

Nagarjuna's Precious Garland

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As usual we can spend some time in meditation. *[meditation]*

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines: For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment myself in order to liberate all beings from suffering, and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and engage in the practice well.

CHAPTER 5: ADVICE FOR EVEN BODHISATTVAS WISHING QUICKLY TO ATTAIN LIBERATION TO BECOME MONASTICS

In Gyaltsab Je's commentary the heading reads: An Indication For Both Monastics And Householders To Train In The Bodhisattva Deeds.

Types of practitioners

The advice in this chapter is for those who are lay practitioners as well those who are monastics. The particular connotation here is that lay people and monastics alike can practise the bodhisattva deeds, regardless of what level of the self-liberation vows they might have taken. Because bodhisattva deeds are practices that are the cause for enlightenment, one does not need to have taken the monastic vows to engage in these deeds.

Practices of a bodhisattva

A bodhisattva is an individual who has already developed an uncontrived bodhicitta mind. Bodhisattvas engage in the practice of the six perfections for the sole purpose of achieving enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, and to liberate them from suffering. It is to be understood that their goal is enlightenment, and that their purpose is to liberate all sentient beings.

Spontaneous vs effortless engagement

It is good to understand how an enlightened being, a buddha, constantly engages in helping sentient beings spontaneously and effortlessly. This comes about as a result of their practice along the path as a bodhisattva trainee. While on the path they have become familiar with an unceasing motivation of wishing to liberate all sentient beings, and for that purpose they aspire to achieve enlightenment. So, when they achieve their goal of enlightenment they will then unceasingly help all sentient beings effortlessly and spontaneously; that is because the buddha is simultaneously in meditative equipoise, while at the same time actively benefiting all sentient beings, by imparting teachings etc. For an enlightened being there is no distinction between meditative equipoise and post-meditative equipoise, and it should be understood that this comes about as a result of having previously trained on the path.

Uncontrived bodhicitta

It is when a trainee develops an uncontrived bodhicitta that they become a bodhisattva and enter the Great Vehicle or Mahayana path. Here we need to understand the difference

between uncontrived bodhicitta and contrived bodhicitta. Uncontrived bodhicitta means that the aspiration to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings is developed to the point where it is effortless and spontaneous.

Developing bodhicitta

In contrast, contrived bodhicitta requires an effort to develop that attitude. A contrived bodhicitta is cultivated through using the six causes to develop bodhicitta. Initially one contemplates how all beings have been one's mother numerous times in the past. Then one remembers their kindness, with the example of the kindness of our mother in this lifetime, and develops the wish to repay that kindness. This is followed by the development of great love and compassion. Then, as result of having thought about these points, the attitude of wishing to benefit all sentient beings develops in one's mind. However it is a contrived attitude because developing that attitude to benefit sentient beings still requires an effort based on cultivating the earlier attitudes. Whereas the actual bodhicitta attitude is effortless and spontaneous, and thus uncontrived.

The chapter has two subdivisions:

A. Brief teachings of what is to be adopted and discarded by bodhisattva householders and monastics

B. Extensive exposition

A. BRIEF TEACHINGS OF WHAT IS TO BE ADOPTED AND DISCARDED BY BODHISATTVA HOUSEHOLDERS AND MONASTICS

The first verse of the chapter reads:

401. *Then having become a monastic
You should first be intent on the training [in ethics].
You should endeavour at the discipline of individual liberation,
At hearing frequently, and delineating their meaning.*

The last verse of the previous chapter advised the king, *if from the unrighteousness of the world it is difficult to rule religiously, then it is right for you to become a monastic.* The practice of ethics for a lay practitioner, or a householder, is to take either the at the same time at the same time householder vows, or the five lay precepts for life. Having mentioned that if it is too difficult to refrain from certain misdeeds because of one's position, the king is advised that it is fitting to become a monastic, as a way to protect himself from those misdeeds. This is a profound instruction on how the practices of a bodhisattva are really based on ethics. As mentioned earlier, the practice of ethics for a lay practitioner, involves taking the five lay precepts for life, or the one-day vows or precepts, and for a monastic of course, there are further vows. The main thing to understand is how all practices are fundamentally based on ethics.

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

Giving up your sovereignty and then having become a monastic, you should first be intent on the higher training of ethics.

Here the king is being exhorted, 'Making the decision to take monastic or ordination vows is not sufficient until you are *intent on the higher training of ethics*, and really understand what those vows entail'. This is really very profound advice.

Here one needs to understand that it is the higher training of ethics that is being specified, in contrast to the normal

training of ethics. As you are aware, there are three higher trainings—ethics, concentration and wisdom. The practice of ethics in conjunction with taking refuge with firm conviction in the three jewels is defined as the higher training of ethics. Similarly, the higher training of concentration is the training of concentration, in conjunction with taking refuge with firm conviction in the three jewels. Likewise the higher training of wisdom is the training of wisdom, in conjunction with taking refuge with firm conviction in the three jewels.

This explanation clearly differentiates between these trainings and the trainings of non-Buddhist schools. What makes training a higher training is combining that training with pure refuge in the three jewels.

The essential point in the higher training of ethics is to take and keep vows such as the individual liberation vows. The main point in higher training of concentration is to engage in meditation practice to develop calm abiding. And the main point in the higher training of wisdom is to enhance the wisdom that leads to the development of special insight.

I have also previously mentioned in greater detail how the three trainings assist a trainee to reach the higher levels of realisation.¹ Without ethics, one cannot possibly develop concentration. Thus, to develop concentration, we need a firm base of ethics. Then having observed ethics, one can more easily train one's mind to develop concentration, on the basis of which one is able to develop wisdom. The three trainings are presented in this progressive manner.

I will not go into further detail now, as it has been explained previously. On those occasions I pointed out how the three trainings are a progressive means to overcome the distracted mind and, in particular, the delusions. It is good for you to keep these essential points in mind.

To continue Gyaltzab Je's commentary:

You should endeavour at the condensed discipline and the four divisions of orally transmitted teachings of individual liberation, and hearing the three scriptural collections frequently, and delineating their meaning as a means to fully understand the essential qualities to be adopted.

The ethics that form the basis for monastics are the vows of *individual liberation*. There is an explanation of these in the condensed discipline as well as the *four divisions of orally transmitted teachings* on the topic of *individual liberation*. Here the king is being exhorted to really look into these, and to study and understand them in depth.

One explanation of why they are called individual liberation vows is that by observing the vows one will obtain the state of liberation. The indication here is that you cannot ask someone else to achieve your liberation! You have to maintain those vows and create the right conditions yourself.

More specifically, the one-day precepts or the five lay precepts for a layperson, and either the novice vows or the full ordination vows of a monk or a nun are referred to as being individual liberation vows, because it is the individual who observes these vows who will be liberated, and not someone else. In other words you cannot liberate others by observing these vows. Rather, individuals have to liberate themselves by directly observing their vows. It is through observing those vows that one is liberated from the suffering

of samsara, and that is to be understood as the real connotation of the individual or self-liberation vows.

Actually the translation of the Tibetan word as 'intent' doesn't incorporate the full connotation of the Tibetan word, which has the meaning of respect. Thus *intent of the higher trainings of ethics* has the connotation of respecting the vows that one has taken, as well as the vows that others have taken. It is a matter of mutual respect — respecting one's own vows as well as respecting the vows of others. Respecting one's own vows helps to ensure that we really observe those vows; if we don't have respect for the vows, then our intention to maintain and keep the vows will be lax.

In other treatises that he composed, such as his *Letter to a King*, Nagarjuna gave the analogy that just as the field is a basis for all crops and plants to grow, ethics is the basis on which all realisations develop.

The next point in the commentary is *hearing the three scriptural collections frequently*. Here the three scriptural collections are also referred to as the three baskets of the Buddha's teachings.² It is explained that all of the Buddha's advice is included in these three baskets or scriptural collections. It is also to be understood that the higher trainings are incorporated in the three scriptural collections.

The three scriptural collections are also referred to as being an inner intelligence or science. This connotation of inner intelligence is a point that differentiates the Buddhist scriptures from non-Buddhist scriptures. Thus the Buddhist scriptures are referred to as the inner scriptures, and non-Buddhist scriptures are referred to as the outer scriptures. However the real connotation of 'inner' relates to the development of our inner intelligence, i.e. the inner development of a more profound wisdom that will serve as a means to overcome the delusions, in particular the root delusion of grasping at the self. So the connotation of inner scriptures, or the scriptures of inner science, relates to the fundamental antidote for overcoming grasping at a self. Thus the main purpose of the teachings is to overcome that root delusion of grasping at the self.

The scriptures presented by the Buddha explain the antidote for overcoming this self-grasping mind. We, who study and listen to the scriptures and make an attempt to understand them, need to ensure that whatever understanding we gain from hearing the scriptures will serve the purpose of overcoming grasping at the self. As explained in the teachings, the root cause of all our problems is this root delusion or misconception; it is the main culprit that is the source of all of our mistakes and every imaginable problem that we have. The fundamental cause of all of those problems is this grasping at the self which leads to a very unruly and troublesome state of mind. Without overcoming that, there is no way to overcome all of the other problems that we face. It was for that purpose that the Buddha, with his great compassion, presented the teachings. Therefore it is necessary that we derive an understanding of meaning of the scriptures, so they can serve their intention as an antidote to overcome grasping at the self.

As those of you who have studied the Lam Rim teachings will recall, Lama Tsong Khapa said that the true sign of a meditation practice having taken effect is when one finds that the delusions in the mind have lessened and that one's mind has become more subdued. So Lama Tsong Khapa is

¹ See for example the teachings of 16 November 2007 and 11 November 2008.

² Ed. Vinaya or moral discipline, sutra or discourses, and abhidharma or wisdom.

providing the essential advice about the purpose of meditating and practising the Dharma. We need to keep that in mind so we can derive the essential purpose of these teachings contained in the scriptures.

When the commentary says, *delineating their meaning* it is referring to analysing and thinking about the meaning one hears in the scriptures. *As a means to fully understand* has a connotation of putting that understanding into practice by meditating on it. Thus one gains a full understanding through the practice of meditation. So the purpose of *hearing the scriptural collections frequently and delineating their meaning* is to derive *the essential qualities to be adopted*.

The second verse of this first section of the chapter reads:

*402. Then, you should forsake
These which are called assorted faults
With vigour you should definitely realise
Those renowned as the fifty-seven.*

Here the king is being exhorted to engage in practice. Now in order to engage in the practice of adopting qualities, one needs to understand what those qualities are. Furthermore, adopting qualities is done in dependence upon overcoming faults i.e. the qualities to be adopted are the opposites of the faults which have to be abandoned. So in order to understand what qualities we need to develop, we need to first identify what those qualities are, and in order to identify and adopt those qualities, we need to understand their opposites, which are the faults to be abandoned. We need to identify and understand what the faults are in order to abandon the faults. This is a very meticulous presentation of how to engage in the practice of adopting virtue and abandoning non-virtue.

As Gyalsab Je explains in his commentary:

Then, you should fully understand the faults and forsake or abandon these which are called assorted faults. Amongst the various assorted faults, with vigour you should definitely realise those renowned as the fifty seven and abandon them.

In Tibetan, the connotation of what is translated here as 'fully understand' refers to recognising all faults, even the minor ones. If they are to be abandoned they first need to be identified.

B. EXTENSIVE EXPOSITION

We now come to the second main section of the text, which is very succinctly presented in two sub-divisions:

1. Forsaking defects
2. Adopting good qualities

This is a very practical presentation. If the question is, what do we need to forsake? The answer is all defects and faults. What needs to be adopted? All virtues and good qualities.

1. FORSAKING DEFECTS

This has two further sub-divisions:

- 1.1. Extensive explanation of fifty-seven defects to be forsaken
- 1.2. Summation

1.1. Extensive explanation of fifty-seven defects to be forsaken

This heading is sub-divided into three:

- 1.1.1. The first fifteen, anger, etc.
- 1.1.2. From hypocrisy to the forty-first, not thinking of death
- 1.1.3. The forty-second, proclaiming one's own good qualities, etc.

1.1.1. The first fifteen, anger, etc.

This section is further explained in two sub-divisions:

- 1.1.1.1 One through fourteen, anger, etc.
- 1.1.1.2 Pride

One could relate this presentation to the fifty-one mental factors.³ In addition to the six root delusions there are twenty-two secondary or proximate afflictions. Those presented here are mainly proximate delusions.

What are the six root delusions? They are attachment, anger, ignorance, pride, deluded doubts and deluded views, which is further sub-divided into five types of deluded views. These six root delusions are the basis of the twenty proximate delusions.

First of all, we should understand what a delusion is. The definition, as presented in the teachings is: *a delusion is a state of mind that causes our mind to become corrupt and unsubdued*. So a delusion is identified as such when it corrupts our mind as soon as it manifests, by making it unruly and unsubdued.

The six root delusions are named as such because these delusions are the primary factors that influence our mind to engage in numerous negative deeds. Being closely related to the six delusions the twenty secondary delusions are called proximate delusions, because of their close proximity to the six root delusions.

In defining a delusion there is the description of uncontrollably corrupting the mind. When the mind is uncontrollably corrupted, and thus unsubdued, then that serves to initiate corrupt actions of speech and body. So we need to understand how delusions initially arise as a corrupted state of mind, which then initiates corrupt speech and corrupt physical actions. That is how delusions are extremely devious, and how they are the main cause of all of our problems. Therefore, we must definitely understand and recognise what delusions are and apply the appropriate antidotes. We cannot be complacent and just let them be, because delusions will not fade away of their own accord. Rather we need to apply appropriate antidotes to overcome them completely.

In one of his works Gyalsab Rinpoche gave a very clear presentation of the four noble truths. He said that what pacifies our mind is the truth of cessation and what enables us to reach the state of having a pacified mind is the truth of the path. Similarly, a disturbed and distressed mind in turmoil is the truth of suffering, and what causes that truth of suffering is the truth of origination, specifically the delusions. So Gyalsab Rinpoche specifically related the Buddha's presentation of this cause and effect sequence to our own state of mind.

Gyalsab Rinpoche was highly praised for this presentation by another great master called Gungtang Rinpoche, who was himself also an incredibly learned and great practitioner. Gungtang Rinpoche's praise of Gyalsab Rinpoche's presentation really goes to show that what may seem as a simplistic presentation has a very profound and deep meaning to it. That is something we really need to understand.

In Gyalsab Rinpoche's presentation, our own experience of a pacified mind is the truth of cessation, and the cause of that pacified mind is the truth of the path. Again, in relation

³ See the teachings on Mind and Mental Factors of 5 October 2001 for a complete listing.

to one's own experience, a troubled and unsubdued mind is none other than the truth of suffering. As Gyalsab Rinpoche indicated, the causes of that suffering are the delusions. As we know, the truth of origination is two-fold—karma and delusions—and of the two, the delusions are the primary cause of suffering. So Gyalsab Rinpoche is presenting these most essential points in a very simple way. He indicates the causes of both a pacified state of mind and a troubled or unsubdued mind.

There is a saying, 'A truly great master is one who shines amongst other great masters'. For us some deep and profound understanding might seem to be presented in a very simplistic way, but when another great master praises that presentation, we should really pay heed and use the advice to move our heart, and put it into practice. Then the true benefit of that apparently simple presentation will be seen.

We can too often take things lightly and say 'Oh yeah, I've heard that before. It doesn't sound all that profound'. Often people ask a question, and before the end of the question, they suddenly say, 'I know, I know'. Apparently Geshe Jampa Tekchog was once asked a question, and before he had finished answering, the questioner said 'Oh I know, I know' and then Geshe Jampa Tekchog said, 'Well if you know the answer, why did you ask me the question?'

1.1.1.1 ONE THROUGH FOURTEEN, ANGER, ETC.

Actually the word 'belligerence' should be used rather than anger. The first of the verses in this section presents the first four ill-effects:

403. *Belligerence is a disturbance of mind.
Enmity is a [tight] hanging onto that.
Concealment is a hiding of ill-deeds [when confronted].
Malevolence is to cling to ill-deeds.*

1) The first ill-effect is **belligerence**, which is not the root delusion anger but a secondary affliction. The Tibetan word for anger is *khong-tro* and belligerence is *tro-wa*. They sound similar but there is a reason why belligerence is presented in the category of secondary afflictions rather than one of the root delusions; it is because even though belligerence is related to anger it is not actually anger.

I may have mentioned this story about the difference between anger and belligerence previously. Once during a debate session Lati Rinpoche asked Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, 'How would you explain the difference between anger and belligerence? Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey replied, 'Well, as I understand it, the difference is that the object of anger is necessarily a sentient being (*sem-den* in Tib.), whereas one can feel belligerence towards inanimate objects as well'. Lati Rinpoche laughed at that response, saying, 'You might have a made point here'.

The Tibetan word for person is *kang-zag*, which also has the connotation of sentient being. So the correct translation of *sem-den* would be a sentient being, which literally means a being which has a mind. However it seems that there are some Westerners who have the view that plants have a mind and could be considered to be sentient, and thus have feelings. I remember once Lama Yeshe jokingly said, 'You can't really rely on what Westerners claim—they think that even flowers have minds!' [*Geshe-la laughs*].

There are in fact some non-Buddhist schools which do assert that certain flowers or plants have minds, and they use natural occurrences to justify their view. They reason that as a sunflower opens up in the morning and then closes in the

evening it must have a mind. There are also other kinds of flowers and plants that shrivel up when they are touched, and recoil back later, and these too are considered by some people to be an indication that such plants have feelings. Because they react in that way, these non-Buddhist schools say, they must have a mind. However that is not a valid reason according to the Buddhist schools.

Scientists would say that plants can't have a consciousness because they don't have a brain. So the only reason that one could give for asserting that plants have feelings depends on the fact that some plants open their flowers in sunlight and close them at night, or shrivel up when you touch it and then open up later on.

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains the meaning of verse 403 in this way:

Belligerence is the term presented in the sutra; *a disturbance of mind* is the description from the treatises; this manner of presentation is to be understood for the rest. *Enmity* is a *tight hanging onto* belligerence, thus it is a later state of mind depending on the previous.

2) What is defined here as **enmity**, is *hanging on to belligerence*, so it is related to belligerence. That is because, as explained here, *it is a later state of mind, depending on a previous mental state*, i.e. *enmity* is dependent on belligerence.

3) and 4) Then the commentary continues:

Concealment is *hiding of ill-deeds* through means of deception when confronted by others. *Malevolence* is to *cling to ill-deeds* and not give them up.

We can go into more detail about this later on. For now we have covered the first four defects of belligerence enmity, concealment and malevolence.

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