



5: Introspection

Teachings on the Bodhicharyavatara, Ringu Tulku Rinpoche

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Explanation of the chapter title

The title of the fifth chapter is *sheshin* in Tibetan. It is translated as “Vigilance” in the Padmakara translation. In other translations it is called “Guarding Introspection,” “Guarding Alertness,” or “Teachings on Introspection.” In this text, we translate *sheshin* as “introspection.” It means to examine the state of the mind again and again—what am I doing now?

Chapter structure

As mentioned, chapters four and five are about discipline, which requires training in heedfulness (*pag-yü*), mindfulness (*trenpa*), and introspection (*sheshin*). Chapter four explains how to practice heedfulness, and chapter five explains both mindfulness and introspection.

This chapter has four parts:

- I. Resolving to guard the mind in order to maintain the training
- II. The way to develop mindfulness and introspection in order to guard the mind
- III. The way to practice the conduct of mind-training by having mindfulness and introspection
- IV. Additional instructions to make your practice more complete

I. Resolving to guard the mind in order to maintain the training

I.A. Brief Explanation

Those who wish to keep a rule of life
Must guard their minds in perfect self-possession.
Without this guard upon the mind,
No discipline can ever be maintained. (1)

In order to guard the mind, you must understand the essence of *tsultrim* (Skt. *shila paramita*), which is typically translated as discipline. To understand the essence of *tsultrim*, you must understand the essence of *pag-yü*, *trenpa*, and *sheshin*, which we translate here as heedfulness, mindfulness, and introspection.

The essence of *heedfulness* is to understand what is the good thing to do and what is not the good thing to do, to understand the consequences of our actions. The essence of *mindfulness* is not forgetting what is the good thing to do, and what is not the good thing to do—to not forget the consequences of our actions. The essence of *introspection* means that in every situation, whether alone or in a crowd, you are aware of what you are doing with your body, speech, and mind; you are never unaware of what you are doing or what is happening in your mind.

All this discipline is completely self-imposed. There is nobody who can do this for you. Even if you have a teacher, the teacher can tell you what to do and what not to do, but it is completely up to you whether you do it or not. And sometimes it is even worse to have a teacher, because then the teacher might say, “Do this,” and then you will not want to do it and you will get angry. Nobody can actually be our discipline master. We must become our own teacher and our own discipline master, by knowing what the consequences are of doing this or that.

When acting as your own teacher, [one analogy suggests] that you take your mind as the horse, mindfulness as a rope, and introspection as the horse-trainer. Since your horse is a little bit wild, if you let it get away from you too much, then it will run away and get into trouble; it might eat somebody’s flowers, or break a leg, or cause some other damage. Therefore, for the good of everyone, you should try and guard your mind.

I.B. Detailed explanation

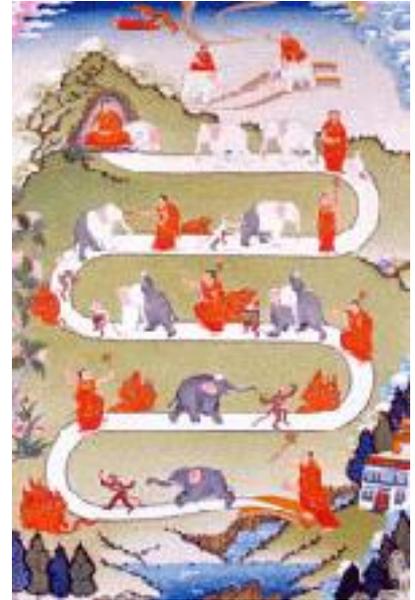
Now to explain this point in a more detailed way. This section has three parts: (1) how all harm comes from the mind; (2) how all virtue comes from the mind; (3) resolving to guard the mind.

I.B.1. How all harm comes from the mind

Wandering where it will, the elephant of mind,
Will bring us down to pains of deepest hell.
No worldly beast, however wild,
Could bring upon us such calamities. (2)

In explaining mindfulness, the mind is often compared to a wild elephant. Elephants are not easily controlled. You cannot just say, "Shush!" to an elephant and expect it to go away. When an elephant comes, it stomps all over whatever is in its way. Our mind is a little bit like that. It's not easy to stop and divert. It's big and wild and stubborn, crashing through everything!

There is a well-known drawing representing shamatha meditation that depicts a wild elephant being led by a monkey. The elephant represents our mind, and the monkey represents the distraction. A monkey never sits still for more than one or two moments. It's always jumping from this tree to that tree, and from that tree to the next tree, going down and going up, and always doing something. This elephant being led by a monkey represents our current mind situation. The whole system of meditation is how to work on this, how to tame this great big wild elephant being led astray by this crazy monkey.



If, with mindfulness' rope,
This elephant of mind is tethered all around,
Our fears will come to nothing,
Every virtue drop into our hands. (3)

In this drawing there is also a monk chasing after this big elephant that is being led by this monkey. The monk is carrying a rope, representing mindfulness, and a hook, representing introspection. The main understanding here is that our mind is not under our control; it is completely wild and distracted and under the control of the mind poisons and habitual tendencies. Therefore it's very difficult for us to gain control back. [In our current situation,] we are [just] overpowered by our mind poisons and do many bad things.

Sometimes it might seem that most people have no compassion and don't want to help each other. But I think that most people have good hearts, to some extent, and want to help. But then as soon as [certain conditions arise], their mind poisons come up and take over, and then their small positive intentions go to the back seat. That's why there are so many problems in the world. These mind poisons are the root cause of all sufferings for ourselves and others. As long as these mind poisons overpower us and take charge, then we will continuously have some problem or other; we will never be free from them.

Tigers, lions, elephants and bears,
Snakes and every hostile beast,
Those who guard the prisoners in hell,
All ghosts and ghouls and every evil phantom, (4)

By simple binding of this mind alone,
All these things are likewise bound.
By simple taming of this mind alone
All these things are likewise tamed. (5)

Verse 4 refers to the fears of this and future lives. *Tigers, lions, elephants and bears, snakes and every hostile beast*, are the fears of this life; if you meet a wild beast or a bandit in the forest, this may instill fear in you. *Those who guard the prisoners in hell* are the fears of future lives; if we are born in the hell realm, we might see that we are guarded by fearsome beings that torment us with fire and all kinds of weapons. *All ghosts and ghouls* are the fears of both this and future lives; these are the negative spirits that cause sickness and so on.

Then Verse 5 says, *By simply binding of this mind alone, all these things are likewise bound.* [By maintaining our mindfulness and introspection,] all the sources of all the fears, and thereby all the negative emotions, are bound.

If we can learn to relax with whatever fear or negative emotion comes up, then the fear or emotion loses its grip over us. In the Vajrayana tradition, we often talk about transforming our negative emotions into wisdom. Then some people think that this means you should sit and make yourself angry, and then you drop that and think, “I’ve just transformed my negative emotion!” But that is not what we mean by transforming negative emotions. Transforming negative emotions means that whatever negative emotions come up, you can relax in that. In this way, the negative emotion, or klesha, loses its grip. The strong aversion and attachment that arises out of the negative emotion is no longer there.

So if somebody really transforms negative emotions, then this person would have less negative emotions. It is often said that the success of your spiritual practice is not measured by how many great experiences you have, or by how many great visions you have in your dreams. Experiences and visions and so on can come from many different places. Even if you can create miracles, that is not necessarily confirmation that your practice is going well, because miracles can be created with the help of negative forces as well as positive ones. There is only one test as to whether your practice has been successful or not, and that is that you see that your mind is coming under your control—this means that your mind poisons are going down and your positive side, such as your compassion, is increasing. If you see that in yourself, that means your practice is really working.

By simple taming of this mind alone, all these things are likewise tamed. If you can tame your mind [through loving-kindness, compassion, bodhicitta or samadhi] then it is same as if all these things that are outside the mind are also tamed.

Therefore, the only practice that you need to do is to train the mind. That’s the way to get rid of the mind poisons, and to get out of all the sufferings. That’s the only way to work for your own benefit and liberation; and it is the most important way to work for the benefit of others. Taming your own mind is not only good for you, but good for others too. Because through training your mind, you gain the wisdom and capacity to help other beings.

For all anxiety and fear,
All sufferings in boundless measure,
Their source and wellspring is the mind itself,
Thus the Truthful One has said. (6)

[Verse 6 re-emphasizes the same point by referring to the teachings Buddha.] The Buddha taught that all the fears and sufferings that come to your body and mind in this life and in your future lives come from the same source, which is the mind itself. It is because our minds are overpowered by delusion and mind poisons that we commit negative deeds, and from that comes all this fear and anxiety and problems—the limitless suffering of body and mind. *Mind itself* is the *wellspring* of all this.

The hellish whips to torture living beings
Who has made them and to what intent?
Who has forged this burning iron ground;
Whence have all these demon women¹ sprung? (7)

¹ “In traditional teachings on the hell realms, [demon women] represent objects of insatiable lust and could just as easily be called “demon men”. In the description of one particularly torturous state, we are continually seduced up a hill made of razor-sharp swords to reach our lover. Although we are cut to shreds, we keep

All are but the offspring of the sinful mind,
Thus the Mighty One has said. (8, first half)

Even when you are born in the hell realm², and you are frightened and tortured by the *hellish whips* and *burning irons* and all manner of fearful things, even then, all that you see and experience are not made by anybody else—all of this comes from your own negative karma, which is created by your mind.

The hell realms and so on are all your own experience. You can't exactly say that it's less real than now, because what we see now, is also in a way created with our mind. When we say created by our mind, that doesn't mean that there is nothing there and your mind is projecting everything. [It's not that you can imagine whatever you want, and then create that.] It's not created in that way. It is created interdependently; it is due to both the outer circumstances and your own habitual tendencies—the way your mind is habituated or conditioned to react, and to see things, to experience things. This is the way your mind is creating.

There is a story about a wise shepherd who was tending his sheep on a mountain pass overlooking his village. A traveler came along and asked the shepherd, "What kind of people stay in that village down there?" The shepherd didn't answer directly. He said, "What kind of people stay in the village where you come from?" The traveler answered, "Oh, in the village where I come from, the people are horrible. They are not at all hospitable. They are very petty and quarrelsome. They're truly not good people." Then the shepherd said, "Oh, the people in that village are also like that. They are horrible. They're not hospitable, they're petty and quarrelsome, just like the people in your village." Then this traveler continued on his way.

A while later, another traveler came along and asked the same question: "What kind of people live in that village?" The shepherd replied, "What kind of people live in the village you come from?" The second traveler answered, "I come from a very nice village. They are all very hospitable, they are very kind, very generous, very nice people. They are so good." Then the shepherd said, "Oh, the people in this village are the same. They are very hospitable, kind, and generous, just like the people from your village."

Why does he give these two travelers totally different information about the same village? Because if the first traveler went to this shepherd's village, he may well find many people there like those from his own village. And the second traveler will too. It's often like that. Some people go to many places, and they find good people all the time. Some people go everywhere, and find all bad people. So if you go everywhere and find only bad people, then you have to look at yourself. That's the understanding. In a way, there's lots of truth in it. It's the way you react with things.

Thus throughout the triple world
There is no greater bane than mind itself. (8, second half)

There is nothing that does not come out of the mind. There is no fear or suffering that does not come out of our deluded mind. Therefore, the only practice that we need to try to do, that we need to get on with, is to see that our mind is liberated from this delusion, instead of being carried away by the distraction. Therefore the most important practice is to try to work on this, by training in mindfulness and introspection.

I.B.2. How all virtue comes from the mind

If all the fear and suffering comes from our mind, what about the positive things? They also come from the mind. The most positive or virtuous deeds that we can undertake are to train in the six paramitas. In the following verses, Shantideva explains how each of the six paramitas arises from the mind.

climbing to the top, only to have this sexy apparition turn into a devouring demon... Such suffering results from out of control craving of an extremely lustful mind." – Pema Chodron, *No Time to Lose*, page 107.

² The "burning iron ground" and other experiences of the hell realms are explained in *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*.

Perfection of generosity

If transcendent giving is
To dissipate the poverty of beings,
In what way, since the poor are always with us,
Have former buddhas practiced perfect generosity? (9)

The true intention to bestow on every being
All possessions—and the fruits of such a gift:
By such, the teachings say, is generosity perfected.
And this, as we may see, is but the mind itself. (10)

What does it mean to attain the perfection of generosity? Does it mean removing all the poverty of all the beings in all the realms, and making everyone rich? This cannot be the case, since the Buddha is said to have perfected generosity, but there are still poor people in the world. But if your *true intention* is the wish to benefit all sentient beings, and towards this end you are capable of giving away all that you have with a generous state of mind, without attachment to your possessions, your body, or even your merit—that is the perfection of generosity. Generosity is determined by your state of mind, the way your mind reacts towards your belongings or toward others.

Perfection of discipline

Where, indeed, could beings, fishes, and the rest
Be placed, to shield them totally from suffering?
Deciding to refrain from harming them
Is said to be perfection of morality. (11)

Discipline (translated here as *morality*) is also a practice of the mind. You cannot protect all beings from harm; you can't put every being in a place where they will never die or be killed by someone. But when you develop the state of mind of really wanting all beings to be free from harm, that is the perfection of discipline.

Perfection of patience

The hostile multitudes are vast as space—
What chance is there that all should be subdued?
Let but this angry mind be overthrown
And every foe is then and there destroyed. (12)

Patience is also a practice of the mind. It is not possible to destroy everyone that is hostile to you, and make everybody be nice to you. There is only one way that you protect yourself from all the hostility and attacks from others, and that is to work with your own anger. When you overthrow your own anger, then it is as if you have no more enemies. Nothing can harm you.

To cover all the earth with sheets of hide—
Where could such amounts of skin be found?
But simply wrap some leather round your feet,
And it's as if the whole earth had been covered! (13)

This is a famous example of patience. You might think that I will not go to that mountain because there are thorns there that will hurt my feet; or I can't go anywhere that is not covered with something very nice, which is not carpeted. If you think like that, then you can't go anywhere outside your house. But there is one way in which you can go there and not hurt your feet, and that is to put shoes on your feet. Actually, it's easier to put the shoes on, and then go wherever you want. Then it is as if the whole earth is covered by leather. That's what the practice is, and this is the only thing we can do.
[end segment]

Likewise, we can never take
And turn aside the outer course of things.
But only seize and discipline the mind itself,
And what is there remaining to be curbed? (14)

In the same way, if you want to protect yourself from all fear and harm, you may wish to make everybody peaceful and nonviolent, and completely nice to you. But you can't make everybody peaceful, you can't make everything safe, and you can't make everything nice. The only thing we can do is to change our own state of mind.

For example, if we expect that the government should do something so that everything is nice and peaceful and prosperous, then we are in for a disappointment. Because nobody has the power to do that completely.

Of course, we wish that everything changes, and difficulties are removed, and it's not that we should not try that, but to expect that to happen is not realistic. First we try to work on our mind, and if our mind is a little bit tamed, and controlled, and positive, then it is more likely that everything will become more positive, and we will have less difficulties.

So, everything that is out there that would make things difficult for me, that would harm me, that would do things that is not right or that is not nice to have, if all these things could be taken care of, that would be great. It is good that we try to make things better as much as possible. But we cannot change everything that's outside which is not nice, which is harming myself or others. It is impossible. If we spend all of our time trying to fix things outside, then we will be too much affected by negative circumstances, and we will always be angry with the way things are. If we go on in this way, we will never be able to make everything right, and at the same time our aversion, our anger, our frustration with those things will keep on growing, and we will keep on torturing ourselves.

Therefore, without stopping trying to change things outside, the one thing which we can and should do, in order to at least make the effect of these negative things less strong on ourselves, that we may not be too much affected by and suffer from these things that are not nice that are coming from outside, is to try and discipline our mind. Because if we can change our state of mind, if we can be more patient with things, if our anger and frustration can be transformed, then we have more peace and happiness in our mind.

So all the positive things that we talk about are actually achieved only through the training of your mind. Of course it doesn't mean that you shouldn't do anything to change the outer world; but it is not possible to change everything by yourself alone. Therefore one thing is very possible, and that is to change your own mind: that is what the practice is. By changing our mind, we can change ourselves, we can change our perceptions, we can transform our suffering into happiness and peace. That is the only thing we can do. Sometimes, we can also help others, but we can't completely change others. But we can change ourselves.

Perfection of diligence

A clear intent can fructify
And bring us birth in lofty Brahma's realm.
The acts of body and of speech are less
They do not generate a like result. (15)

[Diligence is also a practice of the mind.] [Here, Shantideva] is emphasizing the importance of our state of mind in any kind of practice. Dharma practice is a practice of the mind; it is working on our state the mind and the mind's risings. The body and speech are simply agents of the mind. What the mind orders, the body and speech will do. The body and speech can be deceptive. Even if the body does something seemingly positive or negative, [the intention of the mind is not always clear]. You can be doing one thing, but meaning something else. But the mind is as it is: if it is positive, it is

positive; if it is negative, it is negative. Therefore the mind is the real creator of positive or negative karma.

Clear intent here is a translation of the Tibetan word *sem sal*, which actually means having a clear mind, or a mind that is not dark or confused, but [that is infused with] compassion and loving kindness. Having that kind of nice, big state of mind can cause us to be born into the Brahma's realm.

For example, there is a story about a mother and her daughter who tried to cross a river, but they were both carried away by the swift current. As they were being swept away, the mother thought, "How can I save my daughter? It doesn't matter about me. I am old. But I wish that my daughter can get away." At the same time, her daughter was thinking, "I'm alright, I can die. But how can I save my mother?" Both the mother and daughter were drowned, but they both died with this very strong, unselfish love for each other. Then because of their very strong positive state of mind when they died, they were both reborn into the Brahma's realm. In the same way, it's our state of mind that creates our karma.

Perfection of meditation

Recitations and austerities,
Long though they may prove to be,
If practiced with distracted mind,
Are futile, so the Knower of the Truth has said. (16)

[Meditation is also a practice of the mind.] You can do lots of *recitations*, fasting, or other *austerities*, but if you do these things with a *distracted mind*, then it is of little use.

Perfection of wisdom

All who fail to know and penetrate
The secret of the mind, the Dharma's peak,
Although they wish for joy and sorrow's end,
Will wander uselessly in misery. (17)

[Wisdom is also a practice of the mind.] The main thing is to see *the secret of the mind* and to work on that. Anybody who wants to get rid of the sufferings of samsara or attain the final peace of enlightenment, has to work on the mind, and to understand the nature of the mind, *the secret of the mind*. There is nobody who doesn't want to be happy and joyful, and nobody who wants sorrow and sadness and pain. But if we don't know that the main thing that we have to work on is our mind, then we will wander ceaselessly [check] in the misery of samsara.

I.B.3. Then resolving to guard the mind

This is so, and therefore I will seize
This mind of mine and guard it well,
What use to me so many harsh austerities?
But let me only discipline and guard my mind! (18)

There is no other practice you need to do except to guard the mind. Regarding all other practices or *austerities*, if they complement this practice, then it is very good to do them. But any practice that does not help this practice is no use.

When in wild, unruly crowds
We move with care to shield our broken limbs,
Likewise when we live in evil company,
Our wounded minds we should not fail to guard. (19)

For if I carefully protect my wounds
Because I fear the hurt of cuts and bruises,
Why should I not guard my wounded mind,
For fear of being crushed beneath the cliffs of hell? (20)

If we have a broken limb or some other injury, we are naturally protective of it. For example, if we need to pass through a *wild, unruly crowd*, then we are especially cautious; all our thoughts will be turned towards protecting our injury. In the same way, we should protect our mind against negative influences. If we do not protect our mind, if we let our mind run away and become overpowered by our mind poisons or habitual tendencies, that can cause us much more suffering than our *cuts and bruises*.

If this is how I act and live,
Then even in the midst of evil folk,
Or even with fair women, all is well.
My diligent observance of the vows will not decline. (21)

If I learn to protect my mind against these negative influences, then in whatever kind of situation I am in, in whatever kind of environment I live, I'm alright—I can't be disturbed. My mind is going in the right way. I don't have to fear anything else. Even if I'm with lots of people who are very angry, it can't generate my anger. Or if I am in a situation where I might be tempted by greed or lust, I won't be overcome by those emotions. As long as I guard my mind, then I have no fear, I will be safe, I will be alright.

Let my property and honor all grow less,
And likewise all my health and livelihood,
And even other virtues all can go!
But never will I disregard my mind. (22)

My highest priority is to guard my mind. Because if I let my mind be overcome by these negative influences, this will cause me much more suffering than anything else that's happening to me. If I have to sacrifice *my property*, I will sacrifice it. If I have to sacrifice my *honor*, I will sacrifice that. I don't want these types of problems, but if I have to let these things happen in order to save my mind, then I will do that. My *health* is very important, my *livelihood* is very important, but even if I have to sacrifice these things a little a bit, I will do it. I will sacrifice every other good thing that I have, *but never will I disregard my mind*.

My priority is to guard my mind, because if I guard my mind, then in a way I am also guarding everything else. If I understand this, then I won't allow my mind to be overcome by trying to get something else. Because if I allow my mind to be overcome, then I am lost. I will lose everything: my mind and the thing that I was chasing after.

II. The way to develop mindfulness and introspection in order to guard the mind

This section has two parts: a summary and a detailed explanation.

II.A. Summary

In the next verse and in some of the following verses, mindfulness (*trenpa*) and introspection (*sheshin*) are translated as *awareness* and *mental vigilance*. The mindfulness is not to forget what is to be adopted and what is to be abandoned. And the introspection is whether you are in a crowd or whether you are alone, to be able to be aware of what is going on in your body, speech, and mind, and then act accordingly.

All you who would protect your minds,
Maintain awareness and your mental vigilance.
Guard them both, at cost of life and limb—
Thus I join my hands—beseeching you. (23)

All positive and negative thoughts and actions are created by the mind. As human beings, the mind is the most important agent within us, because whatever actions we do first arise in the mind. As we can see, wars first arise in the mind of the people. When there is no hatred in the mind of the people, there can't be war. Therefore the mind is the most important source of good actions as well as bad actions, of negative things as well as positive things. Therefore if you guard your mind, then everything is protected.

II.B. Detailed explanation

This section has two parts: (1) The disadvantages of not having introspection; (2) the actual method of relying on mindfulness.

II.B.1. The disadvantages of not having introspection

Those disabled by ill health
Are helpless, powerless to act.
The mind, when likewise cramped by ignorance,
Is impotent and cannot do its work. (24)

First, one has to try to understand what is the right thing to do, what is not the right thing to do, of what actions cause what result. Once you have this understanding, then try to act accordingly. We usually try to do the right thing. Whether it's a thought, an action, or speech, we try to do what is most beneficial for ourselves and others. But then often we either don't know how to do the best way, or even if we know this is the best way, we can't do it. Why not? Because our mind is taken over by something, whether it is a mind poison or some habitual tendency; this negative influence takes the mind away from us, and we lose control. In this way, we either don't have the knowledge or the power to be in control of our mind.

If my health is very bad or if my body is disabled, then I cannot do everything that I want to. I may want to go for a walk, or to help somebody to do something, but I can't because my body is not under my control. In the same way, when my mind is under the power of negative influences, then even if I want to do something positive, I can't because my mind is not in my control. It's almost like being disabled. In order to be free, the first and most important thing to do is to free my mind from the completely overpowering mind poisons and habitual tendencies.

[And those who have no mental vigilance,
Though they may hear the teachings, ponder them or meditate,
With minds like water seeping from a leaking jug,
Their learning will not settle in their memories. (25)]

Many have devotion, perseverance,
Are learned also and endowed with faith,
But through the fault of lacking mental vigilance,
Will not escape the stain of sin and downfall. (26)]

Without introspection (translated here as *mental vigilance*), you may read some books or hear some teachings and practice a little meditation, or go on a retreat and become inspired and become a very good practitioner for a few days—but then after a time you go back and become the same old person again. Why? Because we can't keep up the inspiration or the understanding.

The understanding we can get, and the understanding we can lose. Similarly, through meditation we can get certain glimpses [of our true nature], and we can lose that too. We can't keep them because our mind is not [stable] enough. Without introspection, our mind is easily distracted, and when it's distracted, it is easily influenced. In fact, our mind is so fickle and so easily influenced that it is changing all the time. So if we have a good influence then we become better, and if we have a bad influence, we become worse. For example, if we are in a peaceful environment, then we feel more peaceful. But if we are in a tense environment, we become tense.

This is one reason why when we begin our practices, we try to create an environment where we will not be disturbed by negative influences. The goal is to become so well trained in mindfulness and introspection that we have become one with our training, with our understanding, with our experience. Then wherever we are or whatever we are doing, we cannot be negatively influenced. That's the ideal. But in the meantime, because we understand that right now our mind is fickle and susceptible to distractions and so on, we must train in introspection.

The benefits of having introspection when negative emotions arise

The more *introspective* we are about our state of mind, the more *mindful* we can be. This is the practice. [This is] especially [true] when we have strong negative emotions. If we are mindful, then even if we don't know how to deal with the strong negative emotion when it arises, at least we try not to react too strongly to it. Then once the emotion has abated a little, we may be able to think more clearly and we will be more likely to make the right decision.

It's important to work on this moment by moment, to be aware of our state of mind and of the strength of our mind poisons [from one moment to the next]. Then when a negative emotion arises, even if we can't do too much, if we just know that, "Now this negative emotion is coming, and it's becoming too strong," then we become naturally more cautious. So that we don't do too much damage to ourselves and others.

There is nothing that you can do right now to completely eradicate your negative emotions: "Now my anger is gone, is no more anger." It is said that eventually you can learn to completely transform your anger when it arises, but this is not at the first stage. In the first stage, we use methods such as generating a positive state of mind and thereby diminishing the negative, or trying not to react to the negative state, so that we can work on it. Or we can try to rest in the nature of mind, and let go of the negative state in that way. Eventually, we can try the Vajrayana method of transforming the negative emotions into wisdom. But whichever method you choose, it will not work without having the introspection, the recognition, the understanding, the awareness. Without this introspection, we will be caught off guard. So therefore this introspection is the main tool of practice.

The disadvantages of being too rigid or oversensitive

On the other hand, if we apply introspection too rigidly, [and we become too stern and judgmental, this causes tension, and that is not good either.] When it's too much, then it becomes too tiring.

Being aware of what's going on around you is also important, but it's more important to be aware of what is going on in you. Sometimes people become too sensitive; that is also not too good. For example, someone might think, "He looked at me in a certain way, maybe he doesn't like me." Or "He said something to somebody else maybe that was meant for me." This happens very often and it's a big problem.

Sometimes we are aware so much of ourselves in the wrong way, such that we think "It's all about me! I am the centre of the whole universe! Of course!" So I see everything that's going on as if it's either for or against me. If someone passes by without saying "Hello" to me, then I think: "Oh, he didn't say hello to me. Maybe he's not happy with me or maybe he doesn't like me." But maybe this

person didn't even notice me, because he's too much involved in himself. We do it all the time. Therefore [we need to be careful of] this type of awareness.

Lack of introspection is like a thief

Lack of vigilance is like a thief
Who slinks behind when mindfulness abates
And all the merit we have gathered in
He steals, and down we go to the lower realms. (27)ⁱ

[If you worked for years and years in order to accumulate great wealth, and then left the front door of your house wide open so that the local bandits and thieves could come in and harm you and steal your treasure, that would be very foolish. Wouldn't it? In the same way, if we allow our mindfulness to decrease, then lack of introspection will follow; this is like leaving the door open for bandits and thieves to enter. Then it is as if all the merit we have accumulated is stolen, *and down we go to the lower realms.*]

Defilements are a band of robbers
Waiting for their chance to bring us injury.
They steal our virtue when the moment comes,
And batter out the life of happy destinies. (28)ⁱⁱ

These mind poisons (or *defilements*) are like a *band of robbers* that skulk around outside of my home, lurking in the dark, always circling and probing, looking for the chance to enter. Whenever these mind poisons see an opening, they will steal my merit and destroy my happiness.

II.B.2. The actual method of relying on mindfulness

Therefore from the gateway of awareness
Mindfulness shall not have leave to stray.
And if it wanders, it shall be recalled,
By thoughts of anguish in the lower world. (29)

Therefore, I will never let mindfulness slip away
From the doorway of my mind.
But should (my mind) become (distracted), I will recall the pain of the lower realms
And firmly establish (mindfulness).

[163] Second: "Therefore, (for this) reason, I will never let the mindfulness of not forgetting the points of what should be done and what should be avoided slip outward or away, meaning somewhere else; but in order to guard (my mind) against the bandits and thieves of afflictions, I will place (mindfulness) at the doorway to the mansion of my mind, the door through which mind strays onto erroneous objects."¹⁸ Thus, I, maintaining mindfulness for this purpose, must guard my mind, never letting it become distracted by the objects of the six accumulations of consciousness.

[164] But should my mind, after forgetting to maintain mindfulness, become distracted toward objects, then I will immediately recall the disadvantages of experiencing the suffering or the pain of the lower realms—(resulting from my) mind having fallen under the power of afflictions because of forgetting to maintain mindfulness—and once again firmly establish mindfulness; in other words, I must rely on it.

In those endowed with fortune and devotion,
Mindfulness is cultivated easily—
Through fear, and by the counsels of their abbots,
And staying ever in their teacher's company. (30)

In the beginning, one who does not have much mindfulness but who wants to cultivate it, should try to train oneself, and if possible train with a teacher who has the all positive characteristics of a proper spiritual friend. Try to find a good spiritual friend or teacher in whom you have trust, and who will remind you when you are not being introspective. Maybe in our situation, in this modern world, we can't stay with the teacher all the time. But I think it is important to be in the company of a good group of people who are of the same mind, who are working in the same way. So that people can discuss

things a little bit. Because everybody can have ups and downs, and then you can have doubts, you can have all different problems.

Sometimes being reminded of certain small things can make a great difference. Because when you're alone or under the influence of a negative situation, you can become so engrossed in your problems that you can't see the bigger picture, put it into perspective. At times like this, if a friend can remind us about the things that we have forgotten, then we can bring back our way of seeing in a more wider way. [For these reasons,] it is good to have good company and try to work on this.

The buddhas and the bodhisattvas both
Possess unclouded vision, seeing everything:
Everything lies open to their gaze,
And likewise I am always in their presence. (31)

One who has such thoughts as these
Will gain devotion and a sense of fear and shame.
For such a one, the memory of Buddha
Rises frequently before the mind. (32)

Another way of bringing your introspection back is to think that the buddhas and bodhisattvas who have *unclouded vision* are everywhere and they always see what you are doing. So if you are [starting to go in a negative direction, you remember that the buddhas and bodhisattvas are watching and] you don't go there. When you think this way, you are also reminding yourself of the positive qualities of the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha. So therefore it's directing your mind to the more positive side. And therefore the introspection and the mindfulness become stronger.

When mindfulness is stationed as a sentinel,
A guard upon the threshold of the mind,
Mental scrutiny is likewise present,
Returning when forgotten or dispersed. (33)

When mindfulness focuses on the purpose
Of guarding the doorway of the mind,
At that time introspection will come about
And even if (introspection) has gone, it will return.

[169] When the mindfulness of not forgetting the points of what should be done and what should be avoided has been placed at the door to the mansion of the mind, mindfulness focuses on the purpose of guarding the mind against engagement with the objects of afflictions. At that time introspection concerning the actions of (one's) three gates (of body, speech and mind) will occur, or will naturally come about, and even if (introspection) is sometimes forgotten, or (even if it) has gone elsewhere, it will arise again or return.

III. The way to practice the conduct of mind-training by having mindfulness and introspection

This section has three parts: (A) the discipline of refraining from negative conduct; (B) the discipline of practicing virtuous dharmas; (C) the discipline of fulfilling the benefit of sentient beings.

III.A. The discipline of refraining from negative conduct

This section has two parts: (1) keep pure all actions of the three gates; (2) protecting the training from decline.

III.A.1. Purifying the actions of the three gates

If at the outset, when I check my mind,
I find within some fault or insufficiency,
I'll stay unmoving, like a log,
In self-possession and determination. (34)

The way to be mindful and introspective is first you check your mind. *If at the outset, when I check my mind*, means that I try to become aware during the course of the day, and see what is the state of mind now. Then see whether these risings in my mind at this moment are something positive or something negative.

When you find that there is a totally negative state of mind arising, which is not beneficial to myself or others, but is actually harmful to myself and others, then you don't do anything at that time; don't do anything with your body, don't do anything with your speech, don't do anything with your mind, don't follow this sequence of thoughts that is arising. You *stay unmoving, like a log*, or like a big tree—a tree which doesn't walk around! You do not let the thought or emotional process [continue]. Because it's always a process. If we follow and get involved, then we become trapped and we are carried forward. But if we can somehow stop this process at any stage, then the thought or emotion is dispersed.

Whenever a negative process arises, whether it is strong or weak, the sooner you can cut the process, the better you are able to change its course, to control it, or to stop it. When you refuse to react, the process peters out. When you learn to just be still and in the present moment, not doing anything, not reacting, not speaking, not following the process, then the sequence is broken and something different happens. Then you are not completely overpowered and carried away by this process.

The practice is learning to stay in the present moment. It's not how we act when everything is alright. It's very good to meditate and so on when things are going well. But the real practice is to try to do something on the spot, when the negative emotions are rising.

In Tibet, there is a saying that if you clean a butter lamp as soon as the flame dies out, then it is very easy to wipe the residue off the glass. But if you wait too long, the residue will dry and freeze, and it will be very difficult to clean. In the same way, this verse is saying that if you can catch the negative thought or emotion as soon as it comes up, that is the best time to clear your mind and not get caught up in the process. That's why it is necessary to always be mindful and introspective.

I shall never, vacantly,
Allow my gaze to wander all about,
But rather with a focused mind
Will always go with eyes cast down. (35)

The way you do things, such as the way you walk, is a sign. When your mind is tamed and in control then your actions also become controlled and deliberate. In the same way, if you train yourself such that your actions become more deliberate, this helps your mind to become more deliberate or mindful.

But that I might relax my gaze,
I'll sometimes raise my eyes and look around.
And if some person stands within my sight,
I'll greet him with a friendly word of welcome. (36)

All this doesn't mean that I always have to go about sternly looking at the ground, and only looking in front of me, and not at all to anybody. That's too much. I need to relax my gaze occasionally, and raise my eyes and look around. So if I see someone there, I will greet them warmly.

And yet, to spy the dangers on the road,
I'll scrutinize the four directions one by one.
And when I stop to rest, I'll turn my head
And look behind me, back along my path. (37)

And so, I'll spy the land, in front, behind,
To see if I should go or else return.
And thus in every situation,
I shall know my needs and act accordingly. (38)

Here again, not allowing your *gaze to wander all about* doesn't mean that you never do anything else but just like go forward like a zombie. You need to look around and see if there is any danger there. For example, when I first went to Delhi, I was told how to cross the road: first you look up and then you look down, and then you go. And then in the middle of the road, you look again, up and down, and then you go. It's the same here.

Deciding on a given course,
Determining the actions of my body,
From time to time I'll verify
My body's actions, by repeated scrutiny. (39)

For example, if you are sitting in a meditation posture, from time to time you check and ask yourself, "Is my body in the correct posture or not?"

This mind of mine, a wild and rampant elephant,
I'll tether to that sturdy post: reflection on the Teaching.
And I shall narrowly stand guard
That it might never slip its bonds and flee. (40)

As we mentioned, the untamed mind is often compared to a wild and drunken elephant that is being led about by a wild and crazy monkey. If you try to visualize this for a few moments, you can see that if I completely let my untamed mind take its wild course, how much damage it can do for myself and others. Therefore I make this determination that I will not let my mind go wild, but I will train it. I will bind my mind on a big *sturdy post* of training, like *reflection on the Teaching*. Then I will try to be on guard to see whether the mind is out of control or not.

[This type of training cannot be done hastily.] We need to tame our mind, but we must take into account that it has been untamed for so long. Our mind is *like* an elephant, but it's *not* an elephant. It's much more *subtle*. If you push too hard in one direction, it will go in the other direction. It's not something that we can just put it in a box and lock it. So we have to be strong and determined, but also very skilful and subtle. Otherwise we can't do it.

So it's not going to happen in the snap of a finger. Even if we want to tame our mind and nothing negative comes to our mind, it's not going to happen in the next moment. We need to be patient. . Because if we're too tight, too concentrated, it won't work. For example, when people tame horses, first they put them on a very long rope and let them run. And then slowly, slowly, they make the rope shorter and shorter, and bring the horse nearer and nearer. In this way, we give [our mind] a long rein, not too tight and not too loose.

Those who strive to master concentration
Should never for an instant be distracted.
They should constantly investigate themselves,
Examining the movements of their minds. (41)

Ideally, we try to not be distracted for an instant. Some people are said to have done this. Maybe we can't do this completely, but we do the best we can.

In fearful situations, times of celebration,
One may desist, when self-survey becomes impossible.
For it is taught that in the times of generosity,
The rules of discipline may be suspended. (42)

[In certain situations, it is acceptable to relax your discipline, such as times of danger, when attending a feast or *celebration*, or when performing an act of great *generosity*.] For example, the Buddha said that in your practice, discipline is generally more important than generosity. But when you are trying to practice generosity and work for the benefit of others, then there are many times that you have to be easy on the discipline part.

When something has been planned and started on,
Attention should not drift to other things.
With thoughts fixed on the chosen target,
That and that alone should be pursued. (43)

Whatever we are trying to do, we need to learn to concentrate on that one thing, and not try to do too many things at a time. This advice is given in the teachings again and again. Whether it is a practice or something that you need to do in your life, first examine all the pros and cons and see how necessary or beneficial it is. And only then—when you see that there is a great need or benefit in doing this—only then do you start.

Then once you have decided to start on this project, you should do it, and not let your attention *drift to other things*. Because when some other interesting little project comes along, and you do that, and then some other thing get your attention, and you do that also, then at the end you have nothing. Choose your *target* and concentrate on that until it is completed.

Behaving in this way, all tasks are well performed,
And nothing is achieved by doing otherwise.
Afflictions, the reverse of vigilance,
Can never multiply if this is how you act. (44)

Behaving in this way means only beginning activities that are truly necessary and beneficial, and then working on them with concentration, without too much drifting. *Nothing is achieved by doing otherwise* means that if you do too many things or if your mind is all over and not concentrated then nothing is accomplished.

Afflictions, or the mind-poisons, are actually the opposite of introspection. Therefore where there is introspection, the mind poisons can not increase in strength. If we act in a more thoughtful way, the more mindful way by seeing the causes and effects of our actions, and choosing one, and then doing that a little bit more concentratedly till the task is through, then not too many problems can come. Because the problems come when your mind is scattered or distracted.

III.A.2. Protecting the training from decline

This section is about how to maintain the precepts of a bodhisattva.

Being present

And if by chance you must take part
In lengthy conversations worthlessly,
Or if you come upon sensational events,
Then cast aside delight and taste for them. (45)

Sometimes, for the sake of others, you may need to *take part in lengthy conversations* or observe *sensational events*. For example, you may need to converse with people who are sick or elderly in order to keep their spirits up. Or you may need to watch different kinds of entertainments and so on. If you have to do these things, there's nothing wrong doing them, but you should *cast aside delight and taste for them*, meaning don't get too involved in them.

If you find you are grubbing in the soil
Or pulling up the grass or tracing idle patterns on the ground,
Remembering the teachings of the Blissful One,
In fear, restrain yourself at once. (46)

[This is basic mindfulness practice. *Tracing idle patterns on the ground* and so on are forms of mindless distraction that indicate we are no longer present. "Instead of strengthening the process of a wandering mind, let us train in being present."³]

When you feel the wish to walk about,
Or even to express yourself in speech,
First examine what is in your mind.
For they will act correctly who have stable minds. (47)

[Here again, Shantideva is cautioning us against doing things mindlessly. For example, if you are fifteen minutes into a forty-five minute meditation session, and you suddenly feel the urge to *walk about*, this is merely distraction. Before any activity of the body or speech, first examine your motivation.]

Refraining from harm

[Verses 48 through 54 emphasize the discipline of not causing harm. Specifically, these verses refer to the *Twenty-Seven Gates That Give Rise to Mistaken Conduct*. The twenty-seven gates are *feelings of desire*, feelings of *wrathful hate*, and so on. When these negative states of mind arise, we should remain still, like a block of wood.]

When the urge arises in the mind
To feelings of desire or wrathful hate,
Do not act! Be silent, do not speak!
And like a log of wood be sure to stay. (48)

When the mind is wild with mockery
And filled with pride and haughty arrogance,
And when you want to show the hidden faults of others,
To bring up old dissensions or to act deceitfully, (49)

And when you want to fish for praise,
Or criticize and spoil another's name,
Or use harsh language, sparring for a fight,
It's then that like a log you should remain. (50)

And when you yearn for wealth, attention, fame,
A circle of admirers serving you,
And when you look for honors, recognition—
It's then that like a log you should remain. (51)

³ Pema Chodron, *No Time to Lose*, page 126.

And when you want to do another down
And cultivate advantage for yourself,
And when the wish to gossip comes to you,
It's then that like a log you should remain. (52)

Impatience, indolence, faint heartedness,
And likewise haughty speech and insolence,
Attachment to your side—when these arise,
It's then that like a log you should remain. (53)

Examine thus yourself from every side.
Note harmful thoughts and every futile striving.
Thus it is that heroes in the bodhisattva path
Apply the remedies to keep a steady mind. (54)

These verses are not difficult to understand, but they can be difficult to practice, especially for beginners. When all these mind poisons and habitual tendencies come up and are about to take over, all you need to do at that moment is to not react. When you don't react, then that particular sequence of thoughts or emotions decreases in strength or stops completely. That's the practice. It doesn't mean that these negative influences will never come back again. Of course they will come back, but then we do the same thing. And once we become stronger and more confident in our ability to do this, then it becomes easier. Thus, the easier it becomes to work momentarily, the stronger your practice becomes. The longer you work on this, the easier it gets. Then slowly, slowly, it becomes part of our way. So that's the recommendation. And that is how we try to refrain from engaging in negative conduct.

Although actions are done by the body, speech, and mind, here the emphasis is on the mind. Because the actions of the body and speech are directed by the mind, so if you control the mind, then you control the speech and the body. Therefore the main discipline is on the mind. Whereas in the Hinayana tradition the main discipline is put on the body and speech, in the Mahayana tradition the main emphasis is put on the mind.

For example, there is a story about a monk who was practicing in the remote countryside. One day a woman came to visit him, and she brought with her a goat and a bottle of wine. The woman gave the monk three choices. She said, "Either you drink this bottle of wine, or you sleep with me, or you kill this goat. Otherwise I will jump off this cliff and die." So the monk thought "Well, what to do now? I don't want this lady to jump off the cliff. I can't let that happen. But if I sleep with her I'll lose my monk's vows, so I can't do that either. If I kill this goat, that would also be very bad. Perhaps if I drink this wine, it's not such a big problem." So he drank the wine. Then the next day he woke up and found out that he had killed and ate the goat and slept with the woman. So completely losing your head can cause a lot of trouble.

Practicing virtue

[If one practices any kind of dharma with one's body, speech and mind, such as staying in retreat and the like, imitating others will not be adequate. Therefore, one must practice (any dharma) while possessing the (following) *Nine Points of Practicing Virtue*. -PKT]

[Verses 55 through 58 refer to the *Nine Points of Practicing Virtue*. The nine points are *perfect faith*, *unyielding faith*, and so on.]

With perfect and unyielding faith,
With steadfastness, respect, and courtesy,
With modesty and conscientiousness,
Work calmly for the happiness of others. (55)

Let us not be downcast by the warring wants
Of childish persons quarrelling.
Their thoughts are bred from conflict and emotion.

Let us understand and treat them lovingly. (56)

When doing virtuous acts, beyond reproach,
To help ourselves, or for the sake of others,
Let us always bear in mind the thought
That we are self-less like an apparition. (57)

This supreme treasure of a human life,
So long awaited now at last attained!
Reflecting always thus, maintain your mind
As steady as Sumeru, king of mountains. (58)

III.B. The discipline of practicing virtuous dharmas

This section has two parts: (1) explaining the need to give up attachment to one's body; (2) becoming skillful in practicing positive deeds.

III.B.1. Explaining the need to give up attachment to one's body, the reason for not training in the trainings

One of the main obstacles to training ourselves to do positive things is attachment to our body and possessions and so on. Out of all the types of attachment, attachment to our body is the strongest and the most difficult to get rid of.

When I speak of being attached to my body, this doesn't mean that I have to feel bad about my body, or that I should hate or reject my body. It means that I must learn to use my body in a proper way: that I should not be a slave to my body, but rather I should use my body to serve myself and others. The teachings speak of this *precious human body*. If I use my body in the proper way, by employing it to do things that are beneficial to myself and other beings, then it becomes a precious human body. But if I spend all my time and energy and attention just to please this body, then I will be overpowered, and I will just become a slave to this body.

So we must avoid the two extremes of either rejecting our body or becoming a slave to it, but rather employ our body to benefit beings. [In the following verses, Shantideva first emphasizes the limitations of the body; contemplating these limitations is an antidote to attachment to the body.]

When vultures with their love of flesh
Are tugging at this body all around,
Small will be the joy you get from it, O mind!
Why are you so besotted with it now? (59)

One day we will die and our body will dissolve into the four elements. Here Shantideva is giving an unpleasant picture of what might happen to our body when we die.

Why, O mind, do you protect this body,
Claiming it as though it were yourself?
You and it are each a separate entity,
How ever can it be of use to you? (60)

Why not cling, O foolish mind, to something clean,
A figure carved in wood, or some such thing?
Why do you protect and guard
An unclean engine for the making of impurity? (61)

First, with mind's imagination,
Shed the covering of skin,
And with the blade of wisdom, strip
The flesh from off the bony frame. (62)

And when you have divided all the bones,
And searched right down amid the very marrow,
You should look and ask the question:
Where is 'thingness' to be found? (63)

In this verse, *thingness* means the essence of the body. Is there any essence? What is the essence? Where is this essence? What is this thing that is really nice, which is there as a substantial good thing? Where is that to be found? What is really there, which is very desirable?

If, persisting in the search,
You find no underlying object,
Why still cherish—and with such desire—
The fleshy form you now possess? (64)

Its filth you cannot eat O mind;
Its blood likewise is not for you to drink;
Its innards, too, unsuitable to suck—
This body, what then will you make of it? (65)

As second best, it may indeed be kept
As food to feed the vulture and the fox.
The value of this human form
Lies only in the way that it is used. (66)

Whatever you may do to guard and keep it,
What will you do when
The Lord of Death, the ruthless, unrelenting,
Steals and throws it to the birds and the dogs? (67)

Slaves unsuitable for work
Are not rewarded with supplies and clothing.
This body, though you pamper it, will leave you—
Why exhaust yourself with such great labour? (68)

So pay this body due remuneration,
But then be sure to make it work for you.
But do not lavish everything
On what will not bring perfect benefit. (69)

Regard your body as a vessel,
A simple boat for going here and there.
Make of it a wish-fulfilling gem
To bring about the benefit of beings. (70)

Here we are trying to look at our body, not as the master, not as something that you always pamper and do whatever it says and then completely become the slave of it, but as something that we are master of. You become the master of your body and use it in a way that is beneficial to yourself and others. And also use everything else in the same way. Whether it is your body, your wealth, or anything else that belongs to you, use it so that it brings good things, it is beneficial to yourself in the present or short-run, and also in the long-run. And it is also the same with whatever we do; we should always act for the benefit of self and others.

This approach of not falling into extremes of attachment or aversion is called the middle path. In certain traditions in India, for example, people used to be very ascetic and torture the body, thinking that this type of suffering would bring them to liberation. But that is not the Buddhist way of thinking. In the Buddhist way, it is not helpful to make the body suffer or to pamper the body. The middle path is to use the body in the proper way such that it will bring some benefit ourselves and others. If we

can follow this middle path, then the body becomes what we call the *wish-fulfilling gem*. It is something that is potentially very powerful and beneficial, with many precious qualities.

This approach can also be applied to whatever type of work that we do. We have to work to pay your rent or mortgage, put food on the table, and so on. But then if we work so much that we become totally absorbed in the work and stressed-out, then it's no use either. Why we are working? In order to become happier and to become a better person. So that we get some money and we have somewhere nice to live. But then we do it so much that we become totally unhappy and totally stressed and totally overburdened. Then it doesn't serve the purpose; it actually does the reverse.

In all of these things, the balance is important. In order to maintain this balance, we need to have mindfulness and introspection. What we are doing? Where we are going? Are we are going too much in one direction, or too little. If we move forward in this way, without becoming too caught up in either extreme, then we can work on the dharma, on the mind, on the trying to do the proper things, the positive things. Then we can change ourselves, we can become more positive, and work for the benefit of ourselves and other beings too.

III.B.2. Becoming skilled in practicing positive deeds

This section is on how to become skilful in doing positive things.

When your mind is free, your body will follow

Thus with free, untrammelled mind,
Put on an ever-smiling countenance.
Rid yourself of scowling, wrathful frowns,
And be a true and honest friend to all. (71)

[By giving up our attachments to our body and outer circumstances, we gain a *free untrammeled mind*. This means that as we overcome our attachments,] we are no longer overpowered by our body or outer circumstances, and therefore we gain more and more freedom. We gain the freedom to say, ‘This is what should be done and this is what should not be done,’ and the power to act accordingly. So now if you wish to put on a friendly, smiling face, you can do that, because you are free—you are no longer overpowered by your attachments. Your mind has tamed the circumstances, so therefore your body will do whatever your mind says. Your mind poisons are also more under control.

At the moment, we give too much to our mind-poisons. Whatever our mind poisons or emotions say, we have to do it. So we have become a slave to our mind poisons. But when we become a little less overpowered by the attachment to the body and to things, and by the aversion or fear of all this, then we can become free.

Attachment and aversion are almost like two sides of a coin—when one is there, the other always follows. For example, if you think, “This is very nice. This is the real thing! This is what I really want!” then immediately the thought follows, “Maybe something bad will happen and I will lose this nice thing.” This fear, or aversion, always follows immediately. In the same way, if you have an aversion to something, then you try to cling to something else. For example, if you think, “This bad thing might happen,” then you try to hold on to something that you feel might protect you from the bad thing, thinking “I might be saved from this terrible thing which is coming to me if I just cling to this.” In this way, these two things, attachment and aversion, always come together.

When your mind becomes a little bit freer of these two things, then your mind has more power over our body and our actions. Then if you want to be nice, you can become nice; if you want to smile, you can smile. Whatever we want to be, we can become like that.

Then, if you wish, you can *put on an ever-smiling countenance* and *rid yourself of scowling, wrathful frowns*. Because the way we feel in the mind is expressed in the body. When our mind becomes freer, then our body also changes its expression. When we are happy, then the body becomes more smiling and bright. Then even if you think you look ugly, if you are happy, then you don’t look *that* ugly. But if you are ugly and you are also angry, then you look very, very ugly.

In this way, you can *be a true and honest friend to all*. This is the bodhisattva’s way—an honest friend to all. Sometimes the bodhisattva is called “the unacquainted friend.” Even if you are not acquainted with a person, still you are their friend. The attitude of the bodhisattvas is that you want to be a friend to everybody, to be helpful to everybody. When you wish everyone well and you want to help, then naturally your heart is open. This doesn’t mean that you go around giving everyone a big hug, but you naturally *wish* good for others, so therefore in your mind you are a true friend.

Be considerate, practice humility

Do not, acting inconsiderately,
Move furniture and chairs so noisily around.
Likewise do not open doors with violence.
Take pleasure in the practice of humility. (72)

This means be aware of what you are doing, and consider whether or not your actions are going to harm somebody or not. Even if you are just sitting down, take note of where you are sitting. Even you

want to move some furniture or chairs, see that it is not making too much noise. Sometimes we make the mistake of thinking, “I *wish good*, so therefore I can do anything.” This type of attitude can cause a lot of harm, because we begin to do things without thinking. For example, we may feel we are a good friend to someone and we wish them only good, so therefore we say things without thinking. And this can create a lot of misunderstanding. Even though we don’t mean to say hurtful things, if we are not mindful of our speech, things can be easily misunderstood.

Therefore, *take pleasure in the practice of humility*. Humility is important in *any* practice. If you don’t have humility, then you can’t learn, you can’t improve. Arrogance or pride is often compared to a smooth, shiny stone. If you pour water on the stone, nothing will stick to it; all the water will roll off, and it will not even get wet. In the same way, if you have too much pride, then you can’t learn from the good qualities from others, and you cannot improve. In order to be able to learn, to improve ourselves, we must have humility. We must appreciate things. We must have a mind that is looking for better things.

Therefore don’t think, “I know everything, I am the best,” and so on. Rather, always look for the good qualities of other people, so that you can always learn from them. If you are prideful, then you always look for the weaknesses of others.

Hérons, cats, and burglars

Hérons, cats, and burglars
Go silently and carefully;
This is how they gain what they intend.
And one who practices this path behaves likewise. (73)

Even if your practice is going well and everything is progressing, don’t make too much noise about it. Even if you can tame your mind a little bit, or if you have some kinds of meditative experiences and so on, don’t advertise it.

Strive to learn from everyone

When useful admonitions come unasked
To those with skill in counseling their fellows,
Let them welcome them with humble gratitude,
And always strive to learn from everyone. (74)

If someone tells us that we have made some kind of mistake, we should welcome the admonition, because it is something useful, and something that we can learn from. This attitude is important. Usually we get hurt when somebody criticizes us. We think, “Oh, this person is really saying something bad to me. He must not like me,” and so on. If we have this attitude, then it is very difficult to take good advice and it is very difficult also to *make* good suggestions to other people.

Here Shantideva is saying that if somebody gives you unsolicited advice or criticism, you don’t need to take it as something bad. You can take it as something positive, thinking, “Look here, maybe it is the right thing, maybe it is a wrong thing, but I must be aware of this. If I have done something wrong, then there is no reason why I should not change it. Even if I have not done anything wrong, if people feel that there is something wrong going on, then I must try to understand why. This criticism also helps me because it prevents me from becoming too proud.”

Because the main task of a practitioner does is to work on the mind against the mind-poisons. So therefore if it humbles you a little bit, if it gives you more humility, then it is a good thing, it is the instruction from the Guru.

[An experienced practitioner of Mahayana Buddhism sees all] phenomena as a teacher. There is nothing that you cannot learn from. Everything is your teacher. You can learn from everything. You can learn from yourself, you can learn from others, you can learn from very highly attained and great masters, but you can also learn from very ordinary people and completely negative people also.

Because [negative people] teach us what we should not do. So therefore whatever is happening is an instruction. Whatever is happening is a learning. Whatever is happening is a training.

When we have this understanding, then even if someone criticizes us, we don't get upset or hurt. And especially for people in leadership roles; it is always said that a leader should have the ear of a ruin. A ruin is something that is already broken, so it cannot be broken anymore. Even if it is broken some more, it is still a ruin, it's nothing, no problem. Therefore, even if the sun shines, the rain comes, the wind blows, whatever; it's a ruin, nobody cares. The ear of a leader should be like that. Meaning that whatever is said, he or she will not feel hurt or harmed. Otherwise you can't function.

In this way, a bodhisattva is like a leader. The bodhisattva is somebody who has made this great aspiration, and in a way a promise, that I will help not only myself but all the sentient beings to become enlightened. So therefore you have assumed a great leadership. Therefore you must be more understanding and patient, and have these qualities of the leaders, otherwise you can't work on that. If you try to be a leader, and then right away somebody says something against you and you get angry and hurt and rejected, and completely depressed, then forget about the bodhisattva thing.

Because as we said in the beginning, a bodhisattva is somebody who wants to help people and who wants to work with people. But you can't work only with good people. Maybe good people don't even need your help. Therefore you have to work with all different kinds of people. So when you have to work with all different kinds of people, then of course you will have problems. You will have to face problematic situations. You will have to face people who criticize you unreasonably and lots of other things.

So one has to build one's own understanding and stability in such a way that all these things don't affect us too much. And one to do this is that whatever comes, we take it as an instruction. Something that we can take with gratitude. We can welcome it *and always strive to learn from everyone*.

Rejoicing

Praise all who speak the truth,
And say, 'Your words are excellent.'
And when you notice others acting well,
Encourage them in terms of warm approval. (75)

It is important to appreciate anyone *who speaks the truth*, who says the right thing. We should not only acknowledge this in our mind, but say out loud, "That's very good. Well said." It is often the case that if something is going well then we don't say anything, but if something goes wrong then we make lots of noise. Therefore if somebody has done something good or said something well, then it's good to say to that person that this was a good thing, because then this person feels appreciated and he or she will be encouraged to do more good things.

Extol them even in their absence;
When they're praised by others, do the same.
But when the qualities they praise are yours,
Appreciate their skill in knowing qualities. (76)

Praising the good qualities of others rarely brings bad results. If people have good qualities, or if they have done well, then praise them *even in their absence*. And if other people say good things about them, then you can also say good things about them. Rejoicing in the good qualities of others is a way to gather virtue, and that helps us as much as those we are praising.

However, when people praise you or say good things about you, don't become puffed-up. Rather think to yourself, "Oh, this is a good person, he recognizes good qualities in others." Therefore you appreciate that person more [by seeing that this person recognizes good qualities in others]. In this way, rather than becoming proud of yourself, you should think, "Maybe I have these qualities and maybe I don't, but this person appreciates good qualities. Therefore I'm happy and grateful."

The goal of every act is happiness itself,
Though, even with great wealth, it's rarely found.
So take your pleasure in the qualities of others.
Let them be a heartfelt joy to you. (77)

The main goal of every action in this world is to become happy. Whatever we do is directly or indirectly to become happier, more joyful, more peaceful, and so on. But it is not easy to get this happiness. Even if we spend lots of money we do not always become happy. So even though everything we do is for sake of happiness, we often don't get it. *It's rarely found.*

So take your pleasure in the qualities of others. Let them be a heartfelt joy to you. Meaning that if you can be happy by rejoicing in the qualities of others, then you can get happiness for nothing. Without spending any money at all! So why not? Why not use this very inexpensive and simple way to become happy. Because if you can do that, then you can be happy on account of other people. If somebody is doing something good, you can appreciate it; you can rejoice and be happy. If you can use this method, then you can be happy all the time. Because there will always be somebody doing good things.

By acting thus, in this life you'll lose nothing;
In future lives, great bliss will come to you.
The sin of envy brings not joy but pain,
And in the future, dreadful suffering. (78)

So by rejoicing in somebody's good actions and good attainments we will *lose nothing*. But we will gain a lot. We will gain our own happiness and peace of mind [in this life], and in the future lives, we share the positive deed of the others.

The Buddha has said again and again, in many different sutras, that the most easiest and the most powerful way of accumulating merit is to rejoice in the great positive deeds of other beings. Therefore we rejoice in the positive deeds of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the past, present and future. Rejoice at all the great beings who have done good things or are doing good things. Rejoice in all the good people who have done good things or are doing good things. When you rejoice like this, then you share in their positive merit. Therefore it's regarded as the easiest, most skillful way of accumulating positive merit. (This is illustrated in the example of Prince Jetta given in chapter three.ⁱⁱⁱ)

Then Shantideva says, *The sin of envy brings not joy but pain, and in the future, dreadful suffering.* This means that if we do the opposite, and practice jealousy rather than rejoicing, then we can be unhappy all the time, for nothing. Without spending any money at all! For example, if somebody does something good, we become jealous and we don't like it. Then if somebody has some good thing happen to them, we don't like that either. So we are unhappy all the time. So by thinking in this way, by always making our mind jealous, we create an insurmountable unhappiness for ourselves.

It's not just *now* that we will experience this misery. By thinking in this way, rather than accumulating positive karma which will bring us happiness in the future, we will accumulate negative karma that will only bring us more and more suffering.

Speaking with honest words

Speak with honest words, coherently,
With candor, in a clear, harmonious voice.
Abandon partiality, rejection, and attraction,
And speak with moderation, gently. (79)

[When one speaks in response to questions, one should speak harmoniously, and according the needs of the questioner. There should be no contradiction between one's earlier and later statements. One should speak without attachment or aversion to one group or another.]

Looking on others with a loving heart

And catching sight of others, think
That it will be through them
That you will come to buddhahood.
So look on them with open, loving hearts. (80)

Whenever you see any other being, look on them with gratitude, thinking, “For this person I am going to work, and through this person I am going to attain enlightenment.” In this way, every being that you meet is important, because I have made this aspiration, made this promise that I would like to bring all the sentient beings to the perfect enlightenment. Therefore I am working for them. It is only through them that I can learn to generate compassion and wisdom, and therefore it is only through them that I will become enlightened. Therefore all these beings bring me great benefit.

With this attitude, then you see every being as an important being, and you feel grateful and appreciate them. Think that, in the beginning, it is because of these beings that I first generate bodhicitta. In the middle, it is because of these beings that I practice this paramitas. And in the end, it is because of these beings that I will attain the enlightenment. So therefore they are my friends who help me to practice bodhicitta.

Implementing the antidotes

Always fired by highest aspiration,
Laboring to implement the antidotes,
You will gather virtues in the fields
Of qualities, of benefits, of sorrow. (81)

Implement the antidotes means that when you are doing these practices, try to do it so that it goes to the point, meaning that you are working directly on your mind poisons. Apply the practice where it needs to be applied, where it needs to touch, where this needs to be practiced. For example, if you are practicing generosity, then give away something that you are very attached to, so that you can really work on your attachment. So that the practice goes to whatever it's meant for.

When you work in this way, you will gather virtue or merit in the Three Fields. These are the field of *qualities, of benefits, of sorrow*. *Field* means to the object towards whom you do these positive deeds. So *field of qualities* means those who are highly attained, like the Buddhas, or Bodhisattvas, or great beings who have great qualities and great achievements and great knowledge and great wisdom and so on. Doing something positive for their benefit, or helping them, brings more good qualities. The *field of benefits* means those who have been beneficial to you, those who have done something to you, those who have helped you, those who have been kind to you, and so on. If you return them the good things, then also it is very important and positive. It is also good thing. The *field of sorrow* or suffering is those who have problems, such as people who are very ill or oppressed or sad or in a very pathetic situation; those who cannot help themselves; those who are worthy of sympathy and compassion and help.

[Note: the PKT translation has a slightly different meaning]

stanza 81
Constantly to be motivated by strong passion
Or being motivated by a remedial force,
Or toward the fields of qualities, benefits and misery,
Great virtues will result.

[230] When practicing any kind of virtue, the key-point concerning time is (to practice) constantly [rtag par] or continuously. The key-point concerning motivation is to be motivated by strong passion [mngon zhen], in other words by a powerful (spiritual) yearning such as faith, compassion and so forth. Or, the key-point concerning the remedial force—(when) being motivated by a remedial force—is that just as generosity is certain to function as an antidote to stinginess, through the giving away of what is most treasured [gang gces] and most loved [gang dmar], or as discipline (serves to) overcome one's major

attachments, whatever they are, (all six perfections) are certain to function as remedial forces for what does not accord with the six transcendental perfections. Or, the key-point of the 'field' is that if one practices generosity and the like toward the 'field of objects endowed with qualities', the three jewels; the 'field of benefits', one's parents; and the 'field of those (who live) in misery', such as travelers from afar, those who are sick for a long time and so forth, much greater virtues will result than making donations to anyone else. The same (principle) applies to negativity as well.

Acting with faith and understanding

Acting thus with faith and understanding,
You will always undertake good works.
And in whatever actions you perform,
You'll not be calculating with your eye on others. (82)

Being endowed with learning and faith,
I will always carry out the (bodhisattva) activities myself.
In all my activities
I will not place my expectations in someone else.

[232] At first, regardless of which dharma I practice, being endowed with great learning in the meaning of this (dharma) and with the faith of conviction in its meaning, I will always carry out activities such as six transcendental perfections and so forth, the conduct of a bodhisattva, myself. Just as in the past, in the life-story of Lord Atisa, he made terracotta (figures) by hand, in all my activities such as (presenting) offerings, (practicing) generosity and the like, I will not practice (the dharma) placing my expectations in someone else, in any person (other than myself), in people who request (me to practice) or people who practice (on my behalf), meaning, if I want to practice, I will do it myself, and if I do not want to practice, it is not proper to rely on others (to do it for me).

The six perfections progress in sequence

The six perfections, giving and the rest,
Progress in sequence, growing in importance.
The great should never be supplanted by the less,
And it is others' good that is the highest goal. (83)

Since the transcendental perfection of generosity and the other (perfections)
Become progressively more important, (one must mainly) practice (the higher ones).
Do not abandon a greater (perfection) for the sake of a lesser.
(However, bodhisattvas) primarily consider (whatever brings) the (greater) welfare for others.

[233] Since (the perfections), the transcendental perfection of generosity, the transcendental perfection of discipline and the other (perfections), become progressively, from the lower to the higher, more important, that is to say more exalted, one must mainly practice the higher ones. For instance, just as the water in a hoof print and (the water) in a great ocean differ, the benefit of keeping discipline for a single day is greater than giving donations for one hundred years. Thus, (the perfections) become progressively more exalted. The Sutralamkara (presents the six perfections) through (distinctions such as) relying on the former (to practice) the latter, and (classifications into) lower and higher, and refined and gross.

[234] "Do not abandon a superior or greater, meaning a higher (perfection), such as discipline for instance, for the sake of a lesser or minor (perfection) such as generosity." In general it is stated thus; however, in particular, one must bear in mind that "Bodhisattvas primarily consider whatever brings the greatest welfare for other sentient beings," and practice (accordingly). It is said:

Furthermore, (both) general and specific (presentations of the dharma)
Are highly important for all treatises.

III.C. The discipline of fulfilling the benefit of sentient beings

This section has three parts: (1) striving for the benefit of others; (2) bringing dharma and worldly activities together; (3) protecting others from disbelief.

III.C.1. Striving for the benefit of others

Therefore understand this well
And always labor for the benefit of beings.
The far-seeing masters of compassion
Permit, to this end, that which is proscribed. (84)

[We should understand and practice the “discipline of refraining from negative conduct” and the “discipline of practicing virtuous dharmas.” Based on this sound understanding and practice, we should then *labor for the benefit of beings*, meaning we should practice the “discipline of fulfilling the benefit of sentient beings.”

When laboring for the benefit of beings, a bodhisattva, or one who has the complete understanding and discipline to practice the disciplines of “refraining from negative conduct” and “practicing virtuous dharmas”, may encounter situations where it is more beneficial to act against the proscribed disciplines. In these situations, a bodhisattva with the proper understanding and motivation is permitted to do even *that which is proscribed*.]

III.C.2. Bringing Dharma and worldly activities together

Eat only what is needful;
Share with those who have embraced the discipline.
To those, defenseless, fallen into evil states,
Give all except the three robes of religion. (85)

Eat only what you need, and share what you don't need. Here, Khenpo Kunpal says: “I will eat just enough to fill my stomach, to sustain my body without any attachment and aversion, neither becoming too full nor starving... This is because if my meal is too large, I will become heavy and dull and if it is too small, I will become weak and will have no energy to practice the dharma.”

The three robes of religion refers to the monks robes, which are their only clothing. Khenpo Kunpal says, “Except for the three-fold dharma robes...which I wear myself, I may give everything else away to beggars, whatever I may have.”⁴

The body, apt to practice sacred teachings,
Should not be harmed in trivial pursuits.
If this advice is kept, the wishes of all beings
Will swiftly and completely be attained. (86)

In the teachings on bodhicitta, there are many examples of great compassion and generosity and working for the benefit of others at the expense of all one's selfish desires. Many examples talk about bodhisattvas who give away their arm or eye or other parts of their body. But here Shantideva warns that this kind of great sacrifice can be done only when you have reached a high level of realization. Khenpo Kunpal says that until you have reached the *first bhumi*, you should not give away your body or parts of your body. The *first bhumi* is the level of realization in which you have direct, complete insight to the nature of things. At this level you no longer have any attachment; you are no longer in a samsaric state of mind.

Once you have reached the first bhumi, then, even if you want to give your life, that's no problem, because you will never have regrets; you will not feel tortured or loose faith or so on, because you have transcended all your attachment to your body. But until then, one should not be overly enthusiastic or try to give away parts of your body.

⁴ See Khenpo Kunpal's commentary for his complete comments on this verse.

Generally speaking, if we are overly enthusiastic in the beginning, and try to do things that we are not ready for, this is not good for ourselves or for others. So if you are asked to do something that you are not ready for, that is no problem. Don't do it. Don't do anything that you are not ready for.

[While we are on the path, we should have great respect for our body.] Our precious human body is the basis or the form through which we can practice the teachings and work on our path. Therefore it should not be harmed. Rather we should protect our body and protect this existence. We should not spoil our health for *trivial pursuits* that bring little or no benefit. The precept of the bodhisattva is that we should not sacrifice the big benefits for small benefits.

As I have emphasized again and again, it is very important to understand that when you take the bodhisattva's vow, you say:

Just like the buddhas of the past
Generated this bodhicitta,
And on the precepts of this bodhisattvas
They trained and practiced *step by step and gradually*.

I too would like to
Generate this bodhicitta
And train myself on the precepts of the bodhisattvas'
Step by step and gradually.

That's the promise you take and that's how one practices. You must understand your own capacity at each stage of the path, and what you can give without any problem, without any regret, without leaving any kind of bad feeling behind afterwards. Then when you are sure that you can give something, then you give it. But if you might feel regret after you give it, then it is not good to give.

It is said that if you are able to give away a cup of curry without any regret, then give this cup of curry to whoever you like. And when you have no more attachment to your own body than this cup of curry, then you may give your body also for the sake of other beings. This is the proper attitude. If one practices in this way, *the wishes of all beings will swiftly and completely be attained*. This means if we work in this way, and we practice on ourselves slowly and gently, then we will attain our goal—we will attain enlightenment very quickly and it will be the great help for all the sentient beings also.

They should not give up their bodies
Whose compassion is not pure and perfect.
But let them, in the world and those to come,
Subject their bodies to the service of the supreme goal. (87)

We should not give away our bodies. We should keep it and care for it. We should not make our body the boss, but employ it in such a way that it becomes an instrument through which we can do this great benefits for ourselves and others.

Teach appropriately, according to the needs of the student

Do not teach to those without respect,
To those who like the sick who wear cloths around their heads,
To those who proudly carry weapons, staffs, or parasols,
And those who keep their hats upon their heads. (88)

This means don't give teachings unless they are asked for. You should not try to impose the teachings on someone in order help them. Only teach those who want the teachings and request it.

Those who like the sick wear their cloths around their heads and so on is referring to those without respect. So even if someone asks for the teachings, if they are not respectful, then you should not give them.

Do not teach the vast and deep to those
Upon the lower paths, nor, as a monk,
To women unescorted. Teach with equal honor
Low and high according to their path. (89)

Those suited to the teaching vast and deep,
Should not be introduced to lesser paths.
But basic practice you should not forsake,
Confused by talk of sutras and mantras. (90)

It is not correct to give *vast and deep* teachings to those who are not ready for them. Nor is it correct to give only lower level teachings to those who are ready for *vast and deep* teachings. For example, you should not give Mahayana level teachings on emptiness to students who are interested in teachings on the Hinayana level. Then again, if a student is ready for the Mahayana teachings, then you should not make them only study and practice the Hinayana teachings. Doing so would be breaking the precept of bodhisattva, because you pretending to teach those with great faith and understanding, but you only show them the lower teachings, then in a way you are deceiving them or taking them in the wrong path.

You should not consider one part of the Buddha's teachings as better than another. That is, you should not think, "I want to teach only elementary Buddhist teachings." Or, "I want to teach only very high and deep teachings, and I don't want to teach all others." Rather, you should give *equal honor* and respect to all the teachings, and give the teachings appropriate for the needs of the student. In the *Sarva-dharma-vaidalaya-samgraha-sutra*, it says, "Manjushri, anybody who regards some of the teachings of the Buddha as good and who regards some of the teachings of the Buddha as bad is forsaking the Dharma."

But basic practice you should not forsake. Generally one has to be very clear talking about the basic practices. For example the karmic consequences: if you do a positive thing there's positive results, if you do a negative thing there's negative results. So the basic practices should not be lost sight of or should not be pushed aside or belittled.

Also, the basic practices should be *confused by talk of sutras and of mantras*. This means that if a student is ready to understand that teachings of the bodhisattva path, and ready to do the real practice of the bodhisattva, then you should not say to them "Oh, you just read the sutras a little bit and say some mantras, and that will be enough."

If there are people who cannot understand and who cannot practice a lot, then you can say to them, "Just do this mantra, just read some sutras or just do this and that, that will be enough for you." But for if you say this to those who are ready to understand more, then you will only be deceiving them. For students who are capable, you have to make it very clear what are the relative teachings and what is more absolute teachings. And then make them understand fully.

III.C.3. Protecting others from disbelief

[In the following verses, Shantideva gives advice for benefiting beings by paying attention to all the details of your life.]

Your spittle and your toothbrushes,
When thrown away, should be concealed.
And it is wrong to foul with urine
Public thoroughfares and water springs. (91)

When eating do not gobble noisily,
Nor stuff and cram your gaping mouth,
And do not sit with legs outstretched,
Nor rudely rub your hands together. (92)

Do not sit upon a horse, on beds or seats,
With women of another house, alone.
All that you have seen, or have been told,
To be offensive—this you should avoid. (93)

Not rudely pointing with your finger,
But rather with a reverent gesture showing,
With the whole right hand outstretched—
This is how to indicate the road. (94)

Do not wave your arms with uncouth gestures.
With gentle sounds and finger snaps
Express yourself with modesty—
For acting otherwise is impolite excess. (95)

Lie down to sleep with posture and direction
Of the Buddha when he passed into nirvana.
And first with clear resolve,
Decide that you'll be swift to rise again. (96)

Going to sleep with the *posture and direction of the Buddha* means lying your right side with your head facing north as the Buddha did. Then think to yourself, "I will arise early, with awareness and mindfulness." In the Mahayana teachings, it is said that if you can go into sleep in a positive state of mind, then that positive state of mind will, more or less, go throughout your sleep. Then you can also get up in that positive state of mind.

Khenpo Kunpal says that you should try to practice taking each day as your whole life. In the morning, it is as if you are born and you become a child, then at mid-day, you are in the middle of your life, and in the evening when you go to sleep, you feel as if you are dying. Then when you get up again, you feel as if you have begun a new life. So each day you try to take it as a new life, and you practice accordingly. In this way, you are exercising the cycle of rebirth and the bardo practice also. When you go to sleep then think that you are about to die and when you sleep then it's almost like death, and then the dreams you have you take it as bardo, and then when you get up you take it as you got a new birth.

IV. Additional instructions to help perfect your practice

This sections gives additional instructions to make this practice more prosperous, meaning more complete. This section is divided into two parts: the actual instructions; and condensing the meaning of the chapter.

IV.A. The actual instructions

Training the mind

The bodhisattva's acts
Are boundless, as the teachings say,
And all these practices that cleanse the mind
Embrace—until success has been attained. (97)

The activity of a bodhisattva is very vast. There are many different ways of practicing the paramitas and working for the benefit of beings. There are many different teachings from the sutras and on the works of the paramitas. But the first thing that we have to do is to *cleanse our mind*, meaning to tame our mind.

It is very important to understand that when you practice Dharma, it's not that you are becoming committed to Dharma and practicing Dharma; rather, you are using the Dharma as a way, as a method, as a tool to work on yourself. As it is said again and again: *my practice is myself*. I am my practice. The *Bodhicharyavatara* is not my practice. My practice is myself: my own mind poisons; my own negative emotions; my own problems; my own suffering. That is the practice. My ignorance is the practice. Therefore I use the teachings, the Dharma, the instructions as the means through which I learn how to practice. If I use these tools to work on myself, then I am practicing the Dharma.

Purifying transgressions

Reciting thrice, by day, by night,
The Sutra in Three Sections,
Relying on the buddhas and the bodhisattvas,
Purify the rest of your transgressions. (98)

When I take the bodhisattva's vows and other precepts, of course I will make mistakes. It's almost impossible for us not to make mistakes. We have been so deeply involved with samsara for so long, and we are so overpowered by our mind-poisons and our negative habitual tendencies [that we are conditioned to think samsarically].

Firstly, it is not easy to know what is the right thing to do and what is not the right thing to do. But then even if we know what is the right thing to do, then also we will many times not be able to do those things, because we are unable to break free from our negative habits and overpowering mind-poisons. Therefore we will break the rules. We will break our own self-imposed discipline. But when this happens, you don't need to feel completely lost and distressed, thinking, "Now I have done something wrong. I feel terrible." Rather, we have to find a way to purify our transgression and rejuvenate the practice.

In this verse, Shantideva recommends reciting *The Sutra in Three Sections*⁵ to purify our transgressions. This sutra has these three sections: prostration, confession, and dedication. In the section on confession, I confess anything I have done wrong. I repent and let go of any transgressions or mistakes that I have made, and I promise to try not to do them again. In this way I purify my transgressions and wash them away.

Then in the section on dedication, I remember the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the three times, and all these practices all the other positive things that I have done in this life and my previous lives, and

⁵ Skt. *Tri-skandha-sutra* Tib. *pungpo sum kyi do*, translated as *The Sutra of the Three Heaps*, by Stephen Batchelor

what I will do in future lives also. And I dedicate all of this merit with this bodhisattva's attitude, which is: may all sentient beings be completely rid of all the sufferings and may they get the highest and deepest attainment, which is enlightenment. In this way, you rely on the buddhas to purify all your transgressions.

Applying the teachings

And therefore in whatever time or place,
For your own good and the good of others,
Be diligent to implement
The teachings given for that situation. (99)

In whatever situation you are in, you should try to diligently apply the teachings as best you can. In each situation, try to apply with diligence whatever is right at that moment, or whatever is most appropriate, from the teachings of the Buddha and from the *Bodhicharyavatara*.

Diligence means find joy in doing positive things. It does not mean doing things begrudgingly. When we are trying to perform positive actions, we should not just be pushing, but we should become joyful in these actions. The joy comes from understanding the benefit of doing something. When you do it with joy, then it becomes easier, and the more and more that we do it, the more and more familiar with these things we become. It is said that the difference between the positive and negative deeds is that negative deeds are very exciting at the beginning, but the more and more you do them, the less you like it. Positive deeds are difficult in the beginning, but the more and more you do them, the easier it becomes.

Learning everything

There is indeed no virtue
That the buddhas' offspring should not learn.
To one with mastery therein,
There is no action destitute of merit. (100)

There is nothing which the bodhisattvas should not learn. There is no subject that is not *virtue*. A learned bodhisattva tries to understand everything, tries to study everything, and then be mindful in everything. For this kind of a learned bodhisattva, there is nothing that doesn't become a source of positive action. Even walking, or extending the arm, becomes a virtuous activity. This type of bodhisattva is able to transform even the smallest actions into a source of positive merit.

There is nothing which cannot be transformed. If you are skilful in this way, then even the worst kind of negative thing [situation – check] can also be transformed into a positive thing. Therefore those neutral things of course can be transformed very easily into a positive things by that way.

When a bodhisattva has reached this level, then whatever he or she does will bring benefit to beings. For example: through Dharma, or through material or other actions that directly benefit others. Or indirectly, if you go into a retreat or do practices for yourself, then the effect of that you use for the benefit of others or you dedicate for the benefit of others. In whatever way you do, directly or indirectly, it is meant for the benefit of other beings. So therefore there is nothing that is not resulting in benefiting the beings and benefiting yourself. Therefore there is nothing that goes to waste, no actions which don't have meaning and purpose.

And then this way whatever good deeds and everything becomes positive, *that* we try to dedicate, all the positive actions that has been done, that is dedicated for all the beings not leaving anyone behind but completely all the beings, that they might attain the perfect enlightenment, the highest thing.

Following the teacher

Never, at the cost of life or limb,
Forsake your virtuous friend, your teacher,

Learned in the meaning of the Mahayana,
Supreme in practice of the bodhisattva path. (102)

Here, Khenpo Kunpal says:

From the time I first direct my mind toward enlightenment until the attainment of the level of great enlightenment, with devotion of my three doors (of body, speech and mind), I must rely upon a sublime master, a spiritual guide who, when I always associate myself with him, naturally gives rise to all qualities (in me).

[This is the first time in this text that Shantideva uses the term Mahayana.] We call it Mahayana because of seven *mahas*, or seven great things. The seven great things are:

- Great motivation
- Great accomplishment (meaning great accumulation of merit and wisdom)
- Great yeshe (meaning great *primordial* or *pristine* wisdom')
- Great diligence
- Great skilful means
- Great result
- Great activity (after attaining enlightenment)

The role of the teacher is very important in the Mahayana path. The teacher serves as a guide and an example.]

For thus you must depend upon your guru,
As you will find described in Shri Sambhava's life;
And elsewhere in the teachings of the Buddha:
These be sure to study, reading in the sutras. (103)

Here Khenpo Kunpal says:

The biography of the boy Shri Sambhava... says: "Noble son, you should give rise to the concept of yourself as a sick person, of your spiritual guide as a physician, of the dharma as your medicine, and of intensive practice as a swift cure for your illness." Thus one must train and rely. Understand the trainings of a bodhisattva such as what must be done and what must be avoided in regard to the manner of how to rely upon a spiritual friend through reading this biography of Shri Sambhava and other advice spoken by the Buddha in the sutras.

Studying the sutras and treatises

The training you will find described
Within the sutras. Therefore, read and study them.
The *Sutra of the Essence of the Sky*—
This is the text that should be studied first. (104)

Here, Shantideva recommends studying the *Sutra of the Essence of the Sky*.⁶ This sutra is also referred to as the sutra of the Bodhisattva Akashagarbha. Akashagarbha's main aspiration was to help the new bodhisattvas who make lots of mistakes. To help them understand what to do and what not to do, and to help in the confession and purification and so on.

The *Digest of All Disciplines*
Contains a detailed and extensive explanation
Of all that must be practiced come what may.
So this is something you should read repeatedly. (105)

⁶ Skt. [check] Tib. *Namkhe Nyingpo*

From time to time, for sake of brevity,
Consult the *Digest of Sutras*.
And those two works peruse with diligence
That noble Nagarjuna has composed. (106)

These verses are referring to Shantideva's two other treatises, *Compendium of Trainings*, and *Compendium of Sutras*, which we discussed previously.

Practicing

Whatever in these works is not proscribed
Be sure to undertake and implement.
And what you see there, perfectly fulfill,
And so safeguard the minds of worldly beings. (107)

Here Khenpo Kunpal says:

In this manner, bodhisattvas should at all times properly practice and train in whatever action is not prohibited, but which is permitted, in any of the sutras, or in the treatises *Compendium of Trainings* and *Compendium of Sutras*. In short, in order to protect the minds of worldly people from disbelief and to delight them, one should study and understand the trainings of a bodhisattva and practice them genuinely, exclusively to benefit sentient beings.

IV.B. Condensing the meaning of the chapter

To keep a guard again and yet again
Upon the state and actions of our thoughts and deeds—
This and only this defines
The nature and the sense of mental watchfulness. (108)

Mindfulness is remembering what is the right thing to do and what is the wrong thing to do. Introspection is continually checking your mind to see that it is not distracted. As we said earlier, mindfulness is like the guard at the door, and introspection like the supervisor who checks to see that this guard is not falling asleep or leaving his or her post. Therefore the whole practice is [maintaining awareness] of what our body is doing, what our mind is doing, what our speech is doing—without this, there is no practice.

Recall the drawing of the elephant being led by the monkey. Our mind is like that: a big, completely crazy, drunk and wild elephant, and who is led by this monkey who is also completely wild and crazy. That's our mind. In this drawing, you yourself are chasing this elephant and monkey with a very small hook and a very small rope. So the practice is to get this elephant under our rope and then use the hook to keep it in line.

Mind is very subtle, so therefore it is not just a matter of putting a rope and then just binding it. We have to do it subtly and skillfully and gently. If we try to force things, and try to apply mindfulness and introspection with too much tension, it doesn't work. Because we can get tired after some time and then you will give it up. Therefore we must work skillfully and gently. Not too hard, but not too soft. Not too much attention, but not too little also.

The skillful means is finding the right balance. If you try to apply the practice too intensely, then you might go mad. If we try too hard, we become too tight, too concentrated, too tense—and that doesn't do any good, because then we can't relax. The main skillful way of working with our mind is letting the mind be relaxed. Not too much tension, but relaxed. But within this relaxation, there is a certain mindfulness; so it's a relaxation that is not completely lost, not completely forgotten and unaware. But within this peaceful relaxed atmosphere of your mind, there is a slight mindfulness and slight introspection, so that you know what is happening in your mind and you know what is happening around you.

If we can do that, then we are practicing. That is the practice. There is nothing else but that. The more we are able to be mindful of things, then the more we are able to deal with problems that arise. Then the more we practice maintaining a positive state of mind, the less chance there is for us to get stuck in a negative situation and be carried away by our negative emotions.

But all this must be acted out in truth,
For what is to be gained by mouthing syllables?
What invalid was ever helped
By merely reading in the doctor's treatises. (109)

Just talking about these things doesn't serve the purpose. It is easy to say things, difficult to do them. To truly benefit ourselves and others, *all this must be acted out in truth*. It must be done.

As the saying goes, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating!" Trying to implement these things is the important thing. Whether the Dharma will help us or not is not dependent upon how much dharma we know, but on how much we implement on ourselves. How much of it we actually use on our real self: that's the thing.

Questions

Are parts of the *Bodhicharyavatara* limited by the cultural context?

Student: Are any parts of the text of the *Bodhicharyavatara* limited by the historical or cultural setting, and if so, how applicable are those parts to us today?

Rinpoche: Of course, the teachings are always set in a cultural context. You cannot do anything without the people around you! The Dharma is an instruction on working on your own mind, your own problems, so therefore it's always meant for people. So when you are talking about people, then people always have their own particular culture and their history and so on. Therefore the teachings will often reflect that a little bit. But I think the actual essence is mainly on human experiences.

Therefore there is not that much difference in the teachings in different cultural contexts. Of course, certain things will be different. For example, this text is especially meant for monks, because Shantideva was addressing the students at the Nalanda University, who were all monks. There are other small things in the context of the Indian society: for example, when it is said that you should not teach a single woman and so on. Or maybe that was for here also! I don't know. Do you find anything which is more difficult to practice in the present modern western society? Is there anything? Not too much, I think. I think you should not throw your toothbrush everywhere!

How do you know what is the right thing to do?

Student: Sometimes, in certain situations, it can be difficult to know what the right thing to do is. Even though you might want to do good, how do you decide what is good?

Rinpoche: You can't always say what is the good, or what is not good, for all the time. It is not possible to have a very clear picture of what is good and what is not good for every situation. That's why as beginners, as we are now, since we are not the most wisest, we should try to act according to our own best judgment. Because we can't do anything more.

It's also important to not to go to extremes, because if you go to the extremes, then there is more chance of making a mistake. Because we are not the omniscient ones, we don't know the future, we don't know the whole consequences of the causes and effects and everything.

If we are trying help other beings, the most important thing is fist trying to generate a positive attitude or motivation, at least from our side. That we can be sure about, because it is ours. So we try to work on that. We try to see whether my real motivation is only for the benefit of others, or is it my self-interest disguised as trying to help others. That happens very often. It's a trick of the ego to say, "I want to help and I want to do good things," but actually it is your own, "Yes, I feel better." When that is checked, then there is less problem of completely missing the point.

Of course, we try to see what is the best way, as we can see it. Two different people may have different opinions of how to do the right thing in a given situation. For example, a student once asked me a difficult question; he said, 'Suppose you go to a big supermarket and you see some still something and run away. Now if you catch him, he may be sent to jail and possibly be branded as a thief and maybe he had a very hard life. But if you don't catch him, maybe he will do another and a bigger and maybe he will become a real big thief and maybe he becomes very bad. So what should you do?'

From the Buddhist point of view, there is no one right answer. You can't really say there is only one correct response. For example, if someone sees the thief and thinks, "Well, if I catch him then he will be imprisoned, and face many hardships. So I think it is better that he's not caught at this time." So if I leave it with that attitude, from my point of view, my attitude is clear. So therefore I didn't do a negative thing but a positive thing.

But if someone else catches the thief because they think that catching the thief is the best thing to do, then that is also is a positive deed. So you can't really say that this is the definitely negative and

this is definitely positive because the two different people have different opinions. Therefore they decided from the best of their own knowledge, they did it like this. Now which one is better for this person who is caught, nobody can say. Maybe, who knows, maybe it was for some person maybe it was better to be kept so that he would not do it again, and then he becomes a good citizen. Maybe to some it's not good.

So, anyway, that's not the question, but I think the question is this, as I said, you can't really say this is only good and this is only bad. But whatever you do it may also depend on different situations because nothings is, this is also from Buddhist point of view, nothing is just one cause and one effect. Nothing happens just because of one thing, happens, things happen with many different reason and many different cause and effects.

For example, if you give one million pounds to your child, that may make him a very good person, or it could spoil him and make him a bad person. It's not just this fact of giving the one million pounds. But if you give him one million pounds and he has good friends and good influence and he knows how to deal with his money and then maybe he will do well. But if he has many problems and bad influences, than maybe giving him one million pounds, or even one hundred pounds, will only make things worse for him—he might not only loose all the money, but also fall into a more negative state of mind.

Student: It doesn't seem to be just a matter of giving or transferring material things to another person, the exercise of compassion, but it seems to be very much a matter of exercising wisdom.

Rinpoche: That's right.

Student: Insofar as one has wisdom and even down all the wisdom that you have doesn't seem to be enough, whatever you do it seems to be wrong.

Rinpoche: Yes, so you can't always make this ensure, that it becomes the best, but that depends on many things. So therefore it doesn't mean that you did something bad. That's what I am trying to say. You do something good with good intention and that is good enough for you, with your best... It doesn't mean that you do something good and then everything else becomes good. There are many other factors. So you're trying to help may help in many ways, but then there are certain things, many other things, which is pulling it down, so eventually the things doesn't work. But that doesn't mean that you shouldn't have given that, understand?

So therefore I think it's not only one factor which makes the things. So therefore from our side, I think, whatever I can do good I think I did the best with my limited knowledge and wisdom. I try to do it, and then what else can I do? But that doesn't mean that I have done it wrong. This is I think very strong, actually, especially in the West that what if you do something and that doesn't happen then you feel guilty, many people. I feel guilty because my child is not doing well. Or I feel guilty maybe something has went wrong, but you can't be fully blamed for that because you are only one factor. Even if you are the father or mother of a child and the child is not doing well, you are one factor only. There are a hundred other factors. So if something goes well also it's not totally, only you. If something goes wrong also it not totally you. I mean there are many things, many factors.

So therefore you do whatever you can. I think that's, then you have to be happy. I mean you have to say that I have done whatever I can. So hope and wish and pray that everything goes well, no?

Student: Just to ask something: 'They should not give up their bodies', I just thought of Jesus Christ, would that be, the idea that he gave his life without regret. He gave his life on the cross without regret, would that be something... I suppose I'm trying to link the two... What your thoughts would be?

Rinpoche : Well this is saying that, generally why you are saying here you should not give your body is because in the saying, from this kind of... Generally you try to do everything and give everything for the benefit of other beings. That's the understanding. But if you are a beginner like us, we should not

attempt too much that we can't do, that's the understanding. So maybe Jesus Christ was a good, highly attained bodhisattva, then no problem.

I'm not sure that I am ready to practice bodhicitta

Student: I'm not sure if I am ready to practice bodhicitta.

When you talk about bodhicitta, you are not really asking people to give everything. That is not the way. Nobody can do that. When you are not ready it means that you don't understand what bodhicitta means actually, because you are kind of right with this name, with these words of being compassionate unlimitedly and things like that. The ideals have frightened you off. But in actual bodhisattva's practices, it has to be understood something quite you know stage by stage, quite gradual.

First you try to get the motivation, 'I want good things for myself and I don't want bad things for myself,' that is the first thing. Without that there is no basis. And then when you have that, that is being kind to yourself. Becoming a little bit kind to yourself and love yourself. And then on that kind of experience, because the other beings are also like me I want it for them also. So you are extending that. And then that is just in the mind. You wish that everybody was happy and you wish that good things happen to others and me too.

And then how we actually go about doing that, that's another section. That is the next. Then you can do it step by step and things like that. Although, if you understand it clearly then it is like that, but there is nothing wrong in taking the bodhisattva's path even for those who cannot or who want not to give everything, who doesn't have that much of complete compassion and things like that. But at the same time, as it is said here, it is not necessary that everybody starts with practicing Bodhisattvayana or not even need to be taught Bodhisattvayana. People are sometimes frightened by this, the ideals. So therefore it is not necessary that they have to do this. They can start with something more fundamental.

Therefore we try to act in a way that would be helping them to do that, that would be able to bring more trust from others, more inspiration to the others, as a little bit of an example. So that this is a little bit to do with what you want to help others or what you want to teach others, you can talk a lot but mostly go off, you don't really keep it in your mind. Usually people learn not from what people say but how people act and how people do, so therefore this is I think our best way of teaching is to show them as an example.

There is a short saying that is supposed to have been written on the tombstone of an Anglican priest in Edinburgh, Scotland. He said that:

When I was young, I wanted to change the whole world.
So I prayed to God, 'May I have the strength and wisdom to change the whole world.'
And I tried my best.

But when I became old I found that nothing has changed.

Then I understood that first I must change my dear and near ones,
and if that happens maybe that taken as an example the whole world might change.
So I prayed to God 'That I may have the wisdom and the power to change my near and dear ones so that taking them as an example the whole world might change for the better.'

But when I became very, very old I found out that nothing has changed.

Then I realized that I have to change myself first. And if I don't change myself then I can't change my near and dear ones, and if I change myself then, taking that as an example, maybe my near and dear ones will be changed and taking that as an example then the whole world might change.
Now I pray to God 'May I have the wisdom and the power to change myself.'

But it is too late now.

So first it's changing yourself, and if we can change ourselves then maybe we can give an example. Because people don't learn from what you say that much, but from how you are. That also goes for the parents and teachers of course.

I'm not sure that I have the right motivation; my motivation is very mixed

Student: I find that my motivation is usually very mixed. [It's usually] not just the one thing. For example, I might wish something good for another person, but there might be a lot of self-interest in that too.

Rinpoche: That's alright. As I said earlier, it may not be possible that we have completely altruistic motivation all the time. That may be too hard for us. Of course, self-interest is there. We do everything with self-interest, [and] that's all right. [One way] is that you do it for yourself and you do for others too, if possible. Maybe that's reasonable, isn't it? If I want to do something that's good for me, and then something good for others. The best thing is I do something that's good both for myself and for others, no?

So I think the best thing is to find out, what is the best thing to do for both myself and others? Then try to find how to do that, then you do that. Then it's all right, I think. Then it's good, very good.

Another thing is that if you find that you want to do something that you think is good for yourself, then check and see that whether that is really good for yourself or not. Because we do lots of things, thinking that it's good for me, but at the end it's not good for ourselves. And most of the things that we do, especially that we think is good for me but, in spite of being bad for others, then if we look more carefully, [it] is maybe not good for ourselves either.

The best thing is try to do something that's good for both, but then even if it's good for me and not very good for others but if it is not really harming too much the others, because if you really harm others, in the long run maybe it's not good for you. So that's, I think, how we try to work on. But if we are doing something, trying to do something for others also, then we have to see whether it's really good for others or not, I think it is also good to, see the motivation and also the action.

Of course we can't be right all the time. We can't be always correct in our judgment, sometimes trying to do something good for ourselves and others may not be that good. But then we can't do more than that. We're doing our best. So then if we happen to do something that we thought would be good for both ourselves and others, but then didn't go that well, then all right. Of course we will try to change it, make it better. [T6, 49:26]

Questions on working with anger

Question: Transforming anger

Student: I have a question about transforming anger. You're saying the first step is to realize that you are actually getting angry, to see the feeling coming. But can you explain the different methods of how you can transform anger, or work with it?

Rinpoche: When you talk about transforming and transmuting these things, that doesn't mean that you keep on getting angry. There are different ways of dealing with anger actually. But I think the easiest way of explaining it is, when the anger arises, to be able to just relax in that anger. That's it. But that requires some training and discipline to be able to do that.

We have difficulties just to relax even if we are not angry. We, it's very difficult to know, to learn how to relax. The moment we relax we go to sleep. Well, if you fall asleep while getting angry it's a good sign, I think. But this is important. So when the anger arises, or any kind of negative emotion arises, then not fighting with it, not having struggle with it. Because the more you struggle, the more you give fire to it. It's like adding fuel to the fire. So therefore one way of doing it is just, at that very moment

you just relax. And when you can do that then it is almost certain at that very moment the anger is diffused. Then no more anger.

Because anger, or whatever emotion is, built on attention, on a frustration, on a struggle. So when that is not there, then there is nothing to hold it. But that doesn't last for long. It's momentary we're [are working], but then if you really have the confidence of being able to do that, you can relax in the anger, you can relax in whatever negative emotions come or positive emotions come too. Then you get the confidence that you're able to deal with any of the emotions. So the emotions do not take over. Emotions do not completely overcome you. Then your mind is tamed in a way, That's very important.

Guilt and forgiveness

If you get terribly angry, or terribly anything and do something terrible, it's a not a good thing, it's a very bad thing, but it's nothing very special. We have been doing that all the time. So therefore, of course we try to purify the negative deed we did because of that or that we did. We try to purify. But the most important thing is not to keep this, not to hold onto this. Let be, forgive. I think forgive, forgive yourself, make a little bit of a commitment or determination that I will try not to [let it] happen the same way. But I think it's not that you have done this and then you keep this: 'Oh I did this'. And you feel guilty about it all the time and that is, I think, doesn't help. So I think, even if you did a terrible thing because of this - we always do because we always come under the complete control of the emotions and negative emotions and then we do things which we regret all the time afterwards.

Don't keep the anger

One thing is first not to keep this anger or hatred or whatever and then try to repair the damage that is done by that, by doing something positive. And by trying to make certain arrangements or certain circumstances or certain situations that it should not repeat as much as possible. And then you just keep on doing the positive things. I think that's the only way. It's not that you have done something and now you have to all the time think about that and do something on it. It's not that good, I think. We have done lots of bad things that we remember that we don't remember in the past. And we will do many more, maybe. So, as long as we are not completely [this way] it's more natural. So when we do negative things it's not that we have become worse, it's [just] that we are like that, so we [so we think we do] not become better. But it's all right.

Appreciate your progress

So if we do something good then it's more new, it's more a progress. I think this is something, I always think it is good to appreciate, even a little bit, of progress we make, Little bit of good things we make we appreciate it. We acknowledge it, appreciate it and encourage us, If you do something wrong, something we become... Of course we have to be aware of it, we have to be mindful about it, but then something that happened all the time. So we try to not let it happen again as much as possible but not think too much about it. [T6, 58:35]

Question: Being compassionate does not mean just being nice

Student: So does anger then stem from not being honest with yourself? Or being honest about a situation, when you build up the anger, and anger really blows, [it's the bit you not going to ask] about the situation. And that stems from being too nice. And sometimes when we're too nice we're not honest. [Maybe] we have not the opportunity to be honest.

Rinpoche: It's not helpful if I am just acting out too nice but keeping something here [Rinpoche points to his heart] then it doesn't, it doesn't work. So I think, I mean to be compassionate is not, this is another thing. It's, sometimes, I think, maybe sometimes people misunderstand. To be compassionate is not just being too nice, not at all. To be compassionate means meaning well, wishing well. Sometimes to be compassionate means being not nice. To become compassionate means not making myself popular to everybody, because I want everybody to like me. That's not the motivation. The motivation is I really wish that something good happens to me and to others also. That's compassion.

So through that you don't need to be nice or not nice, that's not the question. So therefore if you are just being nice even if something negative is happening, is not necessary. I mean you don't need to

shout but you try to solve. If there's a problem, for instance, then, I mean, it's up to you to judge what is the best way to solve the problem. For this, the best way that is for you and for others. So therefore if you think that being nice is the way, then be nice. You are not just doing it for others only. That's the understanding has to be clear. Whatever problem you try to solve you try to do it which is the best for everybody. So therefore when I'm trying to do like that, then I do the best I know about to try to solve this problem which is in the best interest of everybody.

Don't keep the anger

What I was trying to say was this: that even if you lose your control for a while, I mean everybody does, so therefore it's not the worst, it's not that bad. The worst is if you keep this anger. When you keep this anger and then the grudge, the hatred, that is the worst. So therefore this temporarily going out of control and become angry is not the worst thing. It's not a good thing because you do lots of damage sometimes, but it's not the worst thing.

So therefore the most important thing for a practitioner to do is that after you get angry if you don't get angry then it's best, but if get angry also, then the sooner you become aware of it, you become mindful and see that just being angry is no good for yourself and others because it will cause damage for you and others. So therefore then trying to do whatever ways and means you have to not to keep this. That's the practice. So therefore then, instead of keeping the anger, you let it be, let it go. And then you use the best way to try to do something for this thing that you got angry about or anything like that, to solve this problem or whatever, in the best interest of yourself and others; to think about that, by knowing deeply that getting angry is not is not a solution. So that's the practice. [T6, 1:04:00]

Question on keeping anger inside

From the Buddhist way of thinking is that the more you do something, the more you will become like that. The more you indulge in expressing too much, the more kind of angrier type of person you become. Not to think about if you do these kind of things the others will not like it too and they become more, their reaction will be also angry, and when they're angry then you will become more angry, no? Now the question is here if you keep this anger inside and then don't do anything or don't express it, you don't let yourself to bang the door or do anything but *keep* it, *then* I think it doesn't help. It is not good. That's not doing anything with the anger, you are just keeping it. So that to keep it is worse then to a little bit express it. Because then it becomes, it becomes a grudge, it becomes hated. That is no good.

So the best way is, try to dissipate this anger at this moment. Like you did by, doing this expression. Trying to dissipate this without having to shower it on somebody. Like your friend. Usually when we get angry the first person we... is our friend, no? Our husband, or wife! And that is neither good for you nor for the other person. So therefore if we can do something that we can dissipate, even [for a] short while. So there the Buddhist way of thinking is try to do something, so that you don't, you don't keep the anger. Do something so that you don't keep the anger. And also you don't have to express it in this way. So that, all the methods are for that. So whether you use a certain kind of attitude so that it doesn't arise at all, that's the best thing. Or if you can't do that way also you can let yourself, your mind relax or can cut the sequence of the thought so that it [dissipates]. Do anything, but not keep it. That's the main understanding. If you keep it, then it's no good. So therefore this has to [be] very clear.

When we say that no need, expressing it is, because expressing is, then, we are making lots of people angry too. No? So therefore not only that, but you are making, becoming habituated to the... Because the more you get angry the more you get angry. No? It's true. You get angry and then you get more angry and then, and then you say things which is... And most of the time when you are get very angry then you say things, you do things which you always regret. So therefore the best way is to try to nip it before that, or... But it doesn't mean at all that you have to keep it. You *shouldn't* keep it. That's the understanding.

ⁱ PKT, The bandit and sneak thief, the lack of introspection, / Follow in the footsteps of a decline in mindfulness; / Therefore, it is as though even the merit I accumulated / Were to be stolen by a thief, so that I go to the lower realms. (PKT, 27)

[161] For everybody, the bandit-like afflictions—desire and aggression—and the sneakthief-like (afflictions)—arrogance, jealousy and so on—(resulting) from the defect of the lack of introspection, follow in the footsteps of, that is to say ‘follow after’, a decline in the mindfulness of not forgetting the protective-points of what should be done and what should be avoided; therefore, it is as though even all the merit, the stockpile of virtue I previously accumulated around me were to be stolen, and I was thereafter killed; for example like a thief or a bandit stealing my stockpiles of material wealth, (the lack of introspection) steals the wealth of my virtue and cuts my life-force of the higher states, so that I go to the lower realms.

ii PKT, These afflictions, this assembly of bandits and sneak-thieves, / Search for a chance or an opportunity. Seeing an opening they will steal my virtue / And destroy the life-force of the happy states. (PKT, 28)

[162] These afflictions of desire, aggression and so forth, this assembly of bandits and thieves, search and look in my mind again and again for a chance or an opportunity to harm; for example like robbers and thieves who first check to see whether or not they can take someone on, a traveler for instance. Whenever they see a chance and (know) that they can handle (the traveler), they search for a favorable time, be it during the day or during the night. Similarly, showing themselves to be like robbers and thieves, whenever afflictions such as attachment and aversion see an opening, they steal the cause, the accumulation of my wealth of virtue, and they destroy the result, the life-force of the happy states; thus I do not attain the level of the higher realms.

iii **Story of Prince Jetta:** It is said that once in Buddha’s time the prince Jetta, at that time a prince of Magat, he became a great admirer of Buddha. And then he offered a very big garden park to the Buddha and then he hosted the Buddha and all the monks and all the beggars in the whole city. He hosted them for the whole of this rainy season. And then he gave them food and drink and all the facilities, medicines and things like that and he did a big thing. So everybody was very happy.

And then at the end of this day, the program when it’s happened, finished, then, as according to the tradition, then he asked Buddha to do the dedication prayer. That whatever good things to dedicate it. Then when he asked to Buddha to do the dedication Buddha said: ‘Alright I will do the dedication, but by whose name should I do the dedication? By the name of the person who sponsored this happening, or by the name of this person who got most benefit out of this?’

Then the king was a little puzzled, because who sponsored it should get the best benefit, means the best virtues or the merit. Then he says: ‘Please dedicate it by the name of the one who has got the most benefit, the most merit out of this whole thing. So then Buddha took the name of an old lady just sitting, a beggar, sitting at the door of this whole thing. Didn’t do anything, didn’t contribute anything, just sitting there and taking the benefit of the whole thing. So he says: ‘So and so by the whatever and all the other beings who are contributing to this things whatever kind of good positive deeds they have done I dedicate it for the all...’

And then everybody was a little bit puzzled and confused. ‘What is this Buddha doing, maybe he’s not... he’s going a little bit funny, what is it?’ And then Ananda, his attendant, who could ask any questions to him, so he asked: ‘You know, what you have done today is little puzzling. That it is the prince Jetta who did everything and who should be the one who gets the most merit. But you are talking about this lady and she is even not involved in this, she is just a completely, she is just a beggar sitting at the door, just doing that and nothing else.

And the Buddha said: ‘No, that I know. But she rejoiced. She *fully* rejoiced at what this prince was doing and *fully* appreciated and was very happy. That’s why she got the equal amount of merit that this prince Jetta got. But then the prince Jetta was little bit proud. You know he was saying that: ‘Well, this, I have done quite a lot. And everybody cannot do such a thing. Nobody can do such a thing. I have done it.’ So therefore that kind of proud brought his things a little down; reduced in the amount of good positive merit that he got. So therefore her’s became even more. So that’s why I said by her name.’

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