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# Nagarjuna's Precious Garland

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Based on the motivation we generated with the Refuge and Bodhicitta prayer, we can now engage in the meditation practice, maintaining our focus on the object of our practice.

[meditation]

Just as we have done in the *tong len* meditation practice, it is essential to incorporate cultivating love and compassion into our daily life. We should definitely contemplate the essential significance of love and compassion periodically during our daily life, rather than relegating it to a few minutes of meditation practice. In fact, even when we make an attempt to bring a positive, virtuous state of mind to our practice of meditation, we often find it is very difficult to do so. This is not surprising, because most of the time our mind is acquainted with non-virtuous thoughts, and we are engaged in non-virtuous activities. If we don't pay much attention to cultivating a virtuous state of mind regularly, then it is quite natural that it will not come about readily—even when we make an attempt to practise.

It is a fact that for long as we have conscious mind, thoughts will be generated in our mind and if we let our normal state of mind run free, then it is more than likely that we will become preoccupied with worldly, non-virtuous thoughts.

For a practice of meditation to be fruitful, we need to derive the real benefit of developing a virtuous state of mind. Thus, it is essential to periodically bring to mind love and compassion throughout the day, thinking about the plight of sentient beings, wishing them happiness and to be free from suffering. It is by generating such thoughts that our mind becomes more familiar with being in a virtuous state.

Since we regard ourselves as Buddhist practitioners, it is essential that we ensure that our conduct is in tune with our ideals. We do this by ensuring that our pattern of life is in line with a virtuous frame of mind. We may be setting aside some time for meditation and daily practice, so on a regular basis it is good to bring to mind the main purpose for doing that. It is to familiarise our mind with virtue so that whatever we engage in becomes a means to accumulate virtue.

As all the teachers have advised, it is our motivation that determines whether what we do is virtuous. If, in our everyday life, we periodically bring to mind the attitude of love and compassion, and generate the motivation, 'May whatever I engage in now serve as a means to benefit others', then, regardless of whether our activity is a specific Dharma practice, or a worldly activity, it will become a virtuous activity. Even though we may not completely cancel out all the non-virtue that might be involved with some mundane activities, the positive attitude that we develop can definitely assist us in ensuring that whatever activity we engage in does not become a fully negative deed.

In fact, our motivation can turn specific mundane activities into great virtue. For example, we have engaged in the acts of eating and drinking numberless of times in the past and will continue to do so numberless of times. So when we

develop some awareness and mindfulness, we can turn these seemingly mundane activities of drinking and eating into a great occasion for accumulating great virtue.

As a way of contemplating before eating, Nagarjuna presented us with this verse:

Seeing this food as medicine,  
We eat it without attachment or hatred  
Not to become fat, not out of pride,  
Not to look strong, only to sustain the body.  
This offering to the organisms living within my body  
That is now presented as material aid  
In the future may it be the offering of Dharma  
For the benefit of all beings  
And in order to attain Enlightenment  
I now partake of this food and drink.

We really need to think about the meaning of these lines. I am not boasting but I do find these practices really meaningful and practical to engage in regularly. It is something that comes about naturally when we have spent some time incorporating it into our daily life. Thus when we think about it, with the right motivation, we can turn every action of drinking and eating into a practice that is in accordance with Nagarjuna's advice.

It is essential that we think about how much time during the day we spend being completely immersed in frivolous activities, and how much time we set aside for adopting a virtuous frame of mind. If we just let our normal life rule us then, if we don't have much time for formal meditation and practice, we won't have much opportunity to create virtue. But if we periodically remind ourselves and contemplate these essential points of love and compassion, then the opportunity to accumulate virtue is always present. This is something that we need to bear in mind; we can manage to do that. It is just a matter of being aware of it and really trying to cultivate it. Then even normal everyday activities will be an opportunity to become virtuous. So it is in this way that we ensure that our life becomes meaningful.

Regardless of being Buddhists or practitioners, we can still waste so much time and energy if we aren't really mindful. It is not that we are practising meditation because we have nothing better to do and need to fill in time. The reason why we engage in the practice of meditation and study is so that we can use our time virtuously and meaningfully. That is something we need to keep in mind.

If we offer food and drink before we consume it in a mindful way, then it can be an opportunity to accumulate great virtue and merit in just a short span of time. A more complete form is to making an offering first to one's guru and Three Jewels. Then, as mentioned previously, on a second level as one consumes the food or drink, imagine satisfying not just oneself but also all living forms (and apparently there are thousands of them) within our body. They are sustained when we are sustained. We imagine that we are giving them sustenance now, so that they may be sustained by the Dharma in the future. It takes just a minute or two to bring this to mind, and when we consume the food or drink it becomes a really meaningful form of practice.

Opportunities to accumulate great virtue and merit do not have to be on grand occasions. Even stopping for a minute or two, before we consume something, and bringing that offering to mind can definitely accumulate great merit and virtue. This is an example of making our day-to-day activities an opportunity to accumulate virtue. If we really pay attention we will notice that if we take an opportunity to

accumulate virtue, our mind feels happy and joyful and, as a consequence, the rest of the time can be spent quite joyfully and happily.

If, on the other hand, we fail to accumulate virtue and merit, we find that our mind will be more prone to delusions, and it will be all too easy for a negative state of mind to arise, which will inevitably be a source of angst. As a consequence the mind won't be happy and joyful, and thus it will be very difficult to benefit others; indeed we won't even want to be with others. Often, when we are in a depressed, unhappy state of mind, we want to shy away and not engage with others.

In contrast, when our mind is joyful and happy, we don't mind being with others, and when we are with others we are able to contribute to their happiness as well, by saying and doing things that are meaningful. If we don't pay careful attention, this might not be all that obvious, but if we are sincere and look into ourselves, we will notice that there is a difference when we have an opportunity to practise virtue.

Here the doubt may arise that if we have made an offering to the Three Jewels sincerely, would it not actually belong to the Three Jewels? If so, then is it permissible for us to consume it ourselves after we have offered it to the Three Jewels? The point to recognise here is that we are offering the essence to the Three Jewels. With the motivation to sustain ourselves so that we can be of service and benefit to others, we can definitely consume what we have offered to the Three Jewels. They will gladly allow us to do that as a way to benefit others. These are points to keep in mind.

Those who like chocolate can offer chocolate. Then, you can consume it yourself with the thought that this is making me happy so I can help others, which is a way to not only enjoy the chocolate but, in a meaningful way, an opportunity to accumulate virtue as well. So thus the main point here is that whatever we consume, food and drink, if we do it in a proper way we can accumulate virtue.

I remember Angelica once asking a question about what do after we offer chocolate on the altar. In fact this is a reasonable doubt: if we sincerely offer, for example, chocolate to the buddhas and the Three Jewels, then what do we do after that? How long do we keep it on the altar? It might not be appropriate to throw it away, so what do we do with it? We will not face this dilemma when the earlier mentioned motivation is developed.

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

### 1.1.1.2. Pride (15)

We need to recognise the difference between pride and self-confidence. While we definitely need to overcome pride, self-confidence is a positive state of mind that we need to have in order to accomplish the good deeds and practices that we set out for ourselves. In order to not feel discouraged, we need to develop self-confidence and what is sometimes known as the power of mind, which is a majestic, courageous mind.

As mentioned in our last session, in some texts the term 'pride,' may be used in the context of describing the need to develop self-confidence, because both pride and self-confidence share the aspects of an uplifting and cultivating a courageous mind. So we must understand that, depending on its context, pride can mean self-confidence rather than the deluded pride. However, we definitely need to overcome deluded pride which, because it opposes compassion,

hinders the development of a kind, considerate, and compassionate mind.

Both the text and commentary mention that there are seven types of pride.

In the last session I mentioned that in the seventh chapter of *Bodhisattvacharyavata* Shantideva presented three types of pride: deluded pride, a pride of action, and a pride in ability. The **pride of action** is the type of pride that a bodhisattva develops. A bodhisattva develops a courageous mind that is determined to engage in the actions of the practices of the six perfections, thinking, 'For the sake of sentient beings I will definitely take up these practices.'

The **pride of ability** relates to mustering an awareness of one's potential to apply the antidote for overcoming delusions, i.e. it refers to the courage and capacity to overcome the delusions in one's mind.

As mentioned earlier, Nagarjuna's text explains seven types of **deluded pride**. Although the presentation of these seven is slightly different to the way pride is presented in *Abhidharmakosha*, there is no essential difference.

a) The first, **pride of selfhood**, is presented in the following verse:

407 *Fancying that one is lower than the lowly,  
Or equal with the equal,  
Or greater than or equal to the lowly—  
All are called the pride of selfhood.*

After basically reiterating the text, Gyaltsab Je's commentary adds some further points:

*Fancying that one is lower than the lowly, or equal with the equal, or greater than or equal to the lowly are all called the pride of selfhood.*

If one wonders how could assuming one to be lower than the lowly be a form of pride? That is because it is associated with an inflated feeling that it is fine even if one is lower than the lowly.

The pride of selfhood is a pride in relation to equating oneself with others. Those who are really mindful of their state of mind seem to acknowledge that even when one feels lower in status than others there is still this feeling of 'How could I possibly be lower than others? In other words, despite feeling lower in status than others, an inflated sense of self-worth is still present.

People have confided in me, saying that it is actually quite painful to feel that one is lower in status than others. So pride of selfhood is associated with self-worth, in the sense of being uncomfortable with the notion that someone else is better than oneself. For as long as that inflated feeling of self-worth is there, it is a form of pride that makes one feel uncomfortable.

b) Exceeding pride

408abc *Boasting that one is equal to those  
Who by some good quality are superior to  
oneself  
Is called exceeding pride.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary basically reiterates these lines of the verse:

*Boasting that one is equal to those who, by some good quality, are superior to oneself is called exceeding pride.*

This is the pride that is developed in relation to those who are conventionally considered to be of equal status. Even though one may feel that one is equal to others, there is still a sense of inflated self-worth, so there is a sense of superiority as well.

### c) Pride beyond pride

408d *Fancying that one is superior to the superior,*  
409 *Thinking that one is higher than the very high,*  
*Is pride beyond pride*  
*Like sores on an abscess*  
*It is very vicious.*

Here Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

*Fancying that one is superior to the superior and thinking that one is higher than the very high is pride beyond pride; like sores on an abscess it is an extremely stubborn defect, and thus very vicious.*

This is a very strong or elated sense of pride, and the example of its severity is *like sores on an abscess*. Although the Tibetan word *dre* also means grain, here the meaning refers to a certain kind of a skin condition translated here as an abscess. When there is an already existing skin condition on which sores develop, it becomes even more painful i.e. there is more pain on top of something that is already painful. So the pride described here is a pride built on top of an existing pride, which why it is called pride beyond pride. *Just like sores on an abscess, it is extremely stubborn defect, and of all the forms of pride it is one of the most vicious.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary then continues with a quote:

As *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* states:  
Inflated by the disturbing conception of my self-importance,  
I shall be led by it to the lower realms.  
It destroys the joyous festival of being a human.  
I shall become a slave, eating the food of others.  
Stupid, ugly, feeble and everywhere disrespected

According to the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* the pride of an inflated sense of self-importance is a cause leading to the lower realms. For humans it completely destroys good conditions, as explained here with an analogy, the joyful festival of being human. When these good conditions are destroyed by pride, one becomes like *a slave, eating the food of others, stupid, ugly and so forth.*

### d) The pride of thinking 'I'

As the root text explains:

410 *Conceiving an I through obscuration*  
*In the five empty [aggregates]*  
*Which are called the appropriation*  
*Is said to be the pride of thinking I.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

The basis of all, which are called the appropriated aggregates, are *conceived as 'I'*. Through obscuration of the *five* naturally *empty* aggregates is said to be the pride of thinking 'I'.

*The basis of all* refers to the five contaminated aggregates, which are the basis of all suffering. The pride of thinking 'I' is focusing on these aggregates and having conception of 'I', thinking, "This is "me" and "I"".

### e) Pride of conceit

Here the root text reads:

411ab *Thinking one has won fruits [of the spiritual path]*  
*Not yet attained is the pride of conceit.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains this with an example:

*Thinking one has won fruits, such as a stream enterer, not yet attained is the pride of conceit.*

The pride of conceit is assuming that one has attained fruits, such becoming a stream enterer, when in fact when one has

not done so. This is different to lying to others by saying that one has obtained such a state when one knows that is not true, which is called a lie of completely deceiving others. In this case, it is not a lie of deception because, even though they have not obtained it, the individual assumes that they have obtained that status. So there is a sense of pride in having obtained a state such as a stream enterer, when in fact they have not obtained it. Likewise, if one goes around claiming, 'I have obtained an arya's path', when one hasn't then that would be a complete lie of deceiving others. However if one assumes that one has obtained an arya path, when in fact one has not obtained it, then that is the pride of conceit.

### f) Erroneous pride

This is covered in the second half of verse 411:

411cd *Praising oneself for faulty deeds or negative deeds,*  
*Is known by the wise as erroneous pride.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

*Praising oneself for faulty deeds, such as boasting that 'I did it' is known by the wise as erroneous pride.*

This form of pride is something that we can easily relate to. We find that there are many who engage in negative deeds and who, rather than admitting that it is wrong deed, actually boast about it. Here, an example is the generals and so forth, who engage in battles where lives are lost. Despite these downright negative deeds, they come back and are considered conventionally to be very brave heroes. They, too, assume that they are very brave and have achieved great deeds, when in fact they are just boasting about their negative deed of killing.

### g) Pride of inferiority

As the text reads:

412abc *Deriding oneself, thinking*  
*"I am useless," is called*  
*The pride of inferiority.*

In his commentary Gyaltsab Je explains:

*Deriding oneself, thinking 'Even if I am alive, I am useless', is called the pride of inferiority.*

The pride of inferiority is the sense of worthlessness, a complete lack of self-confidence, thinking, 'I am useless, there is no point in even being alive'. However even with that sense of being worthless, there is still that inflated sense of 'me' or 'I', which is of primary importance.

This is slightly different to the pride of feeling lower than the lowly within the pride of selfhood, which is described as a feeling that even though one feels lower than the lowest, one still maintains an inflated sense of worthiness.

412d *Such is a brief description of the seven prides.*

In conclusion Gyaltsab Je states

*Such is a brief description of the seven prides.* 'Brief' can also indicate that pride has been condensed into only a few categories

### 1.1.2. From hypocrisy to the forty-first, not thinking of death

The Hopkins translation uses 'hypocrisy', but other translations use 'pretentious behaviour'.

### (16) Hypocrisy

Hypocrisy is one of the five types of the mental factor of deceit.

As has been explained in detail previously and, as I have also mentioned previously, the Lam Rim teachings explain clearly that offerings should be obtained without deceit. Offerings of deceit can be either through its cause or through one's motivation. Deceitful by through cause would be obtaining offerings from an unethical source, such as stolen goods etc. Deceit through motivation is to make offerings for personal gain, such as thinking, 'By arranging nice and beautiful offerings, others will praise me', or 'I will be seen as doing very virtuous deeds'. So we need to understand that deceit takes different forms in relation to offerings. As mentioned previously, it is permissible to consume offerings after one has made an offering free from deceit and with the proper virtuous motivation.

With respect to the first kind of deceit, hypocrisy, the text reads:

**413ab** *Hypocrisy is to control the senses  
For the sake of goods and respect.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary reads:

*Hypocrisy is to control the senses for the sake of goods and respect. An extensive explanation on this was given in the text previously.*

So hypocrisy is the form of pretentious behaviour that refers to adopting a conduct of seemingly controlling one's senses and so forth, just for the sake of receiving goods and respect from others. If one were to offer goods obtained from such pretentious behaviour then it would be an improper acquisition derived from deceit. If, however, you are offered goods because of your good behaviour, then it is fine to use those goods as an offering, as it would not be an unethical offering.

### (17) Flattery

The root text about the other kind of pretentious behaviour, and the second form of deceit, is quite clear:

**412cd** *Flattery is to speak pleasant phrases  
For the sake of goods and respect.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary makes the same point as the root text:

*Flattery is to speak pleasant phrases for the sake of goods and respect.*

As clearly explained here, uttering pleasant words and so forth to others, with the intention to receive goods and respect is defined as flattery. In offering praise to others we need to be mindful that if there is an intention to receive goods or some kind of favour in return, then that would be flattery. The teachings explain that we need to be really mindful about this.

We also find that some people are very gullible; when offered the tiniest bit of praise they become excited and start giving. That is also something we need to be wary of. We need to be mindful about being easily influenced by the praise of others and their intentions.

### (18) Indirect acquisition

**414ab** *Indirect acquisition is to praise  
Another's wealth in order to acquire it.*

Some translations use 'contrived means', which refers to praising *another's wealth in order to acquire it*. Even though it is explained very briefly, it also has the implication that you might praise someone's generosity as a way of hinting that it would be good if they were to present you with goods and gifts. That would be a form of indirect acquisition.

### (19) Pressured acquisition

**414cd** *Pressured acquisition is manifest derision  
Of others in order to acquire goods.*

As Gyaltsab Je's commentary explains:

*Pressured acquisition is manifest derision of others, such as telling them that they are miserly, in order to acquire goods.*

Here goods or gifts are obtained by using derision, saying, 'Oh, you are very miserly'. This is the fourth form of deceit.

### (20) Desiring profit from profit

**415ab** *Desiring profit from profit  
Is to praise previous acquisitions.*

Here, Gyaltsab Je's commentary states:

*Desiring profit from profit is to praise previous acquisitions.*

An example of this would be when you praise someone, such as by showing great appreciation when they give you something, with the intention that they will give you more again in the future. It is because of this danger that strict vinaya rules state that when something is offered to a monk, he should not offer praise or say, 'thank you', thus showing appreciation for receiving that gift, because of the danger of hinting that you want to be offered more in the future.

Of course we need to understand this in the right context. It is in fact quite appropriate to show appreciation and thank people who do something with real sincerity. The intention here is to acknowledge their generosity and really appreciate their gift, rather than any intention of wanting to receive more in the future. It is only a deceit when one has an ulterior motive. That is what needs to be kept in mind.

We have to be mindful because we need to act in accordance with the effect on others. If you don't show appreciation and thank them then you can actually hurt the feelings of someone who has gone out of their way to give you something. So we need to be mindful about that, and not assume that by not showing appreciation we are practising properly.

Gyaltsab Je's commentary concludes this section on the five deceits thus:

These five are listed individually.

Unlike the seven forms of pride listed under one heading, these five types of deceit, hypocrisy and so forth are listed individually.

The remainder of the text is not too extensive, and we can continue with the remainder of the 57 defects in our next session.

In the *Eight Verses of Mind Training* one of the verses includes practices for overcoming pride. It says

When in the company of others  
I shall view myself as lowest of all  
And from the depth of my heart  
Hold all others as supreme

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