

Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche
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Translated by Karma Choephel

Mindfulness and Attentiveness from *The Way of the Bodhisattva*

During this teaching we will be going through the fifth chapter of the *Way of the Bodhisattva*, or the *Bodhicharyavatara* in Sanskrit. This text was composed by the great bodhisattva Shantideva and in it he first talks about how beneficial the mind of enlightenment is and then how to put this mind into practice. The fifth chapter, entitled “Vigilance” in this English translation, deals with the latter.¹ In particular it talks about the discipline of practicing bodhichitta, a discipline whose primary method is the maintenance of mindfulness and attentiveness.

The Buddha taught us three main areas in which we can train; the “three excellent trainings” of discipline, meditation and full knowing. The first of these, the excellent training in discipline, is to “come to know what to do with our body and speech.” The excellent training in meditation, on the other hand, is to “come to know what to do with our mind.” The third training, the excellent training in full knowing, is to look at the empty nature of all phenomena and our mind. In order to follow the Buddha’s teachings and attain the results of practise that he describes we need to train in these three areas. By training in them we will come to know what to do with our body, speech and mind.

What then is the most important thing for us to do in developing these three trainings? It is to protect our mind. If we do not protect our mind we will lose track of where we are going and not be able to maintain these three trainings. In this way the qualities we develop through these trainings and the trainings themselves depend on our mind. Any dharma practice depends only on our mind. If we allow our mind to become lost in negative emotions, wandering thoughts and the like, there is no way we can actually practise the dharma. So in this way it is very important that we protect our mind.

In this text, the importance of guarding and protecting our mind is taught by way of an analogy. This analogy comes from the time Shantideva was alive and teaching in India. The people of that time were not at risk from car accidents or anything like that. In fact the greatest danger they faced was crazed or intoxicated elephants. Bull elephants in a rut could get intoxicated and become extremely dangerous. In this state they would, and still do occasionally, tear down houses and trample people. Because this was the greatest danger people of that time faced Shantideva likened the unguarded mind to one of these elephants. Still this is not a complete analogy because a crazed elephant can only affect us in one lifetime. They can tear down our house and trample us but they cannot, unlike the unguarded mind, send us to the deepest hell of unlimited pain. In this way, because its results can be felt for many lifetimes, the unguarded mind can affect us even more adversely than a crazed elephant.

So what method should we employ to control and protect our mind? In the third verse, this is explained by continuing the analogy of a crazed elephant.

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

If we have a crazed elephant, we need things to tame it with. First we need a strong rope or even iron chains to tie it down. Once we have done this the elephant cannot harm us anymore, we have rendered it harmless. The mind is not something we can physically tie down with a rope, however. The “rope” we need to use is mindfulness; through the rope of mindfulness we can control our mind, we can learn to prevent ourselves from coming to any harm.

In the normal course of our lives we have many thoughts that arise. Some are good and pleasant, some are unpleasant and some are neutral. What we tend to do is follow after these thoughts and in doing so get lost in negative emotions. In order to stop getting carried away by these thoughts we need to practice mindfulness.² By its nature “mindfulness” means to direct our minds and efforts towards that which is virtuous. By directing our minds in this way we avoid that which is not virtuous. Through practicing mindfulness we recognize when we are performing positive actions and when negative thoughts arise we are aware of these too. If we are aware of negative thoughts arising we can think, “Oh, this is a thought that I need to avoid, this is a thought I need to drop.” In these ways mindfulness and attentiveness protect our minds.

As we go through our daily lives we will find a lot of things come up. This means in the morning we can use mindfulness by reminding ourselves that we need to do virtuous things and remain mindful during the day. In the afternoons we can again practise mindfulness by checking whether we are staying mindful and continuing to do virtuous things. In this way we can keep protecting our minds, making sure we are not getting lost in negative emotions. This is very important.

The next two stanzas, the fourth and fifth, teach us about the benefits that come from maintaining mindfulness and attentiveness.

*4. 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,*

*5. 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.*

These stanzas teach us that if we tame our own minds with mindfulness then tigers, lions, elephants, bears, snakes, our enemies, the demons and guardians of hell and all other harmful things will no longer have the ability to hurt us. At this point you may be wondering how

tigers, lions, elephants, bears, snakes and so forth – which are all external hazards - can be influenced by taming our mind – which is internal. The answer is that mindfulness makes us careful and attentive. Without these skills we are more vulnerable to attack, especially when for example, we go wandering through the depths of the jungle where we could be eaten by a tiger. In this way, protecting our minds with attentiveness means lions and tigers will not be able to harm us. Shantideva explains that this is one benefit we can derive from controlling our minds. These days there are many more things than lions and tigers that can harm us if we do not control our minds but controlling our minds can still allay our fears. Take the events of September the 11th for example. Thousands of people lost their lives on this day because a few people did not control their minds. If those few people had controlled their minds, no harm would have come about.

In the past the teachings of the Lord Buddha spread though India, Tibet and China. Nowadays they are spreading throughout the world. Through Lord Buddha's teachings many people have become bodhisattvas and Buddhas because they generated the mind of enlightenment. In order to generate the mind of enlightenment all these people first had to carefully guard their mind. Then after they had generated this mind they had to continue protecting their minds with mindfulness. From this perspective then, all the benefits that realization and the mind of enlightenment bestow come about through mindfulness, through taking care of the mind. And all faults can be avoided through mindfulness. This is why it says in the text, "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."

The text then goes on to explain how all fears and suffering, as well as happiness and positive qualities, depend on the mind. Firstly it describes the mind as the source of suffering:

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

That is to say that the Lord Buddha himself said that all fears and suffering, all the negative aspects of our lives, come from our minds. As this verse quotes the Buddha, it is therefore said to be a teaching based on scripture. In the next two stanzas, the seventh and eighth, Shantideva gives an alternate explanation for this same truth based on reasoning.

*7. 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 women sprung?*

*8. All are but the offspring of the sinful mind,
Thus the Mighty One has said.
Thus throughout the triple world
There is no greater bane than mind itself.*

In general, the Buddhist teachings explain that there are hells. That is to say, realms of existence where beings experience great suffering through, for example, living on iron-

mountains where fire perpetually burns them and they are attacked by weapons, whipped and so on. The appearances of these realms all come from the mind. When we lose our minds, when we have impure thoughts that lead us to act in an impure fashion, then impure appearances arise. When we lose ourselves to intense negative emotions, the appearances of hell arise. The weapons and other artifices of hell are really nothing other than our minds. The same can be said for the suffering of the hungry ghosts, the animals and humans; they do not depend upon – do not come about because of – anything other than our minds. This means that if we want to prevent these states from happening we need to protect our minds, we need to take care of our minds. The way we do this is through mindfulness, attentiveness and carefulness. By maintaining mindfulness, attentiveness and carefulness we can prevent all of these harms.

This explains how we can avoid fear and suffering by exercising mindfulness, but is that enough? Don't we also need to be happy and develop qualities? In order to do this, don't we also need to gather the two accumulations? There are many different methods for gathering these two accumulations but the most well known are the six transcendences or *paramitas*: generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, meditative concentration and full knowing. These six methods enable us to accumulate merit and bring ourselves happiness. It may seem, however, that these six transcendences do not depend on our mind but on external things. We may think, for example, that giving depends on external gifts and discipline on the actions of the body and speech. How then could they depend on the mind? Yet if we examine these transcendences closely we will discover that all six depend on the internal mind. Shantideva goes on to explain this in regards to each of the six transcendences individually, starting with generosity.

*9. 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?*

*10. 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.*

In the world that we live in, it may appear to us that “giving” depends on external things and therefore the transcendence of generosity depends on external objects. If this were the case though, if the transcendence of giving was to give material objects to all those in need, how could the previous Buddhas have perfected giving and attained enlightenment when we still see many poor beings in the world today who have nothing? This shows that the transcendence of generosity is not external. The transcendence of generosity depends on the internal mind, on developing the attitude that we will give to beings if we can. As the tenth verse describes it, it is “The true intention to bestow on every being all possessions – and the fruits of such a gift.” This means developing the idea that if our body will help someone we will give them our body. If our possessions will help someone, we will give them our possessions. If our roots of merit will help someone we will give them our roots of merit. The mind that is intent on bestowing, the mind that is ready to give in any beneficial

circumstances – and its development – is the transcendence of generosity. In this way we can see that the transcendence of generosity is dependent on the mind.

Next Shantideva goes on to explain how transcendent discipline depends on the mind.

*11. 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.*

Again it could appear to us that the external discipline of not killing, for example, external fish and preventing the killing of fish, birds and the like, is the discipline of abandoning killing. There are many fish, though, and many beings that will kill these fish, so even though we may be able to prevent one fish from being killed we cannot possibly prevent them all from being killed. This means that from an external point of view, there is no way the discipline of abandoning killing can actually be perfected. This is not, however, what the discipline of abandoning killing entails. Again it is to develop the intention not to kill, to avoid this action. The thought, “I will not kill” is the root that forms the basis of the perfection of the discipline of not killing. In this way, again, we can see that the perfection of discipline is based upon the internal mind and not upon external objects.

The next three stanzas look at the third of the six transcendences, patience.

*12. 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.*

*13. 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 has been covered!*

*14. 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?*

Again Shantideva explains that patience is not an external event but one that depends on our minds. Patience is taming anger, pride, jealousy and the like so that we do not experience them. Understanding the transcendence of patience as an external event would mean completely eliminating all the anger, pride, jealousy and so on from the minds of all sentient beings. An incomprehensibly huge number of sentient beings are afflicted by anger and the like, and there is no way we could possibly tame them all ourselves. If the transcendence of patience were dependent on taming external beings it could not be accomplished. The true transcendence of patience, however, which is an internal event, is possible. Shantideva explains this distinction to us by way of an analogy in verse thirteen. He says that if we were to go and walk outside barefoot, all sorts of thorns, dirt and rocks may stick into our feet or

otherwise harm us. This may lead us to think that covering the earth with leather will enable us to walk without harming our feet. But the earth is huge and there is no way we can cover it entirely with leather. If though, instead of covering the earth with leather, we were to cover our own feet with leather, it would have the same effect. It would be as if the whole world were covered with leather and we could walk wherever we wanted without harm from rocks, thorns and the like. In the same way, as we gradually tame the anger, jealousy and pride in our own minds all external enemies will also be subdued. In this way, because the patience transcendence is the taming of our own minds, it is dependent upon our own minds and not on external events.

The next transcendence, the fourth, is transcendent diligence. It is described in verse fifteen.

*15. 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.*

The first line of this verse, “A clear intent can fructify,” refers to the nirvana sutra. In this sutra the Buddha tells a story about a mother and daughter who were swept away in a flood. As they were being swept away the daughter thought, “Oh, if only my mother could be saved! Please let my mother be saved and let me be carried away.” At the same moment the mother thought, “Let my daughter be saved. If I am carried away that is fine but let my daughter be saved.” Although they were both carried away and killed, because they had developed thoughts of great love and compassion as they died, they were born in the god realm of Brahma. Through this story we can see the great power of even a single thought. Normally we think “diligence” means to keep working while we endure difficulties in order to accomplish something, but this is not actually what we mean by diligence. Having diligence means continually training our minds in virtue, in thoughts of love and compassion, because it is these thoughts and those like them that have great results. Generally the actions of our bodies and speech have limited results but if we engage our minds in virtue and diligently train in it, we can experience the great result of the transcendence of diligence.

The next transcendence, the transcendence of meditative concentration, is easy to relate to the mind but it is still important to realize just *how* these two are related. This is explained in verse number sixteen.

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

It is important to do physical practices and mantra recitations with mindfulness, with awareness of what is happening in our mind. If you are doing these practices with a clear mind, with attentiveness, then these actions of body and speech will bring results. If, however, while doing activities of the body or mantra recitation we lose ourselves in distractions, if our mind wanders off in thought and negative emotions, we will not be able to accumulate merit and achieve results in our practice, no matter how many mantras we recite

or how many physical activities we engage in. In this way it is important – whether we are doing physical, verbal or mental practices – to maintain attentiveness. This is something the Knower of Truth, the Buddha himself, said.

The last of the six transcendences, the transcendence of full knowing, is also nothing other than the mind.

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

The “dharma’s peak,” the supreme meaning of the dharma, is really nothing other than the mind. By knowing the nature of the mind, the pith or the essence of the mind, we come to know and penetrate “the secret of the mind,” which is actually just its essence. Penetrating this secret leads to achievement in our dharma practice and is the sixth transcendence, the transcendence of full knowing. Looking at it this way it is easy to see that this transcendence is nothing other than our mind.

All of our dharma practice is based on this. Practicing Mahamudra, the Great Seal, or Dzogchen, the Great Perfection, is just looking at the pith, at the nature of our mind. They are practices that lead us to the secret of the mind – perfect full-knowing – the attainment of joy and the end of all our suffering. We may wish to end all our suffering, we may wish to be happy, but if we do not realize the nature of the mind we cannot. As it says in the root text, we will “wander uselessly in misery.” All the sentient beings wandering in samsara do so because they have not realized the pith of their minds. This pith of their mind is the transcendent, full knowing. It is nothing other than their minds.

In this way, Shantideva has explained to us that all good qualities and happiness arise from the mind. Before that he explained that all harms and negative emotions arise only from the mind. And as this is the case it is really very important that we do just that: that we do our absolute best to protect our minds, that we put mindfulness into practice. How we put this into practice is explained next.

*18. 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.*

When we are doing any kind of practice, it is very important that we protect our minds. We may do many sorts of austerities, physical acts, but if we do them without protecting our minds what is the use? This is why the root text says, “What use to me so many harsh austerities?” These “austerities” may include any hardships we undergo in order to practice, but the Tibetan word that is translated as “austerities” also refers to all kinds of dharma practice. These, we are told, are pointless if we do not protect our minds.

If we reflect on this, we may find ourselves asking what the point of physical dharma practice is. “If it all depends on our minds,” we may think, “why should I go through the difficulties of dharma practice? Why should I teach dharma? Why should I make offerings? Why should I do prostrations?” The answer to these questions is that while it is true that the

most important part of all these practices is the mind with which we do them this, does not make the physical actions unimportant. They are important methods for helping ourselves and others tame our minds, we just need to be practicing awareness while we do them. If we do not actually maintain and guard our minds while doing these practices, we will not receive or give any benefit from them. Because of this the most important part of any sort of practice is to protect our minds while we do them.

*19. 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.*

*20. 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?*

After giving a general teaching on mindfulness Shantideva now explicitly explains how to protect our minds by employing another analogy. If we had all sorts of wounds, he says, when we walked around we would be in danger of further damaging ourselves and experiencing acute pain, so we would be very careful about the way we moved. If we were injured in this way and were surrounded by children who were running and jumping all over each other, for example, we would have to be very careful they did not hurt us. We would think to ourselves, “I have got to be really careful of all these kids. I need to stay here, quietly by myself, otherwise I am going to get really hurt.” Our minds are in a similarly ‘wounded’ state at the moment; they are filled with all sorts of negative emotions – desire, anger, jealousy – that can cause us harm. We are also surrounded by all the objects that arouse these negative emotions – objects that arouse our anger, our desires. In this situation, then, we need to be very careful of our minds; it is as if we were physically wounded and in a crowd. If we are not careful we will lose our minds to negative emotions and create great suffering for ourselves.

This analogy is continued in the next verse, which begins, “For if I carefully protect my wounds.” In this verse Shantideva explains that wounds to our bodies are not that serious; they are temporary, they will heal, the pain will eventually subside. Our “wounded” mind, on the other hand, could create vastly more suffering for us. The results of not protecting our mind could be that we are reborn in the crushing hell where we are crushed again and again between two cliffs crashing together or some other, similar incredible suffering. For this reason, to prevent ourselves taking birth in the depths of these types of hells, we need to guard our wounded minds with mindfulness, attentiveness and carefulness.

*21. 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.*

No matter what we are surrounded by we need to protect the mind with mindfulness, attentiveness and carefulness. If we do this, if we have these qualities in all situations, we can protect and control our minds so they do not cause us harm. We may encounter “evil folk” that cause us to be angry, objects that encourage desire or jealousy, or even things that cause us to worry. Whatever we are surrounded by though, if we can control our minds there is no way that these things can affect us negatively. As is said in the root text, “My diligent observance of the vows will not decline.” We will be able to maintain good discipline and our other practices.

*22. 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.*

Our property, our honor, our health and these kinds of things are not that important. What is important is protecting our minds.

Having again gone over how all suffering, problems, qualities and happiness arise from the mind, we have probably come to the conclusion that we need a method to protect it. The method, though, is not easy and because it is so difficult Shantideva makes it the major topic of this chapter - mindfulness and attentiveness. In this next verse he gives us a brief teaching on mindfulness, or the method of protecting our minds.

*23. 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.*

When Shantideva says, “All you who would protect your minds,” he is referring to everyone who wants to bring themselves happiness and avoid suffering by controlling their minds. By controlling their minds they will abandon the causes of suffering, the negative emotions. We do this by following the method: maintaining awareness—mindfulness—and mental vigilance—attentiveness.³ Mindfulness is remembering that we need to work towards virtue. Maintaining this awareness, being vigilant or mindful, means knowing what we are doing; knowing when we are doing something good and knowing when we are doing something not-so-good, when we are being carried away by thoughts. This quality of “knowing” is attentiveness or mental vigilance, and it is very important. By knowing what we are doing we can protect ourselves from all that can harm us and stop the development of happiness. The ability to protect us in this way makes awareness and vigilance very important, so important that we should, “Guard them both, at cost of life and limb.”⁴

Now if any of you have any doubts or questions, please ask.

Questions

Question: Rinpoche, I have a question about the mind training in mindfulness. How can we make sure that we don’t accumulate negative emotions by judging other people? I have heard that it is good to have discriminating awareness and the ability to differentiate but it

seems to me that a side product of this is that it is easy to become judgmental. How can we transform these judgments that obviously accumulate a lot of negative emotions?

Rinpoche: The teachings on mindfulness and attentiveness do not really focus on external people and events. They were taught primarily by analogies, the analogy of the leather for example. If there are lots of stones and thorns that could hurt us, shouldn't we cover the whole earth with leather? As this is impossible we cover our own feet instead and then we can walk around. In the same way, if we can protect and control our own minds with mindfulness, attentiveness and carefulness then we can stop harm arising. In this way, because it is focused on self awareness, it does not instruct us to look at other people's behavior.

Question: Rinpoche talked about the need to train in mindfulness day and night but sometimes, when we wake up in the morning, we realize we weren't mindful in our dreams. What should you do about this?

Rinpoche: Training in dreams is a gradual process. Sometimes while we are training in this way we will still have bad dreams that we remember in the morning. If, however, we develop the intention then gradually we will start to have good dreams. Merely having this intention will mean we gradually start to experience more good dreams and less bad dreams.

Question: I am one of those people who don't remember their dreams. Is there any technique that would help me remember them?

Rinpoche: If you don't remember your dreams then let your mindfulness and awareness relax a little. If you relax a little you should remember your dreams.

Question: What is the meaning of mindfulness?

Rinpoche: Being "mindful" means to not forget virtue, to continually remember what virtuous things we need to do and what non-virtuous actions we need to abandon. Those with excellent mindfulness always remember what they need to do and what actions they need to reject. Those who have a little less mindfulness might remember every hour that they need to practise virtue, to abandon non-virtue, to develop love, compassion and so on. Yet others remember this perhaps once a day, but this is still mindfulness and it should be developed until we continually remember what it is we need to do and what it is we need to abandon.

Mindfulness and Attentiveness in Meditation and Post-Meditation

We have talked about the need to control our minds and the method for doing this, mindfulness and attentiveness. With regards to this mindfulness and attentiveness we should now look at how they relate to both meditation and post-meditation. Samadhi, or meditative concentration, has two aspects. The first of these is resting or placing our minds in meditation, the actual practice of meditation, and the second are the activities of our normal life that we do after we get up from meditation. This state is called "post-meditation." The teaching we are looking at here, the description of how to control our minds using the method of mindfulness and attentiveness, primarily concerns the activities of post-meditation. It explains how to maintain mindfulness and attentiveness when we go about, talk to other people and perform all the activities of our daily lives.

In discussing the methods for developing mindfulness I referred to the root verse, “All you who would protect your minds maintain awareness and your mental vigilance. Guard them both, at cost of life and limb – thus I make this oath.” Yet another, alternate version of the last line is, “Thus I join my hands beseeching you.” By beseeching us in this way, with hands joined, the princely Shantideva highlights the importance of maintaining mindfulness and attentiveness at all costs. As he does so he gives us a brief teaching on the method for protecting our minds with these two, mindfulness and attentiveness.

In the next few stanzas he goes into more details of the faults that arise through not maintaining mindfulness and attentiveness. He talks of five faults specifically. The first of these is taught in the twenty-fourth verse, again by way of an analogy.

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

In this analogy an ill person who is unable to work, to accomplish anything, is compared to one “cramped by ignorance.” In order to get most things done we need to be healthy. In the same way if our mind is distracted, if we do not maintain mindfulness and attentiveness, our “ill” mind will be unable to accomplish anything. If we are distracted, if we have no mindfulness and attentiveness then we will not know whether the things we wish to do are beneficial or harmful. We will not know good from bad or what actions we should take. In this way it is very important to maintain mindfulness and attentiveness; they enable us to distinguish good from bad before we act. Without mindfulness and attentiveness we will become lost in ignorance and confusion.

The next verse teaches the second fault of not being mindful or attentive. In this verse, although Shantideva is still generally talking about mindfulness and attentiveness, he focuses on attentiveness. The actual fault primarily refers to a lack of attentiveness.

*25. 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.*

Without attentiveness, there is no way to retain what we have learnt, whether that be through listening, contemplating or meditating. When we are listening or hearing the teachings, when we are pondering on the teachings and when we are meditating on them, it is important to maintain the quality of attentiveness so that we can retain what we have learned. This again is described through an analogy. If we have a vase with a hole in its bottom, then no matter how much water we pour into it, none will stay. It will leak straight out and dissipate. In the same way, if we do not have mindfulness and attentiveness, no matter how much we listen, contemplate or meditate, we cannot retain what we have learned. We are like the leaky vase: our knowledge naturally dissipates and is lost.

*26. 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.*

The next fault of inattention is that without it discipline will not develop. Many people may have devotion, perseverance, learning – having listened to many teachings – and faith but if they do not have excellent attentiveness they will slip up, make mistakes and their discipline will become faulty. Without attentiveness discipline will not develop. This is the third fault of inattention.

*27. 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 lower realms.*

The next, the fourth fault of inattention and forgetfulness, is that the virtue we have accumulated will be destroyed. Without mindfulness and attentiveness the virtues, the positive things we have done in the past, will come to naught. Inattention and forgetfulness are like thieves that steal our virtue away from us. Whether we have accumulated merit by making offerings to those who are superior to us or being generous to those who are lower than us, if we lack mindfulness and attentiveness we may slip up and get angry or experience other negative emotions that destroy their positive potential.

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

The previous fault is that inattention and forgetfulness will destroy the results of positive actions we have accumulated in the past. Their fifth fault is that they will allow defilements to arise that stop up from accumulating virtue in the future. Here these defilements are likened to robbers. Why are these negative emotions or defilements likened to robbers? When robbers look at an upright, prepared, attentive person, they assume there is no way to rob them, while someone whose mind wanders and who is lost in distractions would be an easier target. The robbers may think, “I could slip by and sneak something away from this guy.” Or, “I could beat him up and take all his valuables.” Negative emotions act in both these ways; they are like thieves who take away our valuables, our accumulation of virtue, and robbers who beat us up and leave us for dead by sending us down to the lower realms where we cannot accumulate any more virtue. Being sent down to the lower realms is like being left for dead. If we have mindfulness and attentiveness there is no way the negative emotions can take control in this way but if our attention slips they can destroy the virtues we have accumulated and stop us from accumulating more. The way they stop us from accumulating more virtue is by becoming our motivation for performing negative actions whose results are birth in the lower realms where we cannot accumulate virtue.

These are the five faults of lacking mindfulness and attentiveness. In the next five stanzas the text follows their description by discussing the active ways we can develop mindfulness and attentiveness.

*29. 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 worlds.*

If we think about the thieves and robbers of the previous stanzas, this verse is easy to understand. We need to maintain mindfulness and attentiveness in order to protect the mind from the thieves and robbers, the negative emotions. We will not get lost in the emotions if we maintain awareness. This is important both in meditation and primarily here in our post-meditation practice, when we are doing our daily activities. Whatever we do we should continually bring to mind the quality of mindfulness and not allow ourselves to get lost in negative emotions. As ordinary beings, however, it is possible – in fact likely – that we will slip up, lose track and forget to be mindful. When this happens we should remind ourselves that we are not being mindful and that therefore negative emotions can arise that could lead to birth in the lower realms where we will experience a lot of suffering. This kind of reflection should inspire us to practise mindfulness and attentiveness and bring our minds back to attention.

When we are meditating it is important to remain mindful. But the best way to develop mindfulness and attentiveness in our meditation is actually to practise them in post-meditation. If we practise attentiveness outside our meditation periods its benefits will flow over into our meditation periods. This is why this teaching primarily describes how to maintain mindfulness and attentiveness in post-meditation.

We have gone through many reasons why we should have mindfulness and attentiveness and the many defects of not having them. Next we look at what we need in order to generate mindfulness and attentiveness. This is described by way of what are called the five causes, which are described in the next verse.

*30. 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.*

This verse addresses the second part of the third topic, “How to develop mindfulness and attentiveness.” In the Tibetan, the order of these five causes is more or less opposite of the order in this translation. Following the Tibetan order, the first cause is the spiritual friend, the teacher who gives advice on how to maintain mindfulness and awareness. The second is the “councils of their abbots” or oral instructions that lead to mindfulness and attentiveness when followed. We may be told, for example, “You need to be mindful, you need to be attentive, you need to avoid negative actions, and you need to practise in this way.” The third cause is to be careful or even fearful. That is to remember that if we don’t maintain mindfulness and attentiveness we will lose ourselves to negative emotions and fall into the lower realms as a result where we will experience incredible suffering. This fear encourages us to maintain mindfulness and attentiveness. The fourth cause is the good fortune to be able to do meditation practice, receive teachings and so forth. The fifth, last cause is devotion or interest. It means knowing that the maintenance of mindfulness and attentiveness will stop us

losing ourselves to negative emotions and falling into the lower realms. With mindfulness and attentiveness we will be able to complete the path, for the benefit of ourselves and others. Because of what we can accomplish through them we generate devotion to and interest in the development of mindfulness and attentiveness. This interest, in turn, leads to the development of mindfulness and attentiveness. In these ways all five causes together contribute to the increase of mindfulness and attentiveness.

This teaching continues in the next three stanzas.

*31. 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.*

*32. 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.*

*33. 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.*

These stanzas discuss the third cause, fear, and the fifth cause, devotion, from the previous verse. They are described as being the two most important causes because although as ordinary beings we cannot actually meet the buddhas and bodhisattvas, their unclouded wisdom, great vision, love and compassion means that they are always aware of what we are doing. In this way we are always in the presence of the buddhas and bodhisattvas; they can see what we are doing and they know what we are thinking. They know when we are lost in negative emotions or doing something bad. If we remember this then letting our mindfulness and attentiveness become lax, losing ourselves in negative emotions and doing bad things will cause us to experience shame, modesty and fear. The fact that the buddhas and bodhisattvas will know these things have happened, that they will see them, should motivate us to maintain mindfulness and attentiveness.

Devotion also has an important relationship with the maintenance of mindfulness and attentiveness. Maintaining mindfulness and attentiveness will enable us to receive the Buddha's blessings. These blessings will expand our qualities, our faults will naturally diminish, and we will therefore be able to attain results in our practice. In this way, by maintaining mindfulness and attentiveness we will generate devotion and that in turn will help us become more mindful and attentive.

These are the five causes for mindfulness and in particular the two most important, fear and devotion. If we develop mindfulness through these causes attentiveness will naturally arise and with it other qualities. We should also remember to bring the mind back when we lose this attentiveness.

In the next few stanzas Shantideva describes how to train in guarding the mind, what we need to do to train the mind in mindfulness and attentiveness. This he teaches in three

sections: training in refraining from harmful actions, training in performing virtuous actions, and training in benefiting all other sentient beings. In these three sections he describes how bodhisattvas should behave: what they should abandon and what they should take up. This description relates to the three vows: the external vows of individual liberation, the internal vows of the bodhisattva and the secret vows of secret mantra, the Vajrayana. In this text, however, he emphasizes the second set of vows, the internal vows of the bodhisattva, and how these train us in avoiding harm and creating virtue. Quite a few texts deal with this topic of the three vows. In the *Way of the Bodhisattva*, however, although the meaning is the same the way they are discussed is somewhat different. Usually when these three levels of vows are taught the primary focus is on which actions of body and speech we should avoid but here Shantideva focuses on our mental activity during the post-meditation period. This process is described in two different sections: how to abandon perverted actions of the body and how to abandon perverted mental activity. The first section though, which nominally refers to physical activity, actually primarily focuses on the way maintaining mindfulness enables us to do this.

Abandoning Harmful Actions

The topic of the next six stanzas then describes how we should abandon perverted physical and verbal activities. The first of these stanzas looks at our root motivation for actions.

*34. 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.*

Before we do anything, we first need to think, “I am going to do something. I want to go some place. I need to stay. I need to do this particular action.” If we are practicing mindfulness and attentiveness they arise with the thought, surround it, and accompany it. In doing this they enable us to look at the reason we are going to do something—the reason we need to go somewhere, perform a particular action. With mindfulness and attentiveness we will know whether we are doing something to harm another being, or solely for our own benefit or if it really is for the benefit of others. If the reason we are going to do something is not for the benefit of others, if it is solely for our own benefit or if it is to harm someone else then as these activities are not included within the activities of bodhisattvas we should not follow through with them. Whenever we are going to do something we need to look at our root motivation for doing this, is it beneficial? If it is then we should act on it.

The next few stanzas primarily teach about how to look about with our eyes.

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

36. 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.*

The reason Shantideva focuses here on how to look around is that when we look around thoughts and emotions arise; being careful about how we look about can help maintain mindfulness and attentiveness. Shantideva advises us not to look about without any particular reason, not to wander distractedly but instead keep a focused mind with our eyes cast down. This behavior needs to be combined with intelligence, though: it is, after all, the activity of bodhisattvas. So we do not need to continually concentrate downwards but can occasionally, when it is necessary, look around in the four directions, taking note of what and whom we see. When we see someone, we should be friendly towards them and speak kindly to them. It may also be important, when we take a walk down the road, to look around so we know when a dangerous situation could happen. Occasionally, when we stop and rest, we can also look at what is behind us. In this way we are looking in all four directions but we are doing it with intelligence.

The next two stanzas, thirty-eight and thirty-nine teach us not to do actions that are not necessary and to do those which are necessary.

*38. 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.*

*39. 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.*

This describes how we should “Spy the land, in front, behind” when we are about to do something. That is to say, look carefully to see whether it is an action that should or should not be done, that is or is not beneficial. If it is a beneficial action, we should go ahead and do it. If it is a meaningless or harmful action though, it is not an appropriate action for us to perform. We should examine every situation and all our motives carefully before beginning something. Then again, once we have begun the physical action, once our decision has “determin[ed] the actions of [our] body” from time to time we should stop and think, “Is this the right action, is my motivation good, is my motivation bad?” In this way we should continually scrutinize our actions through mindfulness and attentiveness.

In the next two stanzas, Shantideva explains how to protect the mind.

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

41. Those who strive to master concentration

*Should never for an instant be distracted.
They should constantly investigate themselves,
Examining the movements of their minds.*

Previously our minds were compared to wild elephants. When we have a wild elephant we have to tie it to a strong, sturdy pillar. It is the same with our mind: we have to tie it down but we should not tie it to negative emotions, bad actions or distractions. Instead we need to tie it down with faith, devotion and all that is connected to genuine dharma. Not only do we need to tie it down with these things, we also need to keep guarding our mind continually so that it does not escape and get caught up in negative emotions. The last of these two stanzas, verse forty-one, primarily refers to the importance of not letting our minds become distracted in samadhi, meditative concentration. We should never be distracted when practicing meditation, not for an instant as is explained in this verse.

In these last few stanzas we have been taught how to behave with regards to our body and the methods for training the mind in mindfulness and attentiveness. Sometimes, however, we are unable to act with mindfulness and attentiveness. This is discussed in the next three stanzas.

*42. 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.*

Occasionally we find ourselves in situations where we are frightened, involved in a great celebration or feast or there is some other particularly great need. At these times we may not be able to maintain awareness of our physical and mental activity. In these situations it is important not to keep our bodies and minds tight but rather to have a relaxed body and do what is necessary. For example, sometimes it is taught that we can suspend the rules of discipline in order to practise generosity. At these times it is said to be more important to keep our focus on the greater good than the previously explained guidelines. We need to have equanimity even with regards to them.

*43. 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.*

*44. 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.*

In yet other situations, such as when there is a job we need to do, we need to keep ourselves focused on the task at hand with mindfulness and attentiveness. We should not allow our attention to drift to other things because if we do we will not accomplish our goal. If we can maintain our focus and mindfulness we will be able to complete our work. If, on

the other hand, we lose ourselves to negative emotions we will not accomplish anything. If we are attentive and mindful we can accomplish our goals, if we are distracted we cannot and the afflictions will increase.

That was Shantideva's teaching on how to abandon perverted actions of body and mind. He follows this with a teaching on abandoning subtle distractions in two parts: protecting oneself from subtle distractions of the body and protecting oneself from subtle distractions of the mind. The first of these two is taught in the next verse.

*45. 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.*

Taking part in lengthy, purposeless conversations with friends leads to distraction and should be abandoned. Spectacles, festivals and shows can have the same affect; we look at or engage in these entertainments with attachment and craving. There is no real harm that comes about from this attachment and craving but they can be subtly harmful as they become obstacles to our dharma practice and therefore need to be abandoned.

The next verse looks at abandoning useless activity.

*46. If you find you're 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.*

There are other activities that are also really just distractions, have no benefit or purpose and therefore need to be abandoned. It is not that they are particularly harmful they just don't have any benefit. Digging in the soil, for example, without purpose has no particular benefit. It is not particularly harmful but it is not beneficial. Cutting the grass and tracing idle patterns on the ground are similar activities. These kinds of activities do not create harm but they do not particularly lead to dharma practice. As these activities do not help us do this they should be abandoned. If, instead, we remember the teachings of the Blissful One, the Buddha, we will remember to act in ways that lead us down the path of the dharma.

The third part of this section examines our motivation or intention.

*47. 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.*

Sometimes we may want to walk about, talk to someone or do something else. When these thoughts arise we should check, "Why do I want to go for a walk? Why am I talking to this person? Why am I doing this?" We may then realize that we have a good reason for walking about, talking to someone or doing something else and go ahead and do it but we should always look at our intention first. We should only do things for which we have a good

motivation. The next verse, however, warns against doing things which we do not have a good motivation for.

*48. 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.*

There are two types of bad motivation that we may have. The first of these is taught in this verse and that is that we may be motivated by our negative emotions. Sometimes if we analyze our minds when we want to go somewhere or talk to someone we will see that our motivation is primarily a negative emotion. We may find that we want to do something or talk to someone primarily as a result of passion or lust for example. We may also find that we want to talk to someone primarily out of anger or go somewhere primarily out of anger. In those situations we should not act or speak. We should not go where we want to go but instead remain like a log of wood and not do anything. In this way if we have a good action we should act but if we are motivated by negative emotions we should not.

In this way Shantideva explains that we should not act on negative emotions but sometimes when we want to act and our motivation is not good, it is because of very subtle negative emotions instead of coarse negative emotions like desire or anger. This is looked at in the next few stanzas.

*49. 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,*

*50. 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.*

There may be sometimes that we are filled with arrogance, motivated by pride, mockery, haughtiness, or want to show others faults and weaknesses. We should not act on these motives. We may wish to spoil someone else's name, use harsh language or stir up a fight but in these situations it is best not to act but, again, to be still like a log.

*51. 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.*

*52. 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.*

Sometimes, as is taught in these stanzas, we may want to do something out of a desire for fame, wealth, attention or admiration. In these situations though, because we would not be acting for the benefit of other sentient beings but for our own benefit, we again should remain like a log, inactive. When we examine our mind and see that we are motivated by these subtler negative emotions we should tell ourselves we are not going to act in this way, we are not going to do anything motivated by these thoughts and instead remain as still as a log.

The next verse talks about situations in which we are motivated by impatience, laziness, indolence or faintheartedness.

*53. 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.*

When we think we cannot actually achieve anything in our dharma practice, when we feel lazy and think that practicing dharma is too much, we should not act on these thoughts either. They show that we are too attached to ourselves.

In this way Shantideva has taught us to engage neither in coarse nor subtle distractions of the body and speech while keeping a careful eye on our motivation, our mind. He has described this in quite a few different ways but in the next verse he condenses all of these teachings.

*54 . 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.*

In this verse he exhorts us to look at our motivation, whatever we are doing. If we notice that we are motivated or subtly influenced by negative emotions, or if the action is pointless and does not help our dharma practice we should either not start it or desist from it. If there is a task we were going to undertake that would involve a lot of difficulty but has no benefit we should not do it. In acting in this way we should be like the heroes on the bodhisattva path, with stable minds always looking carefully at our motivation and applying remedies when improper motivations arise.

In these last few verses Shantideva primarily discussed the ways to pay attention to our verbal and physical activity. Next he goes on to discuss how to guard the mind from subtle distractions: how to guard our mental activity. He does this in four stanzas in which he first describes how we need a stable, steadfast mind and should always try to be respectful and courteous, then how we should also maintain a sense of modesty and a fear of doing negative things.

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

Here this type of fear is translated as “conscientiousness,” but in Tibetan the word “fear” is used. That is to say that we should be afraid of the consequences of bad actions and always keep this awareness in mind. We should, also, always try and be peaceful, keeping the happiness of others in mind.

*56. Let us not be down cast by the warring wants
Of childish persons quarrelling.
Their thoughts are bred from conflict and emotion.
Let us understand and treat them lovingly.*

When we are engaging in the activities of a bodhisattva we have to interact with other people. These people are often immature, ordinary individuals and as such their minds may be stimulated by negative emotions such as desire, anger, pride, ignorance and so forth. When working with these people sometimes conflicts arise and at these times it is important not to let ourselves become depressed. It is possible to become depressed but instead we should remember that they are just ordinary sentient beings, it is not really their fault they are afflicted by desires. Sometimes they fall under the power of great passion, sometimes they fall under the power of great anger or great pride. Being influenced by these, they then perform negative actions but this is because they are just ordinary individuals and have not abandoned these negative emotions. Instead of being depressed by this, we should generate love and compassion for them. They have not abandoned negative emotions so we should generate love and compassion for their state.

In the next two stanzas, Shantideva explains that whether we are performing a virtuous action or not, or whether we are dealing with other people performing negative or positive actions we should remember we have no self.

*57. 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.*

When we are doing something good, when someone else is doing something good or bad then we need to remember that this person and we ourselves have no self and are like a mirage or an illusion. Keeping this in mind we will not pay too much attention to the activities of ourselves or others. We should also remember that this precious human life we have is rare. We have been wandering in samsara since beginningless time and in all this time we have only very rarely attained a precious human life. We may have attained human lives but mostly they have been lives in which we were not able to practise the dharma. Even if they were precious human lives in which we could practise the dharma we did not attain the ultimate result of practicing the dharma. Now we have the ability to practise for our own benefit or the benefit of all sentient beings and we should remember this. We should firmly and stably remember our precious human life and always act in ways that will enable us to gain the ultimate benefit from it.

Training in Virtuous Actions

Of the three aspects of training in mindfulness and attentiveness – abandoning harmful actions, training in virtuous actions and training in benefiting other sentient beings – we have completed the first section on refraining from negative, perverted actions of body, speech and mind. Now I will talk about how to train in the dharma, in virtuous activities.

When I discussed the abandoning of harmful physical and verbal actions it was primarily from the perspective of abandoning their harmful motives rather than the actual actions themselves. Likewise, as I go on to talk about training in virtuous actions, I will again primarily focus on their motives.

In order to train in virtuous actions we need to be aware of what may prevent us from doing so. When we look into this we see that one of the main obstacles is attachment and clinging to our bodies. In the beginning, because of this clinging we do not take up dharma activities, virtuous actions. In the middle, out of clinging to our bodies we do not engage in these activities diligently. And in the end, because of this clinging we do not attain the results of dharma practice. Because of this we need to give up attachment to our bodies in the beginning, middle and end.

*58. 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.*

Generally, in dharma teachings, we are taught that a precious human body with which we can practice dharma is very important and valuable but after this stanza Shantideva goes on to tell us that it is unclean, of no value and we should not cling to it. We may wonder if these two thoughts are contradictory. They may seem so but they are not. When we are attached to this body it becomes a vehicle for the creation of suffering but when we use it to practice dharma it is a support that can bring us to enlightenment. As long as we view this body with attachment and cling to its appearances we will be prevented from genuine dharma practice but if we do not approach this precious body of ours with clinging it becomes a support for genuine dharma practice. Through this practice we can attain great benefit for ourselves and others and in this respect, as a support for the attainment of enlightenment that will benefit ourselves and others, this human body is very important.

In the next few stanzas Shantideva explains that the body, from the perspective of our clinging to it, is something we need to abandon. He then explains how to do this in five sections.

*59. 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?*

*60. 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?*

The body itself, he says, this body that we cling to has no thoughts and therefore no value. In stanza fifty-nine he describes this situation when he says, “When vultures with their love of flesh are tugging at this body all around.” This refers to our corpses after we have died. In charnel grounds in India and Tibet, the flesh of these corpses are eaten by vultures but the body does not feel any pain because it has no mind. If this is the case, if the body has no mind, why should we be attached to it? In the next stanza, verse sixty, he explains that as our body is *separate* from our mind the body itself has no mind. Why then, he asks, is the mind so attached to the body? He also asks why, if they are separate and the body has no thoughts, do we cling to this body as if it is our self?

Next, in stanza sixty one, he teaches us that the body is not only devoid of thoughts but it is also unclean, being made up of impure substances.

*61. 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?*

Our bodies are made up of all sorts of unclean and filthy substances: flesh, blood, bones and all sorts of things. In themselves these are dirty and disgusting, so why should we cling to them as being our selves? Why does the mind cling to something that is unclean as its self? If it is unclean, there is no way it can really benefit us.

The next point is that the body has no essence. Even though it is unclean, if it had an essence it could still benefit us, it could be useful, but as it has no essence it cannot really be of any use to us. Shantideva describes how to find out whether our body has an essence or not.

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

*63. 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?*

*64. If, persisting in this search,
You find no underlying object,
Why still cherish – and with such desire –
The fleshly form you now possess?*

First you look into your skin, your flesh, your bones and your blood very carefully to see if there is anything there, any actual thing or essence. No matter how hard you look, you will not find anything. Even if you look diligently you will not find any particular thing anywhere that you could say was the essence of the body, like a jewel in the body you could call the

important part of “me.” No matter where you look you will not find it because there is no essence among all these unclean substances.

Again, this body of ours may be unclean and have no essence but if there was some use for it, some way it could benefit us then it would still be alright to value it. As the next stanza and a half says however, this is not the case.

*65. 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?*

*66. As second best, it may indeed be kept
As food to feed the vulture and the fox.*

We cannot eat or drink any of the unclean parts of the body; we cannot eat our own flesh or drink our own blood. These unclean substances do not really benefit us. In the last part of this section, the first two lines of verse sixty-six, we are told that our body may be beneficial as food for foxes and vultures so if we want to take care of our bodies with this in mind that is okay.

Now that we have been shown how worthless the body is in and of itself, what should we do with it? The last, fifth point explains this by telling us to use it to practice dharma.

*The value of this human form
Lies only in the way that it is used.*

What this means is that we have to use this body to do work, to practise genuine dharma, or it is of no use. We need to practise meditation, we need to abandon non-virtuous actions and we need to accomplish virtuous actions. By doing this we make our bodies valuable, if we do not they have no particular value.

*67. 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 dogs?*

If we are not practicing dharma there is no particular point to maintaining our bodies. At some point we are going to lose this body anyway. At some point the Lord of Death will snatch them away from us and throw them to the birds and dogs.

*68. 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 labor?*

We may think that we need to take care of our body, feed and cloth it, but if we do not use it what is the point? If we had servants or slaves who did not work what would be the point of

giving them food and clothing? Doing this would not help us. If they did work, we would give them food and clothing. In the same way we should only repay our body to the extent to which it works. We should pay this body, we should give it food and clothing, but only so that it can act as a basis for the practice of genuine dharma, only so that we can use it to give up bad actions, practice positive actions and benefit others. Apart from this it can not help us.

*69. 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.*

This body, in and of itself, is not something we should be attached to. Rather it is something we can use to accomplish things; to benefit others and do the work of practising dharma. This body is only useful as a support for practising dharma and achieving the ultimate result of this practice – accomplishing the perfect goals of ourselves and others. This is explained in the next verse by the metaphor of a boat.

*70. 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.*

A boat is something we can use to cross a body of water, if we want to do this we need a boat; it becomes very useful in these instances. If we are not crossing a body of water though a boat has no other use; there is no reason we would carry it around with us when we do not want to cross water. We should not have any particular attachment to it except for what we can use it for. Our body is similar. If we use this body to practice ultimate dharma it becomes a wish fulfilling gem that accomplishes all that benefits ourselves and others. It is a vessel that can take us along the path of dharma towards the ultimate result, but in and of itself it is not something we should be particularly attached to.

These five points have covered the way to view and use our bodies. We need to use it to bring benefit to others and ourselves otherwise it has no particular value. To use it in this way we need to train in virtuous activity and this is what is looked at in the next section, which has six points. Again, these six points mostly describe training in post-meditation. The first teaching is a general teaching on post-meditation activities. When we are practicing the dharma it is generally important to practice meditation but it is also important to practice continually outside of our meditation practice. What we do outside of meditation affects the quality of our meditation and therefore, in this section of this text, it is described in more detail. Post-meditation is what we do most of the time and it is important to train ourselves to act virtuously during these times. This importance is described in the next three stanzas.

*71. 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.*

*72. 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.*

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

When we have attachment to our bodies we are not free; our minds are not free and we cannot act freely. Being attached to our bodies we cannot accomplish the great meaning of actual freedom. If we abandon attachment to the body, however, and use it for the purpose of practicing dharma in post-meditation we can. When we are going around and meeting people, for instance, we should always be friendly, open and smiling instead of frowning and looking angrily at them. We should always try to treat people in a straightforward, honest and friendly manner. When we are sitting in chairs or using other pieces of furniture – couches, tables and so on – we shouldn't move around violently making inconsiderate, loud, disrupting noises. We shouldn't open doors violently and make a lot of noise. We should be very soft, gentle and humble in the way we act. Herons, cats and burglars accomplish what they want silently and carefully, and in the same way we need to use our bodies very carefully –with mindfulness and attentiveness – to accomplish the aspirations of ourselves and others.

Next Shantideva goes on to describe how we should give and receive advice; sometimes we receive advice from others and sometimes we give it. First he describes how to receive advice with enthusiasm.

*74. 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.*

This first case looks at receiving advice. How do we accept advice with enthusiasm, how do we take it? People who are very skilled at teaching and giving advice on practicing dharma know when to give long words of encouragement, when to make jokes, when to answer with sharp rebukes, and when to give nice, short answers. People like this are described as “those with skill in counseling their fellows.” When people such as this give advice, how should we accept it? Whether or not these people are speaking the truth, out of respect for them we should always accept their advice graciously.

The next verse looks at how we should give advice.

*75. 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.*

How do we actually give advice? Here Shantideva tells us to encourage others when they say something that is true and excellent by praising them saying, “Your words are excellent, you are speaking well.”

The next verse says –

*76. Extol them even in their absence;
When they're praised by others, do the same.*

This is how we should treat people who are doing things that are meritorious. When we see that they are doing something good then we should praise them, tell them that they are doing something good. There are also times when someone is doing something we do not know about, when their qualities are hidden. But even if we cannot see another person's qualities, if we hear others praising them, and what they are praising is praise worthy, then we should join in. The verse continues:

*But when the qualities they praise are yours,
Appreciate their skill in knowing qualities.*

At other times people will notice that we have positive qualities and praise us. What should we do then? How should we react? We could use this praise as an excuse to develop pride and become full of ourselves, but this is not how we should behave. A better way to react to this praise is to recognize the other person's skill in recognizing positive qualities and appreciate their skill in knowing what is good.

*77. 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.*

Generally whatever we do in this world, whether it is going someplace or doing something, the goal of our actions is happiness, we do not want anything other than happiness. Yet when we act for our own benefit we do not find happiness. How then do we find happiness? By taking pleasure in the qualities of others. If we appreciate the good things others do, if we rejoice in them and it causes us happiness, this is a true source of happiness. It causes us to be happy at that time and brings us happiness in the future. If, on the other hand, we are envious and do not appreciate these deeds we cause ourselves suffering.

*78. 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.*

The next thing Shantideva teaches is how we should speak to others.

*79. Speak with honest words, coherently,
With candor, in a clear, harmonious voice,*

*Abandon partiality, rejection, and attraction,
And speak with moderation, gently.*

We should speak honestly, straightforwardly and in a way that is beneficial and helpful to others. When we speak we should use words that create confidence in people or that people can have confidence in. We should also speak clearly and coherently with a harmonious, pleasant tone. These qualities will ensure that our speech is something others will want to hear. We are also encouraged to remember that we need to abandon the negative emotions – desire, anger and the rest – while speaking. This translation says “rejection” but the Tibetan word they have translated this way can also mean “hatred.” We are also encouraged to speak softly, kindly and only a moderate amount.

We should also consider other ways we act in the same sort of detail. Next we are told how to look with our eyes.

*80. 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.*

We need to be careful about how we see people. When we look around and catch sight of others, when we see another sentient being, we should look at them with open, loving hearts. That is in a straight forward way with love and compassion for them. Without the right motivation this may seem a false or forced way to behave but if we maintain awareness of the proper motivation then it becomes a truly loving thing to do. The right motivation is to realize that as a result of these other people we can practice and attain Buddhahood. By viewing others in this way we will be able to accomplish their aims.

We also need to accomplish physical virtue, and not only virtue but excellent and complete virtue. The way to do this is described in the next three stanzas.

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

Being continuously “fired by the highest aspiration” means maintaining the good motivation to bring benefits to oneself and others. The antidote that we are “laboring to implement” is the mind of enlightenment. By working with a good motivation and using the antidote of the mind of enlightenment we will accumulate great merit. This merit is accumulated based on three fields. The first is the field of qualities, which is the field of Buddhas, bodhisattvas and other realized beings. The second is the field of benefits, which consists of our parents and other people who have helped us. The third is the field of sorrow or suffering, which consists of those who suffer such as beggars, animals and those in hell.

*82. 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.

When we gather virtue by acting with these beings in mind, we are “acting thus with faith and understanding.” We understand what is good and beneficial and because of this we perform positive actions. If we are always aware of this, then we will always accumulate merit by performing positive actions without looking at other people in a calculating fashion. The activities we should engage in are the six perfections or transcendences: generosity or giving, discipline and so forth.

*83. 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.*

Within these six transcendences discipline is more important than generosity, patience is more important than discipline, diligence is more important than patience and so on. In this way, each transcendence is more important than its predecessor: “The great should never be supplanted by the less.” Remembering this, when we do something we should focus on the most important qualities of our activities. This means, for example, that we should consider discipline to be more important than generosity. Behaving in this way and working for the benefit of other sentient beings is the greatest goal.

That was Shantideva's teaching on how to accomplish great virtue by doing things, the second topic in this section. How to do this is in many ways relatively easy to understand but we also need to put these things into practice, we need to transform our normal activities into virtuous activities. When we are doing something great we should transform it into a virtuous activity and when we are doing something small we should transform it into a virtuous activity. In this way we will make all of our activities virtuous and beneficial to ourselves and all other sentient beings.

Training in Benefiting Others

The third topic is acting for the benefit of sentient beings. When training for the benefit of sentient beings we are doing the activity of a bodhisattva. By this we can accomplish our own and others' goals and from these two others' goals are more important. This topic is taught in three sections, the first of which is to put others' needs first.

*84. 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.*

We benefit other beings by making them happy, giving them freedom from suffering and refuge when they need protection. Although we should always be striving to protect beings in this way we will not be able to do this one hundred percent of the time. This means that we should give protection when we can. In order to do this the perfect, ultimate Buddha and all the other masters permit us to sometimes do things that are proscribed, that we are not usually

allowed to do. Although we should not usually do these things, if doing them will bring great benefit to beings we are permitted to do them.

The next section of this topic – always acting to benefit other beings – deals with how to magnetize beings. That is how to collect students and encourage people. You can magnetize people with things and with dharma. The next verse describes how to magnetize people with things.

*85. 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.*

There are many beings who have fallen into evil states like hell or the animal realms, and there are even unfortunate humans who need our help. We should be generous and share our things with all of these beings. We should also share with those who have “embraced the discipline,” who are practicing, in ways that will benefit them. We should also only eat what we need, that is moderately, as a way of helping other people and as a way of magnetizing people. In general, when we are practicing the dharma and helping others we often need to be generous. We should give all that we have but if we have taken monastic ordination then we should not give away our three dharma robes, the “three robes of religion.” These three robes are the sign of practicing the dharma and are therefore the one thing that someone who is a monk or a nun should not give up.

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

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

If we do not use our bodies for dharma, then they have no particular worth, but if we use them to practice dharma they are something very valuable that we need to protect. This means we should not harm them ourselves and should try to protect them from illness, other harms or injury. We definitely should not harm our bodies doing something that is not useful to others. It is true that the teachings on generosity talk about being able to give away our bodies but that is only when there is a need. Without a need we should not give away parts of our bodies or harm them in other ways. As dharma practitioners we often hear stories of bodhisattvas who cut their bodies and gave pieces of them away. This is not something those of us who have not realized emptiness directly should do. Those who have attained this realization can practice in this way and occasionally can cut their bodies into pieces and so forth. They have perfected great compassion and can do this, but we have not and therefore cannot. If we use our body for the benefit of other sentient beings by practicing dharma, however, and if we use them solely to bring happiness and peace to other sentient beings,

then in a sense we are using our bodies in exactly the same way. We are using our bodies to benefit sentient beings. Using our bodies as a vehicle to benefit all sentient beings is the same as giving them up. This verse says that if we protect our bodies this way, “if this advice is kept,” that “the wishes of all beings will swiftly and completely be attained.” That is to say that we will be able to quickly benefit all sorts of beings.

In the next three stanzas Shantideva teaches us how to magnetize with dharma.

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

When we teach the dharma we need to be aware of whether our listeners are appropriate people to teach the dharma to. When this verse says, “Do not teach to those without respect” it is referring to those who do not have faith in the dharma, who are not inclined to it and do not value it. These people are not ready to receive the dharma and do not have a motivation that accords with it. In the next few lines Shantideva goes on to describe how we should not teach people who do not act in accordance with the dharma either. He does this by telling us not to teach “those who like the sick wear cloths around their heads” and “those who proudly carry weapons, staffs or parasols.” People doing these kinds of things are not acting in ways that show they have respect for the dharma. These people are not ready to hear the genuine dharma and because they are not ready to hear it we should not go ahead and preach it to them.

*88. 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 teachings vast and deep,
Should not be introduced to lesser paths.
But basic practice you should not forsake,
Confused by talk of sutras and of mantras.*

Stanza eighty-eight advises us not to “teach the vast and deep to those upon the lower paths” while the next stanza refers to those, “suited to the teachings vast and deep.” This highlights the fact that there are different types of students who need to be taught different types of dharma; there are those who are not ready to hear the vast and deep Mahayana teachings and therefore should not be taught them, and there are those who are ready to hear these teachings and should be taught them. Those on the foundational vehicle paths, the paths of the Hinayana, are not ready to hear the “vast and deep” teachings, the very profound teachings of the Mahayana. These Mahayana teachings are extremely difficult to understand and those who are not ready to hear them should not be taught them. Rather they should be taught simple, basic, condensed teachings that they will be able to understand. Those who are suited to the “vast and deep” Mahayana teachings, however, should not be introduced to the foundational paths. If someone is capable of understanding and has interest in the teachings

of the greater vehicles, they should not only be taught simple, basic, foundational vehicle teachings.

The first of these verses also says that a single man should not teach the dharma to a woman alone, particularly if they are a monk, because this is a situation that people may misunderstand and could lead to their loss of faith. It also instructs us to treat all those to whom we are teaching the dharma “with equal honor low and high according to their path.” This line makes a general distinction between those people on the Hinayana path and those on the greater vehicle but as this distinction should only be used to benefit beings by teaching them what is most appropriate to their needs we should not use it as an excuse to treat those on the greater vehicle more honorably than those on the foundational vehicle. The last line of this verse also exhorts us not to forsake the basic practices because we are, “Confused by talk of sutras and mantras.” This means we should not confuse people or direct them away from basic practices by teaching various sutras or mantras. Instead we should use these teachings on sutras and mantras to encourage people in their dharma practice.

After this teaching on magnetizing people with things and dharma comes the teaching on protecting the minds of others. Once we have collected people and brought them towards the dharma we then need to help protect them and their minds. This process is described in the next seven stanzas, which are relatively easy to understand. The first two stanzas teach us how to abandon disgusting actions, which is to say actions that will turn people off and drive them away. Most of these things we do quite naturally even now anyway.

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

*92. 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.*

These stanzas talk about abandoning actions that are just inherently unpleasant and disgust other people.

The third stanza in this section teaches us how not to be a cause for others to have doubts about, or lose their faith.

*93. 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.*

The fourth tells us how rude it is to point our fingers and to abandon this and other disrespectful mannerisms.

*94. 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.*

The fifth stanza tells us to abandon unrestrained, wild and uncouth actions.

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

The next stanza, the sixth, tells us how to lie down when we are going to sleep and so forth.

*96. 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.*

These actions are mainly verbal and physical actions, but in order to perform them correctly we also need to train our minds in the behavior of bodhisattvas. The most important thing for us to concentrate on is purifying our minds, turning them towards the activities of a bodhisattva. We need to embrace all the actions that cleanse the mind and purify our thoughts while we continually work with the motivation to benefit others.

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

When we are training like this we need to perfect our activities. We do this by incorporating six different elements in our training. The first of these is sweeping clean our negative karma through confession. Occasionally we do things that are wrong, but if we can recognize these faults we can purify them through confession. If we are convinced that these negative actions are actually positive then there is no way we can purify them. If, on the other hand, we recognize that we have done something wrong then we can confess and purify these actions. How to confess and purify our negative actions is described in the next stanza.

*98. Reciting thrice, by day, by night,
"The Sutra in Three Sections",
Relying on the Buddhas and the bodhisattvas,
Purify the rest of your transgressions.*

The way we purify is by reciting three times by day and night *The Sutra in Three Sections*. This sutra has a section on prostrating, a section on confessing misdeeds and a section on dedication. It is a good idea, if we are able, to recite the three sections of this sutra. This stanza also tells us to rely on the Buddhas and bodhisattvas as the support for our

confessions – that is to make our confessions in front of them. Behaving in this manner we purify any transgressions we may have performed.

The next two stanzas, ninety-nine and one hundred, teach us about the actual basis of the training.

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

Here we learn that we need to continue training anywhere, anytime and any place for the benefit of ourselves and others. In any given situation there may be any number of teachings that we could apply appropriately so we should use the teachings that are appropriate to our situation.

In the next stanza, number one hundred we are told that the training in the behavior of the “Buddhas’ offspring,” which is another way of saying bodhisattvas, is something we need to do continually.

*100. There is indeed no virtue
That the Buddhas’ offspring should not learn.
To one with mastery therein,
There is no action destitute of merit.*

It also tells us that there is no section of the different types of virtue that we should not learn. If we know all the different ways we could behave virtuously then we can apply the teachings to any situation, behave virtuously and be beneficial. In this way any situation – good or bad – is a situation to which we can apply the teachings, train in the behavior of bodhisattvas and therefore do things that benefit ourselves and others.

The reason we wish to train in the activities of bodhisattvas is to benefit others. As the next stanza suggests we can do this in both direct and indirect ways.

*101. Directly, then, or indirectly,
All you do must be for others’ sake.
And solely for their welfare dedicate
Your actions for the gaining of enlightenment.*

Whatever we do should be something that is either directly beneficial to other beings now or in the future. In this way our actions may not necessarily be beneficial immediately but may be indirectly beneficial in the future. These kinds of activities are the behavior of bodhisattvas and are what we should train in. Having trained in them we need to condense them into one “activity” and dedicate the merit we accumulate from them to helping all sentient beings. That is to say, we should dedicate the positive results to attaining the state of a Buddha from which we can really help all sentient beings.

The support for all of this activity is the spiritual friend or teacher. The words spiritual friend, virtuous friend or teacher all mean the same thing.

*102. 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.*

Our virtuous friends have two defining characteristics; they are “Learned in the meaning of the Mahayana,” and “Supreme in the practice of the bodhisattva path.” They are “Learned in the meaning of the Mahayana” is that they know the sutras, tantras and practices of the Mahayana. They are “Supreme in practice of the bodhisattva path” because they are able to put this path into practise in their meditations and teach us these meditation practices.

*103. For thus you must depend upon your guru,
As you will find described in Shri Sambhava’s life,*

Shri Sambhava’s life story is told in a sutra. In this sutra how we should conceive our reliance on a teacher is described by way of four analogies. The first is that we should conceive ourselves as ill, the dharma as our medicine, the spiritual friend as our doctor and the practise of dharma as the cure for our illness. In samsara we are stuck in a cycle of suffering and we do not know how to get out of it. This suffering is like the illness of the patient in this analogy. When we are sick we need to take medicine. Our medicine, the cure for samsara, is the genuine dharma that if practised brings freedom from suffering. In order to take medicine, in order to cure ourselves of this disease we need to rely on a doctor’s advice and follow it. If the doctor tells us to take medicine we should. If we follow their advice we will be cured of our illness. In the same way, when we are practicing the dharma we need to follow the instructions of the spiritual friend by doing the practices they prescribe. Through these practices, by actually practicing the dharma, we will gradually purify ourselves of all disturbing emotions and free ourselves from suffering. Just like taking medicine will gradually purify us of our diseases.

In the next few stanzas Shantideva teaches us the source of knowledge but first, in the last two lines of stanza one hundred and three he actually defines it.

*And elsewhere in the teachings of the Buddha:
These be sure to study, reading in the sutras.*

*104. The training you will find described
Within the sutras. Therefore read and study them.*

That is to say that if we want to know what to take up and what to reject we should study the teachings of the Buddha and in particular his teachings in the sutras. If we don’t have time to study all of the Buddha’s sutras though, we should particularly study first *The Sutra of the Essence of the Sky*. This is because it gives a condensed, clear description of all of the actions of a bodhisattva.

*“The Sutra of the Essence of the Sky” –
This is the text that should be studied first.*

Not only are there many different sutras but there are also many commentaries that we may need in order to study them. Here, the child of the Buddhas, Shantideva directs us towards three of his own commentaries: the long, extensive *Digest of All Disciplines*; the medium length *Way of the Bodhisattvas* that we are studying now; and the short *Digest of the Sutras*.

*105. 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.*

*106. From time to time, for sake of brevity,
Consult the “Digest of the Sutras.”*

We can look at these three commentaries according to our needs. Generally when teaching we teach from the middle commentary – *The Way of the Bodhisattva* – as we are doing now. If we need a more detailed explanation, however, of the behavior of bodhisattvas and how to train in it – that is what we should take up and what we should abandon – then we should look at the *Digest of All Disciplines*. If we don’t have the time to read a text as extensive as either of these two we can look at Shantideva’s third and briefest text the *Digest of the Sutras*.

He also mentions commentaries by other masters, in particular the Noble Nagarjuna.

*And those two works peruse with diligence
That Noble Nagarjuna has composed.*

Nagarjuna composed many different, texts but here Shantideva makes particular reference to two of his treatises: *The Root Middle Way (Mulamadhyamaka)*, which is the root treatise of the Middle Way and presents the view clearly; and *The Precious Garland*, which primarily teaches the behavior of bodhisattvas giving us a clear presentation of the course of action we should take.

In the next stanza Shantideva gives us a concise meaning of the training.

*107. 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.*

Whatever the sutras and treatises do not say that we should not do, we should do. What is more, we can use these actions to protect the minds of sentient beings and provide them with refuge.

Following on from this concise meaning of the training Shantideva makes a brief statement about the qualities of attentiveness and gives us a definition of it.

*108. 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.*

That is to say, attentiveness means to continually analyze and look at our thoughts and our physical actions. We perform mental and physical actions and when we are aware of these actions we will be asking ourselves, “Is this action good or bad?” If we become aware that we have done something wrong we can correct ourselves. This is a continual process; we should be looking at our motivation and our physical actions over and over again. This is the definition of mental watchfulness or attentiveness.

Just knowing this is not enough though, we need to act on this truth. We need to actually do these things.

*109. But all this must be acted out in truth,
For what is to be gained by mouthing syllables?*

We must actually start to act like bodhisattvas; we must start actually working for the benefit of other sentient beings. As this verse says, “What help is there to be gained by mouthing syllables?” If we have the instructions on how to practise but just mouth them and do not actually put them into practise they will be of no benefit to other sentient beings. We need to work to free ourselves and all other sentient beings from the sufferings of samsara and bring all of us to the omniscient state of Buddhahood. In order to do this we need to actually practise the teachings not just leave them as mere words. Shantideva describes how important this is by way of an analogy.

*What invalid was ever helped
By merely reading in the doctor’s treatises?*

We need to rely on the medicine that the doctor gives us. If we do not do take this medicine, it will not help us and we will not be cured. If we are sick and we take the appropriate medicine we are cured. If we leave the medicine in our hands it will not help us. It is the same with the dharma; if we take the medicine of the dharma by practising it then we can accomplish the goals of ourselves and all other sentient beings.

¹ The title of the chapter in Tibetan is *shes bzhin*, which means to be aware of what you are doing as you are doing it. In the verses of the chapter this word is translated variously as “mental vigilance,” “awareness,” “mental scrutiny,” and “watchfulness.” In the translation of Rinpoche’s commentary, it is translated consistently as attentiveness.

² The Tibetan and Sanskrit words usually translated as “mindfulness” actually mean to recall or remember, in the sense of recalling what to do and what not to do. This translation of Rinpoche’s commentary uses the word mindfulness in order to match the translation of the root verses. –*Translator*

³ In this passage, “mental awareness” in the root text is referring to what has earlier been translated as “mindfulness,” and “mental vigilance” is what has been translated as “attentiveness.”

⁴ There are two Tibetan versions of this particular verse of the root text. Rinpoche is teaching from the other version than the one used in this translation. In the version Rinpoche is teaching from, the last line reads, “I make this pledge,” instead of beseeching others to be mindful. In that version, Shantideva himself is pledging to maintain mindfulness and attentiveness in all situations in order to protect his mind.

Translation of the root verses from *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, translated by the Padmakara Translation Group and published by Shambhala Publications. © Shambhala Publications Inc.