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again. The more we familiarise ourselves with this noble attitude and intention, the more stable our mind will become. *[Pause for meditation]*

Just as we have attempted in our meditation, it would be good to familiarise ourselves with the practice and do it regularly. Practising in this way is also a means to protect whatever love and compassion one has already developed within oneself. As I stress regularly, if someone were to lose the sense of love and compassion within, then that would be a great loss and even a dangerous state to be in. For such people, everyone around them appears to be an enemy; they feel that they have no friends around them, and that everyone dislikes them.

As I stress regularly, it is really important to consider the fact that if one loses the sense of love and compassion towards others (particularly with more immediate relationships), then it's obvious that what replaces that is anger and bitterness. It is also obvious that the relationship starts to deteriorate from that point onwards. Once anger is expressed it damages a relationship, therefore it is very important to sustain a sense of true concern of love and compassion for each other at all times. This is something that is really important in our daily lives.

In cultivating love and compassion towards all beings, the important element is to base that sense of love and compassion on the fact that, as mentioned earlier, all living beings (including oneself) are equal in wishing for happiness and not wishing to experience the slightest suffering. In that regard, we are all equal. This will also help us to understand the logic of being patient with others, which is where the practice of patience comes in.

As I have mentioned in previous teachings, expressing love and compassion to others is very difficult if we don't have the virtue of patience. *[laughs]* When we lack patience we can lose any sense of love and compassion very quickly. There are many who claim that despite the fact that they have shown a loving and caring attitude, there is no positive response from the other. The object of their compassion doesn't seem to appreciate it, which might result in losing the sense of wanting to care for them, because one cannot be patient with them any longer.

To practise, particularly in relation to really understanding the suffering of others, one must recognise that no one experiences any joy and happiness in a moment of great suffering. So if, for example, one's partner or friend is showing some obvious signs of being upset, it will help if we understand that they are in a state of real unease, and that they are actually suffering. Then, rather becoming angry and upset with them, we can be patient, with understanding and compassion towards them. This is how the practice can work in a really practical way. By relating it to our own experiences we can acknowledge and understand that the other is angry and upset as a result of being in an uncomfortable or uneasy state of mind. How do we feel when we are upset and angry? The anger is a result of not feeling at ease or content within oneself. The immediate condition may be an external condition, but if we don't feel disturbed by the external situation, we will not become upset. What upsets our mind initially is a feeling of unease, an unhappy and unsettled mind, then we get annoyed or angry. We can relate other's situation to our own experiences: whenever they are upset or angry it is the result of feeling uneasy or unsettled in their mind.

You will recall from the teachings that there are three immediate conditions for anger to arise within ourselves: the

inner condition of experiencing suffering; the external condition of things not working out well; and the condition of others harming us. So, as explained, due to the inner condition of feeling unease, even for a moment, becomes a cause for anger to arise within oneself. However when someone we call an enemy is at unease, that isn't a cause for us to become angry; rather it is a cause for us to feel joyful and happy that they are suffering. We may feel that it serves them right. *[laughs]* So, it is very true that it is our own suffering that causes us to become angry. Indeed, when someone is who is feeling unhappy becomes more depressed, it causes them to become more and more upset and angry. That is a fact. Whereas when everything seems to be working well for someone, they will not be in an angry state of mind.

When I went to visit Geshe Loden's centre last Saturday, I met up with Toby Gillies, who is a senior monk there. As we are quite fond of each other, we often talk and joke. The other day he said, 'Geshe-la, you always seem to be joyful and happy and always smiling, but don't you get depressed sometimes?' When I replied 'No, I don't get depressed' he said, 'Not even a little bit?' My response was that it doesn't serve any purpose to get depressed.

There were also two Christian monks present. After we finished the session one of them came up to me and shook my hand. Even though I didn't recall it, he said 'I met you at Tara once before and at that time I told you that there was sometimes quite a bit of trouble in the monks' community'. Apparently I had responded, 'Protect your own mind'. He said that he remembers that advice very clearly and that it has been very sound advice for him. It is true that while we may not be able to completely control external situations, if we control our own mind, then that will suffice to keep our mind in a state of equilibrium. The best example that we have is His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The Chinese are always causing trouble and making so much fuss about him, however His Holiness meditates very peacefully inside. In response, His Holiness often refers to the Chinese as 'my old friends'.

The main point is that if we were to actually spend some time familiarising ourselves with cultivating and developing these attitudes of love and compassion, then there is definitely a benefit. There is no question about that. Merely cultivating those positive attitudes in our mind will help and benefit us, and in a practical way bring us closer to others. Even animals can respond to someone who has a sense of love and compassion.

There are some really amazing stories about how animals can respond to love and compassion. When love and affection are shown to them in the earlier part of their life, they can recognise and respond to that later in their life. Of course not all animals may have that capacity, but some animals definitely do show that response. Just to mention an incident that happened in our local area, a person who used to walk a dog regularly had an accident, and the dog apparently was able to alert the police! There are incidents where the dog notices that something has happened to its owner and becoming anxious, starts barking, which attracts attention and lead people to where the owner is.

It is also noteworthy how obedient these animals can be when they have been well cared for. Apparently there are cases where dogs have been sent to the supermarket with a note to buy meat and return to their owner with the meat in their mouth. Such dogs apparently return to their owners in a very discrete way so that other dogs won't attack them.

Then there is the famous incident during the Black Saturday bushfires of the man who gave water to a koala. The incident became world famous, just because of the fact that the koala responded to the human kindness. Such an encounter can bring tears to our eyes, because we can see the positive response by the koala to the fire fighter. Later the koala died of a disease, and apparently when the fire fighter who had given the water heard that news he cried, as if he had lost a dear friend.

The point is that we can learn a lot from these accounts of the positive response of animals to love and compassion. That is not to mention that it is definitely possible that if you interact with others with a sense of love and compassion and treat them with respect, then a positive response will be reciprocated. Of course there are some exceptional cases where the response may not be immediate, but in most instances love and compassion will definitely be accepted by any human being.

## **CHAPTER 1. EXPLAINING CAUSE AND EFFECT OF HIGH STATUS AND DEFINITE GOODNESS INDIVIDUALLY**

### **A. SETTING THE SCENE (CONT.)**

Last week, the earlier verses introduced 'high status' and 'definite goodness'. Having introduced 'high status' and 'definite goodness', we went on to describe what the causes are, and how they can be achieved. As the earlier verses explained, the main cause for high status is faith in the law of karma (or the law of cause and effect), and the cause for definite goodness is the wisdom realising emptiness.

### **3. DIFFERENCE OF MAIN AND SECONDARY OF THE TWO CAUSES**

The corresponding verse from the text is:

5. *Due to having faith one relies on the practices,  
Due to having wisdom one truly knows.  
Of these two wisdom is the chief,  
Faith is its prerequisite*

In explaining this verse Gyaltsab Je's commentary begins with this quote from a text:

Faith precedes all dharmas just as a mother  
precedes the son

Another quote relating to this says:

Faith is the very root and thus that is to be  
stabilised

In relation to faith, Gyaltsab's commentary explains that faith is the root or basis for all dharmas or all virtues. Because faith serves as the very root, someone with faith will naturally rely on the practices. The particular practice referred to here, as the commentary explains, is a practice such as the ten virtues. A more extensive explanation of this will be presented later on in the text. Here, however, we are considering how faith serves as the very basis of all dharmas and of all good. For example, in relation to our own aspirations, what do we long for? What do we aspire towards? Basically, it is happiness. We all aspire to be happy and that is something that we can all agree upon.

As the teachings present, if we look into the causes of happiness, we find that it is virtue. If we have the understanding that virtue is an unmistakable cause for happiness, we will develop a natural faith in the value of acquiring virtue. With that faith we will acquire virtue because we want the result, which is happiness. Likewise we naturally don't want to experience any suffering. When we

understand the origin of suffering, which is delusions and karma, and understand that as being the causes for suffering, then that is developing faith in naturally wanting to remove the causes for suffering.

The karma referred to in 'delusions and karma' is specifically negative karma. When one has a full understanding how negative karma is a cause for suffering, the wish to refrain from negative karma will naturally arise in one's mind. Likewise, when one can fully understand that virtue or positive karma is the cause for happiness and joy, then one will be naturally inclined to accumulate virtue, because one wishes to experience the result of happiness. Basically that cause and effect sequence summarises karma; negative karma or actions are the cause for suffering and positive actions are a cause for happiness.

Without having faith in cause and effect, one cannot possibly practise true Dharma. Even though karma is explained as being a profound subject, there is definitely a level that we can easily relate to, such as negative actions being a cause for suffering and positive actions being a cause for happiness. That is something that we can definitely understand. So, even though we may not be aware of the deeper implications of karma yet, we can still practice from whatever understanding that we have of karma.

We might wonder why, even with some level of understanding of karma, we don't readily and enthusiastically engage in virtue. Engaging in negative karma, on the other hand, is something that comes about very naturally and easily. Nevertheless we can do something about this situation, and begin to change our ways. If we don't change from the situation where we readily engage in non-virtue and are hesitant to accumulate virtue, then for as long as we remain in the situation of just following negative karma and doing nothing about accumulating virtue, we are just keeping ourselves in that vicious cycle of creating more causes of suffering for ourselves. Whereas if we begin to really see that relationship between negative karma and suffering and virtue and happiness, then the more we develop our faith and understanding in that, the more we will be inclined to try to avoid accumulating negative karma. Rather than voluntarily engaging in negative karma, we will try to be wary of creating negative karma and be quite joyful and happy with the opportunity for accumulating virtue.

Thus, as Gyaltsab's commentary explains, if someone has faith then the causes for obtaining a high status, which are practices such as the ten virtues, will be established. In other words, by relying on these practices one will be a suitable vessel. So if we find ourselves in a state of really wishing to engage in the ten virtues, then we can consider ourselves as a suitable vessel for obtaining high status. The alternative would be quite difficult for us.

In relation to the second line of the verse 'Due to having wisdom one truly knows' the commentary explains, that 'due to having wisdom' refers to having the potential to develop the realisation of the profound wisdom of emptiness, so with that potential one will have the capacity to truly know.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary further explains that if one were to ask which of these two is primary, then the answer is the wisdom realising emptiness, because that is the actual antidote for overcoming samsara. The commentary further explains that while the wisdom realising emptiness is the actual antidote that will free one from cyclic existence, the essential prerequisite is faith in the infallibility of karma.

Without having first developed faith in karma there is no possible way of gaining the wisdom realising emptiness.

#### 4. CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRAINEE WHO IS A VESSEL

The corresponding verse in the root text is:

6. *One who does not neglect the practices  
Through desire, hatred, fear or bewilderment  
Is known as one of faith,  
A superior vessel for definite goodness.*

In explaining the meaning of the verse, Gyalsab Je first poses this rhetorical question: Having explained a suitable vessel needing to have faith and wisdom, then who is the suitable vessel? The commentary then explains the meaning of the verse. In this way the characteristics of the suitable vessel who is **endowed with faith** are presented.

- The line 'one who does not neglect the practice of the Dharma through desire' refers to, for example, longing to eat the meat of animals and killing animals out of that desire. That would be neglecting the Dharma due to desire. One of the characteristics of a suitable vessel is to be free from that.
- The second characteristic of a suitable vessel is that they should be someone who is free from hatred, for example, free from taking the life of others out of hatred. So, being free from neglecting the Dharma as a result of anger and hatred.
- The third characteristic is to be free from negligence of the Dharma out of fear. This refers to, for example, taking the lives of others as a result of fear of the law, i.e. being drafted to the army. So, a suitable vessel is free from that condition.
- The fourth is to be free from the condition of neglecting the Dharma due to bewilderment or ignorance. That would be for example, holding onto the view that it is acceptable to create negativity in order to support one's family, such as one's parents.

Gyalsab's commentary then states that any being who is free from these four conditions i.e. free from the negligence of the Dharma due to desire, hatred, fear or bewilderment, as well as having strong faith in karma, is someone who is said to be a 'vessel with faith'. And such a person is indeed a vessel that definitely has the conditions to lead one to the result of definite goodness.

The next verse particularly relates to a Gyalsab's rhetorical question: Who is a suitable vessel **endowed with wisdom**?

7. *Having analysed well  
All deeds of body, speech, and mind,  
Those who realise what benefit self and others  
And always perform these are wise.*

As Gyalsab's commentary explains, this refers to beings who analyse their body, speech and mind, where 'analysing' refers to analysing the state of mind, to see whether it is a virtuous, or a non-virtuous, or ethically neutral state of mind. Having distinguished between virtuous, non-virtuous and a neutral state of mind, and then abandoned the non-virtuous and neutral states of mind, one adopts a virtuous state of mind, and dedicates whatever virtues one has accumulated to the ultimate awakening of enlightenment for the sake of other sentient beings. Thus, as the last two lines read, the one who realises what is beneficial for oneself and for others is a wise one, i.e. a vessel endowed with wisdom.

Having a full understanding based on the earlier analysis of distinguishing virtue from non-virtue and neutral states of

mind, abandoning that which is non-virtuous and neutral, and adopting virtue, and then dedicating that towards the ultimate state of enlightenment, is the way to ultimately benefit oneself and others. A person with such understanding and knowledge and who is endowed with wisdom would then be called a wise one, a real scholar.

Actually, relating the meaning of this verse to our everyday lives in a practical sense is where we can derive the real benefit of studying the meaning of this verse. This is actually the advice of Buddha Shakyamuni, who in his teachings reminded us again and again that we must analyse and check our actions of the three doors. It is not all that complex when we think about it. Checking ourselves falls into checking the three outlets of our actions, which are of our body, speech and mind. These three are referred to the 'doors' as they are the outlets of actions that we need to be mindful of. We need to pay attention to the thoughts that occur in one's mind, and analyse them well. 'Is it a virtuous thought or a negative thought or a neutral one?' Then when one engages in verbal actions, really thinking about what kind of verbal actions they are, 'Are they virtuous, non-virtuous or neutral?' Similarly we analyse our physical actions.

In this way when we really analyse and think about it, if we are able to recognise and acknowledge that a thought, an intention to speak, or a physical action is negative, then we try to avoid that. At the same time we accumulate or enhance that which is virtuous. We should also not leave things in a neutral state either, but rather make sure that we transform it into virtue.

If we engage in analysis by following the advice of the verse, by avoiding creating negative karma and adopting virtue, and further dedicating that towards complete enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings then, as the teaching states, such a person would be a really wise person; a person endowed with wisdom.

This is something that we can try to adopt in our daily life; taking such a responsibility will really benefit us. These lines give us succinct advice for our daily lives. This is, of course, an abbreviated form of how to engage in the practice, which will be explained in greater detail further on in the text. However it is good to remind ourselves that all of the advice presented here is a means to be used in our daily life.

Gyalsab's commentary further illustrates that if one has that knowledge, but does not engage in the practice of abandoning the negativities and adopting virtue, then the knowledge and the wisdom or intelligence that one gains will be nothing more than a knowledge of the contemporary works and sciences. This refers to the five major types of science or fields of study which are: 1) arts and crafts, 2) medicine, 3) grammar and poetry 4) logic and 5) inner science or philosophy i.e. relating to the treatises. Gyalsab's commentary indicates that even if one has the knowledge of the five sciences, if one does not have the intelligence to distinguish between what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded and actually engage in that practice, then that person can not be called a wise person in this context.

In summary, as the commentary explains, the one who is endowed with the full understanding and knowledge of how to engage in the practices, and thus actually engages in the practices relating to the small, medium and great scopes, is someone who is endowed with faith and wisdom, and is called a 'suitable vessel'.