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# Nagarjuna's Precious Garland

འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷན་པའི་བཀའ་བློན་པོ་ལྷན་པའི་སྐུ་མཚན་ལྷན་པོ།།

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18 October 2011

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Along the lines of the motivation that we have just generated with the refuge and bodhicitta prayer, we can now engage in the meditation practice. [meditation]

We can set the motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings, to liberate them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will listen the teachings and put them into practice well.

This implies overcoming the self-cherishing attitude and acquainting oneself more and more with the attitude and deeds of cherishing other beings.

One of the main points is the importance of acquiring what is useful and discarding that which is not beneficial. Otherwise we may find ourselves practising the opposite, which is acquiring what is harmful and discarding what is useful.

It is essential that we recognise and make the distinction between the positive attitudes of benefiting others, and those that are focused mainly on our own self-interest. It is the selfish attitudes that really hinder our progress and in particular our relationships with others. If we are not mindful about really working at combating the self-cherishing attitude, then whatever study or practice we engage in will not bear good fruit. Furthermore we need to be really mindful about being considerate in our relationships with others; we need to be mindful of their needs and have a genuine concern for them. That is the optimum way to maintain good relationships with others, and when we adopt these positive attitudes they will make us genuinely joyful, content and happy. That is worthwhile to consider.

The main point is that we need to maintain our inner companion of a positive mind at all costs, as that is the only one who unflinchingly assists and guides us at all times. We always need to cherish and try to maintain that positive attitude. Even though we rely upon and enjoy the company of external companions, they are by nature unreliable. External companions are naturally subject to change, thus we cannot rely on them completely and they cannot assist us wherever we go. Because they cannot possibly be with us all the time there will inevitably be times when they will fail to help us. Thus the only one who can be relied upon to assist us at all times is our own compassionate mind, the unflinching inner companion that can be with us at all times. This is something that we need to recognise.

## 1.5. The way to appoint ministers,

We have covered the verses that explain how to appoint religious leaders and ministers, and now we are up to appointing generals.

### 1.5.3. Appointing generals

Again, we can relate to this very practical advice given to the king to ourselves.

324. *Appoint generals who are generous,  
Without attachments, brave, kindly,  
Who use [the treasury] properly, are  
steadfast,  
Always conscientious, and practice the  
doctrine.*

In explaining the meaning of the verse, Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

*Appoint generals who are generous; without attachment to wealth; brave; kindly and faithful to the king;...*

The meaning of *appoint generals who are generous* with their wealth is quite clear. *Without attachment* refers particularly to having the virtue of non-attachment. So *appoint generals without attachment to wealth*, also means endowed with the virtue of non-attachment.

*Being brave* is an essential quality for generals, and it also indicates being brave enough to take up any task as directed by the king, and not to be daunted by it. *Bravery* can also be related to bodhisattvas. The Tibetan term for bodhisattva has the connotation of being incredibly brave in taking upon themselves the personal responsibility to work for the welfare of all sentient beings.

Another necessary quality described in the text is to be *kindly*. The Tibetan word for this literally means having a very gentle mind, in contrast to a rough and stubborn nature. Being *faithful* (or close-hearted in Tibetan) to the king indicates a sense of fondness for the king. This is a really important attribute for the king's ministers to have. The tasks the king gives them would not be completed willingly without the sense of faithfulness, close-heartedness or fondness for the king.

On this note, I recall, an FPMT meeting many years ago up in Chenrezig Institute, which was attended by many geshe, as well as Lama Zopa Rinpoche and Ven. Roger Kunsang. We were discussing the appointment of teachers and translators to the various centres, and the best way to organise all of that. I suggested that whether it is a teacher or translator, or any other centre appointment, it is most important that they have three main qualities: first and foremost to have fondness and closeness with Lama Zopa Rinpoche as the spiritual head of the FPMT organisation; secondly to have a fondness and affinity with FPMT organisation itself; and finally to have a close affinity with whatever centre they are working for. At that point, Roger looked very pleased, and said, 'That is really important. I would like to send that message to all of the centres. These are qualities which are really necessary'. So it is really important to have that sort of fondness and close infinity with whatever organisation or person you are working for.

Gyaltsab Je's explanation of the necessary qualities of the king's generals continues:

...and *who use the treasury properly; are steadfast in not being influenced by others; and because of not consuming alcohol are always conscientious; and thus practise the doctrine.*

Another of the necessary qualities of the ministers is that they *use the treasury properly*. If the great wealth of the king's treasury is not used properly, then it is vulnerable to corruption and so forth. Therefore the ministers need to be honest.

As indicated in the verse, the ministers also need to be *steadfast in not being influenced by others*. This is another very important quality. It would be hard to trust a person who is easily influenced by others, because when they agree to perform a particular task, they could easily be influenced by others. Therefore this quality of being *steadfast* is really important.

As the commentary explains, *conscientious* relates to avoiding the *consumption of alcohol*. As clearly indicated here, intoxicants such as alcohol are one of the main causes for one to a lack conscientiousness. Under the influence of *alcohol* one might engage in all sorts of frivolous activities that are damaging to oneself and the king and so forth. Therefore the quality of being conscientious refers to avoiding alcohol, and in this way *practising the doctrine*.

We can see that all these attributes are relevant to our own lives. Those of you who have taken five lay person's vows, which include the vow of not consuming alcohol, will recall that avoiding alcohol is an auxiliary vow that helps one to maintain a conscientious mind; so as not to breach the other vows.

#### 1.5.4. Appointing treasurers, etc.

This refers to appointing treasurers and other employees. The first verse under this heading reads:

325. *As administrators appoint elders  
Of religious disposition, pure, and able,  
Who know what should be done, are skilled  
in the [royal] treatises,  
Understand good policy, are unbiased, and  
are kindly.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of this verse thus:

*As administrators appoint elders of religious disposition, even if they are lay practitioners who are of a kind character; are pure of selfishness and able to perform tasks;...*

The specific mention of lay practitioners indicates that these qualities are to be adopted by you as well. On a personal level, as a *lay practitioner* one needs to have the qualities of having a kind disposition and being *pure* of selfishness and so forth.

*...who know what should be done with the tasks at hand; are skilled in the royal treatises; understand good policy; are unbiased; and are kindly and close-hearted to the king.*

This is clearly explaining that administrators need to have the ability to perform whatever task they are given, who have the wisdom or intelligence to know *the tasks at hand*

that need to be performed, and being able to distinguish between tasks that are necessary and those that are not. Being *skilled in the royal treatises* indicates being versed in the royal policies that are the means of government. Other important qualities are being *unbiased, kindly* and, as mentioned previously, having a *close-hearted* relationship with the king.

The next verse reads:

326. *Every month you should hear from them  
About all the income and expenses,  
And having heard, you yourself should tell  
them  
All that should be done for the centres of  
doctrine and so forth.*

As Gyaltsab Je explains:

It is not sufficient just to appoint them, *but every month you should hear from them about all the income and expenses of the king, and having heard, you yourself should tell them all that should be done*, such as when there is a deficiency in funds *for the centres of doctrine and so forth*, and increase the amount for the intended projects.

The commentary adds that *it is not sufficient to just appoint the minister*, but it is important to ensure that they are actually carrying out their given tasks and responsibilities. For us this means that if we are given any task in any kind of organisation, it is not sufficient to just assume the title. Rather, we need to ensure that we actually engage in the task at hand, and fulfil the responsibilities of that role. This is very practical advice.

As indicated here, the king needs to check the accounts on a *monthly* or other regular basis, to ensure that the appointed ministers are performing their tasks properly, making sure that the funds are being used for *the centres of doctrine and so forth*, for the Dharma to spread. If there is a lack of sufficient funds then the king needs to *increase the amount for the intended projects*, and in that way to take that responsibility for completing the task.

The following verse is quite easy to understand:

327. *If your realm exists for the doctrine  
And not for fame or desire,  
Then it will be extremely fruitful.  
If not, its fruit will be misfortune.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

The reason for advising to engage in Dharma is that *if your realm exists for the doctrine*, then because of that reason *and not for fame or desire, then your kingdom will be extremely fruitful*. If it is for fame and so forth, then *its fruit will be misfortune*, to be experienced in the lower realms.

This relates to the earlier advice to the king in relation to how to practise in accordance with the Dharma, with respect to himself, and how to appoint his ministers and generals and so forth.

As the commentary explains, *if your realm exists for the doctrine*, indicates that because your realm exists for the doctrine or for the sake of the Dharma, then *your kingdom will be extremely fruitful*. In other words, governing your kingdom with policies that are endowed with the values of the Dharma will bear extremely good fruit in the

future. In contrast to that, if it is governed *for fame and so forth then its fruit will be misfortune*, which will be experienced as being *reborn in the lower realm*.

## **2. INSTRUCTION IN NON-DEGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

This section is subdivided into two:

2.1. Instruction in non-degeneration of previously existent practices

2.2. Developing previously non-existent practices

Again, we can derive an understanding of the meaning of the verses just from the layout of the headings in the commentary. These two subdivisions indicate that the first priority is to maintain whatever practices have been done previously, and not allow them to decline. That is very important advice. Then while maintaining what has been already previously established, develop new practices that have not been established in the past.

In relation to this point, I recall that several years ago Jampa Ignyen, who was at that time an ordained monk, sought advice from Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey about whether he should go on retreat or do some other practice. The advice what was that while it is good for you ponder other practices, it is also worthwhile to really consider maintaining what you already have. Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey said, 'You already have your ordination vows of a monk, so wouldn't it be worthwhile to actually maintain and preserve them at all costs? Then, based on that, you gradually add other practices'. When Ven. Fedor heard that advice later, he commented that it was incredibly sound and practical advice.

In his presentation of these outlines, Gyaltsab Rinpoche is again showing his incredible understanding of the text, and how it relates to the practices. The way the root text is presented in the outlines shows Gyaltsab Rinpoche's great intelligence, and his really deep understanding.

### **2.1. Instruction in non-degeneration of previously existent practices**

As the commentary explains, one should ensure that what one has already established in the past does not degenerate.

This outline is further subdivided into:

2.1.1. Transition

2.1.2. Instructions in non-degeneration

#### **2.1.1. Transition**

*328. O Lord of Humans, since in this world nowadays  
Most are prone to wreak havoc on each other,  
Listen to how your governance  
And your practice should be.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains that:

If you have this qualm: When the king practises the doctrine then he would have to go against the royal policies of punishing others and so forth, while adopting the royal policies of punishing others with the death sentence and so forth would be against the practice of the doctrine. Thus it must be

impossible to practise these two without contradiction.

This qualm presents the implication of what is being explained to the king. The advice on royal policy that is presented to the king by Nagarjuna is in accordance with the values of the Dharma, and the king might then have the qualm, 'How could I possibly implement the practices of the Dharma that might go against *policies* on implementing *punishment* such as *death sentences and so forth*'.

The commentary then explains the response:

*That is not the case, O Lord of humans, since in this world nowadays most are prone to wreak havoc on each other, which is harmful to the kingdom as well; thus, listen to how your governance and your practice should be applied without contradiction.*

Addressing the king as *O Lord of humans*, Nagarjuna explains that these days people are prone to causing destruction and havoc for each other which, in turn, will affect the peace and integrity of the kingdom. Thus, the king is told, *your governance should be applied without contradiction*.

#### **2.1.2. Actual instruction in non-degeneration**

This is subdivided into four:

2.1.2.1. Gathering those of special powers

2.1.2.2. Making oneself compassionate

2.1.2.3. Freeing prisoners and making prisons comfortable

2.1.2.4. If not reformable, banishing them from the country

Again we can see the relevant advice that is presented within the outlines. Gathering those of special powers indicates how to appoint those who have special powers, i.e. who are able to be agents of reform. Secondly, those reformers should be compassionate, which is incredibly important advice. Third is freeing prisoners and making prisoners comfortable. Lastly, when prisoners are not able to be reformed then they should be banished to a far away place, where they cannot cause havoc and destruction in the kingdom.

##### **2.1.2.1. GATHERING THOSE OF SPECIAL POWERS**

*329. Let there always be around you many persons  
Old in experience, of good lineage,  
Knowing good policy, who shrink from ill deeds,  
Are agreeable, and know what should be done.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of the verse thus:

If those who lack special powers are appointed [as governing bodies] the fault of not punishing those who are punishable and punishing those who are not punishable will incur. Thus *let there always be around you many persons old in experience*, who have the intelligence to know what is suitable to be done and what is not. If of bad lineage then the fault of lacking dignity and a good heart will incur, thus appoint those *of good lineage; knowing good policy* of the kingdom; *who shrink from ill deeds; are agreeable*

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with other governing bodies, *and know what should be done* favourable to the policies.

First of all there is a presentation of the reason why it is necessary to appoint those with special powers. If *the governing bodies lack the special powers* (indicating having authority with the qualities that are presented), then *the fault of not punishing those who are punishable and who deserve punishment, while punishing those who are not punishable and who do not deserve to be punished, will occur*. These practices are commonplace even in our times. If a judge is not fair or not skilled, then the wrong sentence might be passed down. Worse would be the case if the judges and so forth are corrupt, then they would condemn those who have not actually done wrong. This is a grave mistake. So the importance of appointing those governing bodies who have special powers is emphasised here.

Furthermore it is important to appoint those who have the intelligence and wisdom know *what is suitable to be done and what is not*. And if they are of *bad lineage* then they may disrespect the fair and righteous policies and impose very severe, harsh punishments. Thus the king is advised to appoint those of good lineage.

*Knowing good policy of the kingdom*, means having a good understanding of the policies, and *shrink from ill deeds* means avoiding engaging in negative deeds. Being *agreeable with other governing bodies* means not being in conflict with other governing bodies with respect to the law and actual policies, and ensuring that *there is agreement*, good communication, and a good relationship with other governing bodies. *What should be done favourable to the policies* means being able to pass laws that are not harmful but favourable to the king's policies. So these are the qualities indicated by the term *special powers*.

*Knowing what should be done favourable to the policies* also indicates that whatever the policy that is adopted the governing bodies should ensure that it of benefit to the citizens, and not harmful.

As people would be aware the next session is the discussion, followed by the test. I have heard that people are taking their tests seriously and doing them well, so that definitely makes me happy. As mentioned previously, the discussion also needs to be conducted in a good manner.

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Edited Version*

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