
to our own karma, we take responsibility for our own actions and this strengthens our conviction in the law of karma.

When others harm our reputation

The next verse talks about how we can transform into the path the suffering of being in adverse situations where, for no apparent reason, others speak harshly to us or say unpleasant things about us. Verse 14 reads:

Even if someone broadcasts all kinds of all kinds of
unpleasant remarks
About you throughout the three thousand worlds,
In return, with a loving mind, speak of his good qualities
–

This is the practice of the Bodhisattvas.

We can understand clearly from these lines how, when bodhisattvas face situations where someone criticises them or harms their reputation by spreading rumours about them *throughout the three thousand worlds, they will in return, with a loving mind, speak of his good qualities.* So, instead of retaliating when someone harms their reputation, bodhisattvas, influenced by love and compassion, will praise that person's good qualities.

The mention here of *the three thousand worlds* is a reference to the *Abidharmakosha* by Vasubandhu, in which each world system is described as having four continents, the sun, the moon, stars and so on. So, one thousand instances of each one of a world system is called the first thousand worlds. The second thousand worlds are the first thousand worlds multiplied by one thousand. And multiplying the second thousand world system a thousand times is called the third thousand world system. So, these are the three thousand worlds. The text says that even if their reputation is harmed throughout *the three thousand worlds*, bodhisattvas don't get angry.

In Buddhism, the world systems go beyond millions and billions into infinite numbers.

When we are publicly criticised

The next verse talks about experiencing harsh or unpleasant speech in front of others. Normally, if someone speaks to us unpleasantly, it is hurtful, but it is not as hurtful as when that person says the same words in front of other people, or at a large gathering. What do we do in such a situation? Verse 15 reads:

Though someone may deride and speaks bad words
About you in a public gathering,
Looking on him as a spiritual teacher,
Bow to him with respect –
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

These lines are also self-explanatory. If a bodhisattva hears someone say unpleasant words about them at a large public gathering, instead of being disturbed or upset, they would recognise the person who speaks harshly about them as a true spiritual teacher or spiritual guide, and show them profound veneration and respect by bowing their head.

Bodhisattvas regard those who speak harshly to them or who harm them as their true spiritual teachers, because bodhisattvas recognise those people as an aid to develop virtue.

Let me tell you a story about the author of *The Eight Verses of Thought Transformation*, the master Geshe Langri Tangpa; the story is often used to illustrate the practice of bodhisattvas. Once, the master was giving a discourse at a public gathering. Out of a motivation to smear the good name of this master, a

disgruntled woman at the gathering, handed her child over to the master, saying, 'This is your child'. To this the master replied, 'Okay. I accept that this is now my child.' So, the master delightfully kept the child. Later, the woman regretted her action and wanted her child back. So she saw the master again. She apologised to him and expressed her regret for what she had done and requested to have her child back. Geshe Langri Tangpa simply said: 'That is okay, you can have your child back'.

What this shows is that as a practitioner, it is important that you always to maintain the stability of your practice, and not let your mood be easily swayed by changing external conditions, whether they are good or bad. For example, normally, if you are faced with something bad, you immediately become unhappy, and if you hear some good news, you immediately get too excited.

When those we trust turn against us

The next verse shows how we should deal with a situation where someone whom we have cared for and supported starts to harm or abuse us. How can we cope with such a situation? Verse 16 reads:

Even if a person for whom you've cared
Like your own child regards you as an enemy,
Cherish him specially, like a mother
Does her child who is stricken by sickness –
This is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

There may be someone you have taken care of, as if they were your own child. You may have supported that person a great deal, giving up your time for them. However, that person may subsequently come to regard you as an enemy and hate you.

In this situation, as this verse says, a bodhisattva would feel even more love and compassion for that person, just like a mother would feel more love for a child who, as we said before, because of some mental disorder may even begin to even harm her. Because the mother has a strong, loving connection with the child, she feels even more love and compassion for that child.

This is how bodhisattvas feel about those harm them. Even though someone may consider the bodhisattva to be an enemy, the bodhisattva feels a greater sense of love and compassion for the person who has turned against them.

We'll leave it here for tonight. Thank you.

*Transcribed by Kim Foon Looi
Edit 1 by Mary-Lou Considine
Edit 2 by Sandup Tsering
Edited Version*

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