receive a further wound to one's head.

Here the root text gives a further reason for not retaliating. It says that it is contradictory to wish for future happiness on the one hand, and on the other hand to think it is OK to retaliate now. It is saying that by retaliating one also creates the cause for suffering in a future life.

Just looking at it from the point of view of one's life, it might not be so bad that one experiences a little bit of suffering in this life because one has retaliated. Here where it says, 'Leading to the mere seed in whichever way' it means if one retaliates then definitely it will create the seed, or the potential for suffering in future lives. That is something that one should consider very carefully.

If somebody hits us with a stick then it will inflict some suffering, and then we might get the idea that we want to retaliate, because the other person has inflicted that suffering on us by beating us with a stick. Actually the suffering that we experience by being beaten is the result of non-virtuous karma that we have previously

created. So this experience of the ripening of the non-virtuous karma that we have previously created is in fact purifying that non-virtuous karma. Therefore those who wish to purify their non-virtuous karma shouldn't retaliate when they experience such suffering, but rather they should see it as the opportunity to purify and eliminate the negative karma that they have previously created.

As it says here, 'Are expressively asserted to be eliminated by that alone.' So this experience of the ripening of the non-virtuous karma is the method for purifying our non-virtuous karma, and one who wishes to purify their non-virtuous karma should be grateful for that experience.

If one has purified all one's non-virtuous karma, then even though one might be hit over the head with a stick one will not experience any suffering. For example even if he is hit over the head Shakyamuni Buddha will not experience any suffering. If we reflect on how the experience of suffering comes about through the ripening of non-virtuous karma, and view this suffering as purifying that non-virtuous karma, that will help us in our meditation on patience, as well as being able to bear suffering.

The next two lines say,

Because of the suffering of retaliation and anger leading to the mere seed in whichever way.

This shows the reason why it is contradictory on the one hand to retaliate, while on the other not wishing for subsequent suffering. The action of retaliation and anger creates the potential for future suffering. No matter which way one looks at it, that's what it will definitely do. It will create the very seed or potential for future suffering. This is a very profound point that proves the outline.

2.2.1.3. Anger Is Inappropriate Because It Destroys the Virtue Accumulated Over Long Periods of Time

2.2.1.3.1. Meaning of the Text

By being angry with a conqueror's child, virtue arising from generosity and morality over one hundred eons is destroyed in an instant.

Therefore there is no negativity like impatience.

Here the root text gives one further material to reflect on the disadvantages of anger. The previous verses highlighted the disadvantages of anger by focussing on the suffering result of anger in both this life and in future lives. Here it is saying that not only does anger create the cause for future suffering, but it also has another disadvantage in that it destroys the virtue that we have already created.

The disadvantages of anger can also be classified into the disadvantages that one can see directly and the faults that one cannot perceive directly.

The **faults of anger that can be perceived directly** include, for example, the anger that agitates and then disturbs the mind at the very time when it arises within the mind. There are also the disadvantages of robbing one of sleep, robbing one of appetite, closing

the mind towards reasoning and good advice, and so forth. These are the various faults of anger that one can directly observe within this life.

The **faults of anger that are not directly observable** include the creation of non-virtuous causes for future suffering. Also that anger destroys the virtue that one has already accumulated, and this is also a fault of anger that is not directly observable.

The last line says, 'Therefore there is no negativity like impatience'. What this is saying is that with regard to the harmful effect on one's virtuous karma, there is no negativity like impatience. Of all the negativities it is the one that is the most destructive for one's virtuous karma.

By being angry with a conqueror's child, with a bodhisattva, even just for one instant we will destroy the virtue that has been built up over one hundred eons through the practice of generosity and morality etc.

Although anger destroys the virtue that has arisen from the practice of generosity and morality it cannot destroy the virtue that arises from meditating on the wisdom realising emptiness. When it refers to the root of virtue that anger destroys, it is talking about the virtue contained within the accumulation of merit. Anger does not destroy the roots of virtue that are contained within the accumulation of wisdom.

Here the object of anger is a lower bodhisattva and the person who is getting angry is a higher bodhisattva.

If a higher bodhisattva becomes angry with a lower bodhisattva then one moment of anger in the continuum of that higher bodhisattva will destroy one hundred eons of virtue.

We also have the situation where a bodhisattva becomes angry with an equal bodhisattva, or where a lower bodhisattva becomes angry with a higher bodhisattva. We have to infer how much merit is destroyed by depending upon scriptural quotations.

Chandrakirti says in his *Self Commentary* that if you look at how much merit is destroyed if one bodhisattva gets angry at another one, do we need to question that merits are destroyed if an ordinary being who hasn't even entered the path becomes angry at a bodhisattva. That doesn't even need to be mentioned as it is implicitly understood.

What this is showing here is that one has to be very, very careful with regard to other people, because one cannot know whether or not another person is a bodhisattva. We might view another person as having no qualities and many faults, but actually we cannot know the other person's mind. So this is exhorting us to meditate on pure appearance and to be very careful with regard to other people. Even on the level of a bodhisattva, lower bodhisattvas cannot comprehend the state of mind of a higher bodhisattva, just as we as ordinary beings cannot comprehend the state of mind of the person opposite of us.

In *Entering the Middle Way* it says that one hundred eons are destroyed by one instant of anger. In the

Entering the Bodhisattva's Way of Life it mentions that one thousand eons are destroyed by one instance of anger. Both these texts are referring to those situations where the object of one's anger is a bodhisattva.

The object of anger can be both an ordinary bodhisattva as well as an arya bodhisattva. The bodhisattva who gets angry can only be an ordinary bodhisattva, as no arya bodhisattva can become angry.

The merit that is destroyed by anger is the merit that belongs to the category of the accumulation of merit. Here we have the various situations of a higher bodhisattva becoming angry with a lower bodhisattva, an equal bodhisattva becoming angry with an equal bodhisattva, and a lower bodhisattva becoming angry with a higher bodhisattva, and a non-bodhisattva becoming angry with a bodhisattva.

In the first case of a **higher bodhisattva becoming angry with a lower bodhisattva**, one instant of anger destroys one hundred eons of virtue.

Lama Tsong Khapa says that the merits that are destroyed by a **bodhisattva becoming angry with an equal bodhisattva**, and by a **lower bodhisattva becoming angry at a higher bodhisattva** have to be inferred by relying upon quotations from sutras mentioned in *Illumination*.

Then we posit a situation of a **non-bodhisattva becoming angry with a bodhisattva**, where one instant of anger destroys one thousand eons of virtuous karma.

When it is asked, 'What is the meaning of 'anger destroying virtue'?' then there is a point of view which says that it means that the potential of the virtuous karma is completely annihilated. However, that is not the meaning of the 'anger destroying virtue'. Then there's also another point of view saying that the ripening of the virtuous karma is delayed. That is also not the meaning of 'anger destroying virtue'.

The three levels of strength in which virtuous karma can be harmed by anger

There are three levels in which anger exhausts the potential of the virtuous karma. If the anger just takes away a little bit of the potential then one talks about the **minimal depletion of virtuous karma**. If anger takes away half of the potential then one talks about the **medium depletion of virtuous karma**, and if anger completely takes away the potential of the virtuous karma to create a happy ripening result, then one talks about the **maximum depletion of virtuous karma**. It depends upon how much of the potential of the virtuous karma to create a happy ripening result is harmed.

Here there is the quote from the sutra where it says that,

the merits that have been dedicated for complete enlightenment will not be destroyed but will endure forever, in the same way as the drop of water that mixes with the ocean will be there for as long as the ocean is there.

This quote doesn't mean that the merits that have been

dedicated with bodhicitta cannot be destroyed, because as we have seen just now, the merits in a continuum of a bodhisattva can be destroyed. So the merits in the continuum of a bodhisattva are not indestructible. The meaning of the quote is that it refers to the ripening state. Once the result of complete enlightenment has ripened, for that long those merits will exist. This quote refers to the ripened state of enlightenment.

2.2.1.3.2. Ancillary Meanings

Then we can talk a little bit about what happens if a non-bodhisattva becomes angry with another non-bodhisattva.

First of all *Illumination* quotes a sutra where the Buddha addresses a bhikku and says,

Bhikku, someone who prostrates to a stupa that contains relics of the buddhas such as fingernails, hair, bones, etc., will create the merits for rebirth as a wheel turning monarch, for as many times there are atoms beneath their body.

What this is saying is that if one makes a prostration to a stupa that contains relics or parts of the body of the Buddha etc., then for each atom that one covers with one's body one creates the merit that can act as the cause equalling the merit that can act as the cause for rebirth as a wheel turning monarch. The number of atoms includes all those from the surface of the earth down to the centre.

After the Buddha had proclaimed the power of the prostrations to such a stupa then one of his disciples, arya Nyewa Korwa replied that the result will only come about if the root of virtue that has been accumulated through the prostration is not harmed by anger. However because sentient beings generate various degrees of anger in various situations then they experience the three types of depletion that we were talking about before, the small elimination of virtue, the medium elimination of virtue, and the great elimination of virtue. Because sentient beings get angry they experience these various levels of depletion of their merits, and then they don't experience that full result that was just explained. That full result will only be experienced by someone who doesn't get angry.

In this quote the arya Nyewa Korwa explains the three levels of depletion of virtuous karma. Implicitly what it is saying here is that it refutes the notion that anger completely destroys the root of virtue. As we said before, the meaning of 'anger destroying the root of virtue' doesn't mean that it completely annihilates the root of virtue. Rather it refers to the three levels of depletion of the virtuous karma. What one can understand here is that anger doesn't have the potential to completely annihilate one's virtuous karma in the same way as a worldly path cannot completely overcome the seeds of the afflictions. In order to completely annihilate the seeds of the afflictions one needs to meditate on a superior path, as meditating on a worldly path cannot completely annihilate the seeds or the potential of the afflictions. In the same way anger also cannot completely annihilate one's virtuous

potentials.

So anger cannot completely eliminate the roots of virtue created through bodhicitta, as bodhicitta has the potential to completely overcome one's mental afflictions.

2.2.1.4. Stopping Anger After Having Contemplated the Many Faults of Impatience

Here we have the three lines:

*Causes an ugly form and leads to inferiority
Robs discernment knowing right from wrong
Impatience quickly throws one into the lower realms*

First of all anger causes one to have an unpleasant appearance, so it creates the cause to have an unpleasant or ugly appearance.

Furthermore, it leads one to inferiority. Here there are two meanings attached to inferiority.

One is the **inferiority of non-virtue and the superiority of virtue**. So anger leads one from the superiority of virtue to the inferiority of non-virtue. That is one meaning attached here to inferiority.

The other meaning is the **inferiority of not realising emptiness directly**. This refers to leading one from the superiority of realising emptiness directly, to the inferiority of the opposite.

Anger interferes with our discernment of knowing right from wrong. It robs one of the wisdom understanding karma, of an understanding of the cause and effect relationship. As we said before, anger robs one of an understanding of who is actually one's enemy and who is one's friend. Because of anger one quite often regards the person who is actually helping oneself, and who wants to help benefit oneself, as the enemy.

So anger robs one of the discernment of knowing right from wrong, of knowing who is actually the enemy and who is a friend. Quite often it causes one to get angry at someone who is actually not the cause of one's problems. It is often easier to get angry at something external than something internal.

Impatience quickly throws one into the lower realms. So anger will cause one to have an ugly appearance even if one is reborn as a human being. It leads one to inferiority, robs one of discernment within this life, and of knowing right from wrong. On top of all of that it will also throw one very speedily into the lower realms. So that is something very one should consider very well.

After considering all of those faults of anger then one should abandon anger. Indeed, if you experience anger, then by reflecting on its various disadvantages that anger will dissipate by itself.

Next is considering the many benefits of patience, but we can continue with this next time. Maybe it's good not to go too far in one session.