

Nagarjuna's Precious Garland

འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷན་པའི་བཀའ་འགྲུབ་མཐོན་པོ།།

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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

We can now set the motivation for receiving the teaching along these lines: For the purpose of benefitting all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that reason I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice well.

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

1.1.1. The first fifteen, anger, etc.

1.1.1.1. ONE THROUGH FOURTEEN, ANGER ETC.

It is good to keep in mind the secondary delusions that we have already covered.

(9) Non-shame and (10) non-embarrassment

The next verse begins:

*405ab Non-shame and non-embarrassment
Are insensibility concerning oneself and
others [respectively]*

The two defilements listed here, *non-shame* and *non-embarrassment*, are both secondary or proximate delusions. Their opposites, shame and embarrassment are two of the eleven virtues, which we really need to understand and adopt.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary on these two lines reads:

*Non-shame and non-embarrassment are the insensibility of
not refraining from ill-deeds, concerning oneself and
others respectively.*

As explained here, **non-shame** relates to engaging in non-virtuous deeds without any sense of shame (in other words, lacking integrity), while **non-embarrassment** relates to engaging in non-virtuous deeds without any consideration as to what others might think and how they might be affected. These two secondary delusions and their opposite two virtues are essential points for our practice. So it is really important that we thoroughly understand them. As mentioned in the teachings, without a sense of shame and embarrassment there would be nothing to encourage us to avoid creating non-virtue and negativity. These are really important points.

It is essential to adopt these virtues of shame and embarrassment, and avoid the delusions of non-shame and non-embarrassment. If we can understand shame and embarrassment, we can then understand their opposites, which are to be avoided. As explained in the commentary, **shame is defined as a mental factor that uses oneself as a reason to avoid misdeeds**, whereas **embarrassment uses others as a reason for avoiding non-virtue**. The opposites of each are to be understood in the same way: not avoiding misdeeds and non-virtue is non-shame at a personal level, and embarrassment in relation to others.

If we encounter an opportunity to engage in a misdeed or non-virtue, then we remind ourselves that it would be

improper to engage in these misdeeds or non-virtues because of the vows we have taken. This is the virtuous mental factor of shame, since we are avoiding misdeeds because of our personal integrity about upholding vows and avoiding misdeeds. Without that sense of shame and personal dignity and integrity we would completely disregard whatever vows and commitments we have taken.

Embarrassment is when we refrain from misdeeds because we know that it would displease the holy gurus, buddhas and bodhisattvas if we were to commit them. Without such regard for our gurus and the buddhas and bodhisattvas there would be nothing to prevent us from engaging in misdeeds.

How could we possibly refrain from engaging in non-virtue if we don't have any concern about either our own integrity or respect for our gurus, and the buddhas and bodhisattvas? Furthermore we need to recall that as our gurus are clairvoyant they will definitely know of our misdeeds! Even though one may feel other people will not find out, our gurus, buddhas and bodhisattvas will definitely know, which would be disrespectful. As soon as we bring that to mind it will prevent us from engaging in the misdeed, thus presenting us with an opportunity to engage in virtue.

As I have mentioned previously, the purpose of having statues and images of holy beings is to remind us and provide a way to engage in both purification practices, and practices that accumulate merit. So the reason why we have holy objects in the gumpa or in our own rooms is to remember to engage in those practices, regardless of any doubts we may have about whether they are actually enlightened beings.

Furthermore, self-liberation vows need to be taken in the presence of an abbot and other members of the Sangha, and when we take the bodhisattva vows we do so by envisioning ourselves in the presence of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. For tantric vows we envision the tutelary deities or *vidams*, all the celestial deities with their mandalas, along with the buddhas and bodhisattvas. So if we break those commitments and vows, and engage in misdeeds we will be doing so in the presence of these holy beings as well! We really need to keep this in mind, and see how essential and important shame and embarrassment are as a way to avoid non-virtue and accumulate more virtue.

(11) Inflatedness

405c Inflatedness is not to pay respect.

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Inflatedness is not to pay respect to gurus and so forth.

This is another essential point to keep in mind. With a sense of inflatedness, there is no way that we will be receptive to the good advice provided by the gurus and so forth. However, even if we initially have a sense of inflatedness, we will naturally develop a genuine sense of respect when listening to the Dharma starts to make sense.

This reminds me of a story I might have shared with you in the past about an old student called (American) Harry. He told me about the very early days when he first encountered the Buddhist teachings. He was in Dharamsala and saw an announcement about a Buddhist talk, which he attended. It happened to be Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey who was giving the teachings then. Harry told me that when he first went in he sat very rigidly and thought 'Well, I wonder what he has to say? What important points has he got to mention?' He told me he sat up very straight with a sense of being equal to

Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey. However, as Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey presented his teaching, it started to really sink into his heart. It affected his mind to the extent that the next day he could not possibly sit up straight with a sense of pride, rather he started to naturally bend down out of respect, just like the others. By the third day, he said, his sense of inflatedness was completely subdued.

This of course is a personal account that was related to me, but we often see people going into a teaching with a care-free attitude, not really thinking of it as being a spiritual occasion. However, as the Dharma begins to sink in and one begins to really relate to it, then a sense true respect can develop.

It is very important that we develop not only respect for our gurus and holy beings, but also for other practitioners. Such respect will be an antidote to jealousy. Otherwise, when we see other practitioners doing well, we might think, 'Oh they think they are so holy and spiritual, but it must be all be very shallow'. Instead of feeling glad about their practice, we feel a sense of contempt, viewing their attempts as meagre and insincere. Such negative attitudes come from a sense of inflatedness and contempt or conceit from our own side. So it is good to develop a sense of respect for other practitioners and, at the very least, rejoice in their good deeds.

As Lama Tsong Khapa and other teachers have mentioned, rejoicing is in fact a very profound practice. When we rejoice in a great being's activities we gain a certain amount of merit ourselves, which is said to be a really incredible way to gain merit without much effort. So it is good to rejoice in the deeds of holy beings as well as other practitioners. This is very profound advice.

As we engage in our practice, we need to remind ourselves that the whole purpose of Dharma practice is to overcome the sense of conceit. Indeed it is said that the Buddha's purpose in giving the teachings was to overcome pride and the sense of inflatedness and conceit. So if we find our pride increasing after studying the Dharma then we have completely missed the point, and it has not served its purpose as a transformative practice. This is essential advice to bear in mind.

In Gyaltsab Je's commentary, the mention of *and so forth* refers to other practitioners. We often find it all too easy to hold others in contempt and look down upon them, brushing aside their attempts to practice, at whatever level it may be. This is really harmful, not only to oneself, but to the other who is being looked down upon, as it can really discourage them. Anyone who genuinely engages in practice, who has real knowledge, will not look down upon others and will not hold them in contempt. So we need to be mindful about this in order to ensure that our attempts to practice don't turn into conceit.

We may sometimes encounter people who seem to be simpletons, and who don't seem to know much, but as Lama Tsong Khapa and other masters mention, the real qualities of an individual lie within themselves and are not necessarily outwardly visible. Therefore, we need to protect ourselves by not ridiculing others. That would be a real misdeed.

There is the story about the illustrious great practitioner and scholar Longdro Lama Rinpoche. When he first entered Lhowa Khangtsen in Sera Monastery, it was customary for a new monk to be sent to fetch provisions and so forth from Lhasa, which is about seven or eight miles from the monastery. He would wear old robes that were quite torn, and appeared to be very poor. On one occasion, as he was

returning to the monastery he reached a spot where he put down his load and sat there, happy to perhaps be contemplating on bodhicitta. Nearby there was a well dressed lady of noble status, and when she saw the destitute state of this monk, she prayed, 'May I never be reborn in this kind of state'. Longdro Lama Rinpoche's response was, 'Don't worry, it will be very hard for you to reach this state!'

This is but one story about the destitute appearance of monks in the monastery. There were many great practitioners who put so much time and energy into their study and practice, that they did not pay attention to their clothes and didn't worry very much about food. It was very hard to get provisions, but they just survived on what little they received, so of course they appeared to be quite destitute. However, although they appeared to be destitute simpletons they were great practitioners. There were many monks in the monastery who were so eager to study, that they paid no attention to acquiring more food or clothing. Their only focus and attention was directed toward their studies and practice, and they didn't seek provisions or clothing, and sometimes relied on offerings from others. When their provisions ran out, and their hometowns and families were two or three months away, they had to make do. There were many occasions where monks had to live on just one meal a day and survive with the help of others.

Many of the monks living at the monastery recalled the days when new monks first arrived. Some of those who came were destitute, and directed all of their attention and focus to their studies and so forth. Even though it was hard and difficult at the beginning, as they studied and practiced, things gradually became better for them. By the time they became geshe, they became quite majestic in appearance and, without any effort on their part, people would just come and offer them provisions and food and so forth. Whereas others from well-off families, who didn't pay much attention to study and practice, became weaker and weaker and really destitute in their old age.

On another note, when Geshe Jampel Senge (who was then living in Perth) visited Melbourne, we were provided with a good lunch, and Geshe Jampel Senge said, 'We have been presented with such nice food and so forth, which must be the result of having debated for many years in the monastery!' I then made the comment that it wasn't necessary to feel that we needed to reap the result of our studies and debates solely by receiving good food! Geshe Jampel Senge's response was 'Well, why not? If we get good food now, then that's a good deal!!'

The main point in relation to this defilement is that inflatedness is a state of mind that lacks respect for gurus as well as other practitioners and so forth. In order to protect ourselves from this defilement, we need to ensure that whatever knowledge we have gained does not become a cause for feeling inflated and conceited, because that can be a cause for disrespect for gurus and other practitioners. So we really need to protect our mind from that.

(12) Faulty exertion

According to the text:

405d. Faulty exertion is to be polluted by belligerence.

As explained in Gyaltsab Je's commentary:

Faulty exertion is physical and verbal actions polluted by belligerence, such as frowning and so forth.

Faulty exertion is described here as being motivated by a state of mind influenced by *belligerence*, and so it basically stems from anger. That belligerence influences the mind to the

point where one exerts oneself to engage in *physical and verbal actions*, such as frowning and so forth.

(13) Arrogance and (14) Non-conscientiousness

As explained in the text:

406a Arrogance is haughtiness [due to wealth, and so forth].

Non-conscientiousness is non-application at virtues.

Some translations use haughtiness instead of arrogance; as explained in Gyaltsab Je's text:

Arrogance is haughtiness due to wealth and so forth

Thus **arrogance** is translated here as being haughty about having sufficient *wealth, status and so forth*, which can produce a heightened feeling that 'everything is quite fine' or 'everything is quite good'. This feeling can actually occur very easily when things are seemingly going well in life; it's a heightened state of feeling satisfied with the way things are going—temporarily—in one's life.

That arrogance can then lead to **non-conscientiousness** which, as Gyaltsab Je explains:

Non-conscientiousness is non-application at virtues due to attachment and so forth and thus not protecting one's mind from contaminations.

Non-conscientiousness can easily arise from a sense of haughtiness. It is state of mind that does not apply to virtue, *due to attachment to one's own wealth and status and so forth*. In other words through not applying oneself to virtue, one is *not protecting one's mind from contamination*. Non-conscientiousness can also be understood in the context of being the opposite of a conscientious mind, which is a mind that applies itself to virtue, thus protecting itself. These are very central points to reflect upon.

As explained previously, it is easy to fall into a state of arrogance or haughtiness if one is not mindful. If we allow the mind to become carried away with external material gains and status, then our mind can easily fall into a state of feeling elated with haughtiness. As I have shared with you previously, I periodically check myself when I am experiencing a sense of joy. If I find it is related to external circumstances then I become wary about that. As I often share with you, I find that it is much more worthwhile to rejoice and feel happy when I see my meagre attempts at practice and meditating on the points of the Dharma, bearing some positive result.

If a sense of well-being, joy and contentment is merely related to sufficient food, clothing, funds and so forth, then there is the danger that when all of that changes, one's mind will fall to the other extreme of being completely devastated and overwhelmed. So it is really important that we periodically check and be wary about falling victim to that feeling of haughtiness or arrogance.

Non-conscientiousness follows from arrogance. When we lack a sense of conscientiousness we can easily make mistakes and engage in misdeeds and so forth and fall victim to engaging in non-virtue. That is because we are not able to protect our mind. A simple way to understand conscientiousness and its opposite is that conscientiousness is a mind that allows one to engage in virtue, whereas non-conscientiousness is the opposite; it is a mind that prevents one from engaging in virtue.

Here we can take note that the earlier defects of inflatedness and faulty exertion are not specifically included in the twenty secondary or proximate afflictions, whereas

arrogance or haughtiness and non-conscientiousness are included in the twenty secondary afflictions. Also conscientiousness is included as one of the eleven virtues. These are really important points to bear in mind. More specifically, they are a way to protect one's mind from engaging in misdeeds, in particular breaking vows and commitments. In the *Foundation of all Good Qualities* that many of us recite regularly one of the verses states:

Led by this pure thought,
Mindfulness, alertness and great caution arise.
The root of the teachings is keeping the Pratimoksha
vows
Please bless me to accomplish this essential practice.

All three, mindfulness, introspection (or alertness) and conscientiousness (or great caution) are mentioned together, which goes to show how all three are equally essential in preventing one from breaking the vows and commitments. **Mindfulness**, or being mindful, is a state of mind that does not forget instructions or the advice e.g. being mindful of vows and various points about commitments. **Introspection** is a state of mind that periodically checks and investigates whether one's mind is being distracted or is moving away from observing the vows and commitments. **Conscientiousness** refers to applying one's mind to engage in keeping those vows and commitments and to apply one's mind to virtue. It is good for us to periodically remember this aspiration from the *Foundation of all Good Qualities* and apply it to our everyday life. That is how it will be of most benefit to us.

1.1.1.2. PRIDE (15)

The fifteenth defect, pride, is also one the six primary delusions (which are included in the fifty-one mental factors). As the root text reads:

*406cd Pride has seven forms
Each of which I will explain.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

Pride has seven forms each of which I will explain.
However within the category of the fifty seven defects, pride is listed only as one.

A commentary¹ on the fifty-one mental factors gives this definition of pride:

Pride depends on the view of the transitory collection as a real 'I' and has the aspect of a puffing up of the mind upon observing one's own wealth, qualities, youth, and so forth.

As explained in this definition, pride is a mental state or mental factor which, in relation to one's wealth, qualities and one's youthful age and so forth, has a puffed up feeling or a sense of inflatedness. It is also described in some teachings being like the feeling we have when we reach the top of a mountain and look down at everything below us. At that point we have a sense of everything being under us, as well as the elated feeling of being above everything. Pride is similar in that it is a sense of being above everyone else, with a sense of superiority over others.

As the definition indicates, pride depends on the view of the transitory collection, and thus it is related to the sense of a

¹ As explained in the previous teaching, these definitions were prepared for the Masters Program by extracting them from Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness*, pp. 261-268. Hopkins noted that he based his text on Yeshe Gyaltsen's *Clear Exposition of the Modes of Minds and Mental Factors*, and Lati Rinpoche's oral teachings, which may have been based on Geshe Jampel Sampel's *Presentation of Awareness and Knowledge*.

truly existing 'I'. Based on that notion of a truly existing self, one develops a secondary sense of feeling superior to others who seem to have fewer qualities than oneself, and being competitive with those who seem to have more qualities, or who are the same. So basically, these feelings relate to that strong sense of 'I', the strong sense of the identity of self.

Although pride is one of the root delusions that we need to try to uproot and overcome, we must not mistake pride for self-confidence, which is something we need to acquire or adopt in order to accomplish what we do need to do. In both a worldly sense and from a Dharma point of view, we need to adopt self-confidence while discarding pride.

In some instances, for example in *The Bodhisattvas Way of Life*, a quality to be adopted is described as pride. But Lama Tsong Khapa clarified this point, saying that because self-confidence is similar to pride, it is more likely that Shantideva is referring to the self-confidence needed to overcome the delusions, in the sense of 'I can do that' or 'I will do it'. So in that sense we can be encouraged by a sense of self-confidence.

Of course from a worldly perspective, we also need to encourage ourselves to see that we are capable of doing something and thus mustering up the courage and will to actually accomplish what we wish to achieve. This does not necessarily have an element of looking down upon others, it's just that one has a heightened determination 'I *will* accomplish this' or 'I *will* do that' or 'I *do* have the capacity'.

Self-confidence is essential to the Dharma because it forms the basis of overcoming the delusions. We need to have the self-confidence to generate the strong determination, 'Having seen the faults and the disadvantages of the delusions infesting my mind, I need to overcome them and I *will* do it'. That strong determination and will to overcome the delusions within one's mind can be described as self-confidence. So it is really important that we understand the difference between pride and self-confidence.

The Bodhisattvas Way of Life describes three categories of pride: deluded pride, a pride of action, and a pride in ability². There, pride of ability is the self-confidence that is to be developed. It is called pride because the way it develops is similar to how deluded pride develops, but it is not a delusion. This classification is discussed in the *Great Exposition of the Path to Enlightenment* or the *Lam Rim Chen Mo* by Lama Tsong Khapa, so you can also refer to that.

We can slowly go through the seven types of pride in our next session. Different texts present these seven in slightly different ways.

It is good to relate the defilements we have covered this evening to the fifty-one mental factors. The first two that we covered, non-shame and non-embarrassment are included in the twenty proximate delusions. The opposite of those, shame and embarrassment, are included the eleven virtues. To review the main point there, non-shame is engaging in non-virtue or misdeeds without considering oneself, one's own vows and so forth. Whereas non-embarrassment is engaging in misdeeds and non-virtue with a lack of consideration for others, in particular the gurus, buddhas and bodhisattvas. The third of the defects we covered this evening, inflatedness is not one of the twenty secondary delusions however, as explained here, it is a state of mind that will cause one to lack respect for gurus and so forth. Likewise faulty exertion is not one of the twenty proximate

delusions; it is a state of mind that is based on belligerence, which leads to the use of facial gestures or verbal misconduct. Lastly, arrogance or haughtiness is another of the twenty secondary afflictions, as is non-conscientiousness. When we include pride we have covered fifteen of the defilements.

Thus we have covered belligerence, enmity, concealment, malevolence, dissimulation, deceit, jealousy, miserliness, non-shame, non-embarrassment, inflatedness, faulty exertion, arrogance, non-conscientiousness, and pride.

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² See Chapter 7, verses 49 to 55.