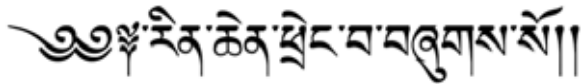


Nagarjuna's Precious Garland



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We can spend some time in meditation. [meditation]

While maintaining an inward focus that is free from external distractions, we can now generate this motivation: 'For the sake of all sentient beings, in order to liberate them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of enlightenment, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well'.

Earlier there was a verse in the Tibetan text that was not considered to be part of the root text, and thus not assigned a number, but which was included as a numbered verse in the English translation. Thus, although according to the Tibetan text we are up to verse 152, in the English translation we are now at verse 153.

2.2.2.3. STOPPING ATTACHMENT TO WOMEN

2.2.2.3.2. *Specific refutation of the cleanliness of a woman's body*

2.2.2.3.2.1. Refuting that a woman's parts are beautiful (cont.)

2.2.2.3.2.1.4. *Though a woman's body is unclean, the stupid call it a cause of pleasure*

This heading shows how to overcome the misconception of ordinary beings that the body is an object of pleasure, which is a foolish perception.

The corresponding verse reads:

153 *Just as pigs are greatly attached
To a site of excrement, urine, and vomit,
So some lustful ones desire
A site of excrement, urine, and vomit.*

As the root text is quite clear, Gyaltsab Je does not elaborate much when explaining the meaning of the verses, thus the commentary's explanations on these verses are brief:

For example, *just as pigs are greatly attached to a site of excrement, urine and vomit, so some lustful ones, like pigs that desire a site of excrement, urine and vomit, are greatly attached to women.*

Generally speaking, pigs roll around in the filth of their sty and are actually attached to the place. Using that as an analogy, those who lust after a woman's body are oblivious to its faults and become attached to her body. The next verse relates to the same point:

154 *This city of a body with protruding holes
From which impurities emerge
Is called an object of pleasure
By beings who are stupid.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

This body which internally is a city of worms and with protruding holes from which impurities emerge, is called an object of pleasure by beings who are stupid.

Thus understanding that this is mistaken awareness one overcomes attachment to women.

First of all, one should understand that the faults that are presented here are clearly the faults of the body in general. However because this advice is specifically directed to the king, a woman's body is used as an example. The description of the impurities of the body applies to equally to male and female bodies, and it is just a matter of interchanging the advice according to gender. A man needing to overcome attachment to a woman's body would think of the faults of a woman's body, while a woman trying to overcome attachment to a man would use a male body.

The commentary first of all explains how, *internally*, the body *is a city of worms*. It has been scientifically proven that there are billions and billions of living organisms, or bacteria in one's body, which can be seen under a microscope. Then, of course, there are worms and other parasites in our body. So in that way, we can think of the body as being analogous to a city of worms or parasites. Just as a city refers to a place where many people dwell there, a body is like a city for many organisms living together. Furthermore, from the *protruding holes* of this body, impure substances *emerge*.

Despite this, the body is still perceived as an object of pleasure by those *who are stupid*, because they have not overcome their mistaken awareness. As the commentary explains, *by understanding it is a mistaken awareness, one overcomes attachment to women*.

A *mistaken awareness* is a faulty perception that does not see things as they exist in reality. When things are perceived in a way that is contrary to how they really exist, then that is a mistaken awareness. Whereas a *correct awareness* perceives things as they really are. It is a mistaken awareness to see the body as being clean and an object of pleasure, when in reality it is filled with impurities.

This presentation shows us a very practical way to overcome lust and attachment to the bodies of others. It is not based on speculation but on fact and reality, and that's why it isn't far-fetched to meditate on these faults. So it's a matter of really thinking about and contemplating these facts, bringing them to mind more vividly in one's meditation.

As explained here, the body is filled with various worms or bacteria and in that sense we can imagine the body being full of living organisms. Anyone who likes meat would instantly lose any sense of attachment to a piece of meat that is covered by maggots. This is really true isn't it? Likewise, it is as if our body is infested with maggots, in the sense of being filled with different types of worms, parasites and bacteria. When we think about it in this way, then the strong sense of lust and attachment arising from the misconception of the body being pure and attractive is reduced, and hence strong attachment and lust is overcome. This is true for both men and women.

We can all see the faults of attachment at play in the world. There is so much trouble and angst caused by strong attachment to someone else. A man strongly attached to a woman, for example, might go to extreme measures and acts of stupidity, which result in harm to

himself and to others. A troubled mind and anger are a result of attachment. Of course the same sort of faults apply to a woman who is very strongly attached to a man.

We can see how so much trouble and angst is due to attachment. So it is essential that we try to overcome strong attachment. Therefore we need to contemplate these points. Even though Nagarjuna's advice was explicitly directed to the king, we need to take this advice as a personal instruction, and try to apply it in our own practice by using it in our meditation. Even though it may not serve to entirely overcome our attachment, it will definitely help to reduce attachment. When the intensity of lust and attachment is gradually reduced in our mind, then we will eventually be able to completely overcome it. This is how we need to put it into practice.

In order to apply this practice, we need to begin by acknowledging that attachment is a vice, a negative state of mind. If we are not able to do that, then we will not see the relevance of these practices. As mentioned earlier, when we contemplate examples of the disadvantages of attachment, seeing how so many faults and vices occur as a result, we will develop the urge to overcome attachment. If we understand that attachment is a negative and faulty state of mind, a wrong consciousness, then the wish to overcome it will arise.

Thus, we will see the relevance of the practices that are presented here. If we apply this practice, it will help us deal with our attachment. Later on there will be further explanations on the disadvantages of attachment and the need to apply the means to overcome it. Rather than assuming that the advice on overcoming attachment is for others, one should take it as a personal advice and really work on it.

2.2.2.3.2.2. Refuting that the whole body is beautiful

This is sub-divided into four:

2.2.2.3.2.2.1. Stopping attachment to a woman's body in general

2.2.2.3.2.2.2. Stopping attachment to its colour and shape

2.2.2.3.2.2.3. Consequent unsuitability of attachment to a woman's body

2.2.2.3.2.2.4. Chiding persons who praise women

Even though the fourth sub-heading will be explained later, it is good to understand its proper context and implications. Here *chiding persons who praise women*, refers to those who praise the physical beauty of women and thus beautify a woman's body. There are treatises that focus on the beautiful attributes or features of a woman's body, which are intended to increase lustfulness. In order to increase attachment they are written in a poetic way, using metaphors to describe features of a woman's body such as her face being like the moon, her voice being very sweet and so forth. Through reading such treatises, one will be naturally drawn towards the object of one's pleasures and attachment and lust will increase. Such treatises are wrong, and those who read (and write) them should be chided.

2.2.2.3.2.2.1. Stopping attachment to a woman's body in general

The verse relating to this is:

155 *Once you yourself have seen the impurities
Of excrement, urine, and so forth,
How could you be attracted
To a body composed of those?*

This is not very difficult to understand. Gyaltsab Je's commentary adds just a few points:

Once you yourself have seen the impurities of a woman's excrement, urine and so forth. How could you be attracted to a body composed of those impurities?

This rhetorical question implies that having actually seen the impurities (in this case, of a woman's body) such as *excrement, urine and so forth*, any one in their right mind should be able to overcome attachment or attraction to a body that is composed of those impurities.

The next verse, which also relates to this sub-heading, explains how when a cause is comprised of impure substances, then the effect can rightly be assumed to also be impure.

156 *Why should you lust desirously for this
While recognizing it as an unclean form
Produced by a seed whose essence is impure,
A mixture of blood and semen?*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je further explains the meaning of this verse:

As its cause and nature is inferior, because of being produced by a seed whose essence is impure, a mixture of blood and semen; why should you lust desirously for this, while recognizing it as an unclean form?

As explained here, the very cause of the body that is the object of desire is *produced by a seed whose essence is impure*. According to the explanation in both teachings and Tibetan medical texts, the essence of our body is essentially blood and semen. It is the initial mixing of semen and blood that served as the basis to produce this body. It is also explained in the Tibetan medical texts, that if one has healthy blood it serves as an ultimate immunity that prevents various diseases. It seems to be true that clean and healthy blood prevent different kinds of diseases.

We can also relate this to the essence of nutritious food. The nutrients extracted from the food that we eat helps to promote the health of the blood and semen in our body. That is another way to gain an understanding of those Tibetan medical explanations.

In any case, the blood and semen would not naturally be considered as being pure or clean substances. We can feel quite repulsed by the very sight of blood or semen. So, when the body is produced by these repulsive substances why, in a right state of mind, would we lust desirously for a body that is the result of those substances? In other words, it is not appropriate or suitable to develop lust for such a body.

The next verse included under this sub-heading is:

157 *One who lies on this impure mass
Covered by skin moistened
With those fluids, merely lies
On top of a woman's bladder.*

As Gyaltsab Je further explains in his commentary:

*An impure body is naturally filled with impurities.
One who lies on this impure mass covered by skin,*

moistened with those fluids, merely lies on top of a woman's bladder [stomach].

Both male and female bodies are naturally filled with different types of fluids. In fact, it has been explained that 80% of our body mass is actually fluid. There are different kinds of fluids that can ooze out, some having a watery consistency, and others being yellowish in colour. When the body has some sort of swelling, or cyst, for example, the fluids excreted from them are repulsive in both smell and colour. Apparently our body is mostly filled with these kinds of fluids, which our skin prevents us from seeing. So the reality of the body is that it is mass of fluid that is covered up with skin.

This is further explained using the example of a woman's body: *One who lies on this impure mass covered by skin, moistened with those fluids, is merely lying on top of a woman's bladder which, in itself, is not very attractive.*

2.2.2.3.2.2.2. Stopping attachment to its colour and shape

This heading is sub-divided into three categories:

2.2.2.3.2.2.2.1. Stopping attachment to the colour and shape of a woman's body in general

2.2.2.3.2.2.2.2. Stopping attachment to a beautiful body

2.2.2.3.2.2.2.3. Thinking that one's own body, like a woman's, is unclean

As mentioned previously, the third sub-heading is one of the main points. Regardless of whether one is a man or woman, one's own body is as unclean as a body that is the object of attachment.

2.2.2.3.2.2.2.1. Stopping attachment to the colour and shape of a woman's body in general

As mentioned previously there are certain kinds of treatises that beautify the female body and talk favourably of its attributes. By applying beautiful metaphors referring to the colour or complexion or the shape of a woman's body, whoever reads it will actually start to feel desire and attachment. This section of the text refutes the idea that although the inside of the body is unclean and is made up of impure and unclean substances, there may be something to the outside beauty of colour and shape. In order to overcome such a misconception, the text specifically talks about overcoming attachment in relation to colour and shape. We can also see here how the text is a meticulous and tactful presentation on how to overcome all the different misconceptions of attachment. The verse relating to this sub-heading is as follows:

*158 If whether beautiful or ugly,
Whether old or young,
All female bodies are unclean,
From what attribute does your lust arise?*

Gyaltsab Je expands on the meaning of the verse:

*If whether a woman's body is beautiful or ugly,
whether old or young, all female bodies are unclean,
from what attribute does your lust arise?* For there is no basis for attachment.

Keep in mind that this refers to the body of both genders. As I have mentioned previously, the text doesn't deny that there are beautiful women. From a general perception there are definitely conventionally beautiful as well as ugly women, as well as those with young bodies

and those with old bodies. However, even though there are these conventional distinctions, both beautiful and ugly bodies are both equally impure—it's not as if the beautiful body is pure and the ugly body is impure. Likewise the bodies of the young and the old are equally impure in nature—this is the reality.

When the commentary asks, *from what attribute does your lust arise?* And responds, *there is no basis for attachment*, it is emphasising this approach as a way to overcome lust.

2.2.2.3.2.2.2.2. Stopping attachment to a beautiful body

This is sub-divided into two:

2.2.2.3.2.2.2.2.1. Unsuitability of attachment

2.2.2.3.2.2.2.2.2. Suitability of disgust

2.2.2.3.2.2.2.2.1. Unsuitability of attachment

This section is explained in three verses.

*159 Just as it is not fit to desire
Filth although it has a good colour,
Is very fresh, and has a nice shape,
So is it with a woman's body.*

The commentary further adds to the meaning:

Just as it is not fit to desire a mass of filth although it has good colour, is very fresh, and has a nice shape. So is it with the example of a woman's body. It is not appropriate to have attachment at any time.

One is aware in a conventional sense that *a mass of filth*, even though it may appear clean and *fresh* and having *nice shape* and *colour*, we know that, because it is a mass of filth, it is *not appropriate* to desire it. There is no reason for anyone in their right mind to desire such a mass of filth. It is exactly the same with a woman's body, thus it is not appropriate to be attached to it.

*160 How could the nature of this putrid corpse,
A rotten mass covered outside by skin,
Not be seen when it looks
So very horrible?*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary adds:

How could the nature of this putrid corpse, a rotten mass covered outside by skin, not be seen when it looks so very repulsive and horrible?

This is again quite easily understood. The nature of the body is likened to a corpse because the substances inside the body are like *rotten mass*. There are repulsive things inside the body that are merely covered by the skin. If we think about its nature, which is very *repulsive and horrible*, then how could we not see the body in that way, and thus overcome attachment. This rhetorical question in the commentary implies that it is appropriate to think in this way.

The next verse reads:

*161 "The skin is not foul,
It is like a garment."
Like a hide over a mass of impurities
How could it be clean?*

We can see how the text has worked from the inside of the body out to the surface. We will all agree that even though it is not externally apparent, when the inside of the body is exposed it is quite repulsive. Using things that are conventionally considered as being repulsive can show how to overcome attachment to the body, which is

filled with such substances. Having gone through all of the internal parts, and being left with the bare skin, one may feel 'well the skin is beautiful, which is a sufficient reason to be attached to the body'. This verse shows us how to overcome that misconception.

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je comments:

If you think; *'the skin is not foul, because it is like a garment', as it is like a hide over a mass of impurities, how could it be clean?*

Here the skin is described as being *like a hide over a mass of impurities*. A flayed skin is clearly not attractive or beautiful at all. Basically our skin is just like a hide that is concealing the impurities within the body. The very fact that you need to beautify it means that the skin is unclean in its very nature; if the skin was naturally beautiful, then one would not need to spend money beautifying it.

2.2.2.3.2.2.2.2. Suitability of disgust

This section addresses any lingering doubts about why the body is suitable to be called an object of disgust.

The root text reads:

162 *A pot though beautiful outside,
Is reviled when filled with impurities.
Why is the body, filled with impurities
And foul by nature, not reviled?*

163 *If you revile against impurities,
Why not against this body
Which befouls clean scents,
Garlands, food, and drink?*

Gyaltsab Je expands a bit on this in his commentary:

A pot though beautiful outside, is commonly reviled when filled with impurities. Likewise, why is the body, filled with impurities and foul by nature, not reviled? It is suitable to be reviled and not suitable to be attached to.

If you revile against externally expelled impurities, why not against this body, which befouls clean scents, garlands, food and drink? It is suitable to be reviled and not praised.

I have touched on this point earlier. Whatever pure and clean food we eat, it becomes impure, disgusting and unclean as soon as the food enters the mouth and is chewed. So if one reviles the impure substances expelled from the body, then why is the body itself not also unclean? After all, it is the body that actually transforms pure substances into impure and unclean ones.

2.2.2.3.2.2.2.3. Thinking that one's own body, like a woman's, is unclean

The verses relating to this sub-division are:

164 *Just as one's own or others'
Impurities are reviled,
Why not revile against one's own
And others' unclean bodies?*

165 *Since your own body is
As unclean as a woman's,*

The main point being presented here is that although this advice on how to overcome lust for a woman's body is being presented to the king, we should also contemplate the nature and impurities of our own body in our personal practice of meditation. As I regularly emphasise, we can scrutinise and really investigate our own body

from the bottom of our soles to the crown of our head, and then understand that there is nothing pure about our body. When we come to the conclusion that it is in the nature of the body to be impure and unclean, then we can apply that to other bodies that we may be attached to. Knowing how their bodies, which seem so attractive and beautiful are exactly the same as our own body might also be a more appropriate way to do a meditation to overcome attachment to the bodies of others.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary adds a point to clarify the meaning of the verses:

Just as one's own or others' impurities are reviled, likewise why not revile one's own and others' unclean bodies, since your own body is as unclean as a woman's?

One's own body can be used as a basis to see the impurities and unclean substances of the body in general, which can then be applied to the bodies of others. The conclusion is that there is no difference whatsoever between the impurities of one's own body and the impurities of the bodies of others. Both are equally unsuitable as objects of attraction and attachment.

From this presentation we can see how it helps the mind when we do not discriminate between our body and the bodies of others. Sometimes we might praise the body of another and criticise our own body. Or there might be times when we praise our own body thinking we are very beautiful, and criticise others who are not so beautiful.

What is being presented here are ways to acknowledge how, regardless of appearance, one's own body and the bodies of others are in the same nature of being impure and unclean. This will then eventually lead to the elimination of attachment.

It is good to use these passages as a means to overcome other delusions as well. Although this presentation is a particular antidote for overcoming strong lust and attachment to the bodies of others, as well as one's own body, we can use these very same reasons to overcome pride, and a critical or judgemental state of mind about the bodies of others. With respect to pride, we might feel 'I'm really beautiful; there is no one else who is more beautiful than me'. At this point one might develop a heightened feeling about our own beauty, where there will be a instinctive state of mind that will be condescending and critical of the bodies of others and so forth.

As a means of overcoming pride in our own body, we can use the same reasons that are used to overcome attachment, in order to reduce any critical and judgemental attitudes towards the bodies of others. In this way we can see how this technique really works to overcome the many different levels of negativity or delusions in the mind.

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Edited Version

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